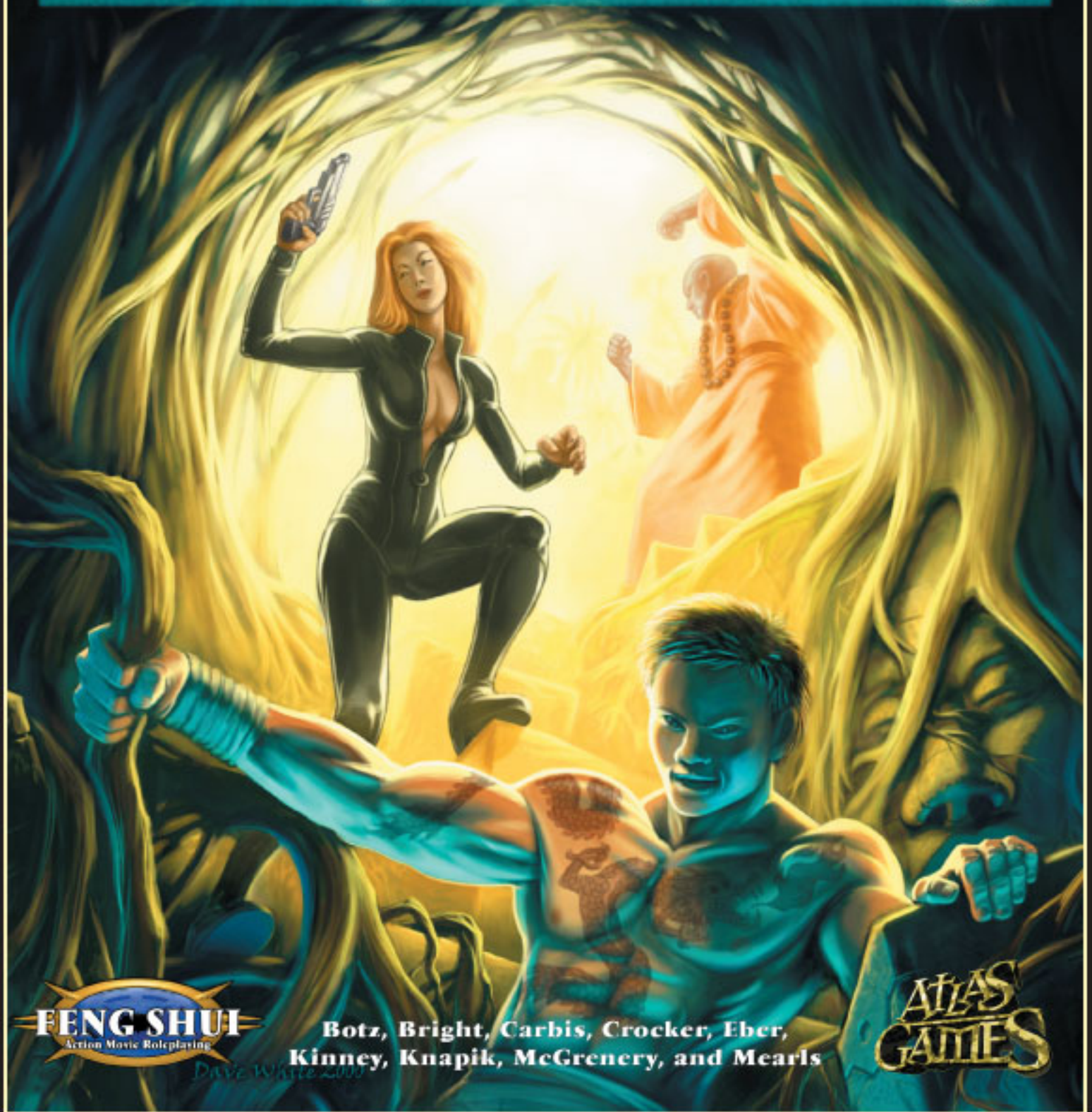


IN YOUR FACE AGAIN

A Feng Shui Scenario Anthology



FENG SHUI
Action Movie Roleplaying

Botz, Bright, Carbis, Crocker, Eber,
Kinney, Knapik, McGrenery, and Mearls

**ATLAS
GAMES**

Dave White

FENG SHUI

Action Movie Roleplaying

Ten Feng Shui Scenarios

A case of mistaken identity. The wrong bag of videotapes. Blood and circuses. An underground fighting circuit. A journey into Darkest Africa. A crotchety old ice cream vendor who happens to be a kung fu master. A fu-based super weapon. A child who can change the course of history at whim.

One Hundred Shady Characters

In Your Face Again is a *Feng Shui* collection featuring a wide variety of scenarios, ranging from introductory adventures for players new to *Feng Shui* to stories that embroil the characters more deeply in the Secret War than they ever cared to go. The scenarios span the open junctures and the Netherworld, and include adversaries from most of the factions described in *Feng Shui* to date.

One Million Bullets

Whether you're looking for inspiration for an ongoing campaign or simply don't have the time to create your own scenarios, *In Your Face Again* provides everything you need for months of *Feng Shui* entertainment.

Now that I am free, I will not stop until I have found those who imprisoned me. They shall know true horrors — horrors they can barely comprehend. I shall deliver suffering until their minds are crushed and they plunge into an eternity of despair. Then, they will . . .
ooo, nummies!

—Kong Tiaorong

What's wrong, never seen your intestines before?

— April Ishihara

Yeehaw! I haven't had this much fun since the Nixon administration!

— Clayton Masterson

All the chop-sockey in the world is no match for a fully charged Helix Ripper!

— Bryce Sutton

AG4006



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Credits

"IN YOUR FACE AGAIN"

AN **ATLAS GAMES** PRODUCTION

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Table of Contents

Fast Forward

Darrin Bright 4

Blood & Sand

Tom McGrenery 18

Invincible Chi

Anthony Botz 28

Last Stand at Old Man Fong's

Mike Mearls 41

The Lost City of An-Makalur

Tom McGrenery 55

Fight Night

David Eber 66

Crossfire

Mark Kinney 78

Hong Kong Phonebook

Loki Carbis 87

E Ticket Ride

Jim Crocker 97

Murderer's Row

Alex Knapik 114

Fast Forward

BY DARRIN BRIGHT

Premise: It's the old switcheroo — some harmless videotapes get swapped for a bag of incriminating evidence.

Twist: A simple misunderstanding turns into a hostage crisis.

Climax: The bad guys open a Netherworld gateway to contemporary Hong Kong. The player characters throw a housewarming party for some abominations who come through to check out the new juncture.

BACKSTORY

The Architects of the Flesh have their eyes on contemporary Hong Kong. They've recently purchased a TV studio from the Triads, where they have set up shop and are currently building a new gate to the Biomass Reprocessing Center (see *Elevator to the Netherworld*, p. 45).

The Dragons caught wind of the situation and sent Jan Jiang, a modern HK operative, to investigate the studio. She raided a tape closet before being discovered, and managed to get away — but unfortunately not cleanly. A bunch of Architect security goons in hot pursuit have followed Jan to a nearby shopping center, where she runs into the PCs . . . literally, of course.

If the PCs are already involved with the Dragons, then you'll need to make some adjustments with Jan and the other Dragon GMCs mentioned later. Specifically, it'll seem pretty odd if your PCs have never heard of

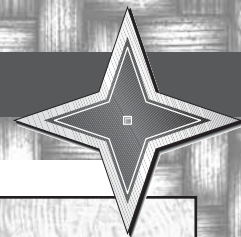
them before. You could tell the PCs something like, "She looks a little familiar, you think you've seen her at the Dragons' hideout," or maybe, "She was at the last Christmas mixer the Prof threw in the Junkyard." If this would cause too many continuity problems, you may want to substitute your own GMCs for Jan and the other Dragons, or adjust the scenario so they are working for the Ice Queen instead.

GETTING STARTED

It's early in the evening, around dinnertime, and the PCs are returning a bag of videos to Tommy Hou's Happy Video Store in the Yaumatei district. If none of the PCs have any reason to rent videos, they are returning them for a relative, friend, or co-worker as a favor.

Jan runs full-tilt into the PC carrying the videos. Both are knocked flat and everyone's bags go flying, but there's no damage. Jan spits out a quick but sincere apology and picks up the wrong bag of videos. Avoid calling attention to the switch, because the rest of the action depends on the PCs winding up with the wrong videos. Even if what has happened is immediately obvious to the PCs, the Architect goons are just

behind Jan, and she ducks into Tommy Hou's Happy Video Store before anyone can grab her. The goons shout out a few lines



from the standard mook dictionary (“Stop her!”, “Don’t let her get away!”), then they pull out their guns and follow Jan into the store. There’s one goon for each PC, one for Jan, and two more that run around behind the video store to prevent Jan from escaping out the back.

Jan Jiang

Jan Jiang grew up as a pickpocket and small-time thief on the streets of Kowloon. She never liked stealing to get ahead, but did what she had to do to keep her family from starving. After “accidentally borrowing” an important magical artifact, she was pulled into the Secret War and the Dragons persuaded her to use her talents to help their cause.

TOMMY HOU’S HAPPY VIDEO STORE

Tommy Hou and his family run the video store and live upstairs on the second floor. Tommy himself sits behind the counter in the center of the store on this particular evening. He’s a short, dumpy little man with several wisps of dark hair swirled around a sweaty bald spot. He smiles a lot when strangers aren’t blowing apart his store, which shows everyone his two front teeth are missing and the rest are soon to go. If (when) a gunfight breaks out, Tommy pulls a Colt King Cobra from under the counter and waves it around, yelling “You pay for that, you pay for that!” at the top of his lungs.

The two or three customers inside the store leave quickly once the goons come in. Jan ducks and weaves between the racks, playing cat and mouse with her pursuers. They lose their patience after a couple of sequences and start blazing away.

Assuming the PCs do not change the situation through their own actions, Jan tips some racks onto a few of the goons and pulls out her Grendel P-12. She’s really not interested

Jan Jiang

Sample Dialogue: “Geez . . . these guys just don’t know when to quit!”

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 2 (Fu 7), Mnd 6, Ref 8

Skills: Martial Arts 12, Guns 12, Deceit 14, Intrusion 14, Info/Streets and Rooftops 15

Fu Schticks: Prodigious Leap, Flying Windmill Kick, Willow Step

Gun Schticks: Quickdraw x2, Eagle Eye

Weapons: punch (6), kick (7), Grendel P-12 (9/1/12+1)

Unnamed Architect Goons

Sample Dialogue: “Stop her! Don’t let her get away!”

Attributes: Bod 6, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 6

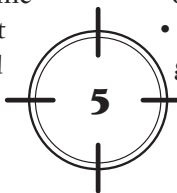
Skills: Martial Arts 8, Guns 8, Intimidation 8

Weapons: punch (7), kick (8), Buro 9 (10/1/17+1)

in a fight, though, and makes a break for the back door the first chance she gets.

Cool Things That Could Happen During the Fight

- The videos are displayed on five-foot-high wooden racks. These can be hidden behind or used for cover, but only count as light armor (+1 Toughness). The racks can also be pushed over onto someone. This doesn’t do any damage, but it takes three shots to get out from under one.
- A few TVs showing new releases sit on stands throughout the store, and there’s a computer monitor on the counter. These can be dropped or thrown (13 Damage).
- Several cardboard stand-ups of popular actors stand throughout the store. These can be hidden behind (no Toughness bonus) or shot up whenever someone misses a Guns roll. Players might get ticked off if the goons blow apart their favorite action heroes.
- A bin of used videos is set up near the counter in the center of the store. The bin sits on rollers and could be pushed, shoved, or ridden around the store.
- There’s a kid playing a demo console game in one corner of the store. He ignores gunfire and focuses entirely on the game,



oblivious to everything else. He's pretty much bulletproof, but the screen he's playing on isn't and he storms out of the store in a huff if it's shot.

BE KIND, REWIND

If things don't go well for Jan, she whips out a small bamboo flute as a one shot defensive action and blows on it. This summons a small wind spirit in the center of the store in the form of a whirlwind. The whirlwind quickly expands throughout the store, whipping videos off the racks and into the air, battering everyone in the store and obscuring vision (two points of Impairment). Jan then escapes out the back.

On the other hand, if the PCs mop up the goons without breaking a sweat, she thanks them heartily but makes a speedy exit, claiming she's late for an appointment somewhere else. If the

PCs follow, the two goons that circled around back chase after Jan with guns blazing. Jan uses Prodigious Leap to hop onto a roof and disappears. Any remaining goons give up at that point and either settle things with the PCs or call it quits. If Jan is killed or drops her bag, the remaining goons grab the (wrong) bag of videos and hightail it back to their superiors. If the goons were all killed, a few more suddenly pop out of nowhere, grab the videos, and disappear into a black limo that screeches away at high speed before the PCs can nail them.

Captured goons don't offer much information. They claim they were chasing a thief and the videos belong to their employers. None of them know what is on the videos, only that they'd better get them back, "Or Else!" If asked about their employers, they claim to be security guards for New Tomorrow Broadcasting.

Once she's on the roofs, Jan can't be followed. She's too quick and knows the territory



Illustration by Toren Atkinson



too well. Following the goons back to New Tomorrow Broadcasting is a lot easier, but the PCs don't get anywhere at the studio. A team of big bruisers meets them at the door and politely asks them to leave. If the PCs are dead-set on a fight, you can skip to the final scene and have it out right there. Otherwise, some police officers show up to investigate the break-in and discourage a firefight.

If the PCs are already Dragons, make sure they get the correct set of videos (the ones the bad guys are after). Jan thanks them heartily and asks them to accompany her back to Sheng Shen's antique shop, or another safe location with which the PCs are already familiar. They can watch the videos there and plan their next move.

WATCHING THE VIDEOS

Shortly after the shoot-out at the video store, the PCs discover they've got the wrong tapes, either by looking in the bag or trying to return them to whatever is left of Tommy Hou's Happy Video. Tommy angrily points out that they aren't his videos, and they aren't rewind, either. He threatens the PCs with late fees if they don't return the right ones soon. "You pay for them! You see! No one cheat Tommy Hou!"

The next scene takes place wherever the PCs watch the videos. Any PC with a working stiff income or better is likely to have a VCR at his apartment. Try to stage the viewing so all the characters check out the tapes together. The events that transpire below may take a while, and you don't want any of the players to get bored while the others get in a fun fight.

THE VIDEOS

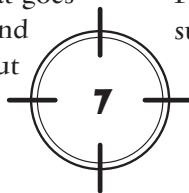
The first video contains several episodes of daytime low-budget filler shows New Tomorrow Broadcasting is currently producing. *Yui's Cosmic Flower Garden* is a self-affirmation show that goes into the cosmic importance of gardening and crystal meditation. *The Food Fighters* is about a bunch of martial artist chefs who use

knives and seafood to fight off green alien gourmet critics. The rest of the video consists of commercials for Grandpa Ching's Discount Acupuncture Palace.

The second video contains footage of several abominations the Architects have been working on at the Biomass Reprocessing Center. The bad guys seem to be the humans in white lab-coats, as the other creatures are crying out in agony, begging for freedom, and so on. There's also some combat footage of the more cooperative nasties. If the characters don't know anything about the Secret War, this may be shocking footage for them and pose a lot of questions. Leave those questions unanswered for the time being.

The third video is the most important, and consists of security camera footage from the New Tomorrow Broadcasting facility. PCs with law enforcement, security, or infiltration backgrounds can get a decent idea of the extent of the security system around the studio, the number of guards, and when the shifts are. By studying the tape, the PCs learn the following:

- The Architects of the Flesh are building a gate from the Netherworld into present-day Hong Kong. This will allow them to move in more equipment and personnel (like those Abominations in the second video) and help them expand their influence in Hong Kong. This is a Bad Thing.
- The Hong Kong side of the gate is being built in one of the studios owned by New Tomorrow Broadcasting. A successful Knowledge or Info roll, or cracking open that arcane tome known as the phone book, gives the PCs an address for it.
- Daniel Chen is in charge of the Architect operation. In one section of the video, he can be overheard discussing how to tighten security with his chief security officer, which can be useful for narrowing down the weak points in the security around the studio.
- The new gate is almost done. The official date that it's supposed to be open (by the PCs' calendar) is tomorrow, but Chen is pressuring the scientists to finish it early.





Bao Gan

Sample Dialogue: "What are you talking about, guys? I'm fine, really! Say, I need some fresh air . . ."

Attributes: Bod N/A (see below), Chi 4 (Mag 8), Mnd 8, Ref 8

Skills: Martial Arts 14, Creature Powers 16, Deceit 14, Sorcery 14

Creature Schticks: Body Borrow x3 (both Damage Immunities), Brain Shredder (base Damage 10), Damage Immunity (hand-to-hand weapons, unarmed attacks)

Magic Schticks: Movement, Fertility

As with the second videotape, characters who don't know about the Secret War will probably be a little bit confused about all of this. For the time being, that's just fine.

The fourth video is actually an imprisoned demon, Bao Gan.

TRAPPED IN THE IDIOT BOX

An Architect scientist trapped Bao Gan inside the fourth video, which is now acting as his body, as part of an experiment. Bao Gan isn't aware of where he is or what's going on, and has no chance to escape as long as no one plays the video. But even demons get lucky breaks every once in a while.

If the PCs play the video, they see a demonic head — green skin, fangs, horns . . . typical demon stuff — on the screen. Bao Gan takes a moment to get his bearings, then uses his Movement schtick to start tossing things around the room. He makes sure the TV remote control is one of them. If he can't smash it into a wall, it gets tossed under the couch in the confusion. He wants the PCs to try to turn off the TV or VCR directly so he can use his Body Borrow schtick (see the insert on the next page) on them. (If one of the PCs does manage to get hold of the remote despite Bao Gan's best efforts, it can be used to safely turn the TV and VCR off.) He isn't about to fail this roll, so he spends as many Fortune, Magic, or Harvest Chi points as he needs to make sure he gets a new body and stays in it. And even if the PCs don't reach out for the electronics themselves, Bao

Gan can use his Movement schtick to animate stereo wires, power cords, the TV antenna, and so on.

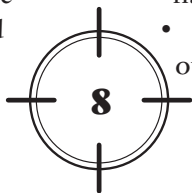
Once he's in a new body, Bao Gan bluffs his way out if possible, but fights if he has to. If captured, he absolutely refuses to reverse the Body Borrow, and sits tight until an opportunity to escape presents itself.

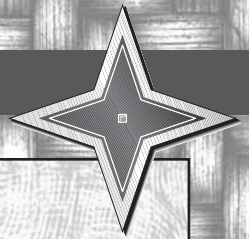
While the victim of a Body Borrow would normally find himself a passive observer in his own body, Bao Gan's confinement to the tape has changed things a little. Instead, the victim finds himself inside the VCR. He can still use any Attributes or skills that don't require a body (like Mind or Info skills). He can also use sorcery schticks, but unless he's particularly resourceful, he won't be able to move around on his own. On the plus side, the VCR can be unplugged and carried around without shutting it off, since it's now powered more or less by the chi energy of the person inside it. When not looking directly out of the screen (or when the VCR is not attached to a TV) all the trapped person can see around him are the fuzzy black-and-white dots of a dead channel.

If Bao Gan gets loose, give the PCs a few chances to chase him down, but don't make it too easy. If he gives them the slip completely, the Dragons or the Architects (your choice) capture him later when he tries to get into the Netherworld.

Cool Things That Could Happen During the Fight

- At first, Bao Gan tries to act like the PC he has possessed and suggest that whoever is now in the VCR is some kind of raving loon or an arcanowave trick. He then makes some excuse to get away.
- Bao Gan takes a hostage! A PC might work, but a GMC is a better choice. Maybe the PC lives with a girl/boyfriend, spouse, nephew, or someone else of less than complete combat-worthiness. Since you don't know in advance where they'll watch the video, you'll have to improvise.
- If Bao Gan doesn't see any other way out, he puts a gun to his borrowed head and threatens to destroy the PC's body if they





Body Borrow

Body Borrow is a creature schtick that was originally detailed in the Feng Shui supplement, *Thorns of the Lotus*. To use Body Borrow, the creature must touch his target, which normally requires a Martial Arts check. (In Bao Gan's case, he can automatically try this power whenever someone touches the TV, VCR, or any other audio or video component that's connected to them.) Once he's made physical contact, the creature rolls his Creature Powers skill against the target's Willpower + 10 or his highest AV + 2, whichever is higher. If successful, the Outcome is the number of sequences the creature has control of the new body. At the end of that time he rolls his Creature Powers skill again in the same way, and the Outcome this time is the number of hours the creature remains in control. After that time has expired, a successful third roll means the creature may stay in the driver's seat permanently — or until he can be exorcised.

When in control, the creature may use the borrowed body as if it were his own. The body's Reflexes and Body remain in effect, while the borrower's Chi, Mind, and Skills substitute for the body's like statistics. The borrower gains access to any of the body's transformed animal schticks, creature schticks, and arcanowave gear, though he must use his own skills to make use of them. The borrower may continue to use his own fu powers, gun schticks, signature weapons, and magic schticks. For each additional schtick in Body Borrow, the creature may transfer one of its own Attributes or creature schticks (chosen when the Body Borrow schtick is purchased) into the borrowed body.

Bodies of transformed animals that are borrowed gain one Reversion point and must instantly make Reversion checks. If reversion occurs, the creature goes with it, forever becoming a dumb animal. As long as the creature remains within the transformed animal's body, he adds one to the surrounding Sorcery AV when distributing Reversion points.

Normally, a creature with Body Borrow and either the Insubstantial or Transformation schtick can absorb his own body temporarily into the body of the target. Otherwise, the creature's body remains catatonic until the creature's consciousness returns to it.

If the occupied body dies, the creature's consciousness is disoriented for a sequence, after which time the creature has one sequence to find a new body. Failure means the creature snaps back into its own body. Snapping back disorients the creature for another sequence. (If the creature's own body has been killed and he has nothing to snap back to, the creature's consciousness is snuffed.)

Body Borrow can also let a creature hitch a ride in someone else's body, hearing what he hears, seeing what he sees, and so on. This only requires one roll. Even with one success, however, the rider has no control at all. Furthermore, the target may make a Sorcery roll against the creature's Creature Powers AV to detect the creature's presence.

don't let him go. Bao Gan tries to convince the PCs that he can find a new body, but their friend trapped in the VCR might not be so lucky. Bao Gan is bluffing and is out of luck if his host body dies.

COMPLICATIONS

After the switch is discovered, the Architects decide they need a little leverage on the PCs, so they kidnap someone close to them and call to set up an exchange. This occurs off-screen unless you prefer to stage the kidnapping as an in-game event. Choose a kidnap victim who is important to one of the PCs, using an existing melodramatic hook if possible: a nephew, girlfriend, grandmother, or whatever. If no one has an appropriate melodramatic hook, invent one. This may be the first time the PC learns he has a girlfriend, but hopefully he'll see what you're

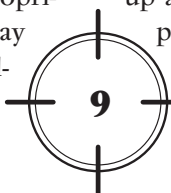
Look, Ma! I'm a VCR!

If Bao Gan is successful in imprisoning one of the characters inside the VCR, do your best to keep the imprisoned character's player involved in the action as much as possible. While it's unavoidably annoying to be so restricted, the GM can do many things to make sure the scenario doesn't become completely boring for that player. Where possible, speed things along to one of the places in the adventure where the PC can get his body back.

trying to do and go along with it. If Bao Gan escaped with a hostage in the previous scene, he might head back to the Architects and exchange the hostage for his freedom.

In any case, once they have a hostage to exchange, the Architects contact the PCs to set up a trade. The phone call is short and to the point.

"We have your <hostage>. We want to trade for the tapes. Be at the Yellow Orchid





Sheng Shen

Sample Dialogue: "Safe and sane is for pansies. Ready for some dumb and dangerous?"

Attributes: Bod 7, Chi 2 (Mag 10), Mnd 7, Ref 7

Skills: Martial Arts 10, Medicine 10, Sabotage 12, Sorcery 15, Info/Explosives 10

Magic Shticks: Blast (throwing firecrackers, rockets, etc.), Heal, Summoning (exorcism), Movement (speed, flying), Divination

Weapons: punch (8), kick (9)

April Ishihara

Sample Dialogue: "What's wrong, never seen your intestines before?"

Attributes: Bod 10, Chi 2 (Fu 10), Mnd 5, Ref 8

Skills: Martial Arts 15, Leadership 10, Info/Eastern Philosophy 12

Fu Shticks: Prodigious Leap, Abundant Leap, Flying Sword, Signature Weapon (katana)

Weapons: punch (11), kick (12), katana (17)

Big Brent Kogan

Sample Dialogue: "Here, let me bash that into a bloody pulp for you . . ."

Attributes: Bod 12, Chi 2, Mnd 5, Ref 8

Skills: Martial Arts 12, Guns 10, Intimidation 10, Medicine 8

Fu Shticks: Claw of the Tiger, Tiger Stance

Stat Shticks: Ich Bin Ein Bruiser (*Golden Comeback*, p. 64)

Weapons: punch (13), kick (14), AMT Automag V (12/3/5+1), Mossberg 500 (13/5/9), Louisville Slugger (15)

tonight at 9 PM. Don't do anything stupid. Don't contact the police."

If the PCs ask to talk to the hostage, he delivers the usual "Forget about me, don't do it!" speech. The Architects respond to any other questions by repeating the time and place for the trade and hanging up.

Shortly after the Architects call, the Dragons contact the PCs. If Jan is still alive, she makes the call. Otherwise Sheng Shen contacts them, identifies himself as a friend of Jan, and asks the PCs about the tapes. If the PCs tell the Dragons about Bao Gan, or if the Dragons have already captured him, Sheng Shen agrees to exorcise the demon in exchange for coop-

eration against the Architects. If Bao Gan is still at large or the Architects have him, the Dragons offer to help track him down, and they suggest the PCs drop by Sheng Shen's antique shop where they'll try to explain everything.

ENTER THE DRAGONS

The antique shop is located in one of the nicer neighborhoods of the Yaumatei district. It's very cramped and packed floor to ceiling with expensive pieces of china, jade, and ivory. Drop a few hints about how fragile everything is, and play up how tragic it would be if a fight broke out, just to make the PCs a little nervous. Sheng Shen shows them into the back room and serves them tea, where they meet Jan and the others. If the PCs have already met the Dragons or are already involved in the Secret War, then feel free to insert your own GMCs here or change the antique shop to a location already established in your campaign.

Sheng Shen does his best to answer any questions the PCs have about the Architects, the videos, and the Secret War. This is where characters completely confounded by the second and third videotapes can be brought up to speed. If the Dragons or the PCs captured Bao Gan, Sheng Shen reverses the Body Borrow using his Exorcism sorcery. Don't worry about rolling, just assume it works and Bao Gan goes back into the video. Then Sheng Shen heals any wounds the PCs may have with his Healing sorcery while April and Brent study the tapes. If the PCs aren't already Dragons, he tries recruiting them. Regardless of whether the PCs decide to join, the Dragons insist on helping them deal with the Architects at the Yellow Orchid.

Sheng Shen

Sheng Shen used to manufacture fireworks for the Guiding Hand in 1850. After a few accidents with some of his more potent mixtures, the Guiding Hand cut him loose and he found his way into the Netherworld, where



the Dragons recruited him. They taught him to mix sorcery with his firecrackers, and he's put it to good use fighting for the Dragons. He managed to miss most of Operation Killdeer while on assignment, and since then has been trying to help the Prof and Kar Fai put the Dragons back together. Sheng Shen's been keeping an eye on the antique shop, which is actually owned by Kar Fai, and is in charge of dealing with the Architects in Hong Kong.

April Ishihara

April Ishihara is fairly new to the Dragons. She's a Kenjitsu champion from Japan with one driving goal that dominates her life: to be the best sword fighter in the world. After dominating tournament after tournament in Japan, she realized she was no longer improving, and moved to Hong Kong to look for another master or more challenging opponents. That's when the Dragons discovered her, and she was delighted by the opportunities offered by the Secret War. She's been studying the Path of the Leaping Storm and has devoted all her free time to improving her swordfighting, ignoring everything else. She may not have much of a personal life, but she's been invaluable to the Dragons as a warrior.

Big Brent Kogan

Big Brent Kogan has a nasty case of Nice Guy Disease, and got dragged into the Secret War by falling in love with April. Brent was working at a health club as a trainer when the two met. They helped the club owner fight off some Triad goons, and since then Brent's been following April around like a lost puppy. He's too shy to tell her how much he loves her, and she's too dense to notice. When April joined the Dragons, he was right behind her. He's learned a couple fu schticks, and has been trying to work up the courage to tell April how he really feels. For the moment, he's be busting heads for the Dragons and watching April's back.

Unnamed Club Bouncers

Sample Dialogue: "You call that a fake ID? Sheesh!"

Attributes: Bod 9, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 6

Skills: Martial Arts 9, Guns 9, Intimidation 9

Weapons: punch (10), kick (11), Buro Godhammer (12/4/5)

THE YELLOW ORCHID

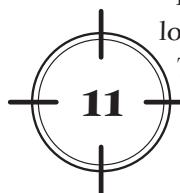
Located in one of the seedier corners of the Wanchai district, the Yellow Orchid used to be a run-down strip club called the Wet Noodle. The Architects bought it a few months ago from the Triads and have sunk a little money into remodeling and making it more tasteful, but they're not really trying to run a successful nightclub. This helps the Architects keep a low profile and makes the Triads happy.

MADAME, MAY I TAKE YOUR TWELVE-GUAGE?

The two bouncers in the entryway are looking for trouble. They don't accept bribes or put up with intimidation, but might fall for a convincing lie (call for a Deceit roll). They insist that anything larger than a hold-out pistol be handed over at the coat check. The PCs are assured they will get their weapons back after their business is over (provided the club is still standing). If the PCs are hard-nosed about it, the bouncers pat them down and remove any weapons they find, down to pocket knives and sharp pencils. If a fight breaks out this early on (most PCs are awfully attached to their weapons), the bouncers grab a variety of weapons from the coat check. ("Hey look, here's that rocket launcher we took from that old lady!")

Everything in the club is a bright, gaudy yellow with red trim. There is glass everywhere.

The tables have glass tops and are divided from one another by sheets of painted





Daniel Chen

Sample Dialogue: "Oh, how quaint, a gunfight. Kill these infidels. I want their spleens on my desk tomorrow morning."

Attributes: Bod 8, Chi 0 (Mag 8), Mnd 6, Ref 8

Skills: Martial Arts 12, Guns 14, Leadership 12

Gun Schticks: Both Guns Blazing x3, Lightning Reload x3, Signature Weapon x2 (Buro-9As)

Arcanowave Schticks: Spirit Shield, Neural Stimulator

Weapons: punch (9), kick (10), 2x Buro-9A (13/1/17+1)

Guld

Dample Dialogue: "Grrrrrrrgh..."

Attributes: Bod 10 (Tgh 12), Chi 0, Mnd 3, Ref 7

Skills: Martial Arts 10, Guns 10, Intimidation 10

Arcanowave Schticks: Robot Limb (arm), Neural Stimulator, Juicer

Gun Schticks: Eagle Eye x3

Unique Schtick: As a one shot defensive action, Guld can take a bullet (or another attack) meant for Chen if he's within 2 meters of him, which should be all the time. Compare the attack's Outcome to Chen's dodge (active or passive) but apply the damage to Guld (using Guld's Toughness). Guld is utterly devoted to his job but low on brain cells, so he doesn't think twice about sacrificing himself to keep Chen alive.

Weapons: punch (11), kick (12), Buro Godhammer (12/4/5)

glass. Plastic plants hang from the ceiling in ceramic pots. A rather atrocious techno-grunge band called the Earaches has set up on stage, but they are between sets when the PCs arrive, and all four members are busy trying to convince the bartender that their manager put "free drinks" in their contract when they agreed to play here.

The club isn't a feng shui site, but the Architects have tweaked the chi flow for the location so that the juncture modifiers for arcanowave and sorcery are the same as what they are used to in their home juncture of 2056.

If the Dragons don't come in with the PCs, they show up on their own. Jan sneaks in her Grendel P-12, Brent manages to get his Automag V past the bouncers, and April convinces the bouncers that her katana is a toy prop for a costume party.

If the PCs don't want to use the front door, they can try sneaking in through the back. This would require Intrusion

and/or Deceit, depending on how elaborate you want to get.

IS THIS BARFIGHT TAKEN?

Once they're past the bouncers, a waitress leads the PCs (they're expected) to Daniel Chen's table, where the hostage is seated between Daniel Chen and Guld, Chen's right-hand man. A handful of goons stand around the table looking smug, though none have drawn any weapons. Daniel Chen exchanges a few pleasantries and asks for the tapes. If they are handed over, Guld verifies whether they are genuine.

At that point, one of the goons wandering around the club notices Jan or one of the other Dragons in the crowd and shouts out, "Dragons! We've been set up! Kill them!" Guns leap out of their holsters and bullets start to fly. If you want to be nice to the heroes, Chen and Guld are surprised for a few shots to give the heroes a chance to grab or free the hostage. Otherwise Chen uses the hostage as a human shield, Guld grabs the tapes, and they both make for the back exit. Don't be afraid to make the PCs work for their prize. In true cinematic fashion, the hostage should change hands a few times during the fight. Do what you can to keep the hostage alive, but don't be afraid to hospitalize him. The PCs probably don't need a reason to hate the Architects, but hey, every little bit helps, right?

If Bao Gan escaped both the PCs and the Dragons, he's present at the Yellow Orchid as well, in the borrowed body, sitting at the table with Chen and the others. The Architects picked him up while he was trying to get back to the Netherworld, and bound him to a special arcanowave device that prevents him from leaving the Yellow Orchid. He fights alongside the Architects. Do your best to make sure he gets knocked out or incapacitated early on, so the PCs have a good chance to get their body back. The arcanowave device has no effect on the original owner of the body, and will drop off once Bao Gan is driven out.

There is one Architect goon for each PC and each Dragon. In addition to the



goons, the bartender and five waitresses are abominations using Transformation to look like normal people. Once things get ugly, they drop the act, transform into their supernatural forms, and whip out their arcanowave gear. If you think the PCs don't have enough to handle, more abominations and goons pour out of the back room after a couple sequences. The goons and abominations use full autofire to bump up the damage. Chen always uses autofire, and never runs out of bullets.

The abominations need a few shots to transform and get their weapons out. Describe to the PCs how their scantily clad waitress grows fangs and tentacles. The Dragons are spread around the club. They focus on the goons for the first sequence, and then go after the abominations after they transform.

If things go badly for the PCs, remind them that they only need to get the hostage back; they don't have to stick around and blow up all the bad guys if they don't want to. If they don't take the hint, one of the Dragons grabs the hostage and yells at the PCs to retreat. If the PCs have more whupass than they know what to do with, the Architects bug out once more than half of them have gone down.

Make sure Chen gets out alive, even if you have to bend a few rules or pull one of those "Save Important GMC From PCs!" arcanowave teleportation devices out of thin air. This gives the PCs an excuse to track him down at the studio for the big finale.

Daniel Chen

Daniel Chen is in charge of running New Tomorrow Broadcasting for the Architects and for setting up the new gate. He's worked his way up the Buro ranks for years, finally making a name for himself as one of Denis Clech's lieutenants (see "Denis Clech" and "The Chen Chien Building" in *Feng Shui*, p. 219). This is Daniel's first big project, and he doesn't want to disappoint his boss. Unfortunately, Daniel has underestimated some of the rival groups in the current juncture. He has managed to keep clear of the Ascended, but is about to learn

Unnamed Architect Goons

Sample Dialogue: "Lousy Scum! You'll thank us when we take over your wretched world!"

Attributes: Bod 6, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 6

Skills: Martial Arts 8, Guns 8, Intimidation 8

Weapons: punch (7), kick (8), Buro 9 (10/1/17+1) or Blade of Truth (10/3/30)

Unnamed Abominations

Sample Dialogue: "RRROWWWRRGG!"

Attributes: Bod 10, Chi 0 (Mag 8), Mnd 3, Ref 6

Skills: Martial Arts 10, Guns 10, Arcanowave 10, Creature Powers 10

Arcanowave Schticks: Agony Grenade, Tracer-Resin Projector, Wave Scanner

Creature Schticks: Transformation, Foul Spew (Glutinous Goo or Slippery Slime)

Weapons: punch (11), kick (12), Buro 9 (10/1/17+1) or Buro Blue Flag (13*/5/32)

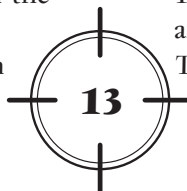
the hard way that Operation Killdeer didn't completely wipe out the Dragons.

Guld

Guld is your typical all-muscle no-brain bodyguard. He's here to soak up damage intended for Daniel and manhandle the hostage. He's a broad-shouldered six-foot-six slab of pure badass. An arcanowave mishap a few years back rendered him completely hairless — he doesn't even have eyebrows or eyelashes. Feel free to give anyone attacking him a -1 Action Value penalty due to bright lights reflecting off his head at odd moments.

Cool Things That Could Happen During the Fight

- Plates and trays can be thrown Frisbee-style, with or without food. Drinks can be thrown, and alcoholic beverages are flammable!
- The tables and dividers between the tables are made of glass, and shatter wonderfully. Those passing forcibly through said glass





Unnamed Studio Goons

Sample Dialogue: "You won't get out of here except in a body bag!"

Attributes: Bod 6, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 6

Skills: Martial Arts 8, Guns 8, Intimidation 8

Weapons: punch (7), kick (8), Blade of Truth (10/3/30) or Blue Flag (13*/5/32)

Unnamed Gate Abominations

Sample Dialogue: "RRROWWWRRGG!"

Attributes: Bod 10, Chi 0 (Mag 8), Mnd 3, Ref 6

Skills: Martial Arts 10, Guns 10, Arcanowave 10, Creature Powers 10

Arcanowave Schticks: Robot Limb (arm), Agony Grenade, Neural Stimulator

Creature Schticks: Abysmal Spines, Foul Spew (Glutinous Goo or Slippery Slime, whichever works best)

Weapons: punch (13), kick (14), Buro Hellharrower (14**/8/20)

take damage as from a plate glass window (15).

- Glass shards can be thrown or used to slash at people (Strength +2 Damage). Random gunfire shatters lots and lots of glass around the club.
- Remember Jan's flute? If Jan's still around, she can use her flute to summon another wind spirit, which creates a small whirlwind of glass shards around a group of goons (15 Damage and two points of Impairment to those in the whirlwind). This doesn't immediately kill any of the unnamed GMCs, but it reduces their Dodge AV by 2.
- The hanging plants can be swung on or swung at someone (Strength +2 Damage).
- The stage is full of band equipment, including guitars, drums, amplifiers, and other sound equipment. The instruments can be thrown or used as weapons, and the sound equipment could short out, shock people, start a fire, etc. Throwing a cymbal hard enough might decapitate someone.
- The lead singer forgot to turn the microphone off, and sometime during the fight this falls over in front of the speakers. That means feedback, and lots of it. Everyone in the club suffers two points of

Impairment until the sound is cut off or the equipment fries itself.

- There is a track of lights above the stage. If someone one can get up there, he can drop the heavy lights on anyone underneath (13 Damage). A few well-placed shots or slices could bring the whole thing down (20 Damage).

BLOWING UP STUDIO B

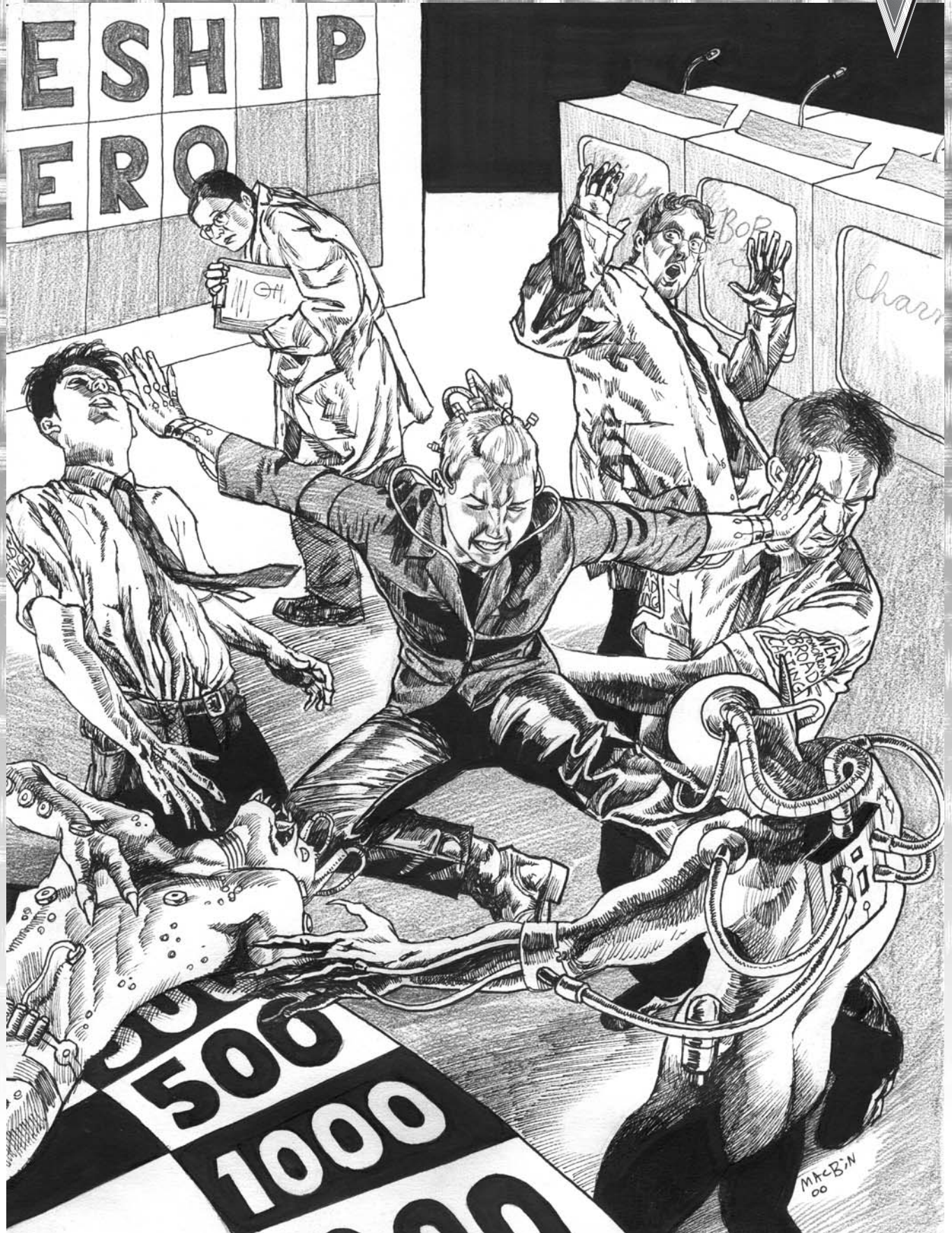
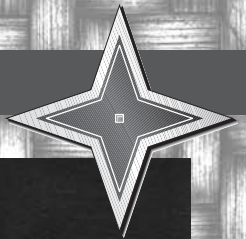
After things are settled at the nightclub, any surviving Dragons suggest heading back to the antique shop to heal up and regroup. If Sheng Shen was killed, the other Dragons know where enough magical healing salves are kept to fully heal all the wounded.

If the PCs get the hostage back, they can call it quits and let the Dragons deal with the rest of the Architects, but the Dragons would certainly appreciate some help taking out the Architects and the new gate they're building. By studying the tapes, they know where it is and they know it's almost done. Either way, if the PCs want to settle things once and for all, they and the remaining Dragons head out to Studio B of New Tomorrow Broadcasting later that night.

Studio B is on a lot near the north side of the Tsimshatshui district. It's a large warehouse with two roll-open garage doors, one on the south and one on the west side of the building. Next to each of the garage doors is a person-sized door. There are no windows, but none of the doors are locked.

Jan (unless she is dead) knows enough about the security system around the studio that she can get everyone in by making an Intrusion check (Difficulty 8). If not, a PC can try an Intrusion check (Difficulty 10 if he studied the video, 15 otherwise). If no one has Intrusion, someone must make an Agility check (Difficulty 15). Failure means the Architects know the PCs are coming and are waiting with weapons drawn.

If the PCs spend any time watching the lot, they observe a lot of people and equipment moving in and out of the studio. The Architects are working overtime to get the





gate up and running. Enterprising PCs might try to mug some workers for their clothes and bluff their way inside. Or just driving a delivery van through one of the garage doors might work.

Half of the studio's interior is taken up by sets for three shows that New Tomorrow Broadcasting canceled last season. The backdrops are set are up against the eastern wall and most of the props are strewn about the studio. The southernmost set is for *Princess Lai Lai's Toybox*, a children's show sponsored by a chain of retail toy stores. Next to that is the set of *The Good Luck Spin Game*, a cheap knockoff of *Wheel of Fortune* that has something to do with Chinese astrology. Finally, there's the set for *Cook Like Kit-Wai*, a cooking show. Various cameras, electrical cords, and other television equipment are spread around the rest of the studio.

The gate occupies the northwest corner of the warehouse, and looks like a movie screen tuned to a dead TV channel. See "Destroying the Gate" on the next page for more information.

Just like the Yellow Orchid, the Architects have tweaked the chi flow on the site so arcanowave and sorcery modifiers are the same as the 2056 juncture.

SMILE, YOU'RE ON CARNAGE CAMERA!

As the PCs arrive, Daniel Chen is storming about the studio, yelling at half-dozen scientists in white lab coats. He's not happy with their progress and he wants the gate open *now*. Luckily for them, the scientists are almost done; the gate will open two sequences after the PCs arrive.

None of the scientists have any combat skills; they scatter once the gate is open. There are two goons — either in the studio or outside patrolling the lot — for each PC and Dragon. Any abominations left over from the Yellow Orchid are here as well, licking their wounds. Once the gate is open, 1 - 6 (roll a die) abominations pour out of it at the start of every sequence until the gate is destroyed. These abominations are expecting trouble and are loaded for bear.

Cool Things That Could Happen During the Fight

- Heavy tracks of lights hang from the ceiling, and are connected by catwalks. Flying or leaping characters could have a lot of fun up there, dropping things on people or trying to throw one another off.
- Cameras can be used for cover, tipped over, or rolled into people. There's a dolly cam on a track that can be pushed or ridden.
- If anyone thinks to turn a camera on and catch the fight on tape, IKTV might pay a lot for the footage. This might help spread word of the heroes in the Netherworld or lead to an acting career.
- There are electrical cords all over the floor. These can be used to trip, entangle, or strangle people.
- Long black curtains hang along the walls and between the sets. These can be ripped, cut, set on fire, wrapped around someone, hidden behind, or used to break a fall.
- The set of *Princess Lai Lai* has several large foam pillows that could be used to break a fall. There's also a rolling rack of costumes that could be used for great comic effect. A costume head could effectively blind a target until removed.
- On the game show set, the Good Luck Wheel could be broken off and rolled across the studio or used as cover (+2 Toughness). The contestant podiums can also be used for cover (+1 Toughness). A mook shot while hiding behind a podium could fall over dead and hit the buzzer.
- The cooking show set offers the most in the way of improvised weapons, including large knives and copper pots. A fishnet on the set's backdrop has plastic fish stuck on it. Of course, there's the open range oven that can be turned on for the face-on-the-burner stunt.



DESTROYING THE GATE

Shooting at the screen doesn't do anything, but shooting at the equipment around it is effective. Hitting the equipment is easy enough (Difficulty 0), but it has Toughness 5 and can take 50 Damage before it explodes. Upon the gate's destruction, a lot of bad things happen. First, anyone moving through the gate at that moment dies instantly, and anyone within three meters takes 15 points of explosive Damage. But that's not the worst of it. As the gate collapses, an arcano-shockwave courses through the entire studio. Supernatural creatures and abominations take 15 Damage and must immediately make mutation checks (Difficulty 15, don't worry about how many sequences have gone by). Transformed animals gain a Reversion point and must make Reversion checks. The Architect abominations are hit particularly hard, and are stunned for the next six shots (-5 to their Dodge AVs). Anyone using Sorcery suffers automatic backlash or takes 12 Damage (your choice). Normal characters don't suffer any ill effects other than an instant sharp migraine, but the huge disruption of the chi flow prevents anyone from using fu powers until the end of the sequence. If all this might kill one or more of the PCs, you may want to lower the damage or difficulties, or let them spend Fortune points to avoid some of the damage. This explosion is really designed to take the fight out of the bad guys and allow the PCs to mop them up, not to kill player characters.

IT'S A WRAP!

If things are going badly for the Architects but the gate hasn't been blown up yet, Chen and Guld retreat through the gate and shut it down from the other side, leaving their minions behind. Once the gate is shut down, it won't explode and can be dismantled. The Architects spend some time rethinking their strategy, and the PCs may or may not hear from them in the future.

Break On Through to the Other Side

If you're looking for an excuse to get the PCs into the Netherworld, you can change the way the gate works. Rather than being able to destroy the equipment from the Hong Kong side, the PCs must travel through the gate to the Biomass Reprocessing Center and wreak havoc on the equipment from there. Of course, once they've shut down the portal, they have to find a different way home, not to mention fight their way out of Architect Central.

If the gate is destroyed, Chen goes nuts and goes down shooting, trying to take as many PCs with him as he can. Give him a death worthy of his villainy. If Chen goes down, the goons lose their nerve and bug out. Guld and any remaining abominations go on a rampage, destroying everything in sight.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

The Architects are understandably upset by the destruction of the gate. They may target the PCs for retaliation.

If you had a lot of fun with Bao Gan, he could pop up again to torment the PCs, borrowing his way through innocent GMC bodies.

The Ascended naturally resent the Architects attempt to expand into their turf. They might also be torqued with the Dragons or PCs for dealing with something they think of as their problem, especially if the PCs made a mess of things. On the other hand, they may be grateful and either ask for help with further dealings with the Architects or do the PCs a favor in the future.

The Dragons are naturally very grateful for the help regardless of whether the PCs want to join the Good Fight. The PCs move toward the top of their list of People To Call When Things Get Ugly.

And, of course, Tommy Hou wants his videos back . . . including the late fees!



Blood & Sand

TOM MCGRENERY

Premise: The PCs go to 69 AD Rome to capture an unclaimed feng shui site.

Twist: The site's chi is channeled through the Emperor.

Climax: At the Circus Maximus, our heroes must prevent the Lotus from killing Emperor Vespasian.

NETHERWORLD AFFAIRS

Very recently, the King of the Thunder Pagoda took a new Innerwalker under his wing. This newcomer to the Netherworld was Lucius Centares, an officer in the Roman army of 69 AD (see *Elevator to the Netherworld*, p. 32). Portals to locations in 69 AD that are outside China are few and far between, so Huan Ken hoped to keep Centares' presence a secret while he found the portal through which the Roman had come. Unfortunately, a drunken Thunder Knight gave the game away and now everyone's rushing around looking for that portal.

The Eaters of the Lotus found it about twenty minutes ago.

ENTER THE DRAGONS

The key plot hook is to get your players interested in the portal to Rome. The easiest way to do this is for the PCs to be affiliated with the Dragons, or at least on friendly terms with the Prof. If your PCs actually *are* the Dragons, hey, we're cooking with gas.

The Prof has become aware of the location of Centares' portal. She also knows there's no way the Dragons can block the other factions' advances into Imperial Rome for long. So, she decided to get a crack team of Innerwalkers to grab some of the prime feng shui on the other side of the portal. The Prof calls on the PCs, explains the background, and then outlines the plan: bust through the Lotus' Netherworld defenses around the portal, grab the biggest, baddest feng shui site possible, then try to figure out how to protect it.

If there are no skilled geomancers in the PCs' group, the Prof introduces Ma Mo Sen. A dis-timed person from when the Four Monarchs ruled the world, Ma Mo Sen is a twenty-something Chinese man who operates in the Inner Kingdom as a "design consultant" and also hosts IKTV's home and gardening show, "Changing Caverns." Usually dressed in his trademark off-white suit, Ma's demeanor is typical of most



Netherworld residents: an affected air somewhere between nonchalance and nervousness.

If the PCs are part of a faction other than the Dragons, their boss (whoever that is) assigns them the same task, introducing Ma if need be (he's freelance). Unless of course they're Jammers, which makes things a bit difficult. In that case, they could be off to wreck Rome's feng shui and end up trying to kill the Emperor. Or whatever. They're Jammers, and they're going to do whatever they want anyway.

Another possibility is that the PCs are natives of 69 AD, and perhaps even citizens of the Roman Empire. Hearing of an attempt on the Emperor's life, they spring into action, *et cetera, et cetera*.

At any rate, let us assume for convenience that the Prof is the PCs' hook to this story. She suggests that the group be subtle in their investigations and try to blend in with the locals.

Wardrobe, Please

This is where we have one of those scenes with the characters walking in and out of the wardrobe and looking at themselves in the mirror with various outfits and accessories, normally in a comical vein. The Prof has a fairly complete selection of garments to serve as disguises.

Men in Rome wear knee-length tunics with short sleeves. These come in a rainbow of colors. It is considered slovenly for a man to appear in public in a tunic without a belt. The *toga* is a formal garment, and should be white if worn by a common man. Since a *toga* must be held up with the left arm, it is unlikely any of the PCs will want one, except perhaps to hide an assault rifle. Each scrappy kid should be given a gold charm, called a *bullia*, to wear around the neck.

Women's dress consists of a long gown with a belt called a *stola*, often worn with a *palla*, a woollen wrap worn something like a shawl. Both of these items hamper movement — female characters may want to disguise themselves as men so their clothing will not get in the way during a fight. Shakespearean to-ings and fro-ings involving identical twins and confused suitors are entirely at your discretion.

Ma Mo Sen

Sample Dialogue: "Yeah, I could knock through this wall, continue the safari motif. Is it load-bearing? Only one way to find out."

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 2, Mnd 6, Ref 5

Skills: Martial Arts 8, Info/Geomancy 12, Info/Interior Decorating 11, Shaping 3

Weapons: punch (6), kick (7)

"Roman legionary" is a fun disguise. The get-up is well known: tunic, helmet, cuirass, curved shield, sword, dagger. The downside is that senior officers may turn up unexpectedly and expect PCs dressed like this to follow their orders.

Some enterprising types may want to dress up as various non-Roman citizens of the Empire — Gauls, domesticated Goths, whatever. They'll get some odd looks, but this strategy may help excuse an "unusual" appearance if the PC is of Asian ethnicity.

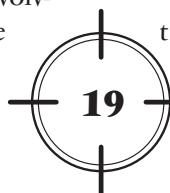
ALL ROADS LEAD TO ROME

The first thing the PCs must do is get to Rome. This means they have to break through the portal, which is guarded by a detachment of Lotus troops. Anyone planning on a nice, sedate trip to the ancient world is sadly mistaken. A bout of fisticuffs is inevitable, unless the PCs can manage some extremely clever bluffing.

Either Ma Mo Sen or a friend of the Dragons guides the group to the portal. It's down several very small, very humid, and bizarrely circuitous tunnels. The members of the group often have to clamber on their hands and knees to get through. If anyone asks why such a difficult way was necessary, Ma simply replies that the other options are even less pleasant.

This Side

The tunnel emerges onto a sheltered ledge that overlooks a large squarish cavern. The formation is such that those on the ledge are hidden from the view of those on





Unnamed Lotus Guards

Sample Dialogue: "Well-armed intruders! Attack!"

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 0, Mnd 4, Ref 5

Skills: Martial Arts 8, Intimidation 5

Weapons: punch (6), kick (7)

the floor below, but can see the whole chamber by peering over the ledge. What do the PCs see when they peer over? Good question, glad you asked.

Three major tunnels enter the cavern from the north, east, and south (if those directions have any Netherworld meaning at all). The eastern one emerges below and slightly to the north of the ledge. Directly beneath the ledge is a series of craggy, boulder-like formations that protrude from the wall (these continue around about half of the cavern), enabling someone (a PC, perhaps?) to jump from one to the other in order to reach the cavern floor.

The portal itself is invisible. It's a two-meter-square vertical plane near the center of the west wall of the cavern. Two black and white striped poles stuck in the ground mark the bottom two corners of the portal. When someone steps through the portal, he vanishes from sight and emerges on the other side in 69 AD. Nothing can be seen, heard, or, for that matter, smelled from one side to the other.

The Lotus have dug a trench, about five meters across and just as deep, in a semi-circle around the portal so anyone trying to get to the portal will have to cross it. In the spirit of hospitality, they have also lined the trench with spikes. A zig-zagging causeway allows passage over the trench, but it takes a while to traverse.

The cavern is as humid as any other in the Netherworld, and the guards are suffering in their uniforms (rather swish red and blue numbers, with hats made out of some kind of dead rodent). Several have already decided that, in the absence of a leader, a nice lie down wouldn't be out of order.

That Side

Anyone who steps through the portal finds himself in a low, dark tunnel which is much cooler than the Netherworld. The portal emerges in the basement of the Flavian Amphitheatre, a.k.a. "the Colosseum." The Amphitheatre is still under construction, but the dungeons beneath the arena floor are already complete. The Eaters of the Lotus have stationed a handful of guards here, but they don't expect anyone to get past the first set of custodians.

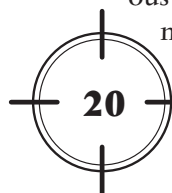
The tunnels are lit with torches in braziers, which make great impromptu weapons. All around are cages. Some are for gladiators before bouts, others for wild animals. The latter may or may not be occupied by something ferocious at this time.

To escape the dungeon the PCs must go down lots of dark corridors in an attempt to work out where they are. The air is fetid and dank but is cleaner as the heroes approach the outside world. As the group emerges into the light, they see before them a huge statue (the Colossus, no less) of the Emperor Nero. Behind them stand the works of the Flavian Amphitheatre, ringed with scaffolding, cranes, and tripods. Some of the builders are even hard at work.

LIKE A VESTAL VIRGIN

Having escaped (for the time being) the clutches of the Lotus, it's time to get down to work for the Dragons.

The streets become more and more crowded as the PCs walk along. Traders accost them from wayside stalls, exhorting all and sundry to buy cloth or pastries or larks' tongues. The crowds are thicker the closer they are to the Capitoline hill and there, on the approach of the Via Sacra, things — *important* things — become all too obvious to anyone who knows anything about geomancy. To wit: the Capitoline is a battlefield of conflicting feng shui. The honorary pillars in the forum are capable of deflecting chi





energy to any or all of the temples in the area, be they the temple(s) of Juno Moneta, Castor and Pollux, Jupiter Optimus Maximus, or any of the other edifices that cluster about the hill, nestled among triumphal arches and small shops.

After a little looking around, it becomes clear which of the temples, is getting all the chi at the moment — the Temple of Vesta. Dwarfed by many surrounding temples and even by the housing provided for its attendants, it has nonetheless captured the feng shui which guarantees it a place of honor in the hearts of the Romans.

The players may want to attune to the place right away. That's not going to be easy. There are lots of guards and civilians about the place, and the attunement ritual takes at least ten minutes. Unless the PCs can make a really impressive distraction, there's no way they can get inside the temple long enough to complete the ritual.

The best way to get in is to do a little breaking and entering after nightfall. It's possible the players will decide the Vestal temple is too difficult to get and try to attune to a different site. In that case, just shift the feng shui-related problems to wherever they go. Yeah, it's railroading. Just don't tell them.

The temple itself is a small, round building with pillars all around it. The sacred fire of Vesta, goddess of the hearth, resides within, perpetually lit and maintained by the Vestal Virgins, the goddess' attendants. The benefits of attuning to the Vestal shrine are as usual, with the addition that anyone attuned to the temple of Vesta gains an extra Fortune Die per session in which he is defending someone's home.

BREAKING IN

Make getting in to the temple as elaborate as you like. A lengthy stealth-fest including multiple problems like guards, noisy dogs, and unreliable ladders is fun, but just gloss over it if you like. The point is that when the group finally gets in and starts the ritual of attunement, it doesn't work. The whole thing just fizzles. Ma Mo Sen looks confused, then annoyed, and starts looking around to figure out what's gone wrong.

In the Forum

Before we go any further, there's some backstory you should know. In the Forum Romanum there is a speaking platform, constructed from the bows of captured enemy ships, called the Rostra. Some senatorial figure is giving a deathly dull speech about the state of the aqueducts. At the foot of the Rostra, though, a slightly more important gathering appears to be taking place — a group of several men in togas are conversing together. One of them looks distinctly Chinese. He is the foreign dignitary known as Marcus Grauchius Orientalis. If the PCs should happen to stumble by the Forum and ask any given bystander who this man is, pretty much anyone can tell them that he's a confederate of Domitian, the Emperor's younger son, and is trying to get Domitian to succeed ahead of his elder brother, Titus. He does not have a squeaky voice, if the players ask. It may not be much of a surprise that Grauchius is the Lotus' agent in Rome, and has been in the city for nearly a year. (He came over land from China).

The chi of the temple is tied to that of another site, Ma explains after a while. To attune to the temple, the PCs must find that other place and remove whatever is blocking the chi flow to the Vestal shrine.

So begins a moonlit trek through the darkened streets of Rome. It's still quite busy, as the carts and wagons that are not allowed in the city by day begin to take their loads to and from the capital. Ma fishes out a device faintly resembling a microscope and meanders along, gazing into the eyepiece.

The trail takes some twenty minutes or so to discern, but leads in the end to a vast mansion in the east of the city. The massive palace that stands before the PCs is a reminder of an age only just ushered out. It is the Golden House of Nero.

THE GOLDEN HOUSE

The Golden House, built by the Emperor Nero (not by him personally, obviously), contains some one hundred fifty rooms. Its name comes from the extravagant use of gold and ivory throughout the palace's many chambers. The walls and ceilings are painted with luxuri-



Titus

Sample Dialogue: "Hey, baby. Wanna see my commemorative arch?"

Attributes: Bod 6, Chi 2, Mnd 5 (Wil 6), Ref 7

Skills: Martial Arts 13, Info/Politics 9, Info/Tactics 10, Leadership 10, Seduction 7

Weapons: punch (7), kick (8)

ant frescoes or studded with jewels and mother of pearl. The many dining rooms have ivory ceilings from which rose petals and gifts used to be dropped to the guests below. Nero being the man that he was, it is said that sometimes poison was dropped down, too.

The palace is riddled with secret passages and disconcerting corridors that are sometimes difficult to navigate. The acoustics bring sounds from far away parts of the building wafting to the ears of the PCs, their source indeterminable.

Ma Mo Sen's search for the key to attuning to the shrine ends in a minor throne room. As opulent as one would expect for an imperial residence, the chamber is festooned with oriental silks, which cover some of the more . . . *interesting* frescoes commissioned by the previous resident. Aside from the throne on a raised dais, several stools for scribes and other officials sit within a few paces of the dais. Ornately embroidered cushions lie scattered on a long divan, as does a slightly inebriated prince.

The recumbent figure that the PCs spy is none other than Titus, the eldest son of the Emperor Vespasian. Titus has been lying down drinking for a while, as the mostly-empty wine bottle he clutches will attest. He's drunk enough to enjoy alcohol-fuelled bravado, and not to care who the PCs are and what they're doing in the Golden House.

The PCs may recognize Titus, or they could just ask him who he is. He's more than happy to see the group, and invites them to share a cup of wine. He tells them about the Golden House, the throne ("Oh, only the Emperor can sit there") and anything else that strikes his fancy.

Somewhere in his mid-twenties, Titus is something of a ladies' man, and any female characters in the party almost certainly attract his attention. Expansive and cheerful, Titus eventually runs out of wine and goes off

in search of some more. Before he leaves, he makes a point of inviting his new friends along to the day-after-tomorrow's festivities at the Circus Maximus. Titus himself will be there in the afternoon and if the PCs turn up, he can get them seats in the imperial box. With that Titus up and leaves, weaving slightly on his way through the door.

As Titus leaves, Ma Mo Sen starts hopping from foot to foot, bursting to tell the PCs what he's found. Simply put, the Emperor needs to be sitting in the throne when the ritual of attunement is performed in the Vestal temple. So, in order to bag the feng shui, they need to know when Vespasian is in the chair. And no, any old person won't do — it has to be the Emperor sitting there.

The Evil Plot

As the group leaves the Golden House, a conversation wends its way to the PCs' ears. Try as they might, the PCs cannot find out where the voices are coming from. The conversation itself is fairly interesting, though. The players don't know who is speaking, but it is in fact Grauchius (the Lotus' agent in Rome — see the insert on p. 21) and Domitian (Titus' younger brother). It goes something like this:

GRAUCHIUS: Our man will win the four-horse race, then he will naturally go up to the imperial box to collect his laurels. At that point, he will stab the Emperor to death.

DOMITIAN: What if he doesn't win?

GRAUCHIUS: We've taken care of his rivals. I doubt there's anyone in the city who could beat him now, let alone anyone who's actually in that particular race.

DOMITIAN: And what about Titus?

GRAUCHIUS: I've arranged for a military expedition to Judaea. Accidents happen, you know.



A GRAND DAY OUT

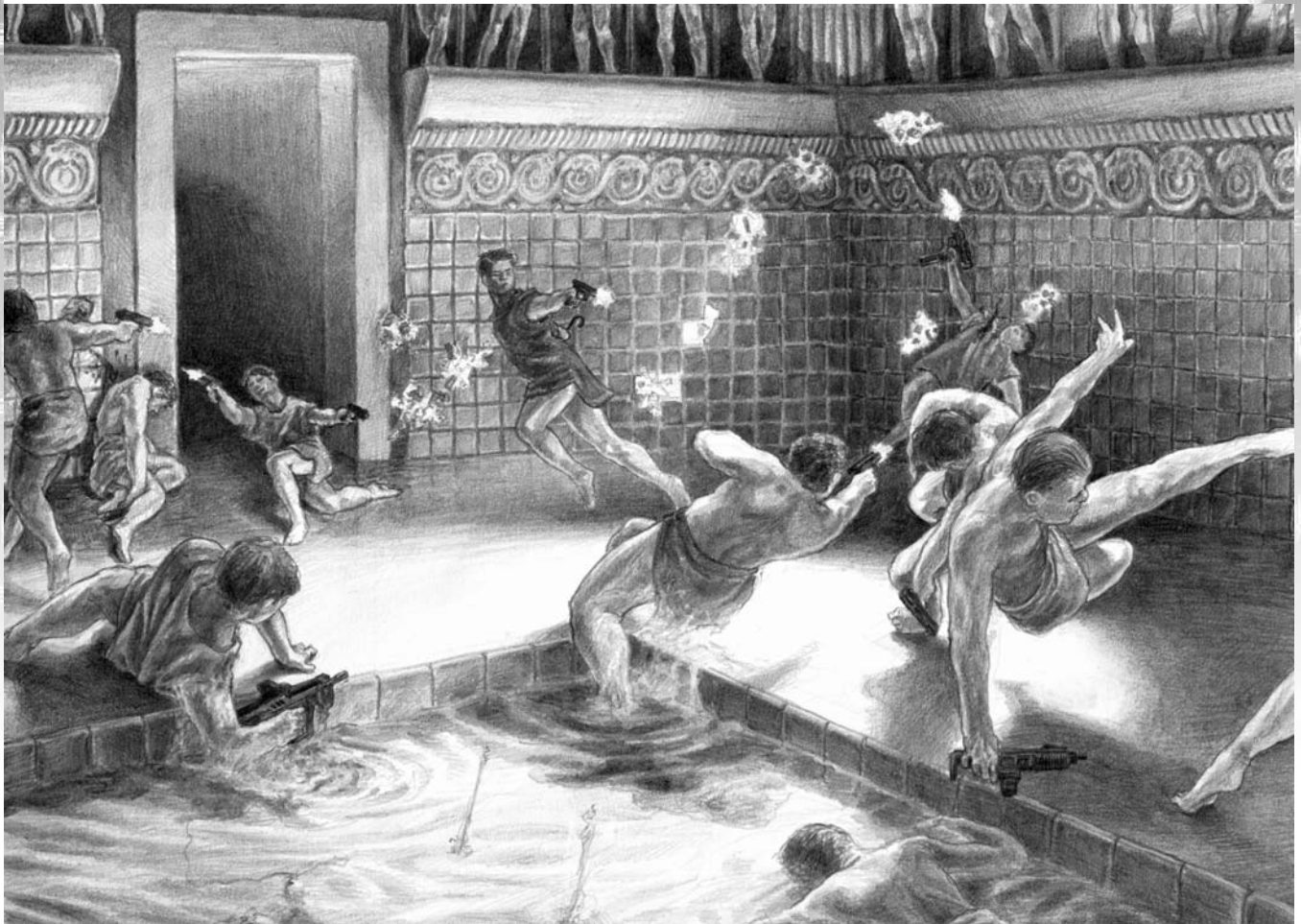
The PCs now have a day free before the assassination attempt. The players have some decision-making to do. Since they're heroes, the best plan for them is to try to save the Emperor's life. Hopefully, he'll be grateful enough to sit still while the PCs run off to attune to the temple of Vesta.

The number one obvious thing to do is simply to tell Vespasian about the conversation. Easier said than done, however, as the Praetorian Guards at the palace are not about to let any old riff-raff in off the street for a natter with the head of state. ("The emperor's going to be killed, is he? Wow. Disembodied voices, eh? Any divine revelations from Trojan Aeneas to go with that?")

At best, some minor flunky makes a note of the PCs' claims, then puts the scroll into storage.

The Circus Maximus is a worthwhile place of inquiry. There are four chariot teams in Rome: the Reds, Whites, Blues, and Greens. Grauchius' hit man is Celer, a driver for the Reds. Strangely, his major rival — the Whites' driver Terentius — has taken ill with a bout of food poisoning. In fact, all of the teams have ill (or outright missing) drivers. Only one of the Reds' drivers is missing, though, and the Blues, with whom they are often paired, have likewise been lightly affected. Overall, everyone is pretty gloomy, except the Reds, as it's pretty obvious from talking to anybody who knows anything about chariot racing that Celer is going to win the four-horse race.

If one or more PCs want to take part in the race (for any team but the Reds) it's fairly easy to find a spot, what with everybody turning up sick. It may take a few practice laps of the Circus to become familiar with the operation of the chari-





Unnamed Pledged Agents

Sample Dialogue: "Take down the guy with the — *aargh!*"

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 5

Skills: Guns 9, Martial Arts 7, Info/Ancient Rome 5

Weapons: punch (6), kick (7), Colt 1911A (10/2/7)

ots. Racing chariots are basically very light wooden platforms with two wheels. They are ornately decorated, but break easily (Pep 0, Wreck 1).

Less scrupulous players may think it a good idea to off Vespasian themselves, probably to gain favor with whoever is planning the assassination already. This plan is (a) not very nice and (b) deeply flawed. Simply put, the PCs have no political clout in Rome. Domitian and Grauchius are unlikely to be happy with a gang of unknown killers who take out Vespasian and then say "Hey, we'd like to be on your side." Having already killed one Emperor, there's an implicit threat there.

MORE TROUBLE

Other factions are interested in Rome as well, and the Lotus hasn't been able to hang on to the portal. The Ascended have grabbed it, and are now fighting a three-way battle with the Lotus and the King of the Thunder Pagoda in the Netherworld to retain it. As the battle rages, a team of agents from the Order of the Wheel has been sent through the gate to find out who already went through the portal, and to kill them. Not that the players know any of this, of course.

Eventually, the PCs end up in the public baths while they're hanging around (women can go in the morning, men in the afternoon). When they do, the Pledged show up. The PCs find out about this when they spot a concealed auto pistol beneath a toga. There are two Pledged agents for every PC. When the going gets tough, they run like hell.

The first room in the baths is the *apodyterium*, or changing room. Clothes are stored in pigeon holes along the wall, providing plenty of cloth with which to entangle opponents and trip them up.

Next up is the *frigidarium* — the cold pool. In here the floor is tiled and the water chilly. Any members of the wrong sex (for the time of day) who wander into this chamber, or, heaven forbid, the chambers beyond, cause a certain amount of distress.

The biggest pool is the *tepidarium*, basically a warm swimming pool. Around here, the Romans kick back and relax with their friends. Statues of notable Romans stand around the pool on plinths. The pool is deep enough for bathers to hide under the water and ambush others. The mosaic-covered floor has plenty of marble pillars for cover, though gunfire could knock bits of stone and dust into the eyes of those taking cover. The exercise grounds are attached to the *tepidarium*, and irate discus-throwers and wrestlers are unlikely to look kindly on having their practice ruined. Barbers and snack vendors ply their trade in the baths, too.

The final room is the steam room, which, naturally, features plenty of obscuring steam. It also features a floor so hot that special raised wooden sandals have to be worn to prevent feet from being burnt. The floors throughout the baths are heated from underneath by hypocausts. (That is to say, the floors all stand on tile pillars, while a furnace makes hot air that flows between the pillars and heats the floor above.) There is very little room to move down there if, say, someone were thrown hard enough to break through the floor. Big bruisers are at a significant disadvantage to scrappy kids down beneath the floors amidst the black, asphyxiating smoke.

A DAY AT THE RACES

Okay. It's the day of the festival. The streets are packed with carefree children, cynical merchants, and everyone in between. The Mediterranean sun is blazing down. The PCs have done everything they want to do before the Final Climactic Battle. It's time to go to the Circus Maximus and imperial assassination.

The Circus Maximus is big — in all, a third of a mile long, and 150 yards across. Each lap is at least half a mile long, depending on



how close to the inside the drivers can remain. There's seating for about 150,000 spectators, but audiences of 250,000 are not unknown. That's a quarter of the population of the city.

There are various racing events on the schedule, including chariot races with one-, two-, or three-horse teams, and one event in which a passenger rides in the chariot and has to run the last lap — whichever team's runner finishes first wins the race. If you're desperate to include every Roman cliché, there may well be some gladiatorial events. Still, the *quadrigae* (the one Celer is intended to win, and, therefore, the one any involved PCs find themselves in) is the main event. Before that race, the chariots parade past the imperial box, where sits the Emperor (and, for that matter, Titus, Domitian, and non-racing PCs). Then, they line up for the start of the race. At the signal of the Emperor's dropped handkerchief, the race is on, and the chariots hurtle down the straight to the first corner.

IN THE STANDS

There should be quite a lot going on in the stands during the race as people run from place to place, trying to be discreet (think of *The Man Who Knew Too Much*) until all hell breaks loose. Leaving aside the race itself for a moment, here are a couple of things that might be happening in the stands:

- Perceptive PCs (Difficulty 7 Perception test) may suddenly recognize Domitian's voice from the night at the Golden House (Grauchius is not present). What do they do? Are they sure it's the same man? They can't exactly walk up out of the blue and accuse the Emperor's son of treason.
- The Pledged turn up again. Perhaps the same ones from the baths, perhaps others. The Ascended don't know what's going on, but the players don't know they don't know, and may want to try and capture one of them. Cue a cat and mouse chase through the throngs of people, and very possibly a gunfight during the race.





ON THE TRACK

The amount of attention you give the race itself should depend on how many PCs are participating. Technically, the race should take 400 sequences (about twenty minutes), but let's avoid such insanity, shall we? If only one PC is racing, two sequences per lap is the recommended amount, going up to maybe five sequences making a lap if all of the PCs are racing. Be careful not to bore non-racing players to tears.

Each race lasts for seven laps, over a distance of three to four miles. The *quadrigae* uses a team of four horses to each chariot, though only the central two are directly controlled with the reins. Drivers wear leather bandages on their chests and legs, and metal helmets.

The track is a long, sand-covered oval, with a hairpin turn at each end of the central spine, which is large and made of stone, with room for officials and marshals to stand on it. Each passing lap is recorded by placing a stone egg on top of a pillar in the central spine of the track, and also by tipping down a bronze statue of a dolphin (you've seen *Ben-Hur*, right?), which the Romans considered the fastest of animals.

Cool Things That Could Happen During the Race

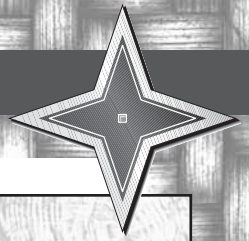
- Ramming is allowed in the races. Often, drivers move to the inside of the track in order to cut off opponents, forcing them to slow down or crash into the walls or each other.
- The horses are vulnerable to such problems as opponents' whips in their eyes, or getting tails tangled in the reins.
- Drivers actually have the reins tightly wound around their upper bodies. While this provides good control, it does mean that if you fall out of your chariot (Damage 13), the only way to not be dragged along is to cut your way free using the dagger carried for just this purpose. Of course, then you're stuck in the middle of the race track, ready to be run over (Damage 12).
- Pedestrians on the track are a problem. Especially if they're trying to kill each other, and some of them are your friends.
- There's little historical evidence of charioteers mounting spikes on their wheels to cut up other people's chariots, but this is *Feng Shui*, so there's no reason not to assume a couple of the drivers have spikes and are willing to use them.
- Celer is determined to win. If things look bad for him, he yanks hard on the reins, almost stopping his team and causing his chariot to slew across the track, covering a large part of it. Other drivers need to beat him in a contested Driving roll, or hit either him or the wall (Damage 14). Celer is not above hurling his dagger at another driver while they are alongside one another.
- The chariots aren't that sturdy. Too much damage and one may begin to slowly fall apart, bit by bit. Will it make it to the end of the race? Will it even make it past the next corner?

AFTER THE RACE

If Celer wins, the PCs can't really do anything until he comes up to get his laurels. As soon as he draws that dagger (concealed in his boot), they can try to intercept him. Before that, Praetorian Guards and the like tend to get in the way.

As soon as the plans of Grauchius go awry — Celer doesn't win the race, for example, or he is prevented from killing the Emperor — it becomes apparent that there was a back-up plan. Almost twenty archers stand up from their seats just outside the imperial box, picking up their bows from beneath the cloaks at their sides. From there, they begin hurling arrows indiscriminately into the box. Any named characters in the box must make a Difficulty 2 Fortune check each sequence to avoid being hit by one of them. About ten unnamed characters bite the dust per sequence until, after about five sequences, there are none left.

The Pledged, at this time, make a point of trying to kill anyone with a weapon. They know that no one else in the place is on



their side, so they may as well do their best. There are only a handful of Wheel agents present, but as the only GMCs with guns, they may be important.

The Praetorian Guard tries to bundle Vespasian out of the Circus as quickly as possible. They may need some help, though. Titus busies himself beating up anyone who looks unfriendly. Domitian runs away.

Of course, the fight may get started before the race even ends, in which case you've got the fun of people jumping from one chariot to another, grappling on horseback and so on. A character pushed into the track may suddenly find himself about to be hit by a hurtling chariot, while a freed team of horses might provide a quick getaway for someone who doesn't want to hang around anymore.

AFTERMATH

Hopefully, Vespasian lives. If so, he is deeply grateful for the services rendered to him by the PCs, as he explains to them over a sumptuous banquet at the palace. He presents each of them with a set of three silver tripods. (No, they don't do anything, they're just three-legged silver objects). They should be impressed, as fellow guests hint. Vespasian can be persuaded at this point to invite the PCs to a party at the Golden House, or play an unwitting role in whatever other ruse the PCs concoct to make sure he's sitting in the throne when they attune to the Vestal temple.

There. Everyone's happy.

Well, not quite.

Celer

Sample Dialogue: "I don't know who you are but I don't need to. Your blood will stain the sand before the day is out."

Attributes: Bod 6, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 7

Skills: Martial Arts 12, Driving 15

Weapons: punch (7), kick (8), dagger (8)

Unnamed Archer Assassins

Sample Dialogue: "Death to Vespasian!"

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 5

Skills: Guns 7, Martial Arts 6

Weapons: punch (6), kick (7), bow and arrow (7/5/1)

Unnamed Praetorian Guard

Sample Dialogue: "Protect the Emperor!"

Attributes: Bod 6, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 6

Skills: Martial Arts 9, Intimidation 10, Police 9

Weapons: punch (7), kick (8), spear (10)

Marcus Grauchius Orientalis wasn't at the race. The PCs don't even know he arranged the hit. He's still at large, and by now knows just who the PCs are, and can guess they're Innerwalkers. His plans for Domitian continue as before.

Of course, by now the Ascended have the PCs marked for death, as well.

And there's still the question of a few brave heroes defending the feng shui of Rome from evildoers. That won't be easy.

Invincible Chi

ANTHONY BOTZ

Premise: The PCs must stop the Ascended from acquiring a fu-based super weapon, the Talisman of Invincible Chi, with the help of the Guiding Hand.

Twist: The PCs' allies betray them and the weapon is stolen by a corrupt Hand master.

Climax: The PCs must battle the corrupt Guiding Hand monk atop a moving train before he can escape.

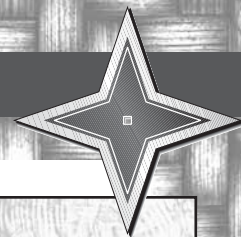
BACKGROUND

In 87 AD, a raging fire drove a group of Taoist monks from their temple. On their travels in search of a proper location to rebuild, they encountered a group claiming to be priests who were also looking to replace a lost residence. The priests guided the monks to a nearby cave which they had discovered earlier. Inside was a small network of tunnels leading into an enormous cavern. This cavern, although not connected to the surface, seemed to be bathed in its own light. The monks took this as an auspicious sign and agreed to construct their temple in it, with their new allies. Neither group knew that the mouth of the cave was really a Netherworld portal, and that they had built their new temple in the Inner Kingdom.

During construction, the Taoists often spoke of their goal to purify their chi force to the

point that they would become invincible. The priests showed great interest and agreed to help. When the temple was complete, the priests secluded themselves in the temple's lower levels, where they claimed they were praying for divine insight to assist the monks in their quest. A month passed without word. Concerned, the master of the monks descended into the priests' sanctum. He found the priests communing with demons from the Underworld, artificially creating the invincible chi they sought. Wanting no part of the dark arts, the monks attacked the priests. After a brutal battle the monks sealed the temple, convinced no one would ever return and uncover its unholy secrets.

Time passed, the gate closed, and the temple sat forgotten in its own little pocket of the Netherworld. For over 2000 years it lay undiscovered. However, on a routine surveying mission plotting the course of one of the many small rivers that lead away from the Sunless Sea (see *Elevator to the Netherworld*, p. 112), a Pledged team entered the cavern. They reported what they found, and within a week the Lodge sent a specialized team of agents to study the site. Overseeing the operation was veteran Pledged agent Donny Wong. Donny Wong remained in contact with his superiors for the first couple of months, but has not filed a report in over three weeks, and the Lodge is growing concerned.



WHO'S BAD?

This section will familiarize you with the two primary villains in this scenario.

Wong Place, Wong Time

Donny Wong became a member of the Pledged through his contacts as a lawyer; because of his habit of meek obedience (instilled over a lifetime by a domineering father), he was always willing to do whatever he was told.

Then he was assigned to baby-sit some feng shui scientists as they recorded information on the ancient temple that held the secrets of invincible chi. After three months cooped up with no TV, no radio, and no Internet porn he just wanted to blow the infernal place up. Then one of the eggheads showed him the manuscripts on invincible chi. They weren't *Playboy*, but Donny saw hope in them — a chance to change his nature. No one was going to tell him how to live his life. Now he could finally show them what it was like to be dominated by someone more powerful than yourself.

Donny convinced the team of feng shui experts and his guards that life would be better if they controlled the Lodge. It wasn't a hard concept to sell. Donny understood the nature of magic and the danger it posed for the Lodge. It would be safe for him to unlock the secrets on the site of the temple, where the Ascended dared not tread.

Shi Sells Seashells by the Seashore

Master Shi has been one of Quan Lo's disciples since the Perfect Master formed the Guiding Hand, and he now heads an elite group of Blue Monks working in the contemporary juncture. Master Shi and his team have flawlessly executed their duties since their placement in the contemporary juncture, but Tortoise Shell Information Services (TSIS) has handed them new orders . . . and a long-awaited opportunity for Master Shi.

Donny Wong

Donny's Chi rating includes the bonus from the talisman.

Sample Dialog: "Finally, my Lodge masters, *you* will bow before *me*."

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 7, Mnd 8 (Cha 10) (Int 10), Ref 5 (Spd 6)

Skills: Martial Arts 13, Deceit 13, Detective 14, Info/History 13, Info/Lodge 12, Intrusion 10, Seduction 13

Fu Schticks: Claw of the Tiger, Tiger Stance, Unyielding Tiger Stance

Unique Schtick:

Talisman of Invincible Chi: See "Talisman of Invincible Chi," p. 30.

Weapons: punch (6), kick (7)

Shi Pinnu

Shi Pinnu's Chi rating includes the bonus from the talisman.

Sample Dialog: "We must acquire the talisman, my students, for you cannot trust *anyone* with that kind of power."

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 14 (For 12), Mnd 5 (Cha 8), Ref 6

Skills: Martial Arts 17, Deceit 11, Info/Neo-Confucianism 15, Info/Secret War 8, Leadership 10, Medicine 8

Fu Schticks: Prodigious Leap, Abundant Leap, Flying Windmill Kick, Gathering of the Clouds, Awesome Downpour, Rain of Fury

Unique Schticks:

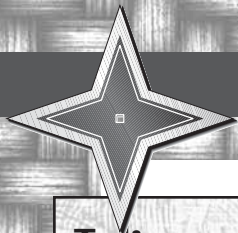
Talisman of Invincible Chi: See "Talisman of Invincible Chi," p. 30.

Weapons: punch (6), kick (7)

The orders from TSIS are to investigate an intercepted transmission from the Lodge that alludes to the Talisman of Invincible Chi. The Hand has long searched for the talisman so they could destroy it once and for all. Until now, they were unable to locate it.

Shi Pinnu's orders are to verify and destroy the talisman. But Shi Pinnu is secretly an operative of the Eaters of the Lotus, and a descendent of the priests killed in this very temple. He knows of the talisman, and of its power. He aims to steal the talisman and present it to Gao Zhang in hopes of acceptance into the Lotus' inner circle of power.

Master Shi's team has taken up positions of surveillance around the temple. As the Pledged moved inside the complex, Shi and his team observed them, choosing the best course of action. When they see the PCs make their move, they won't be far behind.



Talisman of Invincible Chi

The Talisman of Invincible Chi appears to be made from an obsidian-like rock and displays the image of a boar preparing to charge. This talisman is actually Shen Yinu, a powerful demon who pledged servitude to the *faux* priests if they agreed to imprison his rival and brother, Kong Tiaorong. The priests demanded the secrets of invincible chi, which they were searching out for the monks. Shen agreed to transform himself into a talisman which would render its bearer invincible.

Shen Yinu and Kong Tiaorong each feared the other more than anything, since when they were in each others' presence, their powers weakened and they became vulnerable to mortal hands. Each loathed the other and continually plotted the other's demise, but neither had ever succeeded in eliminating his rival.

The priests summoned Tiaorong in a ritual, then used the intense chi forces of the temple to seal him within a magical tomb. Shen Yinu figured that once his brother was eliminated he would be free to betray the priests, but after transforming into the talisman he discovered that he needed more magical energy than was available (a magic modifier of +3 or greater) to return to his demonic form.

The talisman increases its wearer's Chi attribute by five. In addition, only opponents with a higher Chi rating than the wearer can do damage to him in combat, and then only with a hand to hand or fu-based attack. Arcanowave devices and sorcery wielded by opponents with higher Chi ratings do half damage. Also, the wearer uses Chi instead of Constitution when making death checks.

GETTING STARTED

This adventure works best with a group of experienced PCs. They should know about the Secret War and the various factions involved, or, at the very least, know about the Ascended. Also, things will go better if the PCs are heroic Dragons. If your players don't fit this description, stay tuned, we cover that later.

Everything starts in the Flying Pig, a dance club in contemporary Hong Kong. Getting your PCs there shouldn't prove too much of a challenge. Let your players come up with their own reasons; here are a few suggestions if they are needed.

- One of the PCs is a clubber. He's heard the Flying Pig is a cool club and is taking the night off to check it out.

Tweaking the Buy Guys

Donny Wong should have a Martial Arts value one less than the lowest Action Value in your party — this should allow him to hit a PC occasionally. You don't need to worry about his ability to defend himself. No one in your party should have a Chi rating high enough to successfully hit him. If someone does, raise Donny's Chi.

Shi Pinnu should have a Martial Arts value one higher than the highest Action Value in your party. If you feel that isn't enough, increase the number of fu shticks available to Shi. Completing the Path of the Storm Turtle is a good start. If you feel this still isn't enough for your group, go ahead and add the complete Path of the Passive Wings. If you had to raise Donny's Chi, raise Shi's Chi an equal amount.

- One of the PCs' contacts arranges a meeting at the club.
- One of the PCs just free jumped out of an exploding plane. He lands at the Flying Pig.

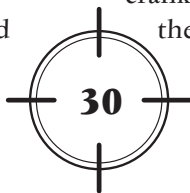
FLYIN' HIGH

Welcome to the Flying Pig, a German techno club located in Hong Kong's Wan Chai district, on Lockhart road. Once a completely mundane warehouse, the building was converted to its present state by dragging in a bitchin' sound system and an ass-load of liquor.

Once past the beefy bouncer who collects the cover, the club opens up in all its glory. It's got all the amenities: rest rooms, coat check, bar, and stage. The bar is standing room only, serving mixed drinks and beer by the bottle. The bartenders are quick and the drinks strong. The stage is off limits. Everything else is open dance floor. Club dancers parade around it in skimpy black leather outfits, dancing seductively to the thumping back beat.

The entire place has a naked cement floor. There are no pesky ceilings separating the floor from the tin roof thirty feet above it, just a dense jumble of rafters about twelve feet above the dancers' heads.

Slap a jammin' techno track in your stereo, crank up the volume, and ask the players what they're up to.





REAL AMERICAN HEROES

As the PCs get settled in they notice the light show becoming increasingly dramatic. A Perception check, Difficulty 8, reveals the source: a Netherworld portal is opening up in the rafters.

A high-pitched scream echoes across the club as it tears open. Shortly after, a limp body falls out of it and lands near the center of the dance floor. It's a Chinese man, mid thirties, dressed in a worn brown suit and carrying a leather satchel. A group of Pledged agents (one for each PC) come through afterward, dressed in dark blue suits and sunglasses. Each carries an automatic weapon. These could be recurring Pledged in your campaign. Otherwise, they're the Joes, a collection of crack Pledged agents. As they are prepared for the landing, they manage to keep their balance in the rafters. A couple climb down to the dance floor to make sure their prey is dead. The rest wait above, watching for trouble-makers. The PCs probably fit into this category.

The Joes

The Joes are named characters. Specifically, they are named Joe.

Sample Dialogue: "No! No, I'm not going to say it! *Fine . . .* got to get tough. Yo Joe."

Attributes: Bod 5 (Str 7) (Tgh 7), Chi 0, Mnd 7 (Cha 9), Ref 9

Skills: Martial Arts 12, Guns 13, Deceit 15, Info/Lodge 12

Gun Schticks: One has Cover Fire x2. The rest have 10,000 Bullets x2
(*Golden Comeback*, p. 77.)

Weapons: punch (8), kick (9), Colt M6351 (10/5/32)

If the PCs do not interfere, the Joes shoot the Chinese man dead, take his satchel, and head back through the portal. They attack anyone who gets in their way.

Cool Things That Could Happen During the Fight

- Automatic weapons versus a wall full of liquor bottles. And all that spilled alcohol is flammable!
- Bartenders — and other club patrons, for that matter — make great human shields.
- The DJ is still around, so keep that music playing.



- Strobe light effects add that bonus cool factor to spinning jump kicks.
- There's gotta be a mirror ball hanging up in those rafters somewhere.
- Spontaneous moshing can cause Impairment.

SPILL IT!

Once your PCs have dealt with these ruffians, they're undoubtedly going to be looking for answers. They have three possible sources of information: breathing Joes, bleeding satchel boy (unless the Joes got him), and his bag.

Joes, after threats and possible torture, admit:

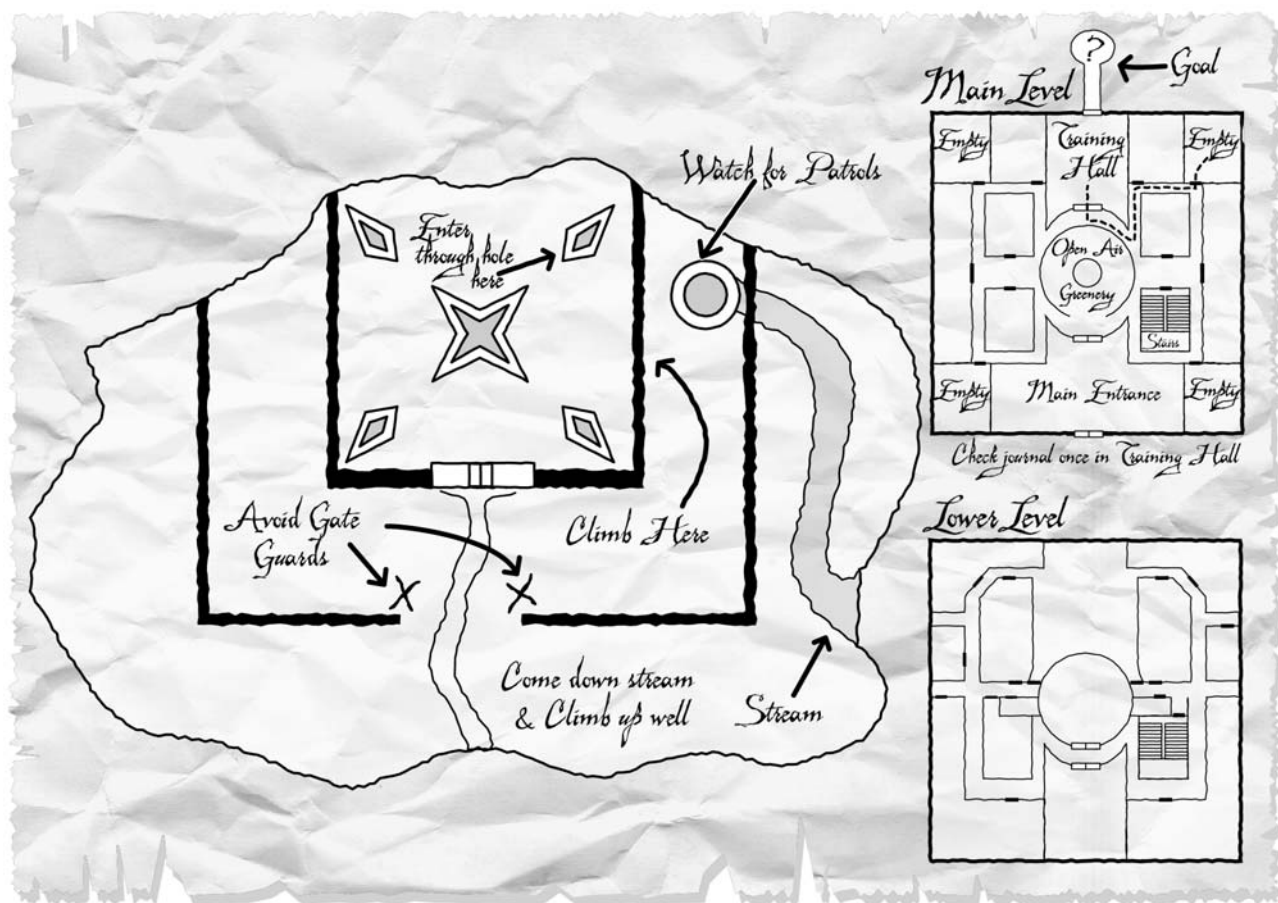
- They were ordered to kill the man with the case and to retrieve it.
- They report to a high ranking Pledged official whose name is Donny Wong.

- If really pushed they admit to knowing this all connects to a temple in the Netherworld, but they won't reveal where it is, exactly.
- They don't mention anything about Donny's betrayal of the Lodge, and they don't know anything about invincible chi.

The guy with the satchel has only one thing to say: "Invincible chi, must warn them about invincible chi..." After he says that, he snuffs it.

Inside the satchel, the PCs find:

- A journal detailing the life of one Jason Lee, a scientist assigned to the temple. The interesting entries are near the back. They outline where in the Netherworld the temple is, the strength of its feng shui, the legend of invincible chi, and Donny Wong's betrayal of the Lodge. No entries mention the magical nature of the temple, nor do they mention anything about the talisman directly.





- Two faded maps. The first lays out the location of the temple. The second shows a detail of the temple itself and the surrounding areas, and describes a secret route that would take an intruder from the outskirts of the area into the inner training room, and from there, into the sanctum where the secret of invincible chi can be found.

After thinking about these clues, members of the Guiding Hand may remember something about the invincible chi legend. Check Info/Ancient History, Difficulty 15.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

Even if your PCs aren't Dragons, there should be enough here to spur them to action. Jammers might want to use the opportunity to destroy an obviously powerful feng shui site. Guiding Hand members probably want to destroy the talisman for good, or, if they don't remember the legend, may think "invincible chi" would be a valuable asset for their faction. Ascended may want to avenge the death of their loyal agent.

Lotus and Monarch characters, on the other hand, may not care much for the clues presented. That is by design. Members of those factions are mostly unsuitable for this adventure, because evil/self-serving PCs tend to keep powerful munchkin artifacts instead of destroying them like good little heroes.

SHUI IN THE TEMPLE TONIGHT

The monks designed their temple to harness natural chi flow and funnel it into the heart of the structure, creating a powerful feng shui site. The priests, in their secret alcoves, perverted this chi flow through various sorcerous geomantic practices. The result is a feng shui

site providing all the usual benefits, but also propagating the 69 AD juncture modifiers throughout the temple and grounds. The temple was constructed with real world materials, without the aid of Shaping. (It doesn't matter where in the Netherworld the temple is located, and its location is left undefined so you can put it in the location that works best for your campaign.)

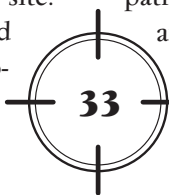
There are nine Pledged on the grounds: two feng shui scientists, six guards, and Donny Wong. The guards work in two shifts. On each shift, two guards watch the front gates while the third patrols the grounds. The information contained in the briefcase has all the details the PCs need to break into the temple and access the sealed room containing the secret to invincible chi, so the guards really shouldn't be a big problem.

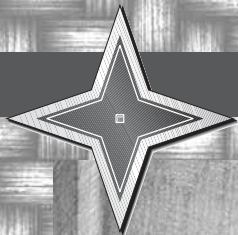
The map shows that the only way to reach the temple is through a river that feeds a well located inside the temple's wall. The river flows mostly underground, curving and twisting (there's plenty of breathing room for spelunkers, though). Eventually, it flows underneath the well's shaft. It's an easy ten foot climb up the shaft. Voila! The PCs are inside the temple compound. On any positive Fortune check, the lone wandering guard is nowhere to be seen when they emerge. If they miss the well shaft, the river briefly runs above ground through the cavern outside the temple walls.

The group's next task is getting up on the roof; it's about fifteen feet up. There is a beveled design on the wall that works great for climbing. Once on the roof, the map directs the PCs to enter through an opening in the north-eastern corner. There is a hole like this in each corner; they allow chi energy to flow into the temple. The holes each lead into small, unoccupied chambers adorned with mirrors. The map indicates the best path to the training chamber from here.

The hallways are dimly lit by torches and sparsely patrolled. Trouble the PCs with the three off-duty guards at your discretion. Only give the players a problem if they break out instruments and march the distance while playing John Philip Sousa tunes. If the PCs wander off the beaten path and start poking their heads into rooms they aren't supposed to, make it up as you go.

These rooms contain the Pledged agents' gear and possibly the Pledged agents themselves.





WHERE'D IT GO?

The main training hall, the PCs' goal, contains four unlit braziers. There are no torches on the chamber's walls, so the PCs will have to light the braziers, bring torches from one of the halls, or otherwise provide their own illumination.

The walls are covered in decorative symbols, some Chinese, some similar to hieroglyphics, and some occult-looking. There are detailed instructions in the journal on what to do with these symbols in order to access the secret chamber. Make the procedure as involved or as automatic as you choose, just don't bore the players. When the procedure is complete, there is a loud clunk from the back wall of the room, as though a large stone latch has been released. (Which is exactly what has happened.) That section of wall then swings inwards when pressure is applied. This reveals a hallway. The hallway leads about fifty feet to a circular room about five feet across.

In the circular chamber, a shaft of unnatural light illuminates a four-foot pillar from above. On top of the pillar is . . . nothing. Donny Wong has already been here and claimed the Talisman of Invincible Chi. Your players, though, will probably assume there is more to the puzzle. Don't let on. When they finally give up and head back down the passage, things get interesting.

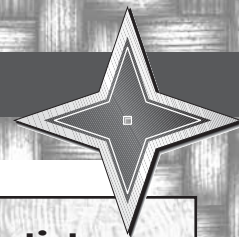
OH, THERE IT IS

When they arrive back in the training hall, it's dark — even if they lit the braziers. As they step into the room, though, the braziers flame to life, illuminating a Pledged agent standing on either side of the room. Any other Pledged agents still alive line the wall facing the PCs. Donny Wong stands in front of the door leading out to the rest of the temple. "Looking for something?" he asks.

Witty repartee ensues. Having read the scenario to this point, you know what Donny knows. He's not interested in getting into details at this point — he's arrogant but not gloating. If the PCs ask about Jason Lee, Donny lamely denies having had a turncoat in his midst. Eventually, Donny speaks of the wonderful location of



Illustration by Andrew Baker



his base, especially all the yard space that can be used to dig shallow graves for trespassers. The PCs are offered a chance to return the quip and then fighting begins. Donny is wearing the talisman around his neck, under his dress shirt, but he doesn't mention it or show it to the PCs.

Donny's mooks do not engage in combat unless directly attacked. They know their master is invincible, so why risk their necks? Donny always attacks the nearest opponent, using Fortune points when you think it will help. Every time someone attacks Donny he uses Unyielding Tiger Stance to counterattack.

Of course, the Talisman of Invincible Chi protects Donny from all damage during this fight. At first the PCs may think they're just missing, but as their Action Results get higher they start to notice bullets bouncing off his eyelids, energy blasts dispersing against his suit, his hair splitting their swords in two, and so on.

If your players are clever, they may connect the missing pillar artifact (whatever they may believe it to be) with Donny's invincibility and start looking for said artifact under his clothing. If they're lucky, they might even manage to expose the Talisman of Invincible Chi by ripping open his shirt. At this point, however, the interests of the continuing plot dictate that they not steal the Talisman, so make sure circumstances transpire which prevent it.

Cool Things That Could Happen During the Fight

- Braziers make wonderful searing hot discusses, and when you're invincible you don't even need an oven mitt.
- Donny throws someone back into the secret passageway, which dramatically seals him in.
- Lit torches make for a great juggling act.

IT'S RAINING MONKS

The fight continues until the PCs realize nothing they try is going to work and start to think about making a tactical withdrawal. At that moment, one of the walls breaks inward and a group of shiny-headed guys with ponytails come leaping in to distract Donny and his

Unnamed Pledged Scientists

Sample Dialogue: "Not in the face! Not in the face!"

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 7, Mnd 8, Ref 6

Skills: Guns 8, Info/Geomancy 15, Medicine 7

Weapons: punch (6), kick (7), Rossi Model 515 (8/2/9)

Unnamed Pledged Guards

Sample Dialogue: "Finally! Something interesting to do!"

Attributes: Bod 7, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 8

Skills: Guns 10, Deceit 15, Info/Lodge 12

Gun Schticks: Both Guns Blazing

Weapons: punch (8), kick (9), 2x Heckler & Koch MP5 (10/5/30)

Unnamed Blue Monks

Sample Dialogue: "Kia!!!"

Attributes: Bod 7, Chi 4 (For 2), Mnd 5, Ref 7

Skills: Martial Arts 12, Deceit 15, Info/Neo-Confucianism 10, Intrusion 8

Fu Schticks: Friend of Darkness, Dark's Soft Whisper

Weapons: punch (8), kick (9)

mooks. Their leader, Shi Pinnu, calls out to the PCs to follow him.

OPERATION: KILL THE INVINCIBLE GUY

The escape is uneventful; Shi leads the group down the well and downstream to a camp in an otherwise secluded Netherworld corridor. His monks rejoin him a few minutes after.

TALK TO THE HAND

Shi wants to know what the PCs were doing in the temple. As long as they mention something about getting invincible chi



away from the Lodge, he insists they work together. If the PCs agree, he explains the true legend of invincible chi, talisman and all.

Then Shi Pinnu needs to see the maps. If the players do not offer them up on their own, Shi Pinnu makes comments like, “The feng shui there is powerful, it must have a focus.” This should get the players to cough up the goods. Master Shi looks over the maps, making notations as he goes, drawing chi flow lines and finally identifying their focus, a room in the center of the temple’s lower level. He believes there may be a series of mirrors and crystals in that room that reflect and refract the chi flow creating the magical field around the temple. He also believes the very feng shui of the temple infuses the talisman with its extraordinary powers. Disrupting it, he says, should leave Donny Wong vulnerable. Shi asks the PCs if they could accomplish this task while he and his team wait nearby, observing the chi flow around the temple. When it weakens, they can make their assault. Shi is even willing to send a few of his best students to assist — although only if asked.

All of this is Shi’s training in the Blue Principle at work: he’s really just trying to keep the PCs busy. Although it is true that the temple’s chi flow is focused in the room master Shi identifies, and it is also true that destroying the focus crystals in that room disrupts the feng shui around the temple, this has no effect of the power of the talisman and Shi Pinnu knows it. With the Dragons out of the way, however, he should be able to snatch the talisman away from Donny Wong before anyone can react. (Since Shi’s chi is superior to Donny’s, even with the power of the talisman, he is able to effectively attack Donny.) Shi, of course, gives no hint of his actual plan.

I SMELL SETUP

Players are wily, and may smell a setup. Try to keep them on the wrong track as long as possible. Remember, first of all, that Master Shi and his group don’t advertise the fact that they are Blue Monks. They study the principles of obfuscation, after all. Master Shi wears a white sash about his waist. He doesn’t claim to be a

Master of the White Principle, but he doesn’t deny assumptions that he is. Members of the Guiding Hand, however, may have heard of Shi’s team. They know that he is a Blue Monk, but they also know him for his proven loyalty. In any case, don’t portray Shi as shifty or conniving. He should come off as a wise old master with the purity of kung fu in his heart.

If, despite your best efforts, the players distance themselves from Master Shi and go off on their own to try who-knows-what, don’t worry. Whatever their plan consists of, it probably involves taking their eyes off the main gates for a period of time. Whenever they get around to entering the temple again, skip ahead to “Is Anyone on the Level Here (p. 38).”

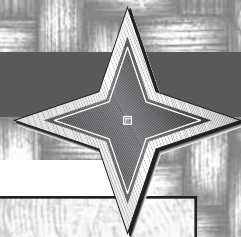
BACK INTO THE FIRE

So it’s back into the temple. The PCs can use the same plan they used before or can come up with something new. Patrols consist of anyone left alive after the first trip. Any mooks knocked out of combat the first time around, but weren’t specifically killed by the players, sport fancy bandages but are otherwise fine. As long as the plan doesn’t attract too much attention, the PCs should be able to get into the temple and down to the lower level without a problem.

The PCs encounter no guards once they reach the underground level — it’s just too creepy for them. The walls are covered with unsettling carvings and arcane symbols. The floors and outer walls are natural Netherworld foundation — the sorcerers liked the surreal lighting.

The rooms of the underground level are all in disarray: The furniture is smashed and the doors are broken off their hinges. The monks ransacked the priests’ belongings before sealing the temple. They didn’t want to miss anyone.

The exception is the room the PCs are headed for — the one Master Shi identified as the locus of the temple’s chi. The door to this room is in perfect condition and has a warning in Chinese carved into it: “Those who enter will be doomed by the viewer of souls.” The monks were obviously dissuaded by this supernatural warning. The PCs, hopefully, are made of sterner stuff.



BEAT THE ONE - EYED SNAKE

The room is an amazing sight. Four mirrors mounted on the room's walls at the cardinal points throw off four beams of light, which are focused by four crystals which appear to float in mid-air. The four focused beams merge in the center of the room to form a sphere of dazzling brightness which reaches from floor to ceiling. Some sort of stone container is barely visible within the sphere.

Breaking mirrors and/or moving crystals (both of which are easy to accomplish) dims the light — once the last mirror or crystal is gone, the sphere completely dissolves. After a moment of silence, a rumbling emanates from the stone container, which bursts open to reveal a sixteen-foot snake-like demon with one large eye in the center of his reptilian head. This is Kong Tiaorong, Demon of the Fixed Gaze. The priests imprisoned him here as part of their deal with Shen Yinu.

Fortunately, Tiaorong's powers have significantly diminished in his two thousand years of solitary confinement. He needs to regain his strength by feeding, and heroes are tasty. He begins by summoning up a group of mini-Tiaorongs (one per PC) to keep everyone busy while he chooses the PC *du jour*. Tiaorong selects the most sorcerous-looking target to eat — he's got a grudge — and begins his attempt to feed. Tiaorong prefers to feed by locking eyes with his intended victim and using his Torrent of Blood schtick (see *Golden Comeback*, p. 96). The rush of blood streams out of the victim's eyes into the demon's mouth.

While unlikely, it is conceivable that a group of *Feng Shui* characters might try and talk their way out of a problem. They'd need to do some pretty fast talking to make a large, enraged — and let's not forget *hungry* — demon stop for some pleasant back and forth. Only two things make Tiaorong pause momentarily: discussion of the sorcerers who imprisoned him, and mention of his nemesis Shen Yinu. Actually, there's a third thing. If the PCs say anything about the Talisman of Invincible Chi, Tiaorong

Kong Tiaorong

Kong Tiaorong's natural form is that of a giant snake. His transformed animal schticks are provided by his Ophidian Form schtick (Golden Comeback, p. 97). His only other choice of form is that of an inanimate talisman, a form to which he reverts when failing a death check.

Sample Dialogue: "Now that I am free, I will not stop until I have found those who imprisoned me. They shall know true horrors — horrors they can barely comprehend. I shall deliver suffering until their minds are crushed and they plunge into an eternity of despair. Then, they will . . . *ooo, nummies!*"

Attributes: Bod 8 (Mov 12), Chi 3 (Mag 8), Mnd 4, Ref 10

Skills: Martial Arts 12, Creature Powers 15, Intimidation 7

Creature Schticks: Tentacles, Transformation, Ophidian Form x2 (*Golden Comeback*, p. 97), Blast (chi), Blood Drain (Fortune), Torrent of Blood (*Golden Comeback*, p. 96), Abysmal Spines (fangs), Death Chisels (fangs) (*Golden Comeback*, p. 98)

Transformed Animal Schticks: Snake: Coil, Strike, Warning

Weapons: bite (11), constriction (9), blast (10)

Mini-Tiaorongs

Sample Dialogue: "Masster! Here! Here issa a plump one!"

Attributes: Bod 4, Chi 0 (Mag 8), Mnd 3, Ref 8

Skills: Martial Arts 8, Creature Powers 9

Schticks: Abysmal Spines x2 (fangs), Blood Drain (Fortune)

Weapons: bite (8)

realizes said talisman is actually Shen Yinu. In any case, talking only works until Tiaorong realizes talking doesn't make him any less hungry. At that point, the PCs are finally going to have to fight the snake.

If the PCs make a break for it, the demon chases them. Sooner or later, they are forced to fight.

Cool Things That Could Happen During the Fight

- If either the mirrors or crystals survived their first encounter with the PCs, they're present and fragile.
- It's only funny until someone loses an eye, and the mini-Tiaorongs only have one to begin with.



- How do you piss off a demonic snake? Tying it in a knot is a good start.

- Kong Tiaorong is sixteen feet long, and the chamber isn't all that large. Even fighters who aren't directly engaged with the demon may have to watch out for his flailing body.

THE POWER IS YOURS

Once the PCs have defeated Tiaorong, he transforms and falls to the ground in his talisman form. This little trinket is important, so hopefully someone is smart enough to pick it up.

While in talisman form, Tiaorong can communicate on a limited basis. While unable to actually speak or move, his emotions and intentions, when strong enough, manifest themselves in the wearer. Whoever holds Tiaorong's talisman has sudden bursts of inspiration and emotion that seem to come from nowhere.

IS ANYONE ON THE LEVEL HERE?

When they return to the main level of the temple, the PCs hear no sounds of combat. If they explore the temple, they find the whole place empty. When they eventually go outside, they find out why. Everyone's dead — all the monks, all the Pledged, everyone. Okay, not everyone. There are two exceptions: Shi Pinnu is nowhere to be found and Donny Wong is laying in a heap near the gates, his expensive suit torn asunder. Donny Wong explains, in flashback fashion, that Shi Pinnu's kung fu was stronger than his and Shi defeated him, claiming the talisman for his own. Shi's students protested, but they were not strong enough to stand against him.

THROW MASTER FROM THE TRAIN

It isn't hard to figure out where Shi has gone, because he's Shaped a new tunnel out of the cavern that leads to a train station.

In a recent Supercharger 5000 race, one of the racers Shaped a full passenger train and tracks that ran the entire length of the course. The train was abandoned by its creator after the race, but a DP with vision stepped in and started the Netherworld's first mass transit system.

As the PCs arrive on the scene the train is preparing to depart. Because he possesses Tiaorong's amulet, Shi senses the demon's nemesis on board.

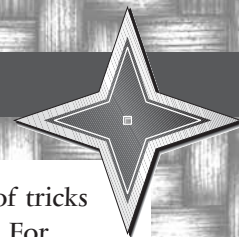
ON THE TRAIN

The train looks a lot like your average contemporary passenger train, though it travels at nearly three times the speed, and its tracks are laid out, in some cases, more like a carnival ride.

The passenger cars are crowded, so it's difficult to spot Shi Pinnu. Allow the PCs to move through the cars for a while looking for their quarry. Throw in a few Perception checks to make it look good. During the search, the PCs are irritated by persistent tourists, insistent dessert cart bearers, and ushers looking for tickets that the PCs don't have. Once all that gets old, the PCs hear a shuffling sound coming from the roof of the train.

I'M INVEINCIBLE

Unless the players climb up onto the roof from the engine, they come up about a car-length behind Master Shi, who is slowly making his way to the front of the train. When the PCs get his attention, he looks over his shoulder at them, then releases his hold on the train and comes sailing back at the point leader and lands a Flying Windmill Kick. Dump a Fortune die into the first few of these to scare the hell out of the players.



When the two talismans are close to one another, they glow opposing colors and their wearers feel intense rivalry and an absolute need to destroy each other. Explain what's going on to the player involved and let him run with it. If he refuses to act accordingly, deliver his dialogue for him.

Furthermore, when the talismans are close to one another, the Chi requirements for doing damage to the bearer of the Talisman of Invincible Chi no longer apply. Now, any hand-to-hand strike, or strike using fu powers, does full damage.

(Arcanowave and sorcery attacks continue to inflict half damage, while guns and other inanimate objects still do jack and squat, respectively.)

Since the train is moving at a rapid pace, it is a continuous action to keep balanced. All shot costs increase by one, except for those with relevant schticks like Gathering the Clouds.

The fight locale also calls for a special death check rule. Any PC who is forced to make a death check loses his balance and falls off the train. If the check is successful, he is able to grab the side of the train at the last minute. It takes a three-shot Martial Arts check with a Difficulty equal to the amount by which the death check was failed to climb back up onto the train. Otherwise, comrades are allowed to make diving grabs for the fallen, with the same shot cost and Difficulty.

Shi's outnumbered, but he has lots of tricks he can use to keep the odds in his favor. For starters, at the beginning of every sequence, Shi's first action is Gathering the Clouds. This will keep him acting quickly while his opponents are bogged down in their balancing actions. Second, Shi uses fu powers whenever he can to strike more than one player at a time. Adding Fortune dice to these attacks for that extra kick helps. Finally, for gosh sake, Shi actively dodges whenever necessary.

Cool Things That Could Happen During the Fight

- Shi tries to chuck characters off the train, forcing Agility checks (Difficulty equal to Shi's Outcome) to grab the side and haul oneself back up.
- Spend a sequence in a tunnel fighting with darkness penalties. Watch your step.
- Loop de loops! This track was laid by a complete madman!
- At the dramatically appropriate moment, Master Shi's shirt rips open, revealing the Talisman of Invincible Chi. Grabbing the talisman is a called shot stunt with +2 Difficulty. Shi actively dodges these attempts.





Gimme That!

Just as one of the PCs makes a successful roll to grab the talisman, the train starts across an incredibly deep gorge. Shi sees a Netherworld portal up ahead, mocks the PCs for their wasted efforts, and steps backward off the edge of the train. Just as he reaches the point of no return, the PC with the successful roll reaches in from off screen and snatches the talisman from around Master Shi's neck.

Shi Pinnu continues to fall, *sans* talisman, screaming obscenities at the PCs. Killers and cops, who are probably bitter at having been unable to hurt Shi thus far, can use this opportunity to fill him full of as many holes as they like.

WRAPPING UP

The villain is defeated, the day is saved, and there are no loose ends to tie up. Oh, wait . . .

PORTAL JOCKEY

If the PCs don't practice their skeet on Shi and you want to have him survive the adventure, he passes through the portal for a safe landing wherever. Alternatively, he may have misjudged the jump, having a not-so-safe landing at the bottom of the gorge.

NOW WE'RE INVINCIBLE

At the earliest opportunity, the character wearing the Tiaorong talisman inexplicably grabs the Talisman of Invincible Chi (if he wasn't the one who grabbed it in the first place) and presses the two of them together. In a brilliant flash of light, they become a single powerless talisman depicting a Jade serpent wrapped around an obsidian boar.

It's a nice keepsake.

If the other PCs prevent this from happening, so be it. What they don't know is

that if either talisman spends more than 24 hours in an area with a zero or lower magic modifier, the demon within dies and the talisman crumbles to dust.

I WANT MY M-FENG SHUI

That temple could make a pretty cool base — nearby mass transit, sky diving portals to 69 AD, and magically delicious to boot. If you'd rather not, the PCs return to the scene to discover the Lodge slipped in while the PCs were off beating up Shi Pinnu and left a smoking pile of rubble in their wake.

FUTURE ADVENTURES

Amazingly enough, your heroes may have managed to make friends instead of enemies this time around. The Ascended might feel like they owe the characters a favor for taking down a renegade agent. The Guiding Hand may or may not be pleased; it depends on your mood. If TSIS hears about Master Shi's attempted treachery and how he was stopped by the PCs, they're grateful. If they don't, they assume the PCs are responsible for his death and the deaths of his students. If Shi Pinnu survived, who knows what lies he's told Quan Lo.

So where did that portal lead? That's up to you. If your players went careening through it after him, you can use it to lead them into your next adventure. Shi Pinnu wanted to return to Gao Zhang's court, so it's likely to lead to 69AD.

If the characters don't voluntarily dispose of the Talisman of Invincible Chi, and manage to stay in high magic junctures, you can use that as a tie-in for another adventure. The Lodge wants that thing destroyed. Pretty soon the PCs have bounty hunters, treasure seekers, eunuch sorcerers, darkness priests, and tax attorneys pounding down their door. More trouble than it's worth, probably.



Last Stand at Old Man Fong's

MIKE MEARLS

Premise: The characters are invited to the funeral of their unexpectedly wealthy friend, Old Man Fong.

Twist: Fong is actually a highly skilled sorcerer who used his cover as a street corner ice cream vendor to scout out heroes who could one day help him destroy an ancient artifact of evil that he guards. The funeral is his cover story for assembling the champions he has met and befriended over the years.

Climax: After engaging in a running gun battle with a band of demonic hot-rodgers, the characters bring the artifact to the Devil's Vortex, the only place in the Netherworld capable of destroying it.

BACKSTORY

Old Man Fong comes from a long line of distinguished demon hunters. For over a thousand years, Fong's family has battled the forces of the Underworld. Each generation of Fong's family has carefully passed along its skills and the daunting mission that Fong's clan has gallantly carried on through the centuries. Despite a long and glorious history of demon hunting, Fong's family has only recently become involved in the Secret War. Most of the demons his family dealt with were rogue creatures or mindless fiends intent only on rampant destruction. With the entrance of the Lotus into the Secret War, things

have changed. The Lotus' agents in the contemporary juncture, after researching the fates of several magical artifacts the Lotus controlled in 69 AD, figured out that Fong has a powerful artifact in his hands, the Jade Chamber of Enforced Reflection. This artifact holds imprisoned within it dozens of powerful demons that the Lotus would love to bring under their sway. Luckily for everyone but the Lotus, the artifact is completely impregnable. The magical bonds that hold the demons within were put into place by sorcerers the likes of which haven't walked the earth in centuries.

Unluckily, nothing lasts forever, even impregnable magical fortresses. The bonds holding the demons in place are weakening. The Lotus knows that Old Man Fong has the Jade Chamber and they want it. Badly. Fortunately for them, the newest apple to sprout on the Fong family tree fell quite a distance from the its roots. Old Man Fong's son, Kenny Fong, is a sorcerer, and he doesn't see why he has to spend his time gunning for demons when he could be hauling in cash by the truckload with his powers. Kenny is a rebellious kid who has fallen in with the wrong crowd. The Lotus have promised him untold riches and power if he can get them the Jade Chamber.

Aware that the magic holding the demons imprisoned is failing and stung by his son's treachery, the elder Fong decid-



ed to fake his own death in hopes of throwing the Lotus off his trail. He then plans to recover the Jade Chamber from its hiding place and take it to the Devil's Vortex, a whirlpool of pure magical fire that he discovered while exploring the Netherworld. As an insurance plan, he is calling in debts owed to him by anyone with the kung fu to take on the Lotus. He needs help recovering the Chamber and then getting it to the Vortex to dispose of it. He'll need all the help he can get. The Lotus is on to his plan, and they've sent a powerful strike force to deal with him and seize the Jade Chamber.

The Jade Chamber is hidden in the Netherworld, close to a gate that Fong discovered in his youth. After discovering the gate, Fong bought the house on the site where it exists and has since used it as a base of operations. Fong plans to recruit the characters after his "funeral," lead them into the Netherworld to recover the artifact, journey with them to the Devil's Vortex, and destroy the Chamber and the demons it contains forever.

Ever hear that saying about plans and contact with the enemy? Fong's, as the characters discover, folds up and dies nice and quickly.

GETTING STARTED

There are several ways in which your characters can get involved in this scenario. The first and easiest is to assume Fong has heard of the characters' exploits and creates an appropriate cover story to lure them to his faked funeral. Fong tailors this approach to fit what he has heard about the characters' natures and personalities. For example, if the characters are somewhat greedy or desperate for cash, he may send them a message saying that a long lost and fabulously wealthy great uncle of one of the characters has died and the character needs to go to the funeral to collect a sizable inheritance. If the characters are cut from the heroically noble mold, Fong takes the *A-Team* approach and sends them a letter begging them to attend the funeral in order to

help foil some great evil. This method is ideal if the characters are the two-fisted, stick-it-to-the-bad-guys-above-all-else types. It's the most direct method, and works well if your players are more worried about wading into fights than looking for suspicious foes lurking behind every shadow. If you are planning a *Feng Shui* campaign and have time to plot out a series of adventures, you can make Fong a fixture of your campaign. He easily assumes the role of the dopey-but-kind-hearted ice cream vendor who always seems to be around when the characters are working the urban beat. In this case, Fong treats them with plenty of respect and deference, feeding them plenty of free frozen treats and commenting on their obvious badassosity.

This adventure is designed so that it can be dropped into any place on earth, from Hong Kong to San Francisco to the middle of nowhere (Pelham, New Hampshire, for example). Don't be afraid to change Fong's name and nationality, his (mundane) profession, or even the details of his house. Depending on your personal tastes and the state of your game, Fong could easily hold his funeral in the characters' base city or somewhere else entirely.

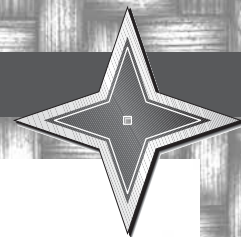
CAST OF CHARACTERS

These are the major players in the scenario.

OLD MAN FONG

Old Man Fong is a spry and energetic old geezer who is as stubborn and shortsighted as he is skilled with magic. Fong has always had problems making plans for the long term, and this failing shines through in his relationship with his estranged son. Fong was far too hard on him as a youngster. While Fong blames himself for his son's actions, he is far too hardheaded to admit that, much less act on it.

Fong is loud and obnoxious. He tends to talk over others and expects them to do as he says, no questions asked.



Old Man Fong

Sample Dialogue: "No, no, no! This is how you properly kick demon butt!"

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 2 (Mag 9), Mnd 8, Ref 6

Skills: Info/Demons 12, Intimidation 10, Medicine 14, Sorcery 16

Magic Schticks: Blast, Divination, Influence, Summoning

Weapons: punch (6), kick (7)

Kenny Fong

Sample Dialogue: "Ignorant poltroon! Your gun is but a toy compared to the power of my sorcery."

Attributes: Bod 6, Chi 1 (Mag 8), Mnd 7, Ref 7

Skills: Guns 12, Info/Demons 9, Sorcery 15

Magic Schticks: Blast, Divination, Influence, Summoning

Weapons: punch (7), kick (8), Browning BDM (10/2/15+1)

Fong is also very good at covering up his less attractive traits for brief periods of time, such as when he's sucking up to heroes in hopes of convincing them to join in his half-baked plan. Fong the ice cream vendor, if you use that option to drag the characters into this adventure, is cloying and deferential. Fong the sorcerer is rude, direct, loud, and obnoxiously pushy.

KENNY FONG

Kenny Fong would never admit it — and he'd probably fry your ass if you suggested it to him — but he is a lot like his father, right down to the pigheadedness and inability to plan beyond the next hour. He doesn't expect others to defer to him like his father does, but that doesn't mean he doesn't want them to do so. Kenny abandoned his heritage because he was sick of trying to live up to his father's expectations. He behaves a lot like a spoiled, overconfident child.

Deep down inside, Kenny just wants his father to accept him. He thinks that by teaming up with the Lotus, he'll get power and respect and show his father that he's a worthy son. The two hate each other, but it isn't the killing kind of hatred.





Gertie Gunderson

Sample Dialogue: [HONK! HONK!] "Get out of the friggin' way before I run y'all down, you many bastards!"

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 0, Mnd 7, Ref 8

Skills: Martial Arts 13, Driving 15, Fix-it 14, Seduction 8

Driving Schticks: Ram Speed! x2, Signature Ride

Weapons: punch (6), kick (7), wrench (8)

Gertie's Wheels: Peterbilt Eighteen Wheeler

Attributes: Pep: -3, Wreck 30

Notes: These stats assume that Gertie still has her load of cheap toys attached to the truck. If she loses her trailer, her truck's stats become Pep -1, Wreck 15.

Clayton Masterson

Sample Dialogue: "Yeewah! I haven't had this much fun since the Nixon administration!"

Attributes: Bod 6, Chi 0, Mnd 7, Ref 6

Skills: Martial Arts 8, Guns 10, Driving 12, Fix-It 10, Intrusion 9

Weapons: punch (7), kick (8), Colt 1911A (10/2/7+1)

Clayton's Wheels: Highly Modified 1987 Ford Escort

Attributes: Pep +1, Wreck 9

Notes: A monument to the excessive defense budgets of the Cold War, this baby has two pop-up machine guns (13*/-/50) hidden under the front hood and an oil slick dispenser in the back with enough fuel for three uses. Treat the dispenser as a ramming attack. If the attack is successful, apply the margin of success as a penalty to the target's driving AV until after his next action. The machine guns can be fired by anyone in the front seats. They are controlled by a simple targeting system.

GERTIE GUNDERSON

Gertie was a nice girl who grew up in a nice family in a nice town in the United States. Sadly, her not-so-nice older brother got involved with some distinctly not-nice gangsters and ended up seriously in

debt. After the gangsters broke his legs as a friendly warning of what they would do if he didn't pay them back, Gertie took over his eighteen wheeler and tried to earn enough cash hauling goods to pay off his debts. She almost raised enough money before the gangsters swooped in and grabbed her brother. Luckily for Gertie, Old Fong was after the gang because of their connections to several demonic entities. When Gertie rammed her brother's rig into the gang's secret hideout, she arrived just in time to help Fong and her brother escape the vengeful gang's clutches. Though Fong doesn't know it, this was the first time he tangled with the Lotus. It was soon after this adventure that they contacted his son and drew him into the fold.

Gertie is a petite, demure blond with fine, delicate features that clash with her greasy overalls, work boots, and baseball cap in an oddly attractive way. She's soft-spoken yet determined, and a hellion in a fight. Gertie owes Fong for saving her brother, and she's the type of gal who believes in repaying her debts. Gertie shows up driving a Peterbilt Eighteen Wheeler with attached trailer. She's currently hauling a load of cheap toys, including cases of marbles, jacks, second rate action figures, and plastic toy guns.

CLAYTON MASTERSON

Clayton Masterson is a walking wounded casualty of the Cold War. With the normalization of relations between NATO and the former Soviet Bloc, Clayton found himself spending more time filing and analyzing satellite reconnaissance photos and less time engaged in a deadly cat and mouse game with KGB operatives. When a chance encounter while on vacation in Hong Kong led him to help Fong put down an outbreak of hopping vampires, Clayton became the old man's sidekick and confidante. Energized by the reintroduction of some true excitement into his life, Clayton secretly funnels money and equipment from his moldering agency and uses it



to help Fong fight the good fight. Currently, Clayton has his hands on a prototype car straight out a James Bond film, equipped with hidden machine guns and an oil slick dispenser. Unfortunately, the prototype was built just at the end of the Cold War, so all the cool toys were built into a highly modified 1987 Ford Escort in the name of cost cutting.

Clayton is in his mid-fifties. His hair is white and thinning, and he has a bit of a belly, but his lively manner is that of a man enjoying his second shot at adolescence. Clayton hails from Texas and always wears his Stetson and a bolo tie. He's loud and excitable but tends to defer to Fong, since he's the one responsible for all the excitement in his life. He is a bit of an adrenaline junkie, though he doesn't show it until bullets start flying and engines start roaring. Fong finds Clayton a bit immature and annoying, but puts up with him because of all the interesting gadgets he has access to.

USING FONG, GERTIE, AND CLAYTON

These three characters are primarily here to either drive the plot (Fong) or drive the characters around (Gertie and Clayton). Don't let them steal the characters' thunder, but don't let them get pushed around and abused like hapless servants. If the characters have wheels of their own, feel free to dump Gertie and Clayton.

Gertie works well as a love interest, and it always pays to pull the old maiden in distress act in the middle of a fight scene to give the players their heroic jollies. Clayton is just excited to be in the thick of the action. He can get overexcited and need rescuing, or maybe sacrifice himself while giving a stirring speech about finally living a full, worthwhile life fighting bad guys.

THE FUNERAL

Fong arranged for his wake to take place at the upscale house with attached garage that he purchased using part of his family's small fortune. The gate to the Netherworld that he discovered is hidden behind the garage. Fong plans to hold the wake in the house's oversized main dining room. Once the mourners leave, Clayton takes the characters aside and asks them to stay a bit longer. Fong then plans to meet with them, fill them in on the situation regarding the Jade Chamber, and take them to the Netherworld to dispose of the artifact. Unfortunately, Fong has no idea that his son is (a) coming to the funeral and (b) an ally of the Lotus.


FONG'S HOUSE

Living Room

The living room is a large room with a freshly polished hardwood floor. Rows of collapsible chairs stand before Fong's casket, which is open for viewing. Next to the casket stands Fong's ice cream pushcart decorated with flower arrangements sent by admirers, friends, and business associates. In actuality, Fong bought most of the flowers himself. The poor man is a little shocked by how little attention "death" has brought him. If all goes according to plans, Fong need only lay still in his casket for a time. Once the ungrateful slugs who are undoubtedly happy to see him off to leave, he can introduce himself to the characters.

Kitchen

Fong's kitchen is well-stocked with the latest kitchen gadgets, appliances, and top of the line cooking utensils. Sadly, Fong isn't much of a cook, and despite the top quality facilities he often orders out for food. The refrigerator is empty save for a half



empty bottle of mustard and a few cartons of moldering take-out food.

Game Room

When he's not tracking down demons or working his cover as an ice cream vendor, Fong likes to relax with a game of pool. The pool table here is a top-of-the-line, custom-built model that's begging to become a collection of improvised weapons. Fong is somewhat attached to the table and chastises characters who damage it, even in the middle of combat. There's also a dartboard, with darts, and a foosball table.

Bathroom

Your standard facilities: toilet, bathtub, and sink. The characters might get some yardage with the chemical cleaning goods stored in the cabinet beneath the sink.

Other Rooms

The rest of the house holds typical furnishings for a wealthy home. There are plenty of paintings and framed pictures on the walls. The tables, chairs, couches, and other mundane bits of furniture found throughout the house are well built and stand up to repeated bashings over mook heads.

HOW IT GOES DOWN

Give the characters a chance to mingle with the mourners. Many of them know Fong as a pushy, crude old man, quite a contrast to the fawning admirer the characters dealt with. If the PCs are here as the result of a promise of an inheritance, feel free to introduce such complications as snotty relatives who are quite sure the PCs aren't even vaguely mentioned in the will, or jealous ones who rail against the PCs for stealing their birthright. The characters should also have a chance to

meet Gertie and Clayton. Both stick out in their rather distinctive dress, but neither will admit to being in league with Fong's plan. They recognize the characters as the heroes Fong has brought in to deal with the Chamber, but don't let on to that.

Things proceed smoothly for a time. The mourners talk amongst themselves, commenting on how peaceful Fong looks (or how decrepit the geezer is, depending on how they feel about him) before Kenny shows up and all hell breaks loose.

Kenny's arrival is met with a hushed silence. He comes dressed in an expensive dark suit and sunglasses. If pressed, a mourner (such as Clayton or Gertie, who don't know the particulars of the trouble between Fong and Kenny) tells the characters of the rift between Kenny and Fong. Kenny boldly strides up to Fong's coffin. The crowd stares on in suspense, hoping for either a touching reconciliation or a tantrum that will give them a new story to impress their friends.

Kenny speaks:

"You old bastard. It's about time you croaked. Now I can finally lay a proper claim to our family's herit—"

The rest of his speech is cut short as Fong, in a complete rage, springs from his coffin and lunges at his wayward son screaming.

"You incorrigible, ungrateful scum! How dare you sully my memory by showing your face here!"

Cue the fight scene music . . .

THE BRAWL

Kenny knows his father too well to think the old man is really dead or has not made some sort of contingency plan to guard the Jade Chamber. Soon after he heard of his father's passing, Kenny began to investigate the mansion. He failed to find the hidden gate to the Netherworld, so he decided to hide a gaggle of walking dead in the woods around the mansion, along with the transformed six-inch version of a normally thirty-foot-tall giant demon named Thundering Death. Thundering Death looks like an enormously fat, gluttonous



Asian male with pointy fangs and red eyes. His rolls of fat hang over the crude loincloth he wears. Thundering Death transforms into his thirty-foot form and smashes his way through the roof of the house right after the fight breaks out. As this happens, the walking corpses heed Kenny's call and arise from the woods, shambling forward to surround and then enter the house. There are three walking corpses for each player character.

Cool Things That Could Happen During the Fight

- Fong goes completely ape. He shouts to the characters to start kicking butt while he unleashes a sorcerous volley against his son, who responds in kind. Though Fong's magic is stronger than Kenny's, the son learned all of the father's tricks. For the purposes of this fight scene, they cause a lot of collateral damage and pepper the area with cool magical effects, but effectively cancel each other out.
- Thundering Death tries to reach down into the crowd, grab random people, and stuff them in his mouth. He's a stock brutish creature, as dumb as he is strong, and can be tricked into grabbing and eating things like chairs, coffins, and live explosives. Once Thundering Death gets his hands on something, it's going into his mouth.
- The dining room is two floors tall, with a balcony stretching around the edges on the second floor and connecting several of the rooms there. Of course, someone is going to leap up there and jump back down on the bad guys or climb on up to deal with Thundering Death.
- Characters looking for cover can dive into the coffin. The two halves open separately, making it a great place for an amusing hide and seek sequence between crafty PCs and the low-mental-wattage Lotus fighters. Distracted monsters chasing a scrappy kid tend to forget about that killer in the back of the room lining them up for head shots.
- Inside Fong's ice cream truck is a small arsenal of weapons. Fong

Thundering Death

The stats here are for Thundering Death's thirty-foot tall form. If he is somehow forced to shrink down to six inches, his Body is reduced to 3.

Sample Dialogue: "Rawrrrr!!!" [Chomp! Chew, chew, chew. . .]

Attributes: Bod 12, Chi 6, Mnd 2, Ref 5

Skills: Martial Arts 10, Creature Powers 10

Creature Shticks: Death Resistance, Foul Spew (glutinous goo), Transformation

Weapons: punch (13), grab and squeeze (14)

Walking Dead

Sample Dialogue: "Ahhhhrgggg!"

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 2, Mnd 0, Ref 4

Skills: Martial Arts 6, Creature Powers 6

Weapons: grope and rend (6)

couldn't think of anywhere else to hide them, and he had to put them in something to get them into the house, so they ended up there. For extra excitement, a panicked mourner grabs an AK-47 and starts peppering the room with gunfire. With a three shot action, a character can find any contemporary juncture gun he needs in here.

- The rest of the house is open for business, too. The kitchen is an arsenal that holds improvised weapons, jets of oven-generated flame, steaming hot water, and a live gas main.

Kenny and Fong duel to a standstill; the walking dead bust into the house through the windows, doors, and walls to raise havoc, wading into the mourners with fists and claws flailing; and Thundering Death tries to turn the funeral into one big deli platter. Once the characters have dispatched Thundering Death, Kenny abandons the remaining Lotus thugs and heads back to his mobile HQ, using his flight shtick and his invisibility ring.

Thundering Death fights until Kenny flees, at which time he heads for the hills. The walking dead are zombies. They keep going until someone puts them down.



THE AFTERMATH

With the Lotus driven off, Fong turns to the business at hand. First there is the matter of his ungrateful mourners, whom he tells he is the undead spirit of Fong, returned to visit vengeance and agony on all those who besmirched his good name and failed to buy him properly flattering flower arrangements. This statement clears the house of mourners. He then gathers the characters in his kitchen and explains the situation. The key points he tries to convey are:

- His son, Kenny Fong, is a scheming bastard whom he should've spanked a lot more often when he was a youngster.
- The Lotus want the Jade Chamber, a powerful artifact that holds hundreds of fearsome demons imprisoned within its mystical confines.
- Who broke that vase/window/load-bearing wall? Someone has to pay for all this damage! There's plenty of room to brawl outside.
- The Jade Chamber is nearby, hidden within a magical realm to which Fong has access.
- Fong's associates Gertie and Clayton are here to provide transportation to the Chamber.
- Not far from the Chamber's hiding place is a magical pool of fire that can destroy the Chamber and the demons within once and for all.
- That was a nice move you made against that zombie/demon, but if you had done it this way, the fight would've ended far sooner and with less damage to my home.

Play up Fong's bossy and uncompromising nature. The more questions the characters bother him with, the more likely he is to start snapping at them and pushing them around. Fong wants to hustle the characters to the garage so he can open the gate to the Netherworld and drive on through it, but if the characters take exception to his remarks he isn't afraid to get into a

shouting match with them. Either way, Kenny is heading back to the mansion with reinforcements. The more time Fong and the characters waste, the more likely they are to get even angrier with each other once the bad guys reappear.

When the characters finally make it to the garage, Fong moves around to the structure's rear, chants a brief incantation, and a gate to the Netherworld appears on the garage's exterior rear wall. The gate is large enough for Gertie's rig to fit through, and Fong tells the characters to bring their own wheels or hitch a ride with Gertie or Clayton. As the characters head into the gate, they hear a monstrous roar from down the street heading up to Fong's place. A group of four muscle cars and a swarm of mooks riding motorcycles roll towards Fong's house at an alarming speed. The race is on!

HOTRODS FROM HELL

Fong's gateway to the Netherworld opens at the terminus of a tall, wide, smooth-floored passageway. The Jade Chamber is hidden in the floor of the Netherworld just in front of the gate. Fong slips out of Gertie's rig, shapes a hole into the floor, and grabs it. Once he has it, the big rig roars ahead. As the characters drive down the passageway, Kenny and his minions burst through the gate.

CHOPPERS, MOOKS, AND AUTOMOBILES

Unfortunately for the characters, Fong hasn't explored much of the Netherworld in the twenty years since he first found the gate and hid the Chamber. Back in the day, he explored the Netherworld enough to locate the Devil's Vortex and discover that its flame burned hot enough to destroy the



Chamber should things ever come to that. He's been back a few times to imprison demons within the Chamber, but never bothered to double-check the area down the corridor. As he's about to find out, things have changed quite a bit. The Buro moved in five years ago and built a small factory over the Vortex, using it as a source of energy to help fuel their Shaped machines. While the base is far from a mighty fortress (Boatman set it up behind Bonengel's back as an insurance policy should things go bad between the two, and he can't divert much in the way of manpower to it without attracting some attention), Fong has no idea it's there waiting for them. Ideally, the characters should notice the BK97 Attack Chopper screaming toward them just as Fong hangs his head out of Gertie's cab and shouts "It's all clear ahead. Trust me! We just have to outrun that dung eating coward I call a son!"

A chain link fence that the characters' vehicles have no problem smashing right through protects the Buro base. Luckily for the characters, the base's main defenses are located on the other side of the base, away from them. The Bobos scouted the passageway leading to Fong's gate when they first moved here and assumed no enemy forces would ever come at them from that direction.

Unfortunately, most of the base's defenders can just pick up their bad selves and head on over to engage the characters. Meanwhile, Kenny Fong and his Lotus friends barrel after the characters, intent on stopping them. Kenny has no idea the Vortex sits within the Buro factory, but he does know enough to keep after the characters, and so relentlessly pursues them. The Buro troops don't know what's going on outside of the fact that a bunch of gun-toting lunatics have just stormed





into their base. They give both sides equal chances for an ass kicking.

This can quickly become a cumbersome battle if you don't handle it correctly. Here are some tips on running this one properly:

- Don't be afraid to keep some of the combatants on the sidelines. Part of the fun of this encounter is that everything is a confused mess as Buro troopers run around everywhere shooting up the scenery, demonic dragsters smash through light-weight prefab Buro housing, and the characters hightail it through all the chaos. If things are getting to be too much to handle, some of the Buro and Lotus goons head off to an unused portion of the battlefield and proceed to beat on each other without involving the characters.
- Keep things interesting for the characters. If you've been holding stuff back and they have too easy a time, a squad or two of Buro troopers with SPUD-U support can always burst out of that last, innocent looking building between the characters and the factory.
- Don't let the dice dictate something lame. This general rule goes double for a scene like this, where a lucky shot from a Buro goon could take down a named character like one of the four Hot Rods of the Apocalypse (p. 51) or Old Man Fong. Let the mooks beat on each other. Save the named characters for our heroes.

WHAT THE BURO GOONS DO

The Buro goons attack in waves, with units arriving in this order:

The Jammer Junker

A BK97 Attack Chopper. This bad boy is flying perimeter and immediately moves in to attack the characters. It's the first Buro

BK97 Attack Chopper

All skill values are derived from the Buro crewmen flying this thing. Assume their stats are otherwise identical to the Buro troopers listed below.

Sample Dialogue: SWOOOSH!!! BOOM!

Attributes: Pep +1, Wreck 25

Skills: Guns 14, Driving 12 (includes pep bonus)

Weapons: Megathreat chaingun (15/-/1500), Woodchuck missiles (25/-/144), Madame Curie microwave laser gun (15/-/-)

Unnamed Buro Grunts

Sample Dialogue: "Where the hell are our damned reinforcements?!?"

Attributes: Bod 6, Chi 0, Mnd 4, Ref 5

Skills: Martial Arts 8, Guns 8

Weapons: punch (7), kick (8), Buro 9 (10/1/17+1), Buro Bluespear (13**/6/30, full autofire)

Unnamed Bouncing Benjis

Sample Dialogue: (Hop, hop) [VROOM! SPLUT!]

Attributes: Bod 8, Chi 0, Mnd 1, Ref 5

Skills: Martial Arts 8, Creature Powers 10, Arcanowave Device 10

Arcanowave Schticks: Juicer, Neural Stimulator, Spirit Shield Generator

Creature Schticks: Abysmal Spines (claws) x3, Damage Immunity: Blast

Weapons: Claws (11)

Tower Rocket Team

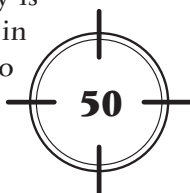
Sample Dialogue: "Eat this, consumer!"

Attributes: Bod 6, Chi 0, Mnd 4, Ref 5

Skills: Martial Arts 8, Guns 8

Weapons: punch (7), kick (8), Buro 9 (10/1/17+1), Buro Blue Spear (13**/6/30, full autofire), Woodchuck missile launcher (25/3/1, takes six shots to reload)

unit to observe and engage the characters. (And yes, it counts as a named character.)





Platoon of Buro Soldiers

These guys are walking perimeter and begin firing at the characters as soon as they come into view. There are three of them for each character in your playing group.

Bouncing Benjis

These are let loose to swarm over the characters and their vehicles. There are four of them for each character.

Observation Tower

This lofty structure houses two Buro soldiers who operate a portable Woodchuck rocket launcher. They pelt both the Lotus goons and the characters with missiles indiscriminately.

WHAT THE LOTUS GOONS DO

Kenny and company are as ignorant about what Fong has up his sleeve as the Buro. Again, feel free to slant things to fit the flow of the story. If the characters are still pretty beat up from the fight at Fong's mansion, Kenny decides that the Buro is in league with his father and orders his minions to target the Buro troopers. If the characters are having an easy time of it, Kenny chalks up the Buro's involvement to bad planning on Fong's part and orders his guys to ignore the Buro schmucks and concentrate their fire on the characters.

The Four Hot Rods of the Apocalypse

These four guys — Cobra, Mustang, Camaro, and Firebird — are unique among the Lotus forces. They have the ability to transform into vintage muscle cars

The Four Hot Rods of the Apocalypse

Sample Dialogue: "We don't brake for losers like you. We just run 'em down."

Attributes (Humanoid Form): Bod 8, Chi 2 (Mag 10), Mnd 5, Ref 9

Attributes (Car Form): Pep +2, Wreck 9

Skills: Martial Arts 14, Guns 10, Creature Powers 15, Driving 14

Creature Shticks: Abysmal Spines x2 (spikes on sides of car form, flaming tire iron in human form), Armor, Blast (fiery breath), Foul Spew (slippery slime), Transformation

Weapons: punch (9), kick (10), flaming tire iron (12)

Biker Thug

Sample Dialogue: "Eat my dust!"

Attributes: Bod 6, Chi 0, Mnd 4, Ref 5

Skills: Martial Arts 8, Guns 8, Driving 8

Weapons: punch (7), kick (8), Uzi (10/4/40)

Motorcycles: Pep +1, Wreck 2

appropriate to their names complete with fire and smoke bellowing out of the exhaust. Demonic flame patterns are painted on the sides and cheesy skulls, pentagrams, and other metal icons decorate on their hoods. Their headlights are replaced with malevolent yellow eyes and they have full use of their creature shticks when in car form. In their humanoid forms, they look like mechanics from hell. Their skin is black as oil, they reek of gasoline, each wears a leather jacket emblazoned with a pentagram on the back, and they fight with flaming tire irons. They prefer to stay in their car forms, and revert to human form only out of the direst necessity.

Biker Thugs

Kenny rounded up these goons to work with the Four Hot Rodders. He figures that since those demons can move pretty fast, he needs some back-up that can keep up with them. Most of these guys are Lotus minions from 69 AD who've grown comfortable using contemporary technology.



Cool Things That Could Happen During the Fight

- A hover-bus full of Netherworld rabble brought in by the Buro to serve as disposable labor blunders into the middle of the running battle. The bus attracts a lot of fire and the driver is shot dead, sending it out of control. Of course, a suitably heroic character could always jump aboard and guide the bus to safety.
- The fuel depot is a bigass explosion waiting to happen. Extra points for characters who detonate the tanks and then drive through the inferno to shake off pursuit.
- The observation tower is a surprisingly flimsy structure. If a vehicle should happen to clip it and send it tumbling to the ground, the Hellharrower ammunition stored within would probably fire off in random directions when it hits the ground, resulting in a more aesthetically pleasing (read: explosion-ridden) battlefield.
- The remaining random buildings aren't so much obstacles as they are chances for daring heroes to drive their vehicles into and past such embarrassing scenes as a Buro scientist perched on a commode; two Buro operatives practicing love, Buro-style; or a platoon of sleepy Buro soldiers tumbling out of bed and racing about in their underthings.
- The construction area is ripe for fun. Sections of modular housing are piled at just the right angle for a car to use them as an impromptu jump. This stunt works especially well if combined with taking out the guard tower. In addition, characters stuck outside a car can find plenty of cool stuff here to play with: cases of nails, screws, and other bits that don't react well with tires; modular living units that make good road blocks; and perhaps a construction vehicle or two, if you're feeling generous and want to allow characters who lose their wheels a chance to get back into the vehicular mayhem. (Of course, you could also include the construction

vehicles if you're feeling nasty and want to give the bad guys a chance to throw more vehicles at the heroes.)

- If you've ever watched *CHiPs*, *The Dukes of Hazzard*, or any other auto-centric cheesy TV show, you should have a good grasp of car chase/battle physics. Disabled cars always blow up, even if the damage that takes them out is more like a flat tire and less like a direct rocket hit to the fuel tank. Cars involved in wrecks are temporarily absolved from the laws of gravity, allowing them to soar into the air courtesy of obstacles and debris that just happen to form a jump so perfect that it would make Evel Kneivel weep. If dramatic license demands that passengers manage to spill out of a vehicle, surviving to riddle the battlefield with more bullets and/or kung fu mayhem, then do it.

STAND IN THE FIRE

After the characters race into the factory, things really start to get complicated. The factory is a massive maze of machines, catwalks, conveyer belts, assembly lines, and panicked workers. The characters need to get to the center of the factory to breach the containment core that surrounds the Devil's Vortex and toss the Chamber into the newly revealed raging inferno of raw, fiery energy. They also must get the heck out of the entire mess before the destabilized raging inferno incinerates the factory and most of the Buro encampment.

All in all, it's another typical day in the Secret War.



INSIDE THE FACTORY

The factory is a cavernous, poorly-lit building. Florescent lights dangle from the be-cat-walk'ed ceiling, casting an unhealthy pale white glow over the interior. The main passageways are large enough to allow two vehicles to proceed down them side by side, while the smaller passageways could accommodate a single car the size of a sedan or smaller, such as Clayton's car or any of the Hot Rods of the Apocalypse.

Cafeteria

This room is a stark, utilitarian place filled with well-ordered dinner tables with attached benches. Along one wall is a series of vending machines that dispense typical Buro fare. Food is categorized by texture, taste, and temperature. Of course, any violent trauma to the machines causes them to spray food gunk all over the place.

Catwalks

Factory management uses these to keep a personal eye on the workers below, though overseers working up here work harder to distract the slobes below from the omnipresent Buro security cameras than to actually keep tabs on them. The catwalks hang fifteen feet above the factory floor.

Conveyor Belts, Machines, and Heavy Industrial Equipment

All of this stuff is in constant motion, busily cranking out weapons, tools, and other toys for the Buro's use.

Containment Furnace

This mammoth, squat steel structure encloses the Devil's Vortex, channeling the magical power it generates to the factory's Shaped machinery, allowing them to operate at optimal levels without Shaped power generators or a constant supply of fuel from 2056. To get to the Vortex, the characters must smash a hole in the furnace, which requires an AR 20 attack action. Ramming the furnace with something suitably large (such as a hover-tank or a big rig) also breaches the furnace. Once the furnace is breached the entire factory shudders and a cool, calm, feminine voice comes over the factory's PA system.

"Attention consumers. Due to a fatal operations disruption, this facility will experience a traumatic productivity failure in five minutes."

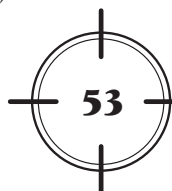
This message repeats every thirty seconds, incrementing the time remaining accordingly. Light pours from the hole in the thing, and the temperature in the factory rises noticeably.

Characters native to 2056 or familiar with Buro lingo know that a "traumatic productivity failure" is Buro-speak for "It's gonna blow up *real good*."

If the Chamber ends up in the furnace, the anguished screams of several hundred demons resonate throughout the factory as the demons meet their final reward. The light streaming from the breach in the furnace rapidly changes colors, bathing the area in a cacophony of reds, greens, blues, and yellows. For the three shots after the Chamber goes in the furnace, all actions are at -2 AV. Anyone heading for the exit is temporarily disoriented and, if you're feeling fiendish, must make an Intelligence roll, Difficulty 7, to stumble back to the exit in the midst of the demonic strobe light show. Of course, killing the characters because they blow an Intelligence check is lame, but making them sweat over it is all in good fun.

Cool Things That Could Happen During the Fight

- Nothing spices up a fight like a massive piece of industrial equipment. There are





all sorts of nasty presses, pistons, grinders, and cutters built into the machines located throughout the factory. Mooks – especially Bouncing Benjis, who are too dumb to avoid dangerous moving parts – are meant to be thrown into them. A named villain should, at some point, try to force a character into a particularly dangerous-looking contraption, causing a tense battle of wills as the two opponents grapple and struggle to toss the other into the path of a whirling blade/pneumatic press/whatever.

- Characters can and should hop from conveyor belt to conveyor belt, eluding pursuing enemies and showcasing their acrobatic skills. Stealthy types should strap explosives to a belt and send them zooming towards unsuspecting mooks.
- The catwalks are rather rickety. Any really violent activity on them (like hand to hand combat) causes them to sway perilously, causing a -2 AV on all skill checks made by those upon them.
- The florescent lights hang by wires from the ceiling, giving acrobatic combatants a chance to show off their Tarzan vine-swinging talents.
- If at any point in the battle Kenny or Old Fong are mortally injured, you have a great chance to play out a touching scene as father and son, faced with the prospect of death, heal the rift between them. Extra points if this happens during the countdown to the great big explosion.
- The big, wide accessways are meant for forklifts and other industrial vehicles. Demonic Hot Rods, modified Ford Escorts, and motorcycles can drive down them two abreast. Game of chicken, anyone?

END GAME

If the characters get the Chamber into the furnace, they have a slight problem on their hands, as explained above. The Buro goons waste no time getting out of the blast area, as do the Lotus. Of course, if two fighters are locked in a particularly tense battle, there's no reason for them to break off the fight for something as minor as a fiery explosion. Keep that in mind as you finish up this scenario. The factory's explosion should heighten the drama and tension, not bring it to a dead stop.

EPILOGUE

Depending on how things turn out, the characters might make a lot of new enemies. The Buro, in typical Buro style, has enough cameras and surveillance devices seeded throughout the complex that at least something survived the explosion, giving the Architects some hard evidence on just who blew up their property. If any of the Lotus goons survive, they lobby to have the characters take up a prominent place on that faction's Who to Kill Next list. Finally, Kenny Fong (and even Old Man Fong, depending on how things go) could become a recurring villain. Of course, if you run this as a filler piece for your game, there's no need to let this adventure have any long-term effects on your campaign. Just assume the explosion took out any evidence of the characters' involvement and get on with your regularly scheduled plot developments next week.

The Lost City of An-Makalur

TOM MCGRENERY

Premise: In 1850, the PCs get a treasure map that leads them to darkest Africa.

Twist: The treasured artifact they seek is guarded by savage tribesmen. And gorillas.

Climax: A journey into the heart of an ancient temple city.

in Africa, a Belgian entrepreneur by the name of Jean de la Croix heard about Wang's escape. He also heard about Wang's map, and contacted associates in Shanghai to obtain it on his behalf.

BACKSTORY

For centuries the Bangala tribe has dwelt deep in the Congo. In the ruins of a forgotten city called An-Makalur, successive shamans of the tribe have wielded the powers of the Lion's Diamond, a fabulous magical item that has protected the Bangala people. European colonization, however, has meant closer and closer encroachment on the Bangalas' tribal lands.

In fact, several expeditions have come altogether too close to the city. While the Bangala believe these interlopers were all slain or captured, unbeknownst to them, one man in the company of the Penrose Expedition (led by Algernon Penrose CBE) saw the city and survived, running the gauntlet of the River Congo's many dangers to return to civilization. He drew a map of the expedition's route, which he kept hoping to find some way to return with a larger expedition, perhaps to rescue his companions, if they yet lived.

This man was Wang Ziyi, a native of Shanghai. It was to his home that he eventually returned. Unfortunately for him, back

ON THE WATERFRONT

Our story begins in the docklands of Shanghai, in the 1850 juncture. Foreign concessions — areas of land ceded by the ailing Qing government to Western powers — dominate the coast at this time. Chinese and foreigners alike teem in the streets. The air is noisy with the shouts of dockers and stall-holders. European soldiers shoulder their way roughly through the crowds. It's a hot day, and more than a few traders' stocks of fish are starting to smell a bit.

There are quite a few reasons characters might be down at the wharves. For example:

- Characters with a Wealth Level of Poor could be working as dockers, loading and unloading ships, or in any of the shops and bars in the area.
- Characters of appropriate types, such as an Everyman Hero, Big Bruiser, or Spy (undercover, you see), might be sailors on shore leave.
- With the area's seedy reputation, cops could be searching out criminals, as could Masked Avengers or Private Investigators.



Unnamed Muggers

Sample Dialogue: "Quick! Get the map out of here! Aaaaargh!"

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 6

Skills: Martial Arts 8, Intimidation 7, Intrusion 8

Weapons: punch (6), kick (7), knife (7)

- A criminal (such as a Thief or Killer) could be looking for work.
- Any character could be looking for passage to somewhere by sea, whether as a passenger or a sailor.
- Chinese nationalist or Hand-affiliated characters might be engaged in anti-European terrorism, such as blowing up a ship or other important installation.

THE MAP ARRIVES

As the action commences, all the PCs should be close to one another and near the sea. A sudden commotion stirs the crowd nearby, and a circle forms around a weather-beaten Chinese man of about forty. A group of five poorly-attired thugs crowd around him. One reaches forward and grabs a small, pale object from the man's jacket. There is a scuffle and then the assailants starting pushing their way away from the man, through the throng of onlookers.

Your players should be itching to roll for initiative, but make them wait just a little longer.

Wang — the victim of the mugging — staggers towards the most soft-hearted PC (who is, conveniently, the closest one), blood trickling from the corners of his mouth. He grasps the PC's shoulders for support and, with imploring eyes, forces out words to the following effect, in a classic movie last words style:

"I'm Wang...the...the map. I saw it...the city... Evil men.... Want the power of the...lion. They took...they took the...the map..."

Basically, you need to convey the importance of the map and the fact that the PCs need to get it from the thugs who have just stolen it. Once this is made clear, Wang expires bloodily and slumps forward, revealing a knife embedded in his back.

Now is the time for butt-kicking and map-retrieval. The thieves are all unnamed characters and the docks feature a vast array of impromptu weapons, so it should be a short fight.

Cool Things That Could Happen During the Fight

- Crates of tea, opium, or whatever else are constantly being taken to and from the dockside. A stray blow could easily spill their contents, causing bad footing for everyone. Plus, there's a rush of looters as passersby try to grab the stuff off the ground.
- It's simplicity itself for one or more of the muggers to flee onto a berthed ship. At this point, rigging, sails, cannon, angry sailors, and all your other *Captain Blood* sailing ship clichés come into play. Ropes can be cut to bring sails crashing down. If one of the thugs flees up the mast, a high-wire martial arts duel is a distinct possibility.
- Portable stalls with awnings stand in rows along the waterfront, selling food and trinkets. To delay pursuit, a thug might push one of these over, causing a domino effect along the row of stalls, burying several people under them (possibly including one or more PCs).
- Anyone falling off the quay rapidly discovers the water level is quite low. The exposed mud at the bottom of the docks is extremely squidgy, and comes up to almost knee-height. Characters fighting in the mud take a -4 AV penalty on account of reduced mobility and unsteady footing.

Investigation

It shouldn't be too hard for the PCs to get the map. If they question the thugs after the event, there is little to learn:

- They were hired by a foreigner who said he would contact and pay them when they got the map.
- He had a very silly moustache — curled up at the ends.



- As for the map, the man said he needed it in order to get to a certain place “before it’s too late.”

If the players take no interest in investigating the map or treasure, let them go on their merry way. If they do try to find out something of what’s going on, however, there are some avenues open. The players may make appropriate Info skill rolls, or simply think of the right people to ask on a subject, at your discretion.

The City

Showing the map or naming the city of An-Makalur to an authority on folklore yields the following information:

- An-Makalur is the mythical home of the equally mythical Bangala tribe, a people who wielded the powers of the very gods.
- The center of the Bangalas’ power was the “Lion’s Diamond,” a jewel that bestowed

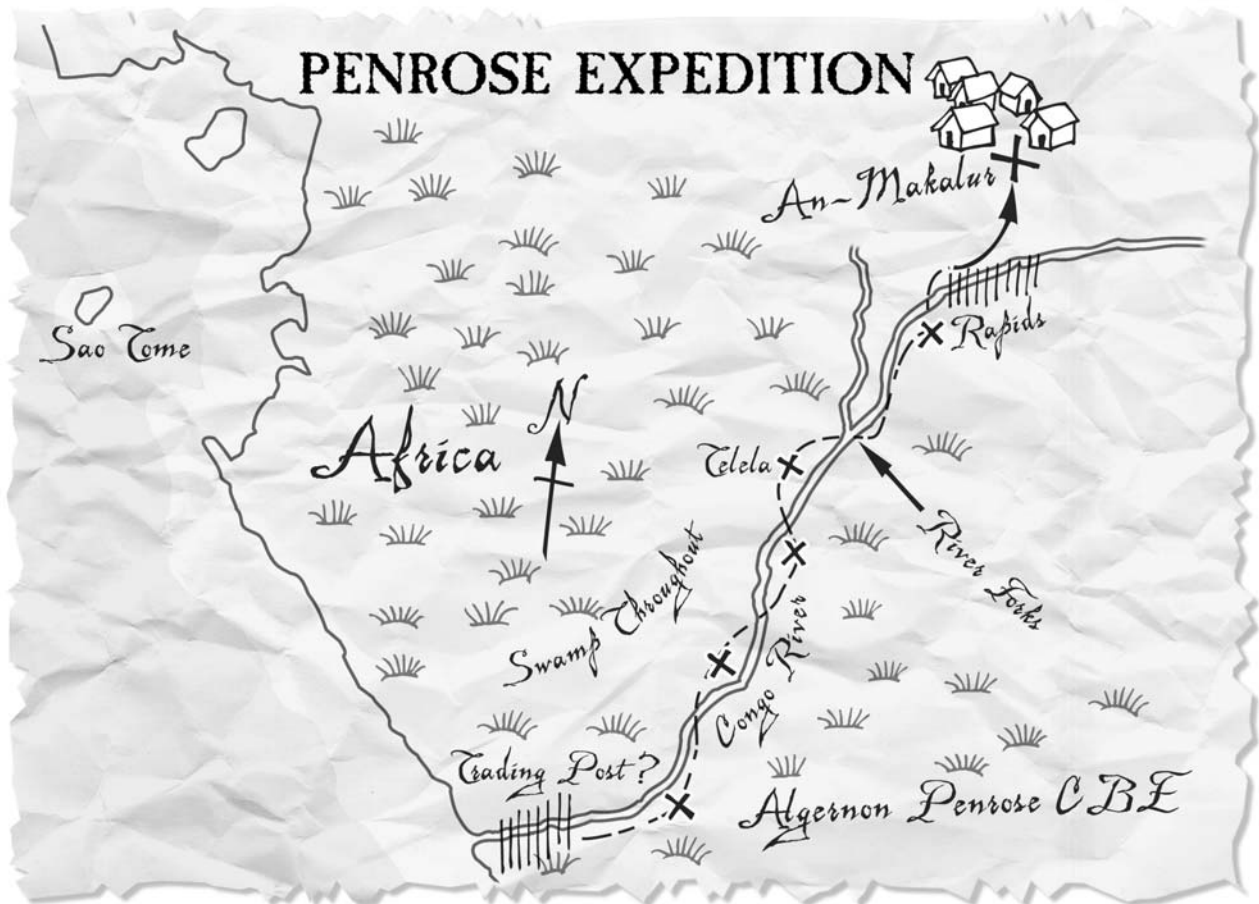
great magical abilities upon its wielder. The lion as an icon is often used in African art to represent the Bangala.

- An-Makalur does not exist. It’s just a metaphor, a model to which the natives of the Congo aspire.

The Penrose Expedition

The administrative buildings and drinking clubs of the British concession are the best places to inquire about the Penrose Expedition. Poor, non-European characters may have difficulty getting in to any or all of these, though.

The final link in the investigative chain (which may be as long or short as the GM desires) is Captain Jack “the Hat” Cholmondley-Warner, who is a friend of Algernon Penrose. Once they’ve cornered said brandy-sozzled, leather armchair-occupying officer, there are a few things to be discovered:



The Belgians

The Belgians are a recommended, but optional, plot device. Wang Ziyi was attacked on the orders of Jean de la Croix, and once the PCs have arrived in Africa, Jean and his cohorts begin to follow them, hoping to beat them to the treasure of An-Makalur despite not having the map. De la Croix commands a handful of Belgian colonial troops — hired men from many countries, a little like the French Foreign Legion, but without such a hard-as-nails reputation.

The Belgians shadow the PCs throughout their journey. They try not to reveal themselves before reaching the city. Nevertheless, the PCs may occasionally spot signs of the Belgians, such as campfire smoke or rustling footsteps in the undergrowth. If a member of the PCs' party — preferably a GMC — goes off by himself, the Belgians may attempt to kidnap him. It is also possible that a less stealthy Belgian might himself be captured and spill the beans, making the players nicely paranoid and confirming for the PCs that they're being followed. Regardless, the Belgians reveal themselves once and for all in the city of An-Makalur, becoming the PCs' out-and-out rivals for the Lion's Diamond in a race for the temple.

Jean de la Croix

Sample Dialogue: "You theenk ze Belgians are all just sprouts and neutrality, ah? Well, soon we shall be ze most powerful imperial nation on Earth!"

Attributes: Bod 4, Chi 0, Mnd 7 (Int 8), Ref 7

Skills: Martial Arts 11, Guns 14, Intimidation 9, Leadership 11, Info/Congo 10, Info/Exploration 8, Info/Schizocorps 8

Gun Schticks: Carnival of Carnage, Lightning Reload x3

Weapons: punch (5), kick (6), black-powder pistol (7/3/1)

Unnamed Lackeys of King Leopold

Sample Dialogue: "No, I'm not a Belgian, I just work for one. There is a difference."

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 5

Skills: Martial Arts 7, Guns 8, Intimidation 8

Weapons: Punch (6), Kick (7), Musket (8/5/1)



Illustration by Toren Atkinson



- You really can't get proper sherry in Shanghai.
- Penrose was terribly enthusiastic about finding gold in the Congo.
- The Congo's in Africa, don't you know?
- Jack last heard from Penrose in a letter sent from Sao Tomé. In it, Penrose said he had been told of a lost city and fabulous wealth.
- Sao Tomé is an excellent place to buy absinthe.
- Penrose mentioned something about someone following him.

Time to Depart

By now, the players should be raring to go. You may or may not want to play out the preparations for the journey. Doing so allows the possibility of a nice *Treasure Island*-type affair with a cutthroat crew if the PCs don't get their hiring right. Regardless, assume a Rich character can buy or hire a ship to get the PCs to Africa. If none of the characters are Rich, they ought to be able to find a ship bound for their destination and get hired as crew.

Some players may dawdle over this. Tell them to get on the damn boat.

SAO TOMÉ

Sao Tomé was Penrose's last recorded stop before sailing on to the mouth of the Congo, thence presumably to An-Makalur. This is where the PCs can pick up what they need for their own trip — supplies, native bearers, and so on. It is a moderately bustling port, serving as a convenient locus for many trades (including slavery, actually, but you may want to gloss over this if you're not feeling gritty). For some PCs not native to the contemporary or 2056 junctures, this may be the first time they've seen Africans. Feel free to use most of the Hollywood-style Moroccan bazaar clichés here. They'll do.

Let the players wander round the streets of Sao Tomé for as long as they like, until they feel prepared to go on with their journey. Try to build a sense of foreboding. If the locals found out where the PCs are headed, they

are full of strange folklore and dire warnings about the Tei-Makalur valley. ("Ah, the lost city . . . it is said that it is guarded by the Terrible Three-Headed Frog!") One name keeps cropping up in conversation, though: Gerard Bresson, who operates a small trading post at the mouth of the River Congo. He is said to know a great deal about the lost city and its inhabitants. Also, he can sell the PCs a smaller river boat in order to continue their journey.

If the players ask around about the Penrose Expedition on Sao Tomé, a few people remember the group passing through the island. Others notice the characters because they are nosing around. Namely, Jean de la Croix and his mates.

THE TRADING POST

The PCs will most likely have to head for Gerard Bresson's trading post. It's difficult to buy a river boat on Sao Tomé, and they should be curious about Bresson and his knowledge of what lies upriver anyway. At the very least, they'll see the post as they sail past, since it is situated on the north bank of the Congo's estuary, with one side on the river front and another on the sea shore. On the opposite bank is a ramshackle village, whence many European groups hire guides and soldiers.

The camp is essentially a cluster of large canvas tents, with wooden jetties and mooring facilities on the ocean and river sides. When the PCs arrive, two river barges are having crates taken from them to a waiting ship. No other vessels are visible.

When (if) they land at the trading post, the PCs are greeted by Gerard Bresson, an ebullient Frenchman who is the only permanent resident of the post. In his mid-thirties, Gerard is almost manic in his appetite for human company, a side-effect of long periods alone in the wilds.

Gerard can outfit the PCs for their journey. Number one on Gerard's list of Things Explorers Should Have is a thirty-five-man canoe. This canoe can be disassembled into twenty parts so the load can be spread among the party's many bearers. (They have hired loads of native bearers, right?). Travelling by canoe is, says Gerard, the most convenient way to travel, as canoes

are easy to take out of the water if need be. Also, they can navigate very small channels.

Monsieur Bresson also has a significant knowledge of the Congo — basically, whatever information about later points in the adventure you feel the players should learn.

ELDERLY MAN RIVER

The River Congo is the second longest river in Africa and one of the longest in the world, at about 4375 km. It ranges in width from one half to ten miles across, depending on location and season, and on its banks lie uncharted realms of jungle and wilderness. The PCs are to travel a tiny fraction of the river's length, but this is still almost certainly a new and exotic experience.

The journey can take as long as you like, with as many encounters along the way as you deem appropriate. Often, the PCs will encounter trouble when they set up camp for the night on the river banks.

THE TETELA

The Tetela are a tribe of cannibals who inhabit this region. Actually, they're a large confederation. You wouldn't have thought cannibals could manage to hang around in such large groups for long, but there you go. Aside from any interruptions by the Belgians (see "The Belgians" on p. 58), the Tetela are the main antagonists of our story until the PCs reach the Tei-Makalur valley. The Tetela aren't stupid, and know that, for them, continued colonial advancement into the Congo is bad news with a capital "Bad." In response to this, they're attacking pretty much anyone who happens along their path. Like, say, wandering action heroes. The following events should occur in roughly the presented order, but interspersed with whatever else you like.

First Encounter

When the PCs and their entourage take a rest stop, they come across a nice flat clearing in the jungle on the river bank. While the first few meters are open, the rest of the clearing is full of very tall grass (about two meters high), criss-crossed with small paths of soil. A few stunted trees grow a little higher than the grass, but the dappled light that filters through the forest canopy above does not allow to become larger. At the edges of the clearing, which is about twenty meters in diameter, the jungle grows at its usual density.

Upon arrival, the bearers spread out to lounge around in the clearing, many out of sight. A cool wind blows across the area, causing the grass to rustle and whisper. A cry of alarm is made, then stifled. The Tetela are here.

This isn't a fight scene as such — there is fighting in it, but the emphasis is on suspense. The Tetela are hiding in the grass, and with almost no visibility, the PCs are separated and alone. They should be reluctant to shout out, as that would give away their locations.

Every sequence, each PC rolls Intrusion. If this beats the Intrusion rating of his opposite GMC (there's one unnamed Tetela warrior for every PC), he's spotted one of the Tetela, and can attack if desired. If the player's roll fails, the Tetela may attack instead. The grass provides a +2 cover modifier to the Difficulty of all attacks within it (this is where those Eagle Eye schticks come in handy). At the end of each sequence, each combatant rolls Intrusion again. Whoever gets the highest Action Result can either melt away into the grass or continue the fight, at his discretion. If other people want to rush over towards the loud "BANG! CLANG! Aaaaaargh!" noises they can hear, have them roll Perception, Difficulty 6, to turn up in the right place in time for the next sequence. If a character blunders about not even trying to be stealthy, his Intrusion check automatically fails.



Cool Things That Could Happen During the Action

- Someone running incautiously through the grass could well crash into one of the trees within the grove, leaving him dazed and probably causing him to fall over.
- Sword-wielding characters might accidentally leave a swathe of cut grass in their wake, making them easier to track.
- One of the Tetela may hide in the forest canopy at the clearing's edge — death from above!
- Don't forget the possibilities of botched Intrusion rolls or sheer GM meanness — fighters could accidentally attack people on their own side. Not too lethal for PCs and named characters, but explaining a bullet-riddled bearer could be interesting.

At the end of the fight (such as it is), the PCs look around and realize that several of the bearers are missing. The Tetela have captured these unfortunates and dragged them off to their village for dinner. Oh, dear.

On the Trail of the Tetela

It's not too difficult to follow the Tetela. At the edge of the clearing opposite the river bank, an obvious path leads into the jungle. This may seem a little careless of the Tetela, but considering that no one in his right mind would attack the village, the convenience of a path to the river makes up for its obviousness.

As the PCs proceed along the path, the forest becomes thicker and darker. After about ten minutes, they can no longer see any sunlight through the canopy of branches above. In the distance, they can hear menacing tribal drumming. As the party rounds a corner, they find themselves at the edge of a bowl-shaped basin. Below them is the Tetela village, and in it are *three million tribesmen!* Well, uh, okay, not three million, but three hundred or a thousand or whatever it takes to persuade the players not to attack the village head on.

Unnamed Tetela Warriors

Sample Dialogue: "Gaaaaahhh! Attack the succulent one!"

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 5

Skills: Martial Arts 8, Intrusion 4, Info/Cooking 5

Weapons: punch (6), kick (7), spear (9)

The PCs find themselves on the slope that approaches the village from the north. The slope gently descends twenty meters to the valley floor. Encircling most of the valley, however, are sheer cliffs of a reddish hue, pockmarked with crevices and what look like cave entrances. Trees of the forest grow on the edges of the cliffs, leaning over and intertwined with the vast forest roof, which is unbroken even over the village, forming a natural dome. A few large trees stand scattered between the Tetela huts and reach up to the canopy.

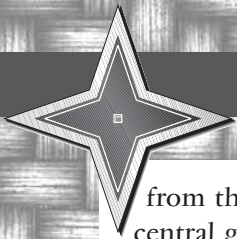
Each Tetela dwelling is a roughly oval mud hut with a thatched grass roof. Larger buildings are made of two or more of these structures, overlapping, with openings where the walls meet. The village is laid out in concentric circles, with the smaller, less important buildings on the outside edge. In the center are two of the larger, multi-hut buildings — the houses of the chief and shaman. Their domiciles face a central open space, which has peculiar burn marks spread across it. Outside the front door of the chief's hut are two poles with human skulls threaded on them.

The whole village appears to be having a celebration — this is the source of the foreboding drumming. The central plaza is thronged with Tetela clad in their traditional loincloths and party head-dresses dancing like mad and chanting occasionally. A large cauldron is being warmed over a fire. In the center of the village, tied to stakes and looking much the worse for wear, are the missing members of the PCs' entourage.

Getting into the settlement, freeing the prisoners, and escaping in one piece may be a bit tricky. For a start, it may require some planning.

A direct frontal assault on the village is a mistake. If they do this, the players discover that the settlement's population seems to be on par with that of the People's Republic of China. The

Tetela kill the prisoners at the first sign of trouble, which is probably the biggest flaw in this plan. It takes a full sequence to get



from the entrance slope of the village to the central green where the bearers are tied up.

Climbing down one of the cliffs requires an Agility roll, Difficulty 5. Doing so without being seen requires an additional Intrusion roll at the same Difficulty. If the character is only climbing down part way, to one of the crevices, the Intrusion Difficulty is reduced to 3. Lucky PCs (Difficulty 3 Fortune roll) may find that the crevice they have clambered down to is the beginning of a tunnel that winds down to ground level inside the cliff.

The forest is very thick in this area, so it is quite easy to climb up into the jungle canopy above the village. Getting down is another matter, and requires an Agility roll, Difficulty 7.

An old classic is to wait for some guards to come too close to the forest edge, then clobber them and steal their clothes. Doing this should get the PCs into the village as long as they don't draw attention to themselves. It's a given that someone will spot them cutting the prisoners' ropes.

Also open is a classic colonial method — setting fire to the village. The Tetela try to put out the flames, and the PCs have the fun of trying to rescue the captives in the middle of a smoky (grass roofs, remember?) blaze.

Once the prisoners have been released (carrying a semi-conscious human is a continuous action) the PCs must escape from the village, fighting off as many unnamed Tetela as it takes before the GM feels they deserve a rest, and then paddle away like mad in their canoes.

Cool Things That Might Happen During the Fight

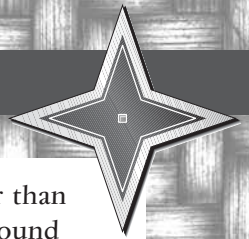
- Having hot long pig soup base sloshed over you from a giant cauldron does 10 Damage. Having said cauldron thrown at you does (Strength +4) Damage.
- Grass is fine as a simple roofing material, but it isn't the toughest stuff in the world. Hurlled fighters easily fall through the roof of a hut onto its occupants. Sneaky types hiding on top of a hut might suddenly find spears jabbing at them through the roof.
- The chief has guns, and knows how to use them!
- People falling on the cooking fire are going to get hurt and have a problem when their clothes are set alight.
- An unreleased captive still tied to his stake could make an unusual impromptu weapon for a really big character. Or a human shield for a really cowardly one.
- Athletic characters who flee up the trees will be followed by several braver-than-normal warriors. Cue the acrobatic martial arts fight jumping from branch to branch.
- At the cliff edges, some vines trail from the trees and are within reach. Someone swinging on one would get down to ground level in the village in about six shots before swinging across to the opposite side. Watch out for those buildings. And spears.
- If the PCs are getting stomped and haven't done anything to really upset the tribe (like setting fire to their homes) the Champion may challenge one of the PCs to a duel. If he wins, the Tetela keep the captives. If not, they go free. An honorable man, the Champion does not renege on the deal, though given his dietary habits, it's understandable if the PCs don't trust him. The Champion has the same stats as an unnamed Tetela, except he's a named character. The Champion surrenders upon reaching 25 Wound Points.

More Tetela pour into the village from nearby settlements every sequence. (They're all coming for the big party). The PCs should definitely run like hell.

Other River Encounters

Here are a few ideas for additional river encounters, if you want to liven things up.

- Predators. Any type will do, really — don't worry about appropriateness for African ecology, because this is *Feng Shui*.
- Kindly primates. These may prompt Secret War veterans to suspect Jammer involvement.



- An unusual European fellow who claims to be “King of Jungle.” He may be useful, he may not be useful, but he’s deranged either way.
- The friendly M’Bongo tribe. They insist that everyone try their delicious fruit drink.

On the Rocks

After some time travelling upriver (after 134 km, in fact), the PCs come to large and impassable rapids, flowing quickly over huge rocks. Clearly, they have to land and continue on foot. As the expedition begins to move towards the bank, however, a troop of Tetela appears on the rocks, standing surely in footing that looks suicidal. If the players decide to charge and cream the Tetela with no provocation, that’s their option. But only a few of the tribesmen are armed — they’re here to talk.

The Tetela Chief steps forward, saying that he has heard the expedition is searching for the lost city. Even the Tetela fear to go there, as it is guarded by the terrifying Bangala tribe, as well as . . . other things. No, he doesn’t know what other things. No one who has gone looking for An-Makalur has ever come back.

Still, if the PCs want to try, it’s thataway.

The Chief points out a narrow, concealed path heading away from the river. The treasure map seems to verify his directions. In fact, it is the way to the city. The Tetela were angry with the PCs, but if they want to go to An-Makalur, they must be slightly touched, so probably didn’t mean any harm. Anyway, if a few more expeditions go missing, there’s a slim hope the Europeans won’t keep coming.

INTO THE HEART OF DARKNESS

As the expedition proceeds along the path to the city, the trail slopes gently downwards. The light becomes dimmer and dimmer as the forest becomes thicker and more overgrown. Pale, alien-looking undergrowth strains towards the unseen sky for the sun. The great trees themselves, some tens of meters across at

the base, are gnarled and twisted. Other than insects, no animal life can be seen at ground level — the only indications of fauna are the shrieks of whatever lives up in the trees as they echo around the boughs.

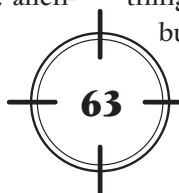
After what seems like ages, the party’s scouts come running back shouting that they can see light through the trees. As they part the leaves of the now-thicker shrubs that stand ahead of them, light floods in on the expedition. They squint out of the jungle and gaze upon the majestic Tei-Makalur valley. Brilliantly multi-colored birds flit from tree to blossoming tree. In the distance a huge waterfall raises a mist that flows over the nearby rocks, gargantuan though they are.

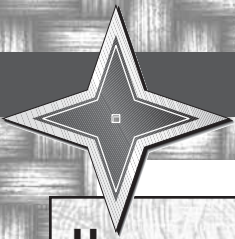
The choir comes in as the majestic music crescendos. The brass section goes mad. There, in the center of the secluded canyon, lies the magnificent temple city of An-Makalur. Made of blocks of yellowish stone, under the glare of the African sun the city shines as if made of gold. Every last building, even the smallest, most humble structure, seems sculpted rather than constructed. Elegant sculptures of men, animals, and gods dot the streets, some reaching twenty meters in height. The general architectural style consists of flat-roofed, rectangular buildings, with steps up to the roof and walkways between nearby buildings stretching from one roof to another.

At the center of the city, roads extending from its base like a web, stands the Lion Temple. Each step of its ziggurat form is as high as a man, and to reach its summit one would have to scale twenty-three of these steps. The Tei-Makalur river flows under the pyramid’s base and emerges in front in a stone-walled canal that flows through the city. The Lion Temple’s crown is its most magnificent feature, though. The gaping jaws of a titanic lion’s head, hewn from the golden rock, forms the entrance to the Lion Chamber.

When the PCs get to the edge of the city, they can see that the place is in a certain state of disrepair. Buildings are missing sections of wall, statues have been worn smooth by the passing of ages. They also discover that the roads don’t go straight to the temple. Rather, they form something of a maze that re-directs travelers around buildings and down perpendicular streets.

Another problem could well be the city’s psychopathic gorillas.





Unnamed Guardian Gorillas

Sample Dialogue: "Oook!"

Attributes: Bod 8, Chi 0, Mnd 2, Ref 5

Skills: Martial Arts 8, Info/Banana Gathering 5

Weapons: punch (9), kick (10)

Asur Mbani, Bangala Shaman

Sample Dialogue: "Seize them! No, kill them!"

Attributes: Bod 4, Chi 1 (Mag 8), Mnd 6, Ref 5

Skills: Sorcery 15, Leadership 10

Magic Schticks: Blast (Lightning, Ghostly Leopard Claws), Divination, Movement, Weather

Weapons: punch (5), kick (6), blast (10)

Unnamed Bangalas

Sample Dialogue: "Aaiiiieee!!"

Attributes: 5, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 5

Skills: Martial Arts 8

Weapons: punch (6), kick (7), spear (9)

The gorillas are controlled by the power of the Lion's Diamond, wielded by the Bangala tribe's shamans. They are dedicated to destroying anyone who dares set foot in the city uninvited. There's an unlimited supply of these hairy chappies, who dog the PCs throughout their time in the city, or at least until someone new takes control of the Lion's Diamond.

THE BANGALA

The passing of time has not been kind to the Bangala and the future does not look bright. Still, the tribe holds on as best they can, aided by the powerful magic of the Lion's Diamond. The Bangala number no more than a few hundred, and all now dwell in the interior of the temple and at the far end of the valley, near the falls. A few guards patrol the streets of the city, unmo- lested by the demented gorillas.

THE LION TEMPLE

The Lion's Diamond is a half-scale replica of a lion's head, in the same jaws-open pose as the Lion Chamber. It is kept at the top of the pyramid, on an altar within the Lion Chamber, as anyone with an eye for stylish and impressive magical item storage could tell you.

To get to the Diamond, the PCs must get up the temple's massive central staircase. What they don't realize until they get to the base of the zig- gurat is that it is surrounded on all sides by a deep, spiked trench. The channel for the canal and several narrow stone walkways cross this trench.

Unfortunately, as the PCs approach, the Bangala head shaman, Asur Mbani, is at the top of the pyramid with some of his flunkies, half- way through a human sacrifice. At an appropri- ately dramatic moment, one of the Bangala notices the approaching PCs and Asur sounds the alarm by hitting a huge gong. As the PCs race up the stairs (each stair about six feet tall, remember) ten fearsome Bangala warriors dressed in jaguar pelts and wearing jewelry made from the teeth of something that had really nasty sharp teeth run down towards them.

Once the PCs reach the Lion Chamber, a thunderous noise of running feet can be heard as hundreds of Bangala rush out of hidden exits in the base of the temple. They stream up towards the Lion Chamber, reaching it in two sequences (though only five can enter at a time).

From here on it's a desperate race to get away from the city. With wrathful sorcerers! Enraged apes! Enraged tribal warriors! Belgians!

Cool Things That Could Happen During the Fight

- Pretty much the first thing Asur Mbani does when the PCs enter the Lion Chamber is rush over to the altar and grab the Lion's Diamond. The PCs have four shots to prevent him from channeling the Lion's Unbridled Ferocity (see "Lion's Diamond User Guide" on the facing page). If deprived of the Diamond, Asur uses his Movement schtick to fly away before trying to figure



out a way to get it back. He finds screaming “Kill them! Kill them all!” at the tribe helps him think.

- If someone got thrown into the gong, it would make quite the comical sound.
- Domino effects can be achieved if large numbers of people rush up stairs. Failing to take proper care when going down enormous stone stairs can easily lead to a nasty fall.
- Jean de la Croix and the Belgians turn up and start shooting at everyone. Make a closed roll at the end of each sequence. A positive result is the number of Bangala the Belgians have taken out. A negative result is the number of Belgian casualties. Since the Bangala outnumber the Belgians (of whom there are fewer than a hundred) significantly, the latter will have to retreat after a while.
- If a rooftop chase occurs at any point (and it should), it becomes apparent that not all of the buildings’ roofs are strong enough to support the weight of a human being.
- A toppled statue falling on you really hurts, especially if it fell over due to one of your allies’ missed gunshots.
- What better way to increase tension than to have the Lion’s Diamond change hands a few times? Force characters who are attacked to make Dexterity rolls to avoid dropping the Diamond. Since everyone wants it, this could occupy a lot of people’s attention.
- When someone new takes hold of the Diamond, the gorillas are freed from their duty and stop their belligerence. Unless you rile ‘em.
- It’s up to you to determine when (or if) the PCs have escaped. Either into the jungle or onto their boats is a good threshold.

WRAPPING UP

So the heroes stormed the temple, nabbed the Diamond, and are on the arduous journey back to civilization. What now? Well, the journey back may not be so easy, especially if the Tetela turn nasty, but even the colonies and home won’t be much better. Being in possession of a sought-after treasure isn’t as easy as all that

Lion’s Diamond User Guide

Thank you for seizing control of the Lion’s Diamond! By spending three surprised shots staring directly into the Lion’s Diamond (not an optional activity), all new owners of the artifact magically learn how to operate it.

The Lion’s Diamond has three powers, each of which takes four shots to activate.

King of the Animals: By using the command words “Ia, ia! Fhtagn!” you can order every animal of a given species within a three-kilometer radius to obey a simple command until the Diamond has a new owner. Examples include “Leave immediately” or “Attack any moving vehicle.” This power costs three Magic points to use. Use the same power with the command words reversed to deactivate this power.

The Lion’s Unbridled Ferocity: Striking a dramatic pose and concentrating really hard allows you to take on the Lion’s Unbridled Ferocity. Until the end of the current combat, you need not make death checks until you reach sixty Wound Points, but you are driven to attack at every opportunity. Once the combat is over, your Wound Points are reduced to thirty if they exceed that number.

Master of Seasons: Immersing the Lion’s Diamond in water grants you a +5 AV bonus on uses of the Weather Sorcery schtick.

— consider the misfortune of Wang Ziyi. And he only had the map.

If the Ascended get wind of the Diamond, they’ll definitely want to get their hands on it. Does it work on transformed animals? They don’t know, and don’t want to find out the hard way.

Although it’s of particular interest to the Ascended, anyone keen on taking over the world would like to get his grubby mitts on the Lion’s Diamond. Any or all of the factions may send hit squads after the PCs.

More importantly, perhaps, what are the PCs going to *do* with the thing?

Fight Night

DAVID EBER

The Premise: A wealthy patron enlists the PCs to track down his daughter, who ran off with her biker boyfriend a month ago.

The Twist: The boyfriend “lost” her in an underground arena combat. She now belongs to the master of the fights, who happens to be a recruiter for the King of the Thunder Pagoda.

The Climax: The PCs battle it out in the underground arena while trying to figure out how to rescue the girl.

BACKSTORY

Amber Matthews is the quintessential spoiled rich girl. Twenty years old and beautiful, with blonde hair and blue eyes, she was always the center of attention — except when it came to daddy, who tried to make up for his long absences by giving her whatever she wanted. As a result, Amber spent most of her teenage life trying to piss her father off. First it was smoking, alcohol, and all-night parties in high school. Now, in college, it’s drugs, wrecked cars, and a procession of seedy boyfriends. Her latest was Kevin Hoyt, leader of the Hellhounds motorcycle gang. They met at a rock concert, and Amber was hooked by his good looks, bad-boy persona, and ample supply of coke. Of course, daddy forbade her to see him. So in a grand gesture of defiance, Amber dropped out of school and took off with him and his gang on the road.

That was a month ago, and now Amber’s father, Brian Matthews, has grown worried. Amber pulled stunts like this in the past, but she’s never disappeared for this long. Brian has good reason to worry. After the Hellhounds left town, they got involved in an illegal underground fighting circuit in Los Angeles. Staged at secret locations throughout the city, these no-holds-barred arena-style fights pit some of the toughest competitors from across the area against each other in bloody, one-on-one combat. The acknowledged master of the fights is a giant of a man named Kel Mukando. Kel has an iron grip on the fighting circuit, and he has never lost a challenge. Unfortunately, Kevin Hoyt forgot that. The Hellhounds were regular, successful competitors in the fights, but one night after too much drinking and a few wins too many Kevin challenged Kel to a fight, hoping to gain control of the arena. Kel gave Kevin a brutal beating in the ring, and then, instead of killing him, humiliated him by claiming Amber as his prize and sending the Hellhounds slinking away in disgrace.

As it stands, Amber is more or less a plaything for Kel, who keeps her complacent with a steady diet of mind-numbing drugs. Kevin and the Hellhounds are lying low and licking their wounds. Kel, of course, continues to rule over the fights unchallenged. However, there’s more to him than this; Kel has been so successful because he’s secretly a champion of the King of the Thunder Pagoda. His whole purpose in taking over the fights was to scout out



the best fighters and recruit them into Huan Ken's service. Although Amber means little to him personally, he won't relinquish her willingly. He sees her as a prize won in battle, and as a warning and reminder to all potential challengers that he's the best there is.

ABOUT THE ADVENTURE

"Fight Night" is an adventure intended for one to four starting PCs. It's meant to be played in one session, and can serve either as a one-shot game or as the starting point for a campaign. It isn't particularly enmeshed in the Secret War, and while the PCs may learn a little bit about what's really going on behind the scenes, that's hardly the focus of the action.

You can involve the players in one of two ways. If you're running "Fight Night" as a one-shot, you might decide that the PCs are all part of a professional organization — a detective agency, group of mercenaries, band of troubleshooters, whatever — who are hired by Brian Matthews to find his daughter. This gives the players a ready reason to take the job and allows you to create characters who are tailored to the needs of the story. However, for a long-term game your players are more likely to want to create their own characters. In this case, your best option is to attach one of the PCs to Brian or Amber Matthews by means of a dramatic hook, and make the rest of the PCs friends of that character. Alternately, one of the PCs could be a private investigator or cop, and the rest of the PCs his friends, contacts, or associates, all of whom get drawn into the action.

If you were paying attention during the backstory, it probably occurred to you that one or more of the PCs will wind up in the fight pits during this scenario. Thus, at least one of the characters should be capable of handling himself in a pretty intense one-on-one. Since this is *Feng Shui*, that should probably go without saying.

One other note: while this scenario is written with Southern California in mind, it's a cake-

walk to change the names and set the adventure in a completely different part of the world.

GETTING STARTED

The game begins with a meeting between Brian Matthews and the PCs. Exactly how much of this gets played out is up to you. You may want to actually roleplay the meeting, or you may simply wish to summarize it, particularly if the characters have been hired instead of volunteering their services. What matters is that the players get the facts of the situation.

Brian Matthews is in his mid-forties, tall, with graying hair and still in fairly good shape. He can tell the PCs:

- His relationship with his daughter has been strained in recent years.
- This isn't the first time she's run away from home. However, she's never been gone this long.
- He hasn't heard from her for a month now.
- She left with Kevin Hoyt, who is the leader of a motorcycle gang called the Hellhounds.
- He doesn't believe she's being held for ransom. At least, he hasn't received any ransom notes or phone calls or anything like that. In any case, money is not an issue, as Brian is a wealthy man.

THE HELLHOUNDS

Finding the Hellhounds should be no problem for the PCs. A simple Police or Detective check suffices, as does a contacts check on, say, Info/Streetwise or Info/Criminal Underworld. Even Journalism could provide a contact with a lead. At any rate, it won't be hard for the PCs to learn that the Hellhounds operate along the California coastline, trafficking in illegal drugs and engaging in various acts of assault, petty theft, vandalism, and the like. The word is that they're going to be meeting up with another gang known as the Ravens out in the desert in a few days, though no one knows exact-



Intercepting the Hellhounds

It's very likely that your players will want to try and find the Hellhounds before they meet with the Ravens. If this happens, you can handle it in one of two ways. The first is to simply say that they can't be located. After all, Southern California is a big place, and the Hellhounds are constantly on the move. The other is to stage a meeting with the gang on the road, at a bar, or somewhere else convenient. Kevin might be among them, or if you want a longer adventure, it might just be a stepping stone to locating him. If you take this option, you'll have to do the work yourself, but it shouldn't be hard to improvise if necessary.

ly why. A little research reveals that the gangs are, if not especially friendly, at least on relatively good terms with each other.

The meeting takes place in a large open area off a deserted stretch of highway. Both gangs are present, about sixty or so in total, their bikes parked loosely in a semi circle around a small bonfire. The two gangs are racing for kicks, drinking, getting high, and generally partying. Both the Hellhounds and the Ravens are your typical outlaw biker types — clad in denim and leather, unshaven, thoroughly disreputable. Kevin Hoyt himself is in his early thirties, tall, and well-built, with deep-set blue eyes, close-cropped dirty blonde hair and matching stubble. His ruggedly handsome looks are marred by the fact that he's obviously had his nose broken recently, and what's more, he just looks mean. There is also an assortment of biker chicks and a few local girls partying it up with the two gangs as well.

The PCs are not made welcome if they show up at the powwow. Neither gang attacks, but they aren't friendly either. Kevin himself is easy enough to find. Not the nicest person under normal circumstances, any mention of Amber sets him off, as his recent humiliation is still fresh in his mind. The mood turns ugly quickly until Juan Cabera, the leader of the Ravens, offers a solution. He suggests that one of the PCs race Kevin for the information. (The Ravens have lost more than they've won this evening, and Juan would like to see Kevin humbled). Assuming they came in some kind of car, that

becomes their stake. He even volunteers to loan them a bike for the race. Of course, both gangs love this idea, and even Kevin warms up to it.

The race is simple: Kevin and one of the PCs have to race 100 yards down the highway, turn around, and come back again. The first person back wins. The race takes 2 sequences, one up and one back. Use the chase rules from *Golden Comeback*, and assume both bikes are Pep +2, Wreck 1. One side of the road — the side that the two gangs are partying on — drops off into a steep ditch. Kevin tries to force his opponent off the side if he's in danger of losing. This is resolved like a Martial Arts attack, but using Driving vs. Driving skills. Any character who is forced off must make a Driving task check, Difficulty 12, to avoid wiping out (taking 15 Damage in the process). Driving off road incurs a -2 penalty to all Driving skill checks from there on. Kevin also carries a long length of chain, which he uses to entangle opponents. The attack is made at a -2 penalty, but if he hits, his opponent must make a Driving check equal to Kevin's Action Result (Martial Arts + Outcome) to stay in control of the bike. The effects of failure are up to you, and can be anything from the character skidding off the side of the road to being thrown from the bike (same damage as wiping out); whatever you think is the most exciting.

If the PCs lose, they're told to start walking. If Kevin loses, he's unlikely to be a good sport about it. He tells the PCs to go to hell, and if the PCs don't take the cue to start busting heads, he probably attacks anyway, 'cause he's that pissed off. Of course, the players may want to skip the race altogether and get straight to the bashing. The only difference is the Ravens. If the PCs go on the offensive, the Ravens are likely to turn against them, but if they win the race, the other just takes off when the fighting begins. As far as they're concerned, the PCs showed guts, and the Ravens aren't looking for trouble. Either way, the stats for members of both gangs are identical. They use switchblades, chains, and tire irons, but don't draw guns unless the PCs do.



Things That Could Happen During the Fight

- When the fighting breaks out, at least a few of the Hellhounds get on their bikes and attempt to mow the PCs down. This can and should lead to a few violent crashes. A tire iron thrown into a wheel causes a speeding bike to flip spectacularly end over end.
- At some point an unnamed character should go speeding into the bonfire, sending flames spraying everywhere. A few seconds later, the bike explodes in a bright fireball, sending everyone scurrying. Shooting a gas tank has the same effect.
- The party area is littered with rough rocks of various sizes, many of which are suitable for throwing and slamming characters onto.
- There are plenty of scattered beer bottles and cans around, both of which can make decent improvised weapons in a pinch.

The PCs may decide to skip the route of direct confrontation and try to nab Kevin for questioning. This won't be easy, as Kevin is never alone. However, at some point in the early hours of the morning he either crawls into a tent with a pair of girls, goes behind a rock to relieve himself, or in some other way separates himself from the gangs. This gives the PCs the opportunity they need to grab him, but don't make it easy. At least a few of the gang members are always awake, and all it takes is one shout or misstep to alert them all.

At any rate, a little coercion should make Kevin a lot more cooperative. He eventually tells the PCs what happened to Amber, and, with a little more pressing, spills general background on the underground fight scene and Kel Mukando in particular. What he can't do is tell the players where to find Kel, because the fights move around constantly. However, he can give them the name Willie Ruiz. Willie is one of the bookies who takes bets on the fights, and he always knows where they're being held. Kevin knows Willie usually does business out of a place called the Laguna Tavern. If Kevin is somehow killed, one of the other Hellhounds can provide this information instead.

Kevin Hoyt

Sample Dialogue: "I don't care what her father wants! Get the hell out of here."

Attributes: Bod 8, Chi 0, Mnd 5 (Cha 8), Ref 8

Skills: Martial Arts 13, Guns 10, Driving 14

Weapons: punch (9), kick (10), combat knife (11), heavy chain (11), Colt 1911A (10/2/7+1)

Juan Cabera

Sample Dialogue: "I've got an idea. Why don't you race for it?"

Attributes: Bod 8, Chi 0, Mnd 5 (Cha 7), Ref 7

Skills: Martial Arts 13, Guns 10, Driving 13

Weapons: punch (9), kick (10), combat knife (11), Colt Python (11/3/6)

Unnamed Bikers

Sample Dialogue: "What do you want, man?"

Attributes: Bod 7, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 7

Skills: Guns 7, Martial Arts 7, Driving 10

Weapons: punch (8), kick (9), heavy chain (10), tire iron (10), switch-blade (9), Colt 1911A (10/2/7+1)

WILLIE RUIZ

The Laguna Tavern is a small, seedy bar located in one of the less pleasant parts of Los Angeles. It's a dimly-lit building with a bar running along the left wall; a small back room contains a few tables, a pair of bathrooms, and an even smaller storage room. The patrons are the sort of people who come to drink by themselves and not be bothered. PCs who ask the bartender for Willie are told he's in the back room. However, when they look, he isn't there. Perceptive characters may note that the door to the storeroom is slightly ajar. That's where Willie does his business.

Willie Ruiz is in his mid-twenties, smallish, wiry, and dressed a bit shabbily. He can tell the PCs about the fights, how they work, and when and where the next one is being held. He doesn't really know anything about Amber, although if the PCs show him a picture he might recognize her as the girl Kel keeps



Willie Ruiz

Sample Dialogue: "Yeah, I can get you in, but it isn't that simple."

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 0 (For 4), Mnd 6, Ref 7

Skills: Martial Arts 6, Guns 6, Gambling 12, Deceit 10, Info/Streetwise 12, Info/Underground Fights 12

Weapons: punch (6), kick (7)

next to him while he watches the fights. He also tells the PCs they can't just show up. These things are a secret, after all, and they don't take kindly to newcomers. Willie can get them in, but he can't get them anywhere near Kel Mukando, who is always surrounded by a small army of bodyguards.

However, there is another option. If one of the PCs wants to sign up as a fighter, Willie can set them up — for a price. For five grand he can get the PC fighter in and bet for him. Half the winnings go to Ruiz, half to the PCs. If the PC actually beats all his opponents, Willie explains, that gives him the right to challenge Kel to a match. Normally fighters work the circuit for weeks, fighting only once in a night and building a rep slowly. Since the PCs need to work fast, they have to do it the hard way, which means maybe as many as half a dozen fights in one night. However, if a PC actually beats Kel in the ring, he's free to leave with Amber.

GETTING IN WITHOUT WILLIE

The PCs may balk at paying off Willie to get into the fights, or they might just decide to go it alone. If they do, a simple skill roll on Info/Streetwise or something similar should allow them to find one of the lesser fights going on around the city. These fights are held in basements, burned out rowhouses, vacant lots, and other isolated areas, usually drawing about a few dozen spectators. If one of the PCs handily beats an opponent in the ring (use one of the ring fighters listed at the end of the scenario, or make up one of your own), they're invited to compete in one of Kel's fights. If the PCs want to get in without fighting, a little bit

of schmoozing and bribery should do the job as well. Just so long as they hook up with someone who can get them in.

On the other hand, if the PCs manage to get the location of Kel's big fight, they may just try to crash it without an intro. They find that, as Willie said, they aren't well received. Neither smooth talking nor intimidation are easy routes into the fight. If things are going poorly, perhaps Willie shows up as they're starting to sweat and bails them out — assuming they cough up the cash, that is.

THE ARENA

The fights are currently being held in an abandoned warehouse on the edge of the city. The only way into the warehouse is through a loading gate on one end of the building. All the other entrances have been locked up. Various people mill about the entrance, including a half dozen armed thugs there to make sure the uninvited don't get in.

The inside of the warehouse echoes noisily with the sounds of yelling and cheering and the blaring of rock and techno music. There are dozens of people scattered about the warehouse, but the majority are clustered around the center of the floor. The crowd presses against a crudely constructed chain-link cage, screaming for blood, as two fighters battle each other in the ring. Wooden crates and boxes, arranged loosely in a circle outside the crowd, provide a second barrier around the cage and also serve as a perch for even more spectators. On one side of the ring the boxes have been arranged more deliberately, almost into a pyramid, high above the rest. Kel Mukando sits upon this improvised throne like a king surveying his subjects below him.

At 6'6" and 365 lbs of muscle, Kel Mukando is not the biggest nor the heaviest fighter present, but he is the most imposing. His skin is rich and dark in color, his eyes deep and piercing. His hair has been woven into dozens of tight braids and pulled back into a warrior's queue. He speaks rarely, but when he does his voice is deep and ominous. He carries a giant medieval sword, never a gun. Stories about him — easy to come by in the warehouse —



suggest that bullets can't harm him and that he's lived a number of past lives, all as a mighty warlord. This last claim is actually somewhat true. Kel was a Thunder Knight back in the days when the Four Monarchs ruled the earth. When the change came, he was laterally reincarnated into a minor African chieftain. However, he sometimes had inexplicable dreams of the reality he left behind, and he became convinced that he was meant for a greater purpose. Eventually, he was found by the Thunder Knights and brought before Huan Ken, who explained who and what Kel had once been. Kel knew he had found his destiny, and once again pledged himself to the Thunder King. His devotion was almost religious in nature, and he quickly rose through the ranks to earn the status of Thunder Champion. Huan Ken charged him with recruiting new warriors to his army, and so Kel took over the fighting circuit and now uses it to scope out new talent. Along the way he's built himself a small army that run the fights and enforces his rule.

During the fights Kel sits and watches impassively, heedless of the crowd around him. His most trusted bodyguards and lieutenants surround him, and Amber Matthews sits listlessly at his side, dressed in a leather halter top and miniskirt. With her sunken eyes, stringy hair, and gaunt frame, she barely resembles the girl in the picture given to the PCs. She seems oblivious to the crowds, the noise, and the fighting, staring lethargically off into space.

The ring itself is about fifteen feet in diameter, with entrances at either end. Once the fighters enter, neither leaves until one gives up or can no longer fight. No weapons are allowed, but otherwise anything goes. Deaths are rare, but broken bones and concussions aren't. Betting goes on briskly outside the cage as bookies work the crowd before each fight, covering their own appointed areas. The crowd is, without exception, comprised of criminals, gangbangers, and various lowlifes. Everyone is armed, but Kel has decreed the fights neutral ground, where no blood is to be spilled except in the ring. Kel has the authority and power to back this up (and there are dozens of his men stationed around the warehouse to make sure everyone stays in line).

How the adventure ends depends largely on the actions of the PCs. Here are just a

few of the more likely scenarios. Bear in mind that players have a tendency to do the unexpected, so be prepared for things to go in directions that aren't covered here.

TWO MEN ENTER, ONE MAN LEAVES

The most obvious scenario involves one or more PCs entering the ring as fighters and taking on various opponents until they can challenge Kel directly. Only fighters who have proven themselves can earn this privilege, and, as mentioned before, this usually takes several months of rep-building. Even then, very few fighters actually do challenge Kel — his reputation is that strong.

In order for a PC to challenge Kel in just one night, he has to win several fights in a row. Entering more than one bout in a night is unusual — even the cage-match winners are rarely in any kind of fighting shape at the end of a typical combat — though anyone crazy enough to attempt multiple fights is allowed to do so. The crowd initially laughs at such foolishness. If a PC goes on a winning streak, though, the mood of the crowd goes from contempt to disbelief to awe. Even Kel takes notice eventually.

It's up to you to decide how many fights a PC has to win, but four is probably the practical limit. Even the player fighting in the arena may get bored with more, to say nothing of the lack of excitement the other players are likely to experience. Besides, the PC may have trouble staying intact for more than this many fights. In fact, if the players do take this route, you may want to have them take turns playing the PC fighting in the ring. This way, none of them will be shut out of the action for long.

Once the player has run out of challengers, he can then call Kel out to fight, with Amber as the prize. (If he tries it beforehand, he still has to fight his way up, if he isn't simply beaten and tossed out for his impudence.) Kel accepts, leaping down into the ring to face his challenger (Kel's stats are on p. 75). Any PC who's lasted this long will have earned the respect and admiration of the crowd, and Kel can't

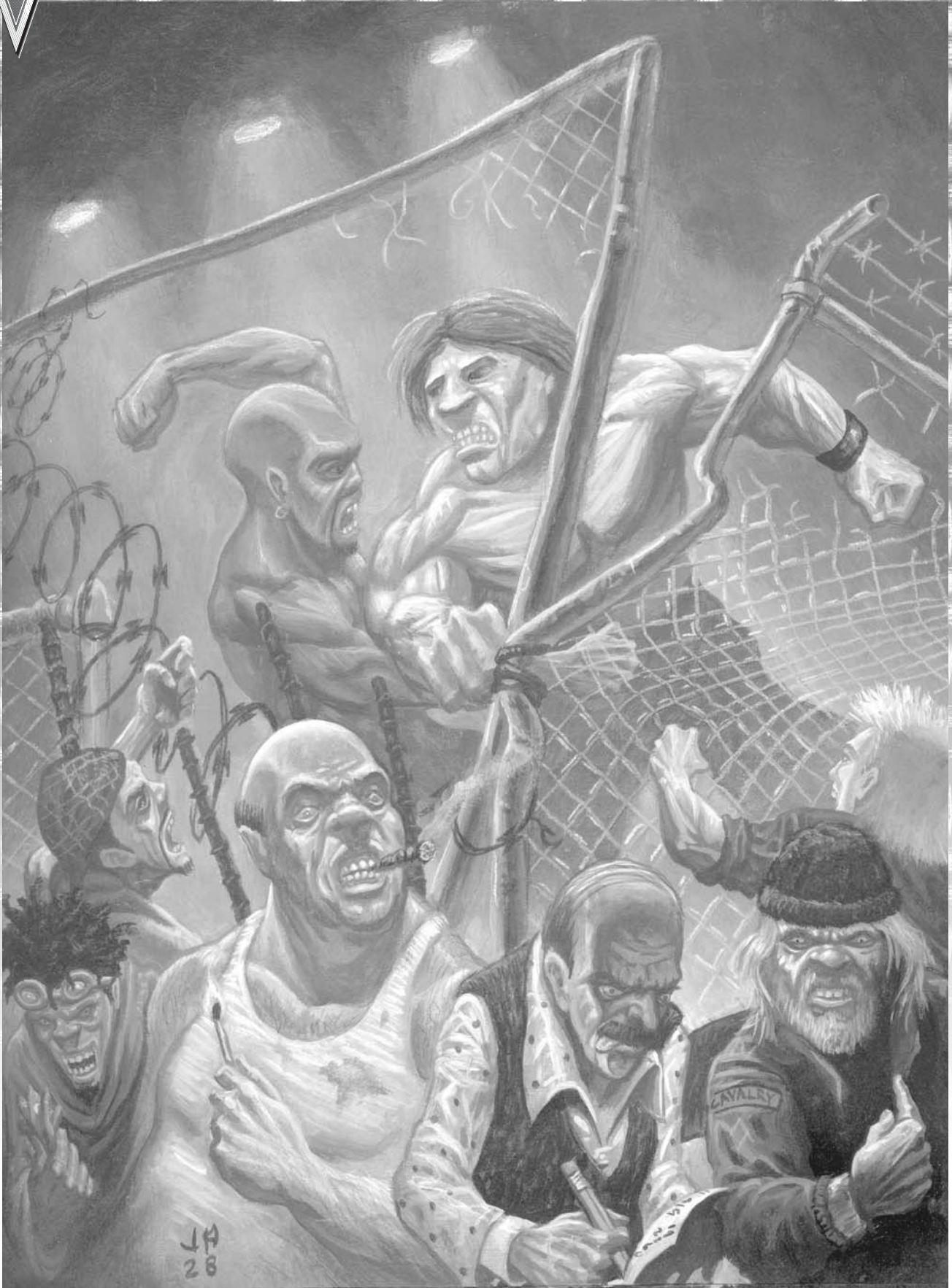


Illustration by Jim Pavelec



afford to look like a coward by refusing. Plus, he's happy to punish anyone with the temerity to challenge him. However, if more than one PC has made it this far, Kel is well within his rights to demand that they fight each other first. If the players hooked up with Willie earlier, he distances himself from the PCs if they start winning. Willie never expected any of them to make it past one match, and he doesn't want to get on Kel's bad side by being too closely associated with them. After all, he has to live here.

Cool Things That Could Happen in the Cage

- The chain link mesh of the cage walls is somewhat flexible. A character could use it as a springboard, jumping onto it and then propelling himself off of it to deliver a powerful kick (a -1 stunt penalty that delivers an additional +2 Damage if successful). This can also be employed in reverse, by flinging an opponent against the cage wall and then delivering a powerful kick as he bounces back.
- A character could also jump up onto the cage walls and cling to it while fighting, using only kicks to defend and attack. Yeah, this makes it harder to fight, but it looks cool, and you can see examples of this kind of combat in a number of HK flicks.
- Of course, the poles that support the cage are not flexible. Ramming someone head-first into one of them is going to hurt (Strength +4 Damage). On the flip side, a character could back up against a pole and then dodge just as his opponent attacks, causing him to hit the pole instead of his head. Have the attacker roll to hit as normal. If he misses, the defender immediately makes a Martial Arts task check with a -2 penalty. If successful, the attacker does Strength +2 Damage to himself.
- The most important way you can make these fights cool is to keep the moves interesting. "He kicks you" is not interesting. "He leaps into the air sideways and spins 180 degrees, catching you in the chest with both feet" is. Revisit your HK film collection for some inspiration, and pay attention to scenes

featuring one-on-one combat. *Fist of Legend* is a particularly good choice.

- If you and your players are getting bored with ring fights inside a chain-link cage (after all, there's only so much you can do in an empty area surrounded by fence), you might decide to vary the locations or props a bit from fight to fight. While it's not technically within the "rules" of the fights, two combatants who both agree might be allowed to fight up in the rafters, or on the open floor, or on a stack of crates, or anywhere else that you think would be cool.

If you find that the final climatic battle between the PCs' champion and Kel is a bit anti-climactic for the rest of the PCs (who, presumably, have been largely watching), you may presume that Kel's defeat causes a riot (started by someone who just lost a *lot* of money, or by Kel's devoted followers) and that the player characters then have to fight their way out — keeping Amber safe — amid general violent chaos.

THE DIRECT APPROACH

This being *Feng Shui*, your players may decide the best route is to go in with guns blazing. This is not the best way to handle the situation. Kel has forty or fifty armed thugs providing security, and there are about six times that many spectators, all of whom are also armed. While most of the spectators bolt when shooting starts, at least some of them take the opportunity to open fire. How many? Enough so that your players think twice about trying something like this again. The PCs are heroes. They're not invincible.

You may choose to cut them some slack if they use the time-honored "crash a vehicle through the gates" approach. The loading dock isn't the best route for this — it's an elevated cement block that a car would have to jump. However, there are large hangar doors on the other end of the warehouse that are locked up. A semi or bulldozer could plow right through them. A car is less likely to pene-



Kel's Bodyguards

Sample Dialogue: "Get to the cars!"

Attributes: Bod 8, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 8

Skills: Martial Arts 8, Guns 8

Weapons: punch (9), kick (10), knife (11), Uzi (10/4/40), Glock 17 (10/1/17+1)

Kel's Unnamed Gangbangers and Other Scum

Sample Dialogue: "What the hell?"

Attributes: Bod 7, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 7

Skills: Martial Arts 7, Guns 7

Weapons: punch (8), kick (9), knife (9), Ingram M10 (10/3/32), Mini-Uzi (10/3/25), Intratec Tec-9 (10/3/32+1), Beretta 92 (10/2/15+1)

trate, as there are a number of parked cars at least partially blocking this entrance. It's still not the best approach, but not only does it cause a huge distraction, it sends most of the spectators scattering as well.

THE INDIRECT (BUT EQUALLY VIOLENT) APPROACH

Remember the scene in *Hard Boiled* where Chow Yun-Fat takes on a whole warehouse full of mooks by himself and lives? By sowing a little confusion beforehand, he was able to gain the upper hand. The players may decide to apply the same technique here as well. Willie has never been to the warehouse, but he knows where it is, and the PCs will have time to scope it out beforehand. There are skylights and a latticework of rafters above the warehouse floor. Although all the doors are locked, the locks can be picked. What happens is largely up to the players, but here are a few things to look out for:

- Banks of portable stadium lights illuminate the ring. If hit by a gunshot, they

explode in a tremendous shower of sparks. If enough of them are destroyed, the interior of the warehouse becomes a lot darker.

- There are steel drums with fires burning in them scattered around the warehouse. If shot, they also explode, possibly catapulting across the room and spraying flaming ash as well. A kung fu kick could also send one of them flying across the room.
- The piled boxes can be used for all manner of aerial stunts. A kung fu kick or a grenade could also shatter one of them, causing the others stacked on it to tumble to the ground. If blown apart, they send shards of wood flying in all directions, and if things start exploding they burn as well.
- A small fleet of luxury cars — Kel's motorcade — is parked inside the warehouse by the main hangar doors, opposite the loading dock. Other than a few guards, no one is really watching the parking lot. Any one of the cars could easily be hotwired and sent speeding into the crowd. This works even better if they're rigged to blow. Of course, if one of the cars is hit with a grenade or shotgun blast, not only does it blow, it sets off all the other cars near it in a spectacular conflagration.
- There's an old hook and pulley system on a track running across the center of the warehouse. This could be used to move quickly across the length of the interior of the building.

Once the chaos starts, most of the spectators scatter, especially if there are a lot of explosions. Kel's men hold their ground, but are likely to be distracted. Kel's inner circle of bodyguards immediately closes ranks and moves, in a tight knot with Kel and Amber in the center, toward the cars to make their escape. Kel is alert during all of this, but does not leap into action blindly. However, if he spots an exposed and unprotected PC, he's not above engaging his enemies directly.



THE STEALTHY APPROACH

The players might decide to avoid a confrontation altogether and try to snatch Amber away unnoticed. As she's never more than a few feet away from Kel and his bodyguards, the PCs need to create some kind of distraction, and even then it takes a lot of stealth to pull off. What's more, Amber herself isn't much help. She doesn't resist being led away, but she's only barely cognizant of her situation at this point, and can't be counted on for much. If the PCs do somehow manage to snatch Amber away, Kel pursues them quickly and with a vengeance. As far as he's concerned, she's a very visible piece of property, and having her stolen right out from under him is very bad for his reputation.

PRE-EMPTIVE STRIKE

Your players may decide to try to grab Amber before she ever gets to the warehouse. While all attempts to locate Kel beforehand meet with failure (he's a shadowy figure who moves around a lot, and his trips to the Netherworld make him hard to find), if they've scoped out the warehouse in advance, they could still hit Kel's motorcade as it arrives.

It is not difficult to guess which direction Kel and his entourage will be coming from. Only one road approaches the warehouse, and there are numerous bottlenecks, as well as plenty of sniping points.

The motorcade consists of a half dozen luxury cars. Four of them contain four of Kel's men each; one contains three of Kel's men and Amber; and the last one contains Kel himself, William Jackson (see the next page), and two more of Kel's men. All the windows on all the cars are tinted, so unless the players think of something clever, they won't be able to tell who is in which car.

If the motorcade is attacked, the cars first attempt to get out of there. If they

Kel Mukando

Kel only uses his sword outside the ring, not in arena challenges.

Sample Dialogue: "Very well. I shall destroy you if that is your wish."

Attributes: Bod 10, Chi 0 (Fu 5), Mnd 5 (Cha 9, Wil 9), Ref 8

Skills: Martial Arts 14, Info/Secret War 7, Info/Criminal Underworld 12, Intimidation 15, Leadership 13

Fu Schticks: Bite of the Dragon, Natural Order, Prodigious Leap

Weapons: punch (10), kick (11), greatsword (14)

Despite his massive bulk, Kel is quick in the ring, a fact that most opponents don't expect. He mostly sticks to punches, but throws in the occasional kick to keep his opponent off balance.

Signature Moves:

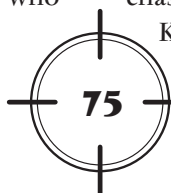
- Kel takes the first punch or two on the chin, just to show his opponent and the crowd how powerful he is. He then responds by parrying the third punch and slamming his fists with blinding speed into his opponent's face, then picking him up and body slamming him.
- When an opponent kicks for his chest, Kel grabs the incoming ankle with both hands. He then twists it rapidly, spinning his opponent in a half circle in mid-air before slamming him to the ground.
- Kel slowly adopts a fighting stance, legs apart, side facing his opponent, with one arm extended forward and straight, the other bent and above him, flexing his muscles taut. He stares into his opponent's eyes, his body rock still. When his opponent finally rushes in to attack, Kel whips around with a spinning back kick, moving faster than he should be able to and striking with full force. This move is a crowd favorite.

get boxed in (if, for instance, the players use explosives to destroy the lead car or block the road), Kel's men get out and start shooting, using the cars as cover, while they try to get Kel away. Kel is no coward, but he doesn't carry a gun, and besides, he doesn't fight with common street rabble. However, if he does spy an opponent within easy melee range, Kel goes after him, using Natural Order to negate the damage from a gunshot — which is intimidating as hell, by the way.

If one or more cars escape the ambush, a chase may ensue if the PCs have vehicles nearby.

Kel's cars have Pep +1 and Wreck 8, but you'll have to wing the specifics of the chase itself.

Describing such an event is beyond the



Ring Fighters

Here's a small sampling of fighters for a PC to face in the ring, in the order in which he'd face them. You may want to come up with a few more of your own, or include known thugs from your campaign if you're not running "Fight Night" as an introductory scenario.

You'll note that three of the four fighters below don't have any fu powers, or, for that matter, any extra-natural capabilities whatsoever. If the PCs they're fighting against are heavy-hitting martial artist types, you may want to give these guys some fu to fight back with. Bottom line: know the player characters' capabilities and line them up against opponents who are entertaining matches for them.

Joe Kucharski

Attributes: Bod 8, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 8

Skills: Martial Arts 12

Weapons: punch (9), kick (10)

Joe is in his early twenties, with short, spiky hair dyed blonde, a stud in his left nostril, and several tattoos. He's relatively new to the circuit, and is just starting to make a name for himself. Joe's combat style is a mixture of street brawling and karate-class moves. Most of his moves are straightforward punches and knee strikes, but he can't resist playing to the crowd with the occasional flashy move.

Signature Moves:

- Joe gets a headlock on his opponent, with his opponent's head behind him. He delivers three knee strikes to the groin, and then releases the headlock and elbows the back of his opponent's head.
- Joe parries an opponent's punch by sidestepping and grabbing his arm. He then uses his forward momentum to slam his opponent up against the cage, followed by repetitive knee strikes to his body.
- Joe parries his opponent's kick, then grabs his shoulders and slams his opponent's head into his knee, followed by a jumping double-kick which first catches his opponent on the chest and then on the chin.

Filippo Vasquez

Attributes: Bod 10, Chi 0, Mnd 4, Ref 5

Skills: Martial Arts 11

Weapons: punch (11), kick (12)

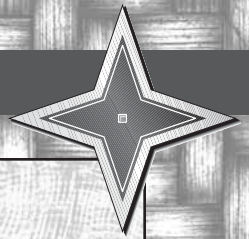
Filippo is a giant Mexican with a ratty moustache and matted hair. His success in the arena to date comes from his ability to absorb and give out punishment in the ring. Filippo relies on his bulk to win fights, absorbing blows until he can grab his opponent and crush him. He also favors wide, powerful swings. More than any other fighter, he likes to use the cage itself as a weapon.

Signature Moves:

- Filippo charges his opponent, grabbing him by the waist and slamming him up against the cage wall. He then punches him repeatedly in the stomach at close range.
- Filippo grabs his opponent in the middle of a mid-air kick and hurls him to the ground, then kicks him in the ribs as he attempts to get up.
- Filippo batters his opponent with several haymaker punches, then grabs him and hurls him against a pole full force.

scope of this scenario. On the other hand, we'd be remiss if we didn't suggest at least a few dock-side chase possibilities:

- One of the cars smashes into a stack of crates full of vegetables. An enraged teamster emerges from the mess, covered in tomatoes.
- A second car flies into the air and corkscrews through a stack of palettes.
- A third car goes sailing over the edge of a dock and crashes into a moored tugboat, which causes its steam whistle to get stuck open.



Ring Fighters, Continued

“Tiger” Chiang Wai

Attributes: Bod 6, Chi 0 (Fu 4), Mnd 5, Ref 9

Skills: Martial Arts 12

Fu Schticks: Claw of the Tiger, Tiger Stance

Weapons: punch (6), kick (7)

Tiger is in his early twenties, with a small, wiry frame and shoulder-length hair. An arena veteran, fighters often underestimate him based on his size. Tiger uses his speed to his advantage. He avoids trading blows with stronger opponents, preferring instead to move inside their range to attack. He’s particularly fond of parries that turn into attacks.

Signature Moves:

- Tiger blocks an opponent’s punch, using his right arm to block a right punch, and vice versa, so that his opponent’s side is exposed. He then delivers a rapid three-punch to the head and body, and follows with a spinning back kick as his opponent staggers backwards.
- Tiger blocks an opponent’s punch, using his left arm to block a right punch, so that his opponent’s torso is exposed. He follows with a rapid series of punches to the stomach and then a front-kick to his chest.
- Tiger does a rapid foot shuffle, distracting his opponent while throwing a quick punch or two to the face. With his opponent distracted by the punch, Tiger follows up with a rapid side kick to the body.

William “Jackknife” Jackson

Note: Jackknife only uses his weapons outside the ring.

Attributes: Bod 8, Chi 0, Mnd 6, Ref 8

Skills: Martial Arts 13, Guns 13

Gun Schticks: Both Guns Blazing x3

Weapons: punch (9), kick (10), 2x Browning BDM (10/2/15+1)

Jackknife Jackson is Kel’s most trusted lieutenant and a top arena fighter. He’s also a sworn Thunder Knight, and the only person in this scenario other than Kel who knows about the Netherworld. However, he prefers his guns to a sword, and his loyalty lies more with Kel than the Thunder King. Joe is tall, dark-skinned, and bald, with a trimmed goatee and sculpted muscles. He’s cool both under fire and in the ring, and Kel sometimes uses him in to test the strength of the better contestants.

Signature Moves:

- Jackknife parries his opponent’s punch, and then delivers several strikes to the inside of the shoulder, attempting to break the arm at the joint.
- Jackknife parries an opponent’s kick by catching it. He then punches his opponent in the groin and drops his elbow down on his opponent’s leg.
- Jackknife delivers a punch to his opponent’s face, then a second punch. This is followed by a side kick, a back kick, and finally a jumping side kick that slams his opponent against the cage, all in rapid succession.

WRAPPING UP

If the PCs rescue Amber by beating Kel in a fight, the adventure is pretty much over. Even if he isn’t killed in the cage, his reputation is shattered and his power dissipates.

If the PCs rescue Amber through some other means and manage to get her safely out of Los Angeles, they may still have to deal with Kel. If he survives, that is. Kel is not so concerned about taking Amber back from her father as he

is with finding the PCs and punishing them to restore his honor.

Even if Kel is killed (especially if Kel is killed, actually) Huan Ken may send others to find out what happened to his recruiting operation. Unless the PCs were careful, these pests may dog their next few adventures.

Finally, ring fighters against whom the PCs prevailed may show up in later scenarios as enemies — or even as allies, if the PCs fought honorably.

Crossfire

MARK KINNEY

Premise: The PCs are enjoying a nice lunch at a local restaurant when an Ascended hit team strikes, spreading the love among the bystanders.

The Twist: The target is a Lotus operative carrying a small metal disk, but the PCs wind up with it.

The Climax: The fight leads to the Architect staging area in this juncture – a local science-fiction convention.

THE BEGINNING

The story begins with a disk. An inch thick, about the size of a CD, this Buro data node wandered, thanks to an arcanotechnician with a terminal case of conscience, into the Jammers' hands. The Jammer in question, in one of those mistakes upon which history occasionally turns, accidentally dropped the disk in an odd passageway of the Netherworld, where an independent agent headed to the contemporary juncture for a Lotus job found it.

The agent, who was able to identify it as Buro-tech, checked in with his Lotus superiors by cell phone when he arrived in the contemporary juncture. They told him to sit tight until they could find someone in his proximity who could figure out what it was good for. He took the disk with him to a nearby restaurant to wait for further instructions.

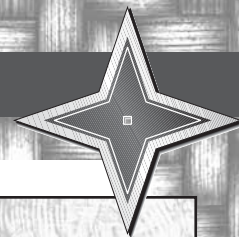
The agent was under Pledged observation. Their curiosity piqued, the Ascended assembled a plan to seize the disk themselves. The plan was simple: assault the restaurant and grab the disk.

Unfortunately, the PCs are also in this restaurant . . .

INTO THE FIRE

If you're running "Crossfire" as part of a series, the PCs visit the Firehouse – a small, greasy fast food establishment built in an actual former firehouse and charitably called a restaurant – for a meeting or as part of their downtime. If this is a one-shot, you can use coincidence to put the PCs in one place.

The dining area is a large open room where firefighting memorabilia adorns the walls. The tables and chairs are not attached to the floor, and in fact the chairs have rollers on their legs. The counter sports two cash registers and a soda fountain. Behind that, a large window opens to the kitchen. The open doorway to the kitchen, on one side of the counter, also contains the sliding-pole well, which leads to storage above the restaurant. Opposite the counter stands a gum-ball machine – one of those huge models with a three-foot-diameter globe. The garage doors fronting the building are now plate glass windows, with the restaurant's front door between them.



The Disk

The disk is just a McGuffin, something for the plot to move around. The PCs could go through the entire adventure without ever finding out what is it. In the event they end the adventure with the disk (assuming a series game) or coerce Huen Li into reading the whole thing for them, here are some ideas for what it could be.

- Technical schematics for a SCAF-PLAT (see *Seed of the New Flesh*, p. 85).
- Information about Operation: Killdeer.
- Architect assessment of global chi flow, possibly highlighting weaknesses in various junctures.
- Arcanowave devices under development.
- If you're sure your players won't string you up for it, it could just be a decoy.

The Lotus agent, wearing a stylish suit, enters shortly after the last of the PCs, looking rather out of place in the fast-food crowd. He's getting antsy as he waits for word on what to do, which may make the PCs a little nervous — and for good reason, as the Pledged assault team will soon raid the Firehouse.

FIREHOUSE TO SLAUGHTERHOUSE

Nathan Ward, a Pledged assassin, is your standard-issue sociopath. Kept away from other children in his youth, he never really adjusted to society. His pathology caused his forced retirement from military service, after which he took the initial steps toward becoming a serial killer. The agent who tracked him down after his first couple of attempts, rather than arresting him, offered him the opportunity to go on doing what he was doing, but with official sanction. Ward made the pledge readily, without reservation.

Ward and a number of mooks equal to twice the number of PCs smash through the front windows, firing freely. Their plan is to disguise the true purpose of their attack by making it resemble just another senseless massacre in a public place (thus their use of the infamous AK-47). As the mooks mow down patrons,

Unnamed Lotus Agent

Sample Dialog: "Hey, isn't that — akh!"

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 6

Skills: Martial Arts 6, Guns 7

Weapons: punch (6), kick (7), Beretta Model 21 Bobcat (8/1/8+1)

Nathan Ward

Sample Dialog: "Make peace with your maker — or don't. I don't care."

Attributes: Bod 7, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 8 (Dex 9)

Skills: Guns 18, Deceit 9, Driving 16, Info/Gangland Politics 6

Gun Shticks: Carnival of Carnage x3, Eagle Eye, Hair-Trigger Neck Hairs x2

Weapons: punch (8), kick (9), Grendel P-12 (9/1/12+1), Mini UZI (10/3/25), AK-47 (13**/5/30)

Unnamed Pledged Hit Team

Sample Dialog: "Yeah! Die! Die! Die!"

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 7

Skills: Martial Arts 7, Guns 8

Weapons: punch (6), kick (7), AK-47 (13**/5/30)

Unnamed Firehouse Patrons

Occasional armed patrons have Guns 5 and carry Colt 1911As (10/2/7+1).

Sample Dialog: "Oh no — augh!"

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 5

Skills: Martial Arts 5

Weapons: punch (6), kick (7)

Ward moves against the Lotus agent. The agent goes down (sadly for him, his death is preordained so the story can advance) and the disk falls from his jacket pocket, coincidentally rolling under a PC's chair.

The first sequence in which the PCs can do anything begins at this point. As the fight goes forward, the hit team continues to fire on the fifteen or so patrons, half-dozen employees, and PCs. Ward targets whoever picks up the disk; otherwise, he fires randomly into the crowd while moving to pick it up.



Illustration by Eric Hotz

Cool Things That Could Happen During the Fight

- The kitchen contains huge grease vats for making fries. Each one is just big enough for a human head.
- The soda fountain uses pressurized tanks of sticky soda mixture. The result can be anything from a jet of liquid to disorient someone, to — given proper abuse — a small but messy explosion.
- Nothing helps endanger proper footing like a broken globe on a very large gumball machine, encouraging the combatants to take to the tabletops in a high-flying bout that makes *lucha libre* look calm and sedate.
- The roller-mounted chairs come in handy here, too — think skateboarding, only higher. Downed mooks take a seat, rolling out of (or into) the way.
- The firehouse motif lends itself to all sorts of abuse, from the possibly still-working fire hose (Agility roll, Difficulty 6 to remain standing, one point of Impairment when being shot regardless) on one wall, to an ax (Strength +4) hanging over the counter.

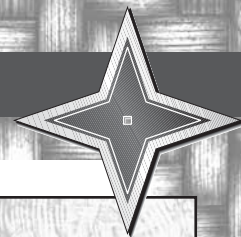
Ward may be sociopathic, but he's not stupid — as the tide turns against him, he flees without the disk. The hit team continues to fight regardless, unaware of the flight of its fearless leader.

IT'S FOR YOU

As the scene calms down and people emerge from cover, the Lotus agent's cell phone rings. If the players don't think to answer the phone on their own, the patrons they've just saved look at them expectantly.

A female voice (this is Huen Li, though she is unwilling to give her name over the phone) asks the answering PC, "Do you have the disk?" If the answer is affirmative, the voice continues: "Bring it to Needs and Wants. You know where that is?" The voice gives instructions, if necessary, and hangs up.

If the PC pesters the voice about money or mention the death of the agent, she



briefly, suspiciously, questions the PC about the course of recent events, but eventually assures him that bringing the disk will be “worth your while.”

If the PC refuses to deliver the disk (or doesn't answer the call) Huan Li divines the location of the disk and sends a team after it.

In addition to the call from Huan Li, the Buro tries to contact the PCs. They can track the disk, after all, and that fact becomes obvious as every phone along their route (to wherever they decide to go) begins to ring. They offer the PCs the opportunity to turn over the data node and walk away unharmed. If the PCs take them up on this offer, skip the Needs and Wants section and jump right to “Constabulary XXIII.”

If the PCs, despite all the hints of how important this disk is, and despite the fact it falls right into their laps, refuse to have anything to do with it, put the game away and offer to play a few rounds of Hearts.

NEED AND WANTS

Huan Li is a relatively important Lotus operative in the contemporary juncture. This is unusual, since, being female, she is not part of the main organization. She has a unique outlook on the 1990s, having found a personal connection to it. In the course of her studies, she especially observed those things that fit the primal duality that defines the *I Ching* as well as much of her own native philosophy. *Yin* and *yang*. Good and evil. Female and male. One and zero.

Li is fascinated with computers. She recently put the finishing touches on a number of applications that assist her in divination. To her mind, the digital format works out much the same way as the old yarrow sticks would. Her superiors have grown more dubious of her loyalties over time, but she does get results, so they tolerate her eccentricity for the moment.

Huen Li

Sample Dialogue: “It’s not exactly traditional, but it is very efficient.”

Attributes: Bod 7, Chi 0 (Mag 8), Mnd 7, Ref 7

Skills: Sorcery 15, Martial Arts 8, Fix-it 8, Info/Computers 9, Info/Geomancy 11, Info/History 11

Magic Schticks: Blast (Lightning), Divination, Domination, Fertility, Movement

Weapons: punch (8), kick (9), Blast (10), staff (10), chakram (5)

Ji Kwan

Sample Dialogue: “Bet you can’t do this.”

Attributes: Bod 6, Chi 0 (Fu 8), Mnd 6, Ref 9

Skills: Martial Arts 17, Gambling 9, Info/Eastern Philosophy 12, Leadership 8

Fu Schticks: Crane Stance, Hands Without Shadow, Eyes of the Snake

Weapons: punch (7), kick (8), sword (10), chakram (5)

Won Kwang

Sample Dialogue: “You lack discipline and resilience. You must train your mind as well as your body.”

Attributes: Bod 8, Chi 0 (Fu 8), Mnd 5, Ref 8

Skills: Martial Arts 16, Info/Eastern Philosophy 12, Leadership 10

Fu Schticks: Bite of the Dragon, Clothed in Life, Armored in Life

Weapons: punch (9), kick (10), nunchaku (9), chakram (5)

Unnamed Lotus Mooks

Sample Dialogue: “You’ll never take me ali —”

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 0 (Mag 5), Mnd 6, Ref 5

Skills: Martial Arts 6, Sorcery 7

Magic Schticks: Blast (various types)

Weapons: punch (6), kick (7), blast (7)

She operates out of an antique store, Needs and Wants, in a slightly seedy part of town, with a small cadre of mooks and two highly competitive “bodyguards” — Ji Kwan and Won Kwang — assigned by her doubting superiors.



Unnamed TacOps Troopers

Sample Dialogue: "Right away, sir!"

Attributes: Bod 6, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 6

Skills: Guns 8, Martial Arts 6

Weapons: punch (7), kick (8), Buro 9 (10/1/17+1)

Commander Wu

Sample Dialogue: "Move it out, by the numbers! Go! Go!"

Attributes: Bod 7, Chi 1, Mnd 6, Ref 7

Skills: Guns 17, Martial Arts 12, Driving 14, Leadership 10, Sabotage 11

Gun Schticks: Both Guns Blazing x3, Lightning Reload x3

Weapons: punch (8), kick (9), 2x Buro Avenger (11/2/6), Buro Blade of Truth (10/3/30)

FOR SALE: JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING

The sales floor of Needs and Wants is somewhat disorganized. Pieces of large furniture (couches, chests of drawers, tables, and shelves) mark the boundaries between sections of piled stuff, with paths winding around through the junk. There could well be buried treasure there, but it would take a lot of searching, as most of the "stuff" consists of old toys, tools, and general bric-a-brac and memorabilia. Shelves along the back wall contain old paperback books (and even older hardcovers), videotapes, CDs, and even vinyl record albums. Behind the counter, near the door, is the cash register and a radio with a stack of CDs.

When the PCs arrive, it's obvious that Li, hunched over her cobbled-together computer, is expecting them. One of the bodyguards demands the disk as soon as the PCs are inside. If the PCs give up the disk, Li allows them to stand by as she attaches it to the computer with a set of alligator clips and begins her readout. PCs with the Divination sorcery schtick can make a check to interpret the results along with Li. The GM decides how much information, if any, the analysis provides before the Buro shows up. If the PCs won't turn the disk over, or

want to engage in lengthy and specific negotiations about what's in it for them, the Buro goons show up right away and start shooting up the place.

ORDER OF BATTLE

The Buro troops surround the building, sweeping in from front and back.

There are eight Lotus monks and TacOps troopers, equal to three times the number of named characters on the PCs' side. The Buro side is led by Commander Wu. However, it is important that the fight remain balanced, so the GM may opt to include one of the abominations from the last part of the scenario if there is a significant advantage to the PCs in named characters. In addition, one of the two bodyguards may be absent from the current scene at the GM's option.

Cool Things That Could Happen During the Fight

- Li and her bodyguards modified several of the CDs near the counter, sharpening the edges. The resulting chakrams (Damage 5) can be deflected off the walls, furniture, or whatever, cutting down mooks like wheat.
- Speaking of wheat, stores like Needs and Wants in the real world always seem to have large tools like cross-cut saws and scythes in their inventory. At least one combatant is bound to start running around with one of these like Death manifested on Earth. (Let's say Damage is Strength +4 on either one.) The saw isn't really useful to a single person, but two, if they get their act together, could clothesline several others.
- Some of the taller furniture items (chests of drawers and shelves, mainly) can happen to be arranged like dominoes, so that tipping one over sends several down, possibly trapping combatants underneath.
- The furniture in general makes for interesting terrain effects. Both the TacOps and Lotus take advantage of the cover and generally run all over everything, leaping over the aforementioned taller items, and basically



lending all new meaning to “island hopping.” Anyone whose parents always told them to keep their feet off the furniture should be thrilled.

- A broken kerosene lamp (there has to be one somewhere in that mess) adds time pressure to the situation — just apply a flame!

The TacOps troopers’ goal is the disk; once they have it, they withdraw in short order. Otherwise, the remaining troops make a disordered retreat upon Commander Wu’s death, or the Commander calls for a retreat after two-thirds losses.

TAKING STOCK

Upon the Buro withdrawal, a number of things can happen. If the TacOps succeeded in taking the disk, the remaining Lotus want revenge, and some quick divination (or a handy paper containing Li’s previous divination of her enemies’ locations, should the sorcerer not survive) reveals the location of the Buro staging base.

On the other hand, should the PCs successfully defend the disk, a PC’s cell or the shop phone rings. The Buro renews its offer to allow the PCs to walk away if they turn the disk over.

Exactly how the sides shake out in the next scene depends on what the PCs decide. If the PCs intend to strike under the pretense of returning the disk, the Lotus operatives are more than willing to assist. If the PCs take the disk to the Buro with the intention of turning it over, the remaining named Lotus characters (with possible additional magical backup at the GM’s option, especially if Huen Li is dead) gather a small army to prevent this from happening. Of course, if the Buro has the disk, the Lotus agents are eager to retrieve it, and they welcome any assistance from the PCs. If no Lotus operatives from the store remain, for any reason, and the PCs refuse to deal with the Buro, that phone call should make it obvious that the Buro can track the disk, and anything further the PCs do with it is at their own peril. Similarly, if the PCs don’t get involved in the Lotus counterattack on the Buro, the anti-magic-optimized Buro forces trounce the attackers and track down the

PCs if they kept the data node. If the Buro grabs the disk and the PCs choose not to attack (either on their own or in cooperation with the Lotus), the Buro operatives return to 2056 without incident.

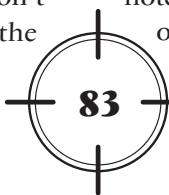
CONSTABULARY XXIII

In the face of the emergency the loss of the data node presented, the Buro dispatched a strike force to the contemporary juncture. Under orders to deploy a maximum team, the senior officer, Commander Wu, discovered an oddity of the 1990s that might allow relatively open deployment of the two abominations — a science-fiction convention called Constabulary. The convention features a number of semi-famous guests, a huge huckster room, open gaming, and scores of programs about various fantasy and science-fiction subjects.

The convention, unsurprisingly, takes place at a local chain-owned hotel. The hotel’s registration desk and an elevator are central to the building, with two wings connected to it at a ninety-degree angle. The first floor of one wing contains the convention areas and a small bar, and large picture windows face a patio and pool right outside the hotel, inside the vertex of the wings.

ACCOMMODATIONS

The Buro field headquarters is in a third-floor suite. Wu spends most of his time there, adjusting the portal generator for the return trip to 2056. The two abominations, Malefactor Zeta and Defibrilis, and their wrangler, Warden Chiang, hang out near the freebie tables at the far end of the convention wing, typically mistaken for something from an upcoming feature film due to their extensive arcanowave gear. At night, they crash in the suite. The TacOps troops at the hotel (five times the number of named characters opposing them, whether those named characters are PCs or not) patrol the rest of the hotel, reporting back periodically. Whether





Warden Chiang

Sample Dialogue: "Okay guys, calm down . . . calm . . . hey, cool it!"

Attributes: Bod 7, Chi 5, Mnd 6, Ref 7

Skills: Guns 14, Martial Arts 11, Arcanowave Device 15, Info/Abomination Wrangling 10, Info/Ancient China 10

Arcanowave Schticks: Pulser, Wave Suppressor

Gun Schticks: Eagle Eye

Weapons: punch (8), kick (9), Buro Avenger (11/2/6), Buro Backup Arm (8/1/5+1)

Malefactor Zeta

Sample Dialogue: "You consumed . . . one way or other."

Attributes: Bod 10, Chi 0 (Mag 8), Mnd 3 (Cha 1), Ref 6

Skills: Guns 11, Martial Arts 11, Arcanowave Device 16, Creature Power 15, Intimidation 8

Arcanowave Schticks: Feedback Enhancer, Helix Ripper, Neural Stimulator

Creature Schticks: Conditional Escalation (+1 to Chi if the target of a successful sorcery attack), Rancid Breath

Weapons: punch (11), kick (12), Rancid Breath (10), Helix Ripper (15**/7/-)

Defibrilis

Sample Dialogue: "Shoot that!"

Attributes: Bod 6, Chi 0 (Mag 8), Mnd 3 (Cha 1), Ref 10

Skills: Guns 13, Martial Arts 13, Arcanowave Device 16, Creature Power 14, Leadership 6

Arcanowave Schticks: Agony Grenade, Feedback Enhancer, Tracer Resin Projector

Creature Schticks: Abysmal Spines, Regeneration

Weapons: punch (9), kick (10), Buro 16 (13*/5/32)

they have the disk or not, they expect company. If Wu snuffed it at Needs and Wants, Chiang works on the portal generator while he tries to keep the abominations from eating the suite's wet bar.

The TacOps troops carry concealed Buro 9s, as does Commander Wu. Chiang wears his Avenger openly (ostensibly part of his costume, and not yet noticed by convention security) but carries his backup concealed.

SPOILING THE PARTY

The Lotus have any surviving named characters (even those unused in the previous scene) and ten mooks at their disposal. The PCs will tip the balance either way, but the abominations present were specifically chosen to face sorcerous opposition.

If the PCs arrive with the Lotus operatives to retrieve the data node, combat commences when the group first encounters the abominations. The disk is in the suite, guarded by five mooks with or without Commander Wu. If the PCs have the disk and are helping the Lotus clear out the Architect agents, you have latitude for an antsy mook to begin the fight on either side. If the PCs are on their own side, turning over the disk despite Lotus wishes, the Lotus group appears in the middle of negotiations.

You may play the developments at the convention for as much tension as you like, no matter the setup, prolonging the beginning of the inevitable fight until the players are falling out of their chairs in anticipation. If you go for the huge standoff scene (and why wouldn't you?) you can break it when convention security finally notices the blatant weapon-policy violations all around, or when a gaggle of live-action roleplayers descends upon the crowd that obviously indicates a combat in progress. They pester the various mooks ("Are you in character? I want to run a fight!") into acting against them, triggering the degeneration into an open firefight.

The abominations' strategy is well practiced, so even they can't screw it up: Defibrilis mainly uses his Trace Resin Projector to set up targets for Malefactor Zeta's Helix Ripper, and uses his own Agony Grenades when hit, relying on their Feedback Enhancers to discourage magical attack. Chiang supports the abominations as much as possible. If Wu is still around, he emerges from the suite two sequences after the fight begins. If the fight turns against the Buro, they retreat towards the suite, the location of which is easily extracted from any mook the PCs think not to kill.



The fight, which soon spreads throughout the public areas of the convention, contains great potential for havoc.

Cool Things That Could Happen During the Fight

- The freebie table, containing large numbers of buttons and flyers, is wonderful for Movement schticks. Death by 10,000 paper cuts, anyone?
- The huckster room contains all sorts of dealers, from a sword and knife vendor (ordinary) to resin modelers (with models of all sorts of wicked-looking science-fiction TV show weapons which may temporarily fool a character unfamiliar with them). New-Age-oriented dealers may have trinkets useful in defending against sorcery attacks.
- The hotel has set up a number of snack stands, including popcorn machines perfect

Unnamed Convention Security

Sample Dialogue: "I'm sorry, that's a violation of our weapon policy."

Attributes: Bod 6, Chi 0, Mnd 6, Ref 6

Skills: Guns 6, Martial Arts 7

Weapons: punch (7), kick (8), Colt Detective Special (9/1/6)

Unnamed Medieval Re-enactor

Sample Dialogue: "Yield, foul beast!"

Attributes: Bod 7, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 5

Skills: Martial Arts 6

Weapons: punch (8), kick (9), boffer weapon (9), real sword (11)

for throwing mooks through and pretzel racks with prongs that make them handy as improvised weapons. The snacks themselves may distract the abominations, too.





- Unlike the other two fights, there are a large number of unwitting bystanders. If things go badly for the TacOps troops, they resort to hostage-taking for temporary advantage, as might the Lotus. The PCs must make all sorts of trick shots to avoid unnecessary loss of life. (At least, we hope so.)
- Not all the bystanders are unwitting. In addition to convention security, there are a number of medieval re-enactors in the convention membership. These emerge from the background in partial chain mail carrying boffer weapons (imitation swords padded with foam and duct tape) and looking to mix it up (see their stats on p. 85). Some might graduate to the sword dealer's real blades.
- The suite, of course, contains a wet bar, perfect for impromptu molotov cocktails — not to mention that magnums of champagne are damned tough, and usable as clubs. (There is footage of Bess Truman christening a ship without the preparatory scratches on the bottle, taking several tries to break it against the steel hull.)

There are many ways the fight might go, so rather than providing a big list of what might happen, you should simply keep in mind that:

- The Buro wants to get the disk and escape through its portal (which it finally gets fixed at about the time the fight starts). If the PCs allied themselves with the Buro, they may be irritated to discover that the Wu and/or Chiang are happy to jump through the portal back to 2056 once they get the disk, and leave the PCs to fight the Lotus.
- The Lotus wants to get the disk for itself. It's willing to fight the Buro to get it, or negotiate with or fight the PCs, in the event that they have it.

STANDING DOWN

If this is part of a series, the PCs have likely made at least one set of major enemies, and possibly some allies of a sort. They may not be totally desirable allies, but they did (theoretically) do one side a favor. Depending on which side the PCs dealt with, they may have an advantage in future deals involving either the Buro or the Eaters of the Lotus. If the PCs still hold the disk, the Buro (who, with their phone calls, demonstrated their ability to track the data node) keeps an eye on the PCs, seeking a future opportunity to obtain its lost property. On top of all this, if Nathan Ward survived his encounter with the PCs in the first scene, he may be out for revenge.

Huen Li is something of a special case, assuming she survives. Her fascination with the modern world may lead her away from the Eaters of the Lotus at some point, especially considering the status the Lotus affords women. She could eventually become a good “unaligned” ally. In any event, her word is true — if the Lotus ends up with the disk, the PCs are nicely compensated for their trouble. If the Buro escapes with the node, Li is still grateful for the group's help, and is willing to assist them at least once in return.

Hong Kong Phonebook

LOKI CARBIS

Premise: The PCs investigate a bizarre series of kidnappings.

Twist: It's a threefold case of mistaken identity. Three different factions have kidnapped three different guys with the same name — and none of them got the one they were after.

Climax: A five (or more) way shoot-out in a sports stadium construction site.

BACKSTORY

It all started with Leslie Lau. He'd heard about the remodeling of the Causeway Bay Sports Ground. The place had long been a favorite haunt of his. But when he looked at the plans, he realized the new design would re-align the complex's chi flow, turning it into a powerful feng shui site. He made sure to pass this information along to Huan Ken, and the King of the Thunder Pagoda decided to make it his own when the time came. Huan Ken figured it could be his foothold on re-entry into the real world — the first step in taking back the world he had lost.

Unfortunately, Lau also mentioned this to his girlfriend, a cute little number named Patty Kama, who happens to be a darkness priestess. Patty reported the news to her boss, Ming I, and the Queen of the Darkness Pagoda was pleased with her. This information was the last piece of a puzzle she'd been assembling for months.

For some time, Ming has been aware of a delightful coincidence. Three men in contemporary Hong Kong — all with the same name, but each totally different from the others in every other way — each unwittingly serve the interests of different Secret War factions.

Simon Chou is a bio-technician, working on tailored gene therapies. Without the work he will do in the next ten years, the Architects of the Flesh might never have succeeded in taking over the world.

Simon Chou is a restaurateur with ambitions. He's a good man, but a naïve one, who didn't think to question where the money to expand his business came from — which pleased Gao Zhang no end.

Simon Chou is a professional fortune-teller who uses the I Ching to provide others with guidance. A moralistic man who believes that modern society is hopelessly corrupt, and that the end justifies the means, he is an unwitting ally of the Guiding Hand.

After pondering the matter at length, Ming I had an inspiration. She plans to set things up so that each faction winds up kidnapping the wrong Simon Chou. She'll then engineer events so the situation ends up in a three-way hostage exchange between the Architects, the Hand, and the Lotus. Naturally, the swap will take place at the stadium — which is sure to arouse the ire of Huan Ken.



GETTING STARTED

There are any number of ways the PCs could become entangled in these events:

- A PC could be a friend of any of the three Simon Chous, and witness his kidnapping.
- PCs could be consulting with any Simon Chou on a professional matter (getting their fortunes read, eating in the restaurant, or trying to figure out what the latest tailored virus they've captured from the Architects is) and witness his kidnapping.
- The PCs could be uninvolved witnesses to one or more of the kidnappings.
- Cop characters might hear about the kidnappings of the first two Simon Chous, and then be assigned to the third Simon's protective detail.
- Architect, Hand, or Lotus agents or sympathizers could be assigned to assist with their respective faction's kidnapping attempt.
- Members of the factions not directly involved will be running around trying to figure out what's going on. Any fool can see something's up, but what?
- After the second kidnapping, just about anyone who hears the news will be able to work out that someone is kidnapping Simon Chou. A quick check of the phonebook shows there is only one more in town.

GMC Notes

The following sections detail the major GMCs involved in the scenario.

Patty Kama

Like any other darkness priestess, Patty is beautiful, seductive, scheming, and manipulative. Also like most of Ming I's priestesses, she's not nearly as smart or as cunning as she thinks she is. She's cunning enough, though — and given the whole point of this mission is to sow confusion and discord among her mistresses' enemies, there's a little more latitude for error.

Unlike most of her fellow priestesses, Patty is a recent recruit, having found her

way to the Darkness Pagoda since it moved to the Netherworld. She freely joined the service of Ming I. Patty is convinced the way to earn Ming's favor is to help her frustrate her siblings and other enemies. To this end, she got herself assigned to work in the contemporary juncture, of which she is a native.

Patty has been put in charge of this operation, and knows her promotion is assured if she can pull it off. She's the prime mover behind the events of this adventure, and most likely the PCs will not meet her until the very last scene.

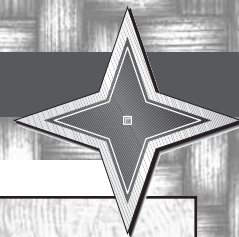
Her stats are not provided, as they should not come into play. Patty never fights against her enemies. She attempts to talk her way out, run if that doesn't work, and surrender as a last option.

Zhifu Wan

Back in 67 AD, Zhifu Wan was one of the very few non-eunuchs to rise to anything resembling a position of power in the Emperor's court. A highly-placed member of the exchequer, he succumbed to the temptation to embezzle. He was caught, of course, but members of the Lotus arranged for his rescue. Brought before Gao Zhang, he was offered a simple choice: "Work for us, or we'll put you back." No fool, Zhifu swore loyalty on the spot, even though it meant he had to become a eunuch. After the gate to the contemporary juncture was discovered, Gao Zhang decided the rampantly capitalist contemporary juncture was crying out for someone of Zhifu's financial wizardry.

Zhifu Wan has been in modern Hong Kong for a year now, and his strategies seem to be working. Bribery and other monetary tricks are making headway, destabilising the positions of the Ascended and disrupting the loyalties of agents on all sides of the Secret War. One of his best schemes has been loansharking, mostly to civilians in the Secret War, especially those who have the drive to be useful to the Lotus someday. This naturally includes men like restaurant owner Simon Chou.

As the Lotus operative who's directly responsible for recruiting Simon Chou, Zhifu's the one who's going to be sweating how to get him back safe and sound. Far more at home with money and intimidation, Zhifu is ill at ease taking a part in the action himself. But he's even more afraid of explaining failure to Gao Zhang.



Jianguo Lo

A native of the contemporary juncture, Jianguo Lo's parents fled to Taiwan decades ago to escape the Communists. They knew their traditional way of life and Confucian beliefs would never be tolerated by Mao Tse Tung's regime. Like many expatriates, they were recruited to the Golden Candle society. As he grew, Jianguo Lo was also recruited, and was promoted through the ranks into the Guiding Hand.

Sent to Hong Kong after completing his training five years ago, Lo's disgust for the city has never gone away. Taiwan might have become a land of factories bent on satisfying the bottomless maw of the consumerist culture, but Lo saw Hong Kong as all the worst parts of capitalism mixed with the most corrupt bits of Chinese culture. When he met fortune-teller Simon Chou, Jianguo was reassured — not all the natives of Hong Kong had abandoned the traditional ways after all. Although efforts to recruit him to the Golden Candle Society have proven fruitless, Simon Chou's philosophical bent and position of respect in the community have led the Guiding Hand to consider him an ally, and something of a mascot.

Loyal and earnest to a fault, Jianguo does not hesitate to deploy Guiding Hand resources to rescue Simon Chou.

Bryce Sutton

An administrator originally assigned to the contemporary juncture by the vagaries of office politics, Bryce Sutton is firmly committed to the Architects' cause. All the more so, really, because since his re-assignment to modern-day Hong Kong, he's discovered he really likes mixing it up with his enemies hand to hand, rather than dealing with them as statistics in reports.

In fact, he's gone a little crazy on the subject. His first taste of gunfire and bloodshed — and a bit of arcanowave energy — awoke in him an almost sociopathic need for still more of the same. He's also developed sharp fangs in place of his teeth: another legacy of arcanowave mutation.

As a former Buroucrat, Sutton isn't one to think imaginatively or initiate actions. This tendency to be hidebound and reactive makes him easy prey for Ming I's schemes.

Zhifu Wan

Sample Dialogue: "There is only one truth, that which Lenin spoke: *cui bono?*"

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 3 (Mag 5), Mnd 7, Ref 6

Skills: Martial Arts 7, Guns 6, Intimidation 9, Info/Lotus 7, Info/Secret War 5, Leadership 4, Sorcery 9, Accounting 12

Sorcery Shticks: Blast (conjured weapons, disease), Divination, Influence

Weapons: punch (6), kick (7)

Jianguo Lo

Sample Dialogue: "Though it take a thousand years, China shall prevail."

Attributes: Bod 7, Chi 1 (Fu 7), Mnd 5, Ref 6

Skills: Martial Arts 14, Guns (archery) 10, Intimidation 6, Info/Guiding Hand 5, Info/Secret War 5, Leadership 7

Fu Shticks: Bite of the Dragon, Crane Stance, Wing of the Crane, Beak of the Crane, Claw of the Tiger, Tiger Stance

Gun Shticks: Signature Weapon (bow)

Weapons: punch (8), kick (9), bow and arrow (7/5/1)

Bryce Sutton

Sample Dialogue: "All the chop-sockey in the world is no match for a fully charged Helix Ripper!"

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 1, Mnd 6 (Int 7), Ref 5

Skills: Guns 16, Martial Arts 8, Arcanowave Device 8, Deceit 5, Intimidation 8, Info/Architects 6, Info/Secret War 4, Leadership 4

Arcanowave Shticks: Helix Ripper

Gun Shticks: Both Guns Blazing, Hair-Trigger Neck Hairs

Weapons: Punch (6), Kick (7), Beretta 92 Centurion (10/2/15 + 1)

But he is learning, and may well surprise Ming and the players both before this is over.

Simon Chou the Fortune-Teller

The son of a Chinese father and British mother, Simon has always been torn by the conflicting pulls of Eastern and Western values. Educated in a very proper school in England but taught the traditions of the East by his paternal grandfather, Simon actually found World War II something of a relief, emotionally speaking. For once in his life, both halves were

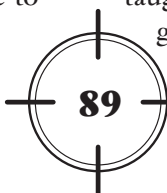




Illustration by Grey Thornberry

aligned. But after the Communists came to power, the two sides were once again out of balance. Simon decided to consult the I Ching, and interpreted the results as indicating that he should cleave to his Chinese heritage.

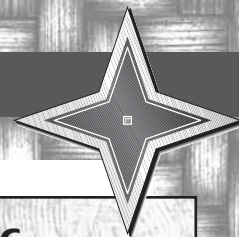
Abandoning everything of the West except his name (to abandon that would be an insult to his parents), Chou has spent years eking out a marginal existence as a fortune-teller in the Yaumatei district's Night Market. But he's at peace with himself, even if he's still disgusted by modern Hong Kong.

Simon Chou the Restaurateur

Young, ambitious, and a little too greedy for his own good, Simon built his restaurant with money he scrimped and saved for years to raise — and an eleventh hour loan when prices went up suddenly. With the handing back of Hong Kong just around the corner, he's trying to decide whether to leave, and if so, where to go — Sydney, Los Angeles, or San Francisco. But starting over would probably take another loan, and Simon's afraid of Zhifu Wan and his associates. He just wants to pay back the loan and get away. He doesn't realize the true magnitude of his error yet. In fact, he thinks he's dealing with the Triads. If he learned Zhifu was actually a eunuch sorcerer from the first century AD, his nerve would break and he'd just run.

Simon Chou the Scientist

The very model of the absent-minded professor, Simon Chou is a leading light of one of the top bio-tech firms in Hong Kong. He has no idea about the uses to which his work will be put by the Architects over the next few decades, and he's ethical enough that he would destroy his notes if he did. Fortunately for the Architects, Chou is not much given to pondering the larger implications of his work, and thus, the chances of him abandoning it are slim. Still, rather than take that chance, Bryce Sutton has ordered that he be kept under observation, and that he be protected from anyone who might interfere with him or his work.



THREE OF A KIND

The kidnappings occur on three successive nights, as detailed below. For game purposes, it doesn't matter in which order the Simons are grabbed. Use them in whatever order works best in your game. Note that the PCs need not be directly involved in each of the kidnappings.

Prior to these events, each of the three factions involved receives a warning that another faction is out to kidnap their Simon Chou. At the same time, double agents working for Ming I (and under the command of Patty Kama) arrange things so each faction decides to take its own Simon into protective custody. The same double agents also confuse matters so each faction winds up grabbing the wrong one. Note that the precise identities and tactics of the double agents are not detailed, since it's unlikely to become even marginally relevant to the action of the scenario. In things go in that direction, you'll have to wing it.

The only wildcard is the four plainclothes cops inconspicuously keeping an eye on the third Simon. This quartet is ready at all times to wade in and add to the confusion by making the fight three-sided. Unless one of the PCs is a cop, these guys are likely to assume the PCs are either part of the kidnapping or are opportunistic brawlers. If there is a PC cop, they are grateful for the assist — assuming the cop PC wasn't already assigned to their detail.

In the end, all three kidnappings should be successful. While these fights are minor skirmishes for PCs, and while the PCs may well succeed in taking down half of the opposition, make sure to engineer things so those who remain standing get away with their prey. It will make the final climactic fight much more interesting.

KIDNAPPING THE SCIENTIST

Every night, Simon finishes work and walks from his building to the nearby multi-level car park, where he picks up his car

Unnamed Plainclothes Cops

Sample Dialogue: "Of course I'm not a policeman — *<hears gunshots>* Out of my way!"

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 0, Mnd 6, Ref 5

Skills: Martial Arts 8, Guns 8, Disguise 3, Driving 7, Police 10

Weapons: punch (6), kick (7), Colt 380 Government Pocketlite (8/1/7+1)

Unnamed Guiding Hand Mooks

Sample Dialogue: "Eggheads! I hate 'em"

Attributes: Bod 6, Chi 0, Mnd 4, Ref 6

Skills: Martial Arts 8, Guns 8, Driving 7, Intimidation 8

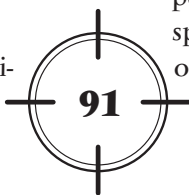
Weapons: punch (7), kick (8), AMT Automag IV (11/3/7+1)

and drives home. There's no valet, so he walks up the stairs to the sixth level above the street by himself. That level is about three-quarters full at that time of the evening. About half of the fluorescent tube lights work, and one in five of those flickers constantly. On the night of the kidnapping, Simon is followed into the car park by a group of monks — not that he notices. Of course, any PCs watching him — or randomly walking past, for that matter — definitely notice.

There are twice as many Guiding Hand mooks as there are PCs. Their plan is to reason with Chou — they expect he is on their side, after all — and convince him to come with them quietly. Since he has no idea what they're talking about and tries to escape, they decide to push him into his own car and pile in as many of their guys as possible before escaping to confer with Jianguo Lo, whom they've been told is their contact in the contemporary juncture. If the PCs intervene, remember that the Hand fighters don't have to defeat the PCs, just delay them long enough for the car containing Simon to escape.

Cool Things That Could Happen During the Fight

- The car park is full and ill-lit. It's easy for people to hide between or beneath cars, spring out to attack from surprise, or snake out limbs to punch, kick, or trip.





Shen Lian

Sample Dialogue: "Taste the awesome power of the Lotus!"

Attributes: Bod 4, Chi 0 (Mag 5), Mnd 6, Ref 5

Skills: Martial Arts 8, Sorcery 8

Sorcery Shticks: Blast (fire, lightning), Influence

Weapons: punch (5), kick (6)

Unnamed Lotus Mooks

Sample Dialogue: "This old fool's hardly worth the effort."

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 0, Mnd 4, Ref 7

Skills: Martial Arts 8, Intimidation 8

Weapons: punch (6), kick (7)

- There are other people around, but they run off on foot once the fight starts, leaving behind their cars with the engines running. Hand brakes can be knocked out, sending cars rolling ponderously across the floor until they hit other cars or crash through the barriers and tumble into the night. If they can't get Simon to his own car, the mooks do not hesitate to steal another car.
- Someone could try driving a car into his opponents (most likely steering one-handed while leaning out of the car to fire a gun with the other hand). Although it's unlikely anyone will be hit, the inevitable collision should be suitably pyrotechnic.
- Any stray gunfire could ignite a fuel tank and cause bursting flames and thick black smoke, which sets off the sprinkler system after a minute or two. The Hand takes advantage of such confusion in order to escape.

KIDNAPPING THE FORTUNE-TELLER

Zhifu Wan has sent a sorcerous thug of his acquaintance, Shen Lian, and a number of grunts (twice as many as there are PCs) to grab the Lotus-affiliated Simon Chou. While Shen is a bit confused when the address he was given — which was altered by one of Patty's double-agents — winds up being a fortune-teller's

stall rather than a restaurant, Zhifu warned him that Simon might not want to come willingly, so it doesn't come as any surprise to him when he has to use force.

Once Simon yells out for help, people notice. Although most people ignore the crazy old man shouting about sorcerers trying to take him away, the PCs — if they are present — know he could be telling the truth. Fortunately for the PCs, Shen Lian is a coward. He uses his spells to create diversions rather than go on the offense. Offense is what his mooks are for.

Lian talks an arrogant game, but is actually a lot smarter than he sounds. His front is designed to make his enemies think of him as just another egotistical sorcerer. Although he isn't very powerful yet, he's devious and subtle. He prefers distraction and subterfuge to direct combat, and uses his powers to keep the PCs off balance long enough for his mooks to grab Simon.

Cool Things That Could Happen During the Fight

- Think of the scene in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* where the bad guys kidnap Marion in the market. Multiply that level of confusion by the number of PCs, make it night, and set it in Hong Kong. Play up the natural distractions of the market: noisy chickens in wicker cages, barkers hawking their wares, and a crowd so thick a chainsaw wouldn't get through it. If you can separate the PCs and lead them to pursue each other while the bad guys get away, so much the better.
- There's bound to be someone selling pottery or chinaware. It would be a real shame if someone got thrown into the rack with all that fragile stuff.
- Small carts sell large pots of hot soup, fry things in boiling oil, and have wide flat hot-plates. It'd only be fair for a mook to get his goose cooked, as it were.
- All this running around and breaking things is bound to attract the attention of the cops — or possibly just start a massive free-for-all, with market patrons and barkers alike getting into the act. Particularly careless and destructive PCs may have to go into hiding to avoid charges of rioting.



KIDNAPPING THE RESTAURANTEUR

If there's one thing Bryce Sutton does well, it's follow orders. Especially if it sounds like the orders might get him into a fight. Thus, when the orders came down from 2056 that he should grab this guy Simon Chou, and that he might put up a fight, it didn't even occur to him that he knew a Simon Chou, but that the Simon Chou he was being sent to grab wasn't that one. Of course, the (forged) orders came from Patty Kama's double agent.

The Architects arrive to grab Simon the restaurateur in the middle of a busy night at the restaurant. With Chou serving as *maitre'd*, things do not proceed in a subtle manner.

The restaurant has a high ceiling with chandeliers hanging from it and a stairway leading to

a gallery along one wall. Two doors lead off the gallery. There are fish tanks along the floor of the wall opposite the gallery, with a variety of edible marine life on display. The ground floor has about thirty tables, each suitable for four people, and about five more which are larger, circular, and seat twelve or so. The tables can be arranged in various ways to accommodate larger parties.

Cool Things That Could Happen During the Fight

- The large circular tables have lazy-susans on them so diners can share their entrees. One of these might serve as the basis of an unorthodox spinning kick. Alternately, someone could be spun around on one until nauseous or too dizzy to stand.
- The two doors off the gallery lead to the balcony — which isn't built yet. Mooks barging





Unnamed Architect Mooks

Sample Dialogue: "How can you eat that unprocessed crap?"

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 0, Mnd 4, Ref 7

Skills: Guns 8, Martial Arts 6, Intimidation 8

Weapons: punch (6), kick (7), Colt 1911A (10/2/7+1)

through fall to the ground below, while named characters do humorous double-takes or hang from the door for a minute while struggling desperately to get back inside.

- There is a cart upon which dirty dishes are placed by staff. This makes a marvelous source of cutlery to throw at people. A mook tries this if his gun is lost or disabled, but only if a PC doesn't think of it first.
- At least one of the tanks contains live lobsters, and anyone whose head is dunked emerges with one of the little sea bugs clutching his nose with its pincer.
- The possibilities of the chandeliers are too obvious to belabor.

POKER FACES

This is the part of the scenario where all of the involved factions run around trying to figure out precisely what the hell is going on. Except for Patty Kama, of course — she knows *precisely* what the hell is going on. How the PCs are involved in this segment depends completely on how they got involved in the first place.

If the PCs are agents of one of the involved factions — the Architects, Hand, or Lotus — they are assigned by their superiors to assist Bryce Sutton, Jianguo Lo, or Zhifu Wan in sorting out the mess. All three have reached the same conclusion: someone in their employ is a double-agent. While each tries to smoke out his respective traitor, the PCs are assigned to handle the search for the appropriate Simon Chou.

If the PCs are friends of one of the Simon Chous, they already have an interest in finding him — he's been kidnapped, for Chrissakes!

Cops assigned earlier to protect one of the Simons are assigned to find him. Alternately, if the PC cops have an antagonistic superior, they could be *forbidden* to assist in the

investigation (since they bungled up his protection), virtually guaranteeing they'll investigate behind said superior's back.

Characters who are members of other factions simply trying to find out what's going on continue to be motivated to find out what's going on.

KAMA CHAMELEON

Tracking down the various Simons wouldn't be much of a problem normally. Clues at the various crime scenes — surveillance tapes, witness reports, and the like — would eventually allow the proper authorities to identify the various involved misanthropes and track them to their respective lairs.

Unfortunately, Patty Kama is still one step ahead of the game. As each side realizes it has the wrong Simon, she (and/or her agents) contacts them anonymously to inform them that she knows who has stolen the Simon they want. For a price, this mysterious figure offers to arrange a meeting of the various parties to the mess so they can negotiate a swap.

While the various parties stall, asking for a day or two to think it over, none really have any choice in the matter. Their respective superiors are breathing down their necks and their initial botches are making them look very bad. All want to wrap things up as quickly and as painlessly as possible. For that matter, each knows the Simon he really wants could be under interrogation or torture all the while, in danger of spilling important secrets. Time is of the essence.

The extent to which the PCs are involved in or aware of these behind-the-scenes negotiations depends on where they're coming from, so this investigation segment of the scenario can be as short or as involved as you like. Since this is *Feng Shui* and not *Sweat the Little Details: The RPG of Anal Retentive Fingerprint Dusting*, we're going to gloss right on over precisely how the PCs get from Point A to Point B. The only thing that's of crucial importance is that they somehow find out about or trail someone to the stadium for the final showdown.



HOUSE OF CARDS

The site for the swap is the Causeway Bay Sports Ground, which is absolutely huge. When it is re-opens to the public, it will offer facilities for football, volleyball, badminton, and tennis. In addition, the central football ground is also used for a variety of track and field events. The swap has been scheduled to go down at night, after the workmen have all gone home. Patty Kama has also arranged for the stadium's security guards to get the night off.

Casting your mind back to the beginning of this scenario, you'll remember the stadium is being renovated, and that Huan Ken has taken a special interest in this site, which will have powerful feng shui once the construction is completed. Since an anonymous informant tipped Huan Ken off that agents of the Architects, Guiding Hand, and Lotus are gathering at the stadium to do something — something *nefarious*, no doubt — Huan Ken has sent some . . . observers.

Where the PCs are depends entirely on who they're with and what they're up to.

Each of the factions has been limited to bringing two dozen warm bodies to the swap, and each has been instructed to enter from a different gate to keep pre-game distractions to a minimum. As the three factions meet for the first time on the central football ground, storm clouds gather and it begins to rain. Zhifu Wan, Jianguo Lo, and Bryce Sutton are all present. Everyone is understandably twitchy.

As the negotiations commence, Zhifu Wan is cagey with his information, but tries to give the impression he knows a lot more than the others do about whatever they're talking about. He's glib and quick-witted, and always seems to have gotten to the end of your sentence before you have. He's also paranoid, and has half-convinced himself that any given person he talks to is in league with the double agents he knows are somewhere in his organization.

Jianguo Lo, in contrast, is honest and forthright. He asks some questions irrelevant to the matter at hand in an effort to gauge the moral character of his opposites. The one

thing he can't do is conceal his dislike of Western culture. Westerners offend him by their mere presence, and Asians who are conspicuously Western-leaning (wearing walkmans or eating Burger King, for example) are nearly as bad. He's too polite to say anything, but his intense dislike makes him seem preoccupied.

Bryce Sutton comes across as a harried middle-management type, unless you see his eyes, which are windows to the bloodlust of the savage within. Of all three, Bryce is the only one who seems to look forward to something going wrong.

As the negotiations continue, the rain intensifies. Hey, wait a minute, you don't suppose a Thunder King can control the weather, do you? Huan Ken's soldiers are busy sneaking into ambush position as the sides negotiate, and upon the signal — the first crash of thunder — they open fire on everyone who's gathered in the center. For maximum irony, all hell breaks loose just as negotiations are reaching a successful resolution. The Architect, Hand, and Lotus forces immediately erupt into bloody violence, blaming their opposites for setting them up. It's a complete bloodbath.

Huan Ken has sent about sixty expendables to fuel the party. These mooks pop up throughout the stands and fire on anything that moves. Any given PC who fails a Fortune check, Difficulty 5, each sequence is the victim of 1-6 (roll a die) shots from these snipers in the galleries.

Huan Ken has also sent one of his loyal acolytes, Cardinal Gray, to observe the fray and report back. Unless spotted and specifically engaged by the PCs, Cardinal Gray does not become personally involved in the fight, his mission being to report back to Huan Ken.

Similarly, Patty Kama is out there somewhere, skulking in the shadows, watching her handiwork with satisfaction. If the PCs specifically look for the person who set all this up, they might be able to find her. Remember, she's completely unwilling to get into a fight. She tries subterfuge, and, as a last resort, surrender. She's not willing to die for her promotion.

PCs attempting to rescue one or more of the Simon Chous from the bloodbath (they all wind up hiding together under the same construction tarp in the center of the



Cardinal Gray

Sample Dialogue: "Interesting . . . very interesting . . ."

Attributes: Bod 4, Chi 0 (Mag 9), Mnd 7, Ref 4

Skills: Martial Arts 8, Intrusion 10, Leadership 12, Sorcery 15, Info/Church of the Thunder King 12, Info/Secret War 10

Sorcery Schticks: Blast (lightning, fire, conjured weapons), Heal, Movement

Weapons: punch (5), kick (6), ceremonial dagger (7)

Unnamed Thunder Pagoda Mooks

Sample Dialogue: "This is your eviction notice!"

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 0, Mnd 4, Ref 7

Skills: Martial Arts 8, Guns 9, Intimidation 8

Weapons: punch (6), kick (7), H&K MP5 (10/5/30)

Unnamed Darkness Warriors

Sample Dialogue: "Death has come for you, Simon Chou!"

Attributes: Bod 6 (Mov 5), Chi 0, Mnd 6, Ref 5

Skills: Martial Arts 8, Guns 8, Intimidation 7, Info/Darkness Pagoda 8

Weapons: punch (7), kick (8), AK-47 (13**/5/30), Aztec warclub (12)

madness) run into an ambush set by Patty Kama as they flee through the stadium's bowels. The enemies in this case are a group of darkness warriors, whose numbers are equal to the number of PCs. They try to simply keep the PCs at bay while dispatching the Simons, but they fight to kill PCs if that seems easier. Try to avoid identifying the assailants as darkness warriors if possible. Just describe their black clothes and avoidance of lights, leaving the players to guess about their origins.

Cool Things That Could Happen During the Fight

- A large trailer on the field provides storage for all manner of athletic equipment, ranging from the innocuous (tennis balls and shuttlecocks) to the potentially lethal (javelins and throwing hammers).

- One part of the stadium is a multi-story maze of catwalks and scaffolding.
- There are construction vehicles — cranes, cement mixers, backhoes — parked on the field. There's also a huge quantity of smaller implements of construction — power tools, pipes, bags of doorknobs — laying about.
- There's a big power generator that provides juice for the construction site, running a number of banks of large floodlights that allow the workers to see after dark.
- The athletes' accessway to the field is clear, and can be escaped into. This leads to the maze-like interior of the construction site. Parts of the stadium are complete and other parts are not, and it doesn't really matter if a completed section is cheek by jowl with a bit that's still being built — use whatever you think will be the most fun
- The renovations include a new swimming pool, which is completed and filled. The PCs discover it from the diving platform levels, meters above the pool itself. High jumping action on and around the diving boards, plus the inevitable dunkings, are a must!
- One or more of the double agents who helped set this up could experience a crisis of conscience, especially if the PCs are known members of the Dragons. They're willing join the party in exchange for a promise of safe passage out of the chaos. If the PCs haven't already figured it out, these guys are happy to finger Ming I and Patty Kama as the people behind the mess.

AFTERMATH

After the showdown in the stadium, there's enough unfocused aggression floating around the Secret War to keep everyone twitchy for months. Each of the factions blames all of the others. Huan Ken's involvement eventually becomes known as well, though unless the PCs do some investigation, Patty Kama and Ming I are never connected to the matter of the kidnapped Simon Chou. Thus, Patty's promotion takes place, and she shows up in the future, but with more resources at her disposal than before.

E Ticket Ride

JIM CROCKER

Premise: Team Joy has opened the brand new Freedom Flags Park for the day for *free* to any and all orphan children the Buro can identify and provide transport for. It's a photo op, investment in the future, and social experiment all rolled into one!

The Twist: Welcome to the field test of the Über-kid Mark II. Can they fit in with normal kids? Will the normal kids notice? Will they bolt at their first taste of freedom? The Buro would love the answers to all these questions, and today they'll get them plus a few more. Like, how will they deal with the crack team of Jammer "orphans" who plan on crashing the party?

Climax: PCs vs. Jammers vs. Architect super-kinder in a postmodern artificial wonderland.

BACKSTORY

If the modern amusement park is meant to provide an idolized view of the corporate culture that creates it, the one-world government version must surely do the same, but with better rides. While the Buro is not big on co-opting 20th century ideas, they have come to grudgingly admit that when it comes to giving the masses what they want, even the Architects can learn a thing or two from the Mouse.

So they created Freedom Flags Park, a carefully designed complex containing the state-of-the-art in family entertainment. Things like rides, shows, happy and efficient staff,

exotic food, and, of course, funny mascots in big costumes are all subtly tweaked to reinforce the Buro ideal.

Part of that ideal is the creation of a better citizen. Hence, the Über-kid Mark II.

The Buro didn't do so well with its first attempt at the Über-kids (see *Seed of the New Flesh*, p. 17). Those genetically engineered tykes figured out pretty quickly that they were headed straight into the Buro meat grinder. They escaped, and are scattered about the various junctures, few in number and tenaciously hunted by their former masters.

The Buro is into redundancy, though, so it should come as no surprise that they had a second batch of new and improved buns in the oven in a matter of weeks. The CDCA gene genies had to demonstrate there wouldn't be a repeat of the Über-kid Mark I fiasco before they got the funding for the second batch, so they devised a means of keeping the second generation in check. Meet the Interactive Onboard Aural Personal Behavioral Modification and Communication Accessory — a.k.a. the "eardrummer." While these little doodads are usually used to keep tabs on agents in the field and are particularly useful for communicating surreptitiously with agents undercover, the CDCA saw them as the ideal way to bring the internal, omnipresent voice of Mother and Father to a generation of vat-grown super-kids.

Each of the Über-kids is equipped with an eardrummer, which the precocious tot



Über-kid Mark II

All the Über-kids were christened upon removal from their test-tubes by the CDCA creepazoids who reared them. The GM should make up names for Über-kids as needed. These tend to be common first names followed by a number/letter combination reflecting their batch number, followed by "Jr." For example, Jennifer C2, Jr.; George F17, Jr.; and so on.

Sample Dialogue: "Daddy says I should tell you to surrender before I have to take your gun away and kill you with it."

Attributes: Bod 3, Chi 2 (For 4), Mnd 10 (Cha 4), Ref 6

Skills: Martial Arts 6, Guns 6, Deceit 10, Fix-It 10

Unique Schticks:

Really Squirmy Lil' Bastard: The Über-kid Mark II is a tiny little fella. His dodge AV is 3 higher than his Martial Arts value.

Photo-Reflexes: The Über-kid Mark II is so smart he can pick up tricks that take regular people years to learn just by watching. An Über-kid Mark II who spends a sequence observing a PC or GMC using a particular skill at a level higher than his own in that same skill may make a Mind roll. The Difficulty is the difference between the Über-kid's and the PC or GMC's AV. If the check succeeds, the kid's AV increases by one. This schtick, while impressive, does not allow the Über-kid to perform actions he is physically incapable of or doesn't have proper tools for. The brat may know how to use a caseless 20mm chaingun, but that doesn't mean he can actually carry one. Also, while the Mark IIs may eventually be able to pick up schticks just by watching, they're not quite old enough for that just yet. Luckily.

Weapons: punch (4), kick (5)

has worn since he came out of the incubator. (See *Seed of the New Flesh*, pp. 52-53. If you don't have *Seed of the New Flesh*, an eardrummer is basically a bit of tech that goes in the ear and allows a remote person to talk to the subject and hear everything the subject hears.) These are part of a broadcast network that allows the Buro techs (a staff of child psychologists who work 24/7) to communicate with any single kid or group of kids at any time. This means that the kids have lived with the voices of their "parents" in their heads for as long as they can remember. It's comforting knowing that all you have to do is whisper and help is on the way, and that anytime you need to know why something is the way it is, all you have to do is ask. Unfortunately, it also means Mommy and Daddy know when you have a Bad

Thought, because they can hear what you're thinking.

Can't they?

The Buro thinks the kids believe this, but it need to be sure. So it's going to allow the kids out of the training facility for the first time.

Which gets us back to Freedom Flags Park.

A FREE LAUNCH

Team Joy has been planning to open their new "Secure Family Recreational Amusement and Relaxation Facility, Optional" for the last couple of months. They have been held up by the CDCA, which is eager to field test its new creations, but needed to make sure they were ready. The scientists have finally given the green light, so the Buro publicity machine has swung into full gear.

The Grand Opening of Freedom Flags Park is absolutely free, but with a catch: it is open only to widows and orphans. Of course, a few minor Buro officials are also attending, as well as a host of celebrities and journalists. Other than that, on opening day the park will be populated entirely by the wives (and husbands — it's not just a man's world in the BuroMil) and children of citizens who died to advance the Buro ideal, willingly or otherwise. And the Omnivision cameras will be there to capture every heartwarming moment in glorious 3D color.

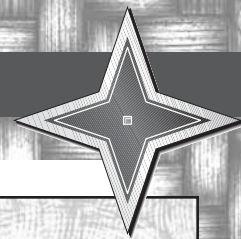
It's a great day for the Buro, a glorious publicity coup, and a great step towards Team Joy realizing its goal: Freedom from Misery!

As long as someone doesn't crash the party.

Motherless Monkeys

Unfortunately for the Buro, their delay in opening the park allowed information about the ceremony and special "theme day" to leak to the Jammers. The Jammers have taken offense at not having been invited to a ceremony meant to honor the widows and orphans whose spouses, parents and siblings died for the Buro ideal.

Given that they easily lead any other population in this category (at least on a per capita basis), they probably have a point.



ManDrill

Sample Dialogue: "Any ol' body can throw ordnance somewheres, bobo. It takes *talent* to get it to where it really *wants* to be."

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 0 (For 4), Mnd 6 (Per 8), Ref 8

Skills: Martial Arts 10, Guns 14, Arcanowave Device 14, Fix-It 12, Info/Burocracy 12, Intrusion 16, Sabotage 18

Arcanowave Schticks:

Gun Eye x2 (*Golden Comeback*, p. 79): ManDrill's extra schtick in Gun Eye allows him to see in any wavelength of the electromagnetic spectrum, and protects from the effects of any sudden changes in illumination (as from flash-bang grenades, the effect of explosions, and so on). He uses this little beastie to probe small places and locate bombs more often than he uses it with his firearms.

Robot Limb (Drill Arm) x2: ManDrill's left arm has been replaced at the elbow with a hyper-pneumatic drill attachment. The drill tip is an ARB alloy that sharpens itself when it comes in contact with living matter. When activated as an Arcanowave Device, the drill cuts *better* when cutting living flesh. It does 8 Damage to non-living things, but does 12 Damage to flesh and blood. When it hits a living opponent, the drill doesn't spray blood and gore like it should. Instead, it sucks any messiness along the grooves of the spinning drill and into the guts of the arm, presumably lubricating and feeding the arm. The sight of a horrible gouging wound left spotlessly clean can be quite unsettling. ManDrill can attach other tools to the motors and actuators in his arm for various tasks as needed. Assume he has any typical hand tool or appropriate appliance he needs. It takes 3 shots to switch functions. As with any Robotic Limb, it can be powered by a mundane battery pack in non-Arcanowave mode, in which case it doesn't contribute to mutation checks.

Neural Concentrator: ManDrill wears this slung over his right shoulder. It is similar to a Neural Stimulator (*Feng Shui*, p. 121), but appears as an octagonal red pack with what looks like piano wire coming out of each of its eight sides and plunging into his back. When he activates it, the wires pull taut and twang lightly as he moves, making a quietly discordant pinging sound. The octagon's shape also seems to lose coherence, writhing as the wires pull it in different directions. The Neural Concentrator eliminates unnecessary motion on the part of any muscles not performing some specific task. In effect, ManDrill gives up gross motor control in exchange for fine motor control. In game terms, it increases his Dexterity attribute. When the Concentrator is activated, ManDrill makes an Arcanowave Device check, Difficulty equal to his Dexterity. The Outcome is then added to skill checks on Dexterity-based skills (usually Guns or Sabotage) for a number of sequences equal to the Outcome, or until the Concentrator is turned off. The downside is that during that time, any Agility-based activities (like Martial Arts and Intrusion) are reduced by the same amount. Furthermore, while the device is turned on, if ManDrill goes any faster than half his Move attribute in a single action, he receives 1 Wound Point per point of extra Move he uses, against which Toughness does not apply.

GateMaker: (See *Seed of the New Flesh*, p. 59)

Gun Schticks: Dismantle Gun x3 (*Golden Comeback*, p. 78)

Weapons: punch (6), kick (7), drill arm (8 or 12), silenced HK MP5 K (10/5/30), silenced Buro Avenger (11/2/6), infinite supply and variety of mini-grenades (see *Golden Comeback*, p. 86), explosives (see "Sneaker Ordnance" p. 110)

Equipment: ultrasonic communications headset, night vision goggles, grapple line with belt mini-winch, suave black infiltration monkey suit

Because of the special nature of this event, the Jammers, after much debate, finally came to the conclusion that their standard tactics might not work. The park is far from any gates to the Netherworld, and is as unobtrusively well secured as PubOrd could make it. Nevertheless, it is accessible by public transport lines, and the supplies and personnel that regularly move in and out mean that someone sneaky might be able to get inside unnoticed. Once inside, there are plenty of places to hide.

Now, "sneaky" is not normally a word associated with Jammers. But Potemkin is nothing if not practical (other than hyper-

active, a pyromaniac, and a flying chimpanzee). After hand-picking a few good monkeys with the right skill set, he's come up with just the gang for this mission: ManDrill's Simian Sneakers.

The Sneakers' mission: get into the park, set explosives in strategic locations, blow it sky-high to create maximum panic, then get out. The Sneakers understand they're *covert* mission specialists. They work hard not to be seen because they're not that tough in a stand-up fight.



Typical Unnamed Simian Sneaker

Sample Dialogue: (whispered) "Hee hee! Consume *that*, Bobo!"

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 0, Mnd 5 (Per 7), Ref 6 (Dex 7)

Skills: Martial Arts 8, Guns 12, Arcanowave Device 12, Intrusion 12, Sabotage 14

Arcanowave Schticks: Robot Limb x2 (may be an arm or leg, but always has the same tool kit option ManDrill has), Neural Concentrator (see ManDrill's stat box on p. 109 for details)

Weapons: punch (6), kick (7), drill limb (8 or 12), silenced Buro Blade of Truth (10/5/30), silenced Buro 9 (10/1/17+1), grenades (2 frag, 2 flash-bang, 2 tear gas — see *Golden Comeback*, p. 86), explosives (see "Sneaker Ordnance" below)

Equipment: ultrasonic communications headset, night vision goggles, grapple lines with belt mini-winchers, suave black infiltration monkey suit

ManDrill

ManDrill was one of the Simian Ordinance Retrieval and Disposal Initiative Drive's (SOR-DID) success stories. He loved his job, the modifications took well, and he was small and agile — a natural at crawling around in the confined spaces where bombs were often hidden. When the first wave of Jammers let themselves out of their cages, ManDrill stayed on the job, finding and defusing several of the little presents they left behind, including one that would have substantially reduced property values for about six city blocks around the historic old UN building in New York City.

They didn't count on him quitting because of a girl.

Daizee the chimp was a non-combatant designed by the CDCA for commercial domestic applications (cooking, cleaning, and that sort of thing). ManDrill was smitten the moment he laid eyes on her, and even though he was a foot shorter than she, the appeal of a man who came with his own set of tools was undeniable to the domestic Daizee. One thing led to another: he broke her out and they made a desperate dash for the Netherworld, where they right quick joined the Jammers in "non-mission critical" roles. Daizee is now the chef and domestic goddess in the Silent Jungle, while ManDrill acts as a consultant when the Jammers need actual explosives *expertise*. (Given how

often the typical Jammer wants to *stop* bombs from going off, ManDrill has lots of down time to help with the gardening.)

Other Sneakers

The Sneakers are primates of various types, but most are small, wiry, agile, and alert. There are several spider monkeys, a couple of baboons, and even a lemur in the gang. ManDrill insists they all use the same equipment so everything is interchangeable.

The Sneakers have been trained by ManDrill to be patient, sneaky, and cunning. They are smarter than the average Jammer, and highly motivated to get their bombs to the right places. PCs may be in for a surprise when the Sneakers ambush them, hit and run, and cover their tracks with short bursts of concentrated SMG fire, as opposed to simply blowing up everything in sight. In a pinch, though, they don't hesitate to throw wired claymore mines at people they think might be dumb enough to catch them, and thumb the switch just as the poor sap is reading "This side towards . . ."

But they only do that when *necessary*.

Sneaker Ordnance

The Sneakers, in addition to employing garden-variety grenades in various flavors, use a custom-made explosive substance dubbed "claymost." Claymost is a highly concentrated polymer explosive that comes sealed in a handy plastic ziplock pouch. A sonic pulse of a very specific wavelength not found in nature detonates it. It can be otherwise shot, burned, blown up, frozen, soaked, buried, eaten, run over, and even electrocuted with no ill effects. Furthermore, it can be mixed with a series of other compounds to easily change its consistency. It starts as a gel-ish liquid which can be easily poured down pipes, into gas tanks, and so on. When mixed with a various range of powders, claymost becomes putty-like. Different types of powders produce putty of varying levels of stickiness, allowing it to be thrown against glass, molded along doors, put on a road to be picked up by vehicle tires, and so on. Finally, claymost can be treated with a spray that makes it as hard as concrete so it can (for example) be formed into wedges and hammered into things like trees.



Each of the Sneakers has a sonic broadcaster built into his headset, which allows him to selectively detonate any of his own bombs at will. ManDrill also has an override broadcaster allowing him to detonate *any* of the bombs left by the members of his team. The Sneakers use timers the size of thumbnails, which can broadcast the signal for a given lump of claymost up to ten meters. These free them from having to think about a given demolition job once they've set their charges.

Each pouch of claymost counts as a big explosion (see *Feng Shui*, p. 140). In the course of this scenario, the Sneakers mostly use claymost to blow up the park, but a desperate Sneaker could find plenty of ways to use it offensively, especially if he has a bit of time to prepare.

TEAM SPIRIT

So we've got an Architect PR stunt, a group of disgruntled Jammers, and a gaggle of bio-engineered brats. It's time to add the PCs and make it an adventure.

There are several angles for involving a typical group of Secret Warriors:

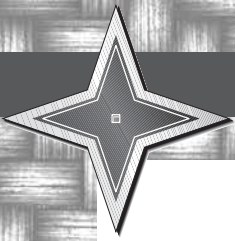
- If the PCs are Jammer-sympathizers, they get wind of the impending Jammer operation through their Jammer-friendly contacts. They may even be asked to help if they have a rep for Architect-hosing. The Jammers neglect to mention they plan to blow up old people and little kids.
- If the PCs are in the habit of hosing the Jammers, they get wind of the impending Jammer operation through their Jammer-hosing contacts. The contact has enough information to pique the PCs' interest, but not much else. Jammers being Jammers, the PCs will probably be looking for a major assault as opposed to the sneaky tactics being employed on this mission.
- If original-series Über-kids have been involved in the campaign previously, one or

more of them contacts the PCs to rescue their Mark II brethren. Whether they are totally forthcoming about the nature of their younger siblings' day out depends on the role they've played in the past. In any case, they have no knowledge of the Jammers' plans.

- If the PCs are looking for an opportunity to hose the Architects, they could easily get the same idea the Jammers have completely independently. After all, the Architects have made no secret of the park's grand opening.
- The GM may also wish to tip her hand and inform the PCs that their sources have heard there are experiments with chi going on in the park. Amusement parks are full of structures that have no practical purposes in the real world. While only one of the structures described in this scenario is chi-related, you can feel free to make a particular ride, or the whole park, a feng shui site if it suits the campaign.
- Finally, if one or more of the PCs are natives of 2056, they may be widows or orphans themselves. The Buro has a *lot* of information on its citizens. Any PC who has written a dead spouse, parent, or sibling into his background receives an invitation like the one on the next page.

DOING THE PARK

The following sections describe the major set pieces at Freedom Flags Park. Each description includes ideas for using it with the Sneakers, the Über-kids, and/or park security to create all sorts of havoc. Keep in mind that these are only the major attractions. See the sidebar on p. 116 for other minor attractions, and feel free to improvise as many additional set pieces as you'd like based on your own theme park experiences. Add rides you hate so the Jammers can blow them to smithereens. Whatever works.



THE PARK ENTRANCES

There are two main entrance gates at either side of the park. They look pretty similar to a modern park entrance: a series of gateways, with little booths next to each gate. At any given time,

there are several dozen people queued up to enter the park, and milling around just inside the entrance as they decide where to go. There is a big Omnivision interactive map that details different attractions in the park, and can provide instructions on how to get to them.

To enter, a visitor must stand for a moment in front of a retinal scanner that confirms his identity. As the check is going on, microradar

A Letter from the Sub-Bureau For Constructive Personal Perspective
"Goal: Freedom from Misery!"

Greetings, Consumer!

It is my pleasure to inform you that you have been selected to be a member of Team Joy's Freedom from Misery (Family Trauma Recovery) Program!

The Program allows you and one (1) other family member to attend the Grand Opening Ceremony of the newly constructed Freedom Flags Park!

For this event only, Team Joy has reduced the normal assessed rate for consumers whose work schedules have been disrupted by the violent death of (a) spouse(s), sibling(s), or parent(s).

Team Joy has also secured a Government Holiday for you from your employer. Not only will you be able to enjoy the world's most engaging Optional Themed Family Entertainment Facility without an outlay of Hours, you will be compensated as well.

Participation in this Program is, of course, voluntary. If you do not plan on participating, please simply complete the attached questionnaire (see enclosure) to help Team Joy with future Programs. Buopresident Bonengel has requested that all declinations be forwarded to his office so that he may personally review them to help him assess the effectiveness of the Project and its impact on consumers like you.

We hope that you will take advantage of this unique opportunity. Team Joy's goal of Freedom from Misery can only be achieved with your help! We look forward to your response!

Sincerely,

Clarence Fonderbecker

Clarence Fonderbecker
Team Joy Consumer Liaison
Special Project Assessment Coordinator

cc: Buopresident Bonengel, Office of Special Project Compliance



scans the visitor for weaponry. The machine has Perception 12 for purposes of this check. If any weapons are detected, the booth snaps a blackout sack over the offender's head and automatically summons security. In 3 sequences, three Security Guards per PC are on the scene.

Cool Things That Could Happen at the Park Entrances

- The security guards can get through the gates without setting off the alarms even though they're armed. A resourceful PC or Jammer could force one to go through the booth with him, or even somehow detach his retina and use it *sans* the rest of him.
- Blackout sacks can be snagged for later (or immediate) use.
- A PC can run at full speed through an entrance booth, setting off the alarm and dropping a blackout sack on whoever was chasing him.
- A nimble PC or monkey could actually travel from place to place on the heads and shoulders of queued-up visitors, or patrons fleeing in terror.
- The Sneakers happily place children in the way of stampeding mobs to get PCs off their backs. Über-kids might be so curious about an ongoing battle that they fail to notice immediate danger.
- Smaller characters might get a shoulder boost from their larger buddies to see above the crowds. A trapped Sneaker might then jump onto a civilian for a very odd game of chicken. Über-kids in the area might join in, realizing it is an efficient means of not getting stepped on.
- PCs can create their own exits by blowing out the entrance gates (which normally only allow one-way travel, but blow open if they



take 20 Wound Points) or the walls near the entrance (a bit tougher, at 40 Wound Points). This would allow the crowds to escape with far fewer trampling incidents.

- The Omnivision screen shatters in a bright shower of color if a PC hurls a security guard or Jammer through it. Smashing someone into the exposed wiring revealed does the usual damage.

THE FERROUS WHEEL

This major attraction surrounds the park in a large loop. It will be the second important landmark the PCs run into. Feel free to conveniently arrange to have it passing by as the PCs enter the park.

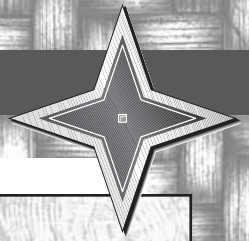
Imagine just the wheel part of a Ferris wheel without any of those pesky structures that hold it up. Imagine a hefty axle at the center of the wheel, running perpendicular to the plane of the circle and sticking out each end. (This whole apparatus looks a lot like the front wheel of a bicycle.) Now, imagine a pair of parallel monorail tracks running about 100 feet off the ground. Finally, imagine setting the wheel between the tracks so it's supported by the axle but free to travel the tracks, spinning as it goes.

Thus, the Ferrous Wheel: one part Ferris wheel and one part monorail. It spins at a sedate pace — much like a regular Ferris wheel — while it moves around the park, powered by really heavy-duty electromagnets. It stops at four stations, where the wheel dips and then turns in place long enough to unlatch seats of disembarking passengers and replace them by catching seats of passengers getting on. It's a fine way to see the park, though it only travels two or three miles per hour (its Move score is 3) — more slowly than most people can stroll.

The Wheel is about 150 feet tall, top to bottom, and is therefore suspended 30 feet above the heads of pedestrians on the ground. Towers spaced at regular intervals hold up the rails.

Cool Things That Could Happen at the Ferrous Wheel

- If the PCs catch the Sneakers placing explosives, a cat and mouse game of aerial tag along the spokes of the moving wheel ensues.
- PCs may get onto the Wheel while it's in motion, either by leaping from the ground or a building to catch a passing set of seats, or leaping on from a Z0Gee Coaster car.
- The Sneakers don't hesitate to toss civilians off the side of the Wheel to get the PCs off their backs. Even the most callous PC will have a hard time ignoring a falling little kid, especially if he reminds the PC of a sibling. This would be a good use of an Über-kid.
- Clever PCs can play magnetism tricks with metal objects. Seats blown up? Any large metal object (like a big steel sword) can be held aloft as the electromagnetic clamp whirls by. Hold on tight (Strength test, Difficulty 8) and you're whisked along by science!
- Can't wait for the station? A Fix-It roll, Difficulty 12, or 30 points of Damage, uncouples a seat from its mechanism, sending it plummeting off the wheel (or simply leaving it behind, sitting quietly in the aftermath, if the wheel is rolling on the ground already).
- Overkill-prone PCs may try to blow up a tower or rail. This is impossible using standard weapons or explosives, though 100 points of Damage to a rail will disrupt the flow of power and cause the Wheel to grind to a halt.
- Über-kids on the wheel might leap to the ground when their seats arrive at the bottom of the wheel. Of course, the PCs don't know they'll land on their feet.
- There's plenty of opportunity for PCs to dive and shove people out of the way of the relentlessly rolling Wheel. Alternately, they can push bystanders *into* the path of the wheel, *between* the rims so it passes them by harmlessly, or *under* the rims of the Wheel if they're bad guys.
 - The Wheel's track goes all the way around the park, and provides an excellent



vantage point for PCs fond of sniper rifles. *Really* dedicated Velocity Addicts who manage to get their bikes on the track could get around the park in a hurry.

The ZOGee Coaster

This is the park's crown jewel, costing more to develop than the current GNP of most modern European countries. It is hard to miss from either entrance.

The ZOGee looks like a pretzel crossed with a Moebius Strip crossed with one of those big-budget "event" coasters you see at the big theme parks. It hangs in mid-air over the western side of the park, about fifty feet above the ground at its lowest point, and several hundred at its highest. Underneath it, embedded in the ground, is a huge gravity-canceling device that makes the entire thing weightless. The ground under the coaster is taken up by a large glassed-over pavilion (the "Zero Grav Fun Park!") which contains various attractions: "N0grav" basketball; a room where the walls, floor, and ceiling are trampolines; a zero-gravity ball pit, and so forth.

The ZOGee Coaster floats in zero-gravity, held in place by steel cables that run to towers surrounding it. The towers are a couple of hundred feet tall and extremely dense (similar to the rail towers for the Ferrous Wheel). A circular tower within the zero gravity zone provides access to and from the ride. The tower is split into two separate shafts by a transparent barrier. On one side of the barrier, a fan propels new riders upwards at a gentle pace. On the other, a fan pushes riders who are finished back down to the ground. Riders can also pull themselves more speedily by using the dozens of handholds all over the interior of the shaft.

The passenger section of the ride is one long flexible module. Once everyone is sitting, the plastic memory seats are given a jolt of electricity, and form-fitting restraints slide across the waists of the riders. Then, they're off . . .

The ride starts when the track plunges straight down towards the ground . . . at only a few miles an hour. It then makes a leisurely turn as it flips upside down and turns towards a steep climb, which it rockets up at runaway train speed when it hits the base of the hill. From there, it hits a corkscrew, which it negoti-

ZOGee Shui

The ZOGee Coaster, in addition to being a kick-ass amusement, is also the first generation of an experiment by the Architects in artificial feng shui sites. The design of the coaster, its location in the park, the influence of the area of zero-gravity, and the very deliberate placement of the Fun Park below result in a structure that slowly collects chi.

Of course, experiments being what they are, the Architects aren't exactly sure what effect this will have. They are hoping it will serve as a sort of chi capacitor, storing up a charge of chi energy they can somehow use or even discharge as a larger version of the Chi Blast Sorcery schtick. Or, it may simply bring increasing good fortune as it builds up energy.

So the coaster itself is a feng shui site of sorts. The only hitch is that to attune to it, you need to actually ride the coaster for the entire time it takes to attune. The benefit for those crazy enough to do this is that, in addition to the usual experience point bonus, they never again get dizzy under any circumstances, even if drugged or under the effect of sorcery.

PCs or GMCs with the Geomancy skill are able to recognize the significance of the structure with a roll of 12. With a 15 or better, the geomancer can also deduce the chi storage capability of the structure.

When (if) the coaster gets blown up in this adventure, there is not enough stored-up chi to cause any serious devastation. On the other hand, if given a chance to build up a significant reserve — say, after a few months of continuous use — the burn rush effect of destroying it would be significant. In such a case, the ZOGee Coaster would send out a spike of chi energy acting as a large explosion, save that Chi offsets Damage, not Toughness. Anything within 50-100 feet would take Damage as if at the edge of a regular-sized explosion, but again, using Chi to offset Damage.

This structure isn't exactly practical to build just anywhere, and requires a lot of energy to run and regular maintenance. So while the Architects may not build many more of them, they are almost certainly only the first step in the Architects' use of gravity to try to influence chi.

ates with ease, accelerating into each upturn of the screw. The rest of the track is a similar experience, with the acceleration and deceleration of the coaster coming at unexpected times and in unexpected places. The ride comes to an end as the car rockets toward the start of the ride upside down, coming to a halt underneath where it started. Because it's zero-gravity, it doesn't matter. The passengers disembark and move into the exit tower. When the last one has



Everything Else

While the majority of the action takes place at the entrance and three major attractions, there is plenty of ground to cover in the park. The Jammers aren't too concerned with these other areas of the park, but the GM may have need of other places to go, so included below are brief descriptions of other areas in the park.

Merchants

Small kiosks designed to part consumers from their Hours are scattered throughout the park. These include food stands, souvenir shops, and the like. Most of them are manned by teenagers being paid minimum wage, and are deserted at the first sign of trouble. Remember that gambling is a vice, so there are no traditional carnie games.

Other Rides

There are a host of other rides in the park, and GMs should feel free to place their favorites as desired. There are three less exotic roller coasters of varying size. There are half a dozen spinning rides, half a dozen rides involving vertical drops of some sort, and half a dozen "family" rides that tell stories and reinforce Buro ideals. There are no rides that allow the patrons to take control of vehicles themselves. No bumper cars, no race cars, no jet planes where you control the altitude. When you're here, you're just along for the ride.

Arcades

Half a dozen buildings filled with the latest virtual reality games and simulations are spread throughout the park. The games are all free, and most of these buildings are pretty full all the time. The games all blatantly reinforce the values of the Buro, but more importantly, simulate actual PubOrd and BuroMil missions. The retinal prints of high scorers are recorded so the Buro can track them down and offer them jobs.

Facilities

There are dozens of small restroom kiosks located throughout the park. In keeping with the advancement of the Buro ideal of equality, they are all unisex. All the toilets are stalls, with devices that automatically lower the seat when you're done. They are kept sparkling clean and fresh.

ic power failure. They consist of ten large banks of redundant batteries, any of which could individually run the entire ride for about six hours. Four of them are located underground at the compass points of the zero-gravity area, and the other six are in the towers that hold the track in place.

If the car ever leaves the track, the cushy memory plastic holding the riders surges to life and envelops them until the car stops moving completely. The plastic leaves a pocket of air around the passenger's mouth, but otherwise cushions the head and neck from any impact.

Cool Things That Could Happen at the ZOGee Coaster

- In zero-gravity, force exerted in one direction causes you to move in the opposite direction. Clever PCs can use the Damage rating of their gun as their Move for the sequence by shooting in the opposite direction they want to travel. Add one for every extra round of autofire they knock off.
- Shooting or throwing things into or out of the zero-gee area requires a bit of practice. Characters with no experience in this sort of thing (including any guards or Sneakers) are treated as using an unfamiliar weapon. Sorcery is not affected.
- The cables whipping around the spinning coaster can be grabbed, resulting in an express ride around the outer perimeter of the coaster. They can also be severed along the length and used as weapons, grapples, or lifelines.
- The zero-gravity field extends upward for well over a mile. It is possible for PCs to drop in from a great height, and be moving no faster than whatever speed they started at. By the same token, if a clever PC manages to change the direction of the coaster to straight up, it continues lazily up into the air for a full mile until it breaks the field and drops back in, slowly falling back down to earth.
- PCs may try to shut down the artificial gravity altogether. After blowing all the towers and the two external gravity devices, the whole coaster structure crashes to the

entered the tower, the door locks, and the section of track containing the car rotates to allow new passengers to board.

Back-up systems make sure the gravity stays off even in the event of a catastroph-



earth, causing much carnage. Treat as a really big explosion (see *Feng Shui*, p. 140), with a blast radius equal to the radius of the coaster.

- A PC might blow up the roof of the Zero Grav Fun Park, causing a slowly expanding cloud of razor-sharp glasslike shards to explode upward in the lack of gravity. Anyone caught by the spray of glass takes 20 Wound Points.

The Center Stage

The stage is a large, covered pavilion located at the center of the park. Air curtains keep the temperature inside comfortable, no matter the weather outside or type of show going on inside. The roof has a complex grid of catwalks, cross-bars, and tracks for mounting lighting, sound equipment, lasers, and holographic projectors.

The floor is honeycombed with maintenance ducts, wiring, cables, and seating. The seats can be retracted into the floor or flipped out to provide stadium-style seating or family picnic tables as needed.

The perimeter of the pavilion is lined with shops and eateries. For this crowd, there's a Frozen Extruded Dessert Food vendor, hot dog stands, and so forth.

There are also a couple of stores set up to hawk merchandise related to the acts that are performing. There's Team Fun! (see p. 120) paraphernalia (t-shirts with the word FUN! in tall letters going across the front, "I'm a Fun Fan!" backpacks), Stark concert gear (tasteful shirts with his tasteful logo, Yuuzic downloads of his music), and Dan Dammer Anti-Jammer Hammers (rubber mallets with the Dan Dammer logo — when you hit someone with them, they spew one of Dammer's famous quotes), among other stuff.





The stage is a marvel of modern technology. It rotates, allowing everyone sitting around to get a view of the acts. Scenery can be dropped in from the ceiling, flipped up from underneath, and even projected holographically. It's covered in a touch-sensitive mesh linked to an advanced computer array that controls the effects for the shows.

Cool Things That Could Happen at the Stage

- We mentioned that there are multiple levels of catwalks, tracks, and so on hanging over the battlefield, right? And that they are wired with lots of electricity? Good.
- A PC could commandeer a spotlight and shine it in an enemy's eyes to blind him.
- PCs who make successful Fix-It, Info/Special Effects, or Sabotage rolls might do any of the following:
 - Cause pieces of scenery to be dropped on enemies.
 - Flip the tables into the floor, trapping enemies, or flip them halfway to provide cover from enemy fire.
 - Switch to stadium seating, allowing PCs or Jammers to make a jump for the rafters from the top row of seats.
 - Rig the holographic projectors to provide distractions.
 - Stop the revolving stage, or speed it up to unsafe speeds and *then* stop it, sending whoever is on it flying.
- Characters with a flair for the dramatic could ask for volunteers from the audience for their "next trick."
- The Dan Dammer set pieces have working cop gear (cuffs, suckerlights, blackout sacks, etc.), desks and other office furniture (to hide behind, throw, or leap on top of), and several very confused actors who can be thrown around, used as human shields, and generally abused by all parties.
- Trays of food spin nicely when you throw them, and those Frozen Desserts are *slippery* when they hit that concrete floor. They also make it hard to see out of whatever you might be wearing over your eyes (like, say, UV/IR goggles).
- PCs with a sense of style can spend 3 shots at any control panel to change the music to something more appropriate for the fight.
- PCs who are Pete Townshend fans could use the instruments from Stark's band as bludgeoning weapons. Cool GMs will give a few extra Wound Points if the PC is plugged in when he swings his axe.
- PCs who find the Jammer costumes waiting under the stage for the actors playing Jammers might use them to try and fool ManDrill or the other Sneakers.

PARK PERSONNEL

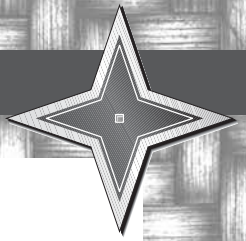
CLARENCE FONDERBECKER

Clarence is the official government skill for the grand opening. A Team Joy middle manager, he is an expert ribbon-cutter, baby-kisser, and photo-opportunist. He is the human face the Buro puts on events like these. He has been issued a standard sidearm, which he has spent the required simulated practice hours on, but has never actually pointed at someone and fired. He's much more likely to try and talk his way out of a situation, even when it would be clear to someone more pragmatic that speechifying is not a good option.

He truly enjoys his job and feels he is doing something good for the Buro's citizens. He knows nothing of Über-kids, chi experiments, or the Secret War, though he does know a Jammer when he sees one. He dresses in currently fashionable casual business attire, and is well-groomed even under stress.

PARK SECURITY

Park security guards are discreet because, for the most part, they're not expecting much trouble. They don't carry guns, because they're not trained to use them and don't



expect to have to deal with anything more dangerous than rambunctious kids. But there are a *lot* of them. They can be played for comic relief, or as needed to get in the PCs' way when they're after the Sneakers or chasing Über-kids.

There are security stations located at each of the entrances, and the main office is attached to the stage pavilion. There are as many guards available as the GM needs to make things interesting, up to ten per PC in any given area at any time, taking three sequences to arrive anywhere in the park.

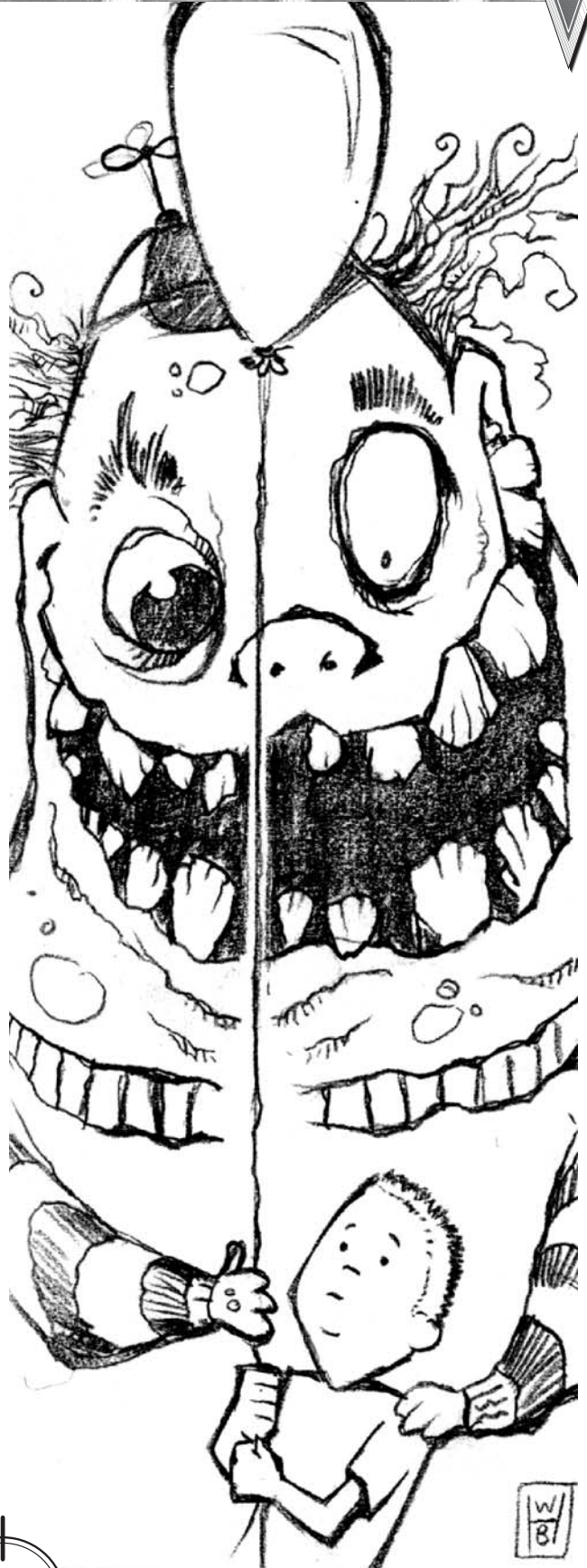
WAGE SLAVES

A small army of teenagers and retired folks work the food stands and souvenir kiosks that dot the park. For the most part, they're harmless, and flee if trouble comes their way. But a few might be too foolish or too dumb not to get out of harm's way. One or two might even be looking for a promotion to security and try to be heroic. Regardless of their motivations, they're all in uniform, all smiling, and all ready to serve.

BURÓMON

The Burómon are good monsters who have given up their evil ways and decided to serve the Buro. They are the official mascots of Freedom Flags Park. Of course, to have actual abominations, no matter how tame, running around a park full of between-meal snacks is where even BuroMil draws the line, so the Burómon are portrayed by actors in elaborate suits.

The suits can simulate some powers of actual monsters when they put on a show, and look surprisingly realistic, even when viewed from close up. Each is unique, so make up whatever critters suit your fancy, and tailor the special effects of their creature powers accordingly. Think a typical BuroMil abomination animated for a kids' Omnivision show.





Clarence Fonderbecker

Sample Dialogue: "Thanks very much! So glad you all could make it!"

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 0 (For 3), Mnd 6 (Cha 8), Ref 6

Skills: Guns 8, Info/Burocracy 12, Info/Park 10, Intimidation 8

Unique Schticks:

Speechify: When addressing anyone whose Mind stat is lower than his Charisma, Fonderbecker may attempt to get his way. Treat this as an Intimidation attempt that automatically succeeds. He may only do this once on any given individual, and only if the resulting action can be logically performed without significant risk to the target. For example, Fonderbecker could browbeat a guard into opening a gate for him when he didn't have his ID on him, but not into acting as a human shield against a sniper.

Weapons: punch (6), kick (7), Buro 9 (10/1/17+1)

Equipment: portable phone/minicomputer/Omnivision, fashionable sunglasses, Buro government ID, all access pass to park

Park Security

Sample Dialogue: "Hey! No running inside the park, fella!"

Attributes: Bod 6, Chi 0, Mnd 5 (Per 6), Ref 5

Skills: Martial Arts 8, Info/Park Rules & Regs 10, Intimidation 8, Medicine 8 (First Aid)

Weapons: punch (7), kick (8), shock baton (10)

Equipment: radio headset, blackout sack (see *Seed of the New Flesh*, p. 44)

TIMETABLE

The schedule of events for the park is pretty general, and can be altered as needed. It assumes the Sneakers are able to proceed pretty much unmolested, and that the events of the day aren't disrupted prematurely. As the PCs mess around (as they are bound to) move things accordingly, keeping in mind the overall goal of the Sneakers to cause as much destruction as possible, and the desire of the Über-kids to learn as much about their environment as possible.

If you want the PCs to have a chance to catch the Sneakers before they start blowin' things up, that's just fine. There are several Sneakers setting bombs under and inside each location. They don't bother to help

any of their buddies until they've finished planting their own charges, so even if the PCs find one or two of the bombs before they go off (or prevent them from being planted), there is still the opportunity to blow stuff up.

MORNING

Crowds begin to line up at the park around 9:30, half an hour before it opens. The Jammers arrive around this time, via, ironically, a truck full of props for the Dan Dammer show. They fan out through the conduits and ductwork of the park and head for their designated bomb-setting areas.

Fonderbecker shows up at 10:00 for the ribbon-cutting ceremony that officially opens the park. He gives a brief speech broadcast via Omnivision, and cuts the ribbon with a little laser torch. The crowds enter, eagerly but orderly.

Everything is running except the Z0Gee Coaster when the park opens. The crowds file in, and the worst of the crowding at the gates is over by 10:30 or so.

The Über-kids arrive at 10:40 and start to fan out through the park to experience and observe, monitored by their CDCA handlers.

At 11:00, Fonderbecker makes another speech and cuts another ribbon, then takes the first ride on the Z0Gee Coaster, along with a handpicked group of orphans of famous BuroMil types. Several Über-kids are slipped in with the riders to see how they react.

By this time, the Sneakers have made it to their destinations and are starting to set their explosives.

AFTERNOON

The stage shows start at 1:00 with Team Fun!, the official Live Entertainers of Freedom Flags Park. Team Fun! is a combination pop music/sketch comedy/storytelling ensemble for kids. All the music is prerecorded with holographic projection, lots of props, and an equal mix of male and female performers, all comfortably racially indistinct. They play for two hours, and are followed by adult contem-



porary pop star Stark. Stark is a former rock star turned semi-official voice of a generation of Buro middle managers and suburban middle-aged women. He plays from 4:00 to 6:00. The Über-kids gather to watch the first show, but quickly become bored with the second and go back to ranging around the park.

Fonderbecker walks around the park throughout the afternoon, giving interviews to Omnivision, posing for pictures with kids, and generally glad-handing until 3:30 or so, when he heads for the stage. Fonderbecker is a big fan of Stark's, and will be in the stage area during his entire show, and backstage getting an autograph afterwards until about 6:30.

The Burómon are ready to start walking around at 2:00 or so, and wander the park in groups of two or three for the rest of the day.

By 5:00, the Sneakers have placed all of their charges and are working their way to their rendezvous point under the stage, where they will set the final batch of bombs.

EVENING

By 6:45, the Sneakers have placed all their bombs and are grouped together under the stage, waiting for the grand finale. The Über-kids are spread throughout the park by now, so assume there are several of them at any of the major locations the PCs end up at during the ensuing carnage.

At 7:00, the "Dan Dammer, Jammer Slammer Experience" stage show starts with the actor portraying Dammer dropping in from the ceiling on a group of actors in gorilla costumes amidst booming techno music and an explosion of pyrotechnic effects. As the show starts, the Jammers' bombs start going off. The explosions are set to go off about fifteen minutes apart, allowing for maximum panic and potential to catch security on the wrong side of the park when subsequent blasts go off. The very first set of bombs disrupts the park communications systems. This takes out the PA system and kills communication to locations outside the park, save for portable communications devices like Fonderbecker's.

Wage Slaves

Sample Dialogue: "Would you like fries with that?"

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 0, Mnd 5 (Cha 6), Ref 6

Skills: Martial Arts 6, Info/Park 8

Weapons: punch (6), kick (7), large blunt souvenir (7), bucket of searing hot food (9)

Equipment: non-slip shoes, park employee ID card, official uniform.

Burómon

Sample Dialogue: "Eh-huh-huhuh!" <Pats kid on the head>

Attributes: Bod 7, Chi 5, Mnd 5 (Per 4), Ref 6

Skills: Creature Powers 8, Info/Park Rules & Regs 10, Intimidation 9

Creature Schticks: Blast (special effect varies), Damage Immunity (suffocation), Armor

Unique Schtick:

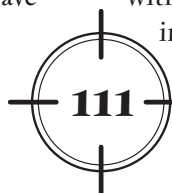
Shed Skin: The Burómon are just actors in suits. The suits are big and elaborate and hard to take off and put on, but can be gotten out of in six shots if the wearer is in a hurry. A three shot action allows the wearer to remove the head of the suit, deactivating the Blast creature power. If the wearer sheds the suit (say, at gunpoint), another wearer of adult size and shape may wear the suit and utilize its abilities. The suit's creature powers draw on chi from the suit, not the wearer, so the wearer's Chi becomes 5 as long as it is worn.

Weapons: punch (8), kick (9)

Equipment: park ID card

Next a series of explosions rips the moorings loose from the spokes of the Ferrous Wheel. Free from the rail, it falls to the ground, crushing anything beneath it and causing terror in its wake. It rolls along the ground inside its tracks, still pulled by the magnets, crushing everything in its path. The PCs need to shut down the power (Fix-It roll of 16), break the wheel somehow (100 Damage in a particular spot or a Sabotage roll of 16), or just make sure everyone is out of its way. It grinds to a halt after making one full circle around the park, just in time for the third explosion.

The third victim of the Jammers' indignation is the Z0Gee Coaster. Explosions from within the towers that anchor it snap the mooring lines, and then a massive blast blows the top off the entry tower, completely disconnecting the coaster from anything. With





the car still whipping around the tracks, it starts to drift lazily downward towards the glass-domed zero-gee Fun Park. It hits in three sequences, completely demolishing the Fun Park and causing the tracks to explosively unravel in all directions, whipping through the area like giant razor-sharp metal serpents. For ease of play, the breaking up-coaster has AV 10 to see if pieces of it hit characters or GMCs in the area. Damage is per getting hit by thrown or dropped objects of whatever size is appropriate (see *Feng Shui*, p. 139).

All of this panic should get people running for the exit gates, which is how the Jammers planned it. So naturally, they blow up those next.

A series of explosions rips through the entrance gates from underneath. The rubbled pavement and collapsed booths block entry and exit from the park, resulting in mob scenes at both entrances. PCs present need to prevent kids (and Über-kids) from getting trampled. Treat the mob as a small explosion that does damage every six shots to anyone in its path who fails a Dexterity check, Difficulty 5. PCs who grab up GMCs can use their own Dexterity in place of the potential trampling victims'.

The explosion also sends hundreds of black-out sacks spraying into the air. The black polymer bags fly all over the place in the thermals from the explosion and get tangled up in the crowd, adding to the panic. At the start of each sequence, the PC with lowest Fortune is unlucky

enough to get snagged by a sack. If you want, impose Impairment penalties to make things interesting as PCs fight through the annoying black plastic blizzard. Once they're free, the finale awaits . . .

Just as the panic from the exploding entrance gates subsides, ManDrill and his Sneakers rush the stage of the Dan Dammer show (which is still going, of course). They swarm up from under the stage during a break between scenes. As ManDrill starts his GateMaker, the Sneakers shoot up the set for fun. The audience thinks this is just part of the show, while the actors panic as they realize what is happening. None of them have any actual combat skills, so they cower backstage and hope the Jammers leave.

Once the Netherworld gate is open, ManDrill pauses to let everyone know that what is about to come is not officially part of the show, but it'll be more entertaining than the show so far. He proceeds to thumb the switch that starts the explosions in the pavilion and steps through the gate, which closes behind him.

The explosions in the pavilion start with the roof, which showers broken Plexiglas on those underneath (15 Damage unless suitable cover is available). Then the stage starts to explode, scenery blowing to bits and pyrotechnics going off prematurely, followed by the souvenir and food stands, which blast hundreds of gallons of frozen yogurt and tacky souvenirs all over the



pavilion. Treat the rubble and garbage as one point of Impairment for those trying to move through it.

Finally, the explosives on the roof supports go off, collapsing the whole thing. Anyone inside who doesn't find suitable cover (under a picnic table, under the stage, beneath a supernatural creature with Damage Immunity: Falling Objects) is buried (Strength check, Difficulty 15, to dig free) and takes 30 Damage.

Throughout all of the carnage, remember security has no way of knowing the PCs are not the ones who *caused* the explosions. Even as they are trying to save the lives of bystanders, our heroes stand a good chance of having to fight off hordes of rent-a-cops while doing so if they appear to be the sorts of people who might plant bombs — and what Secret Warriors don't, frankly.

AFTERMATH

If you want to introduce the PCs to the Netherworld, let them follow ManDrill through the gate before it closes. If they hesitate, a TacOps squad or two arriving on the scene might induce them to make a decision. Alternately, they could get hold of ManDrill's GateMaker themselves, either before he has a chance to use it or after he's dropped it and fled through the portal.

If the PCs stick around 2056, they need to either get away or be prepared to answer some *very* difficult questions from the authorities. Blaming it all on the Jammers won't cut the mustard if the PCs broke any laws themselves. If they managed to capture any Sneakers, they have to decide what to do with them.

Architect-hosing PCs may want to join the Jammers. If they showed any inclination to blow up bobos, and didn't hinder the Sneakers, they may be allowed to do so.

The Über-kids can serve as a nice plot device for any number of endings. If the Sneakers got wind of them, perhaps they kidnapped some to bring back to Potempkin. After the carnage has ended and the PCs are safely away from the park, any of the PCs who befriend one of the little tykes and don't catch the eardrummer he's wearing will have trouble staying away from the Buro.

If the PCs were unknown to the Architects before, they're on the Buro radar now. How they decide to deal with the heroes is up to you and should be based on your long-term plans for the Architects in your campaign. The Buro has a serious mad-on for them if they did anything that harmed the Über-kids.

And, of course, a whole generation of 2056 kids remembers the heroes as the scary people who helped wreck the first good day they had in their *entire* lives. Ah, the pathos!

Murderer's Row

ALEX KNAPIK

Premise: A stranger gives the PCs free tickets to a baseball game if they bring a young child along. They are mysteriously attacked by a bunch of mooks trying to kill the child.

The Twist: The stranger is actually the protector of the Crystalline Child, a girl prophesied ages ago to be born with the power to open junctures in the time stream at will. The protector gave the tickets to the PCs as bait for Lotus mooks while he fled with the real girl.

Climax: When the PCs finally locate the girl in a Hong Kong power plant, they must protect her from both the Lotus and the Guiding Hand. If the players are successful, a question remains: what should be done with a five-year-old who can literally change history as they know it?

BACKSTORY

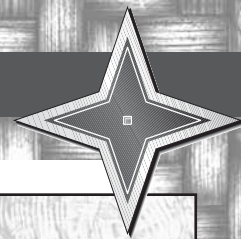
Around 100 AD, a story about a young girl who could travel through time began circulating in a few small Chinese villages. Within the next hundred years, these stories evolved into the full-blown legend of the Crystalline Child, a girl who created gateways made of crystal leading to the past and future. This child, as the legend went, even utilized her amazing powers to help the Chinese people destroy the ancient, evil rulers of their kingdom.

In the 1850 juncture, agents of both the Guiding Hand and the Eaters of the Lotus separately unearthed texts dating back to

as far as 250 AD describing this legend. Both groups have been actively searching for the girl. The leaders of the Hand believe her to be the one chosen to help fulfill their destiny, while the Lotus assumes she is the reason for their eventual downfall.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Fast-forward to contemporary Hong Kong and the Taoist monk Tai Gongen. Nearly three years ago, while the monk was traveling down a residential street on the outskirts of the Western District, a colossal fire broke out in an apartment complex. A hush came over the crowd as a woman on the tenth floor, being overwhelmed by the flames, screamed and threw a toddler out her window. Tai Gongen ran to the foot of the building and caught the two-year-old girl in the nick of time. After a few moments, the girl began singing while cradled in Gongen's arms. Looking back at the apartment, he watched as the flames reversed themselves, turning back into the windows and doors. All around him, the smoke, the people, the oncoming fire truck — *everything* — was rewinding like videotape in time with the girl's song. In a matter of moments, it was like nothing had happened. No fire, no crowd, no screaming cries of tortured agony . . . except that he had seen and heard it. And,



of course, there was the matter of the little girl in his arms. Gongen went from door to door in the apartment complex trying to find the woman who threw the girl out of the window. After hours of fruitless searching, he brought the girl home to his modest shack on the other side of town. He named the girl Chun Baobai, roughly translating as "a pure, unblemished jewel."

Tai Gongen

Master Gongen is a respected, kind, but bad-tempered monk in his late eighties. His life was a boring routine until he rescued young Chun Baobai. Now, he has regained focus and dedication. Along with his student Donald Khao, he has tried his best to contain the girl's power through meditation and discipline, but is now at his wit's end. He knows only faint legends of anything having to do with the Secret War, but is naturally trustworthy and will divulge anything he does know to the PCs as long as their intentions seem good.

Trouble Loves Company

Tai Gongen should have named Chun Baobai "Chun Naoshi:" "Trouble." Over the next three years, Tai Gongen and his young student, Donald Khao, lived with, cared for, and attempted to control the little girl's powers. Well, two of three ain't bad. From day one, Chun Baobai showed uncanny abilities, being able to speed up time, slow down events, and "rewind" mistakes. Her powers were nothing short of amazing, but they were tolerable. One day, however, when she sent the neighbor's cat through a dimensional portal to 50,000 BC (give or take a millennium), Tai Gongen thought it best to seek "outside assistance." Over Khao's vociferous objections, Gongen contacted a group of mysterious monks who had visited a nearby temple several times and were known to be experienced with "unnatural" situations.

These were monks from the Guiding Hand.

When word reached the Guiding Hand's membership, they immediately sent two emissaries from the mainland to meet with Gongen and investigate the validity of his claim. After all, it isn't every day when

Tai Gongen

Sample Dialogue: "Only patience can temper this magical girl's gifts. Only underst — Hey! Stop fast forwarding bath time!"

Attributes: Bod 4, Chi 8, Mnd 7, Ref 4

Skills: Martial Arts 15, Leadership 12, Medicine 10

Weapons: punch (5), kick (6)

rumors of the arrival of your supposed savior crop up. Unfortunately, one of these men, Fang Nuxu, was a traitor to the Hand cause; a traitor from the Eaters of the Lotus. A *eunuch sorcerer* from the Eaters of the Lotus.

Fang Nuxu

Fang Nuxu is one of the Lotus's best-placed spies, in any juncture or faction. He managed to pass himself off as a contemporary monk (using magic to conceal his stereotypical eunuch voice) and rise through the ranks of the Guiding Hand. He's a fairly powerful sorcerer, entrusted with a very important mission from Gao Zhung himself: get this girl, or kill her. Nuxu is tall, dark, evil, and very available.

Two Heads are Better Than One

When the two men, Peng Guo and Fang Nuxu, came to Gongen's home, they met with the girl in the old monk's presence. They realized that they had found their Crystalline Child when they watched her play catch with herself, throwing a ball as far as she could, then rewinding it back to her hands. Both tried to stay calm, not wanting to alarm Gongen, but their heads swirled with their own plots to get the girl — Peng Guo to give her to his Hand masters and Fang Nuxu to put her in a shallow grave dug by the Lotus. They told him that the girl was "extraordinary, but not the first they'd seen," and that they and their noble warriors would "be able to give her the care and protection she so desperately needs." Fang Nuxu even stole a lock of the girl's hair to use his Influence Inspiration sorcery effect if necessary.

Yeah, right.



Donald Khao

Sample Dialogue: "I don't have to justify anything to you! I did what I had to do!"

Attributes: Bod 7, Chi 2, Mnd 4, Ref 6

Skills: Martial Arts 14, Guns 10, Deceit 13, Driving 10

Weapons: punch (8), kick (9), Colt Detective Special (9/1/6)

The young Donald Khao watched this scene with weariness and disgust. He had grown attached to the girl and very protective as well. Piercing the lies of the men's calm, collected voices, he watched their eyes preying on the girl like ravenous wolves. Luckily, Khao had already thought of a way to test these "noble warriors" true intentions.

Donald Khao

Donald Khao is a muscular, street-savvy twenty-year-old who was given to Master Gongen when he was eleven to "straighten out." His parents couldn't handle the hotheaded troublemaker, but Gongen provided Khao with the guidance and focus he needed. When Gongen brought the girl home, Khao became immediately attached to her; she reminded him of the sister he left behind. He is willing to die to protect her, though his alternating brooding/fiery personality isn't willing to admit that. He believes he is a lot more clever than he really is.

Khao's Plan

Khao figured that if these Guiding Hand guys would try to take the girl outright, they'd rather do it outside Gongen's presence. So, the day before the meeting, he bought tickets to an exhibition baseball game to be played at Hong Kong Stadium. During the meeting, he dropped hints that he was taking Baobai to the game alone, and conveniently left two of the tickets out so the Hand members could easily see where he and Baobai would be sitting.

Khao's plan is to give the tickets as bait to someone else with a young girl. If someone tries to attack them or take the girl, he will know that these people Gongen has found do not have

honorable intentions. The Hand loyalist Peng Guo has no intention of taking the girl forcefully; he believes he can convince Gongen to give the girl over to the Hand by talking to the monk without Khao's interference. The baseball game provides the perfect opportunity for that. Fang Nuxu, however, falls completely for the trick and thinks the game is the perfect time to kidnap or kill the girl, before the Guiding Hand gets a chance to act.

And just who can Khao find to give the tickets to and be his patsy?

ENTER THE PCS

The player characters (ideally between two and five of them, who know at least a little bit about the Secret War) receive the tickets from

Whattya Mean, a Young Girl?

It is imperative to the adventure's sense of rationality that a little girl, aged between three and six, be near the PCs when the Lotus mooks attack them at the baseball game. The best way for a girl to be there is for one or more of the PCs to somehow know or have one. She would preferably be there when the PCs first are offered the tickets, so they can make the connection quickly. There are some ways you can work around the PCs not knowing any young girls:

- If the PCs are given the tickets through an acquaintance, they can easily be persuaded to take their friend's daughter along.
- When the PCs receive the tickets, a young homeless girl with a weather-beaten Giants cap is nearby. She looks at them with big brown eyes and says "Hey, wow . . . wish I could go to that game . . . <sniff>"
- A woman with whom one of the male PCs has a history arrives at his doorstep with a you-know-what (Three Secret Warriors and a Little Lady, anyone?).
- If all else fails (or stretches credibility to its limit), the PCs' seats are in a special Kids' Section, and so there is an unrelated tyke sitting next to the PCs. Two dozen screaming rugrats could definitely up the stakes during the battle with the Lotus.
- Of course, any little girl the PCs are stuck with should be as comically annoying and intolerable as possible, until she redeems herself with one "I wuv you, mister a-bom-a-nation man."



Khao and go to the game with a young girl. They do, that is, if you want an adventure to take place. This is obviously critical, but it can be fragile and fail completely if the PCs aren't given a motivation to go. Some possible ways you can put those tickets into the hands of your players include:

- One or more of the PCs are on the street with a young girl (see "Whattya Mean, a Young Girl?" on the facing page) when Khao approaches them with an offer for free tickets. This would be a nice time for a PC's (or the young girl's) secret love of baseball to shine. At the very least, who couldn't use a break from all the head bashing and bone cracking the average *Feng Shui* character goes through in a typical week of heroism?
- Khao gives the tickets to a romantically-inclined acquaintance of the characters. The acquaintance even has a younger sister who *loves* baseball, a fact which she uses to set up

- a date with one of the PCs. *Nothing* says romance like the crack of the bat and the roar of a crowd (along with four Secret Warrior friends and a five-year-old girl . . .)
- Some way or another, Khao knows of one of the PCs (quite possibly through a dramatic hook) and anonymously mails or otherwise delivers the tickets, claiming in a cryptic note that one of the baseball players is in grave danger. If you use this plot device, the PCs probably won't take a young girl with, so there might simply have to "coincidentally" be one sitting in a nearby seat at the game.
- Khao has as many tickets as there are PCs that want to go to the game (convenient, huh?) plus one "child-priced" seat.





Marvin Zhizhi

Sample Dialogue: "If her head is my ticket to favor with the Lotus, then I'll cut it off and wrap it up myself."

Attributes: Bod 7, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 8

Skills: Martial Arts 12, Guns 14, Intimidation 14, Leadership 10

Gun Shticks: Both Guns Blazing x2, Fast Draw x2

Weapons: punch (8), kick (9), 2x MP5 K (10/3/30)

Lotus Baseball Mooks

Sample Dialogue: "Your blood is our victory!"

Attributes: Bod 6, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 5

Skills: Martial Arts 8, Guns 7

Weapons: punch (7), kick (8), Glock 17 (10/1/17+1)

THE GAME

After the PCs have the tickets, it's off to the game. It's an exhibition game between two of Japan's major league baseball teams, the Yomiuri Giants and the Osaka Buffaloes, played at Hong Kong's impressive (and aptly named) Hong Kong Stadium in So Kon Po on the island. The stadium seats about 46,000 fans, and the vast majority of seats are filled for this late Saturday afternoon game. It's a typical dome stadium, filled with the latest high-tech Jumbotron (they call it "Diamond Vision") screens, restaurants, luxury suites, and all the other amenities the newer ballparks in the United States have. Of course, the stadium is designed and normally used for soccer or rugby, but the officials have set up a decent baseball field for the exhibition series.

The PCs enter the stadium and give their tickets to a young, pimply usher. The usher, Tim Lee, looks up at the PCs suddenly after he checks their seats. He asks one of them nervously "You're Donald Khao?" No matter how the PC replies, Lee tells him that "Mr. Khao and his guest are getting, um, seated in an improved spot, in the second row in left field, after winning a contest today." At this point, the PC can "fess up" to being Donald Khao and get the better seats, tell Lee they got the tickets from some guy (presumably Khao) and still get

the better seats, or refuse the whole thing and go up to their normal section. If either of the two former options occur, Lee cautiously mentions his surprise that the baseball-watching party consists of more than one man and a little girl, but still accommodates them all. If they go to the original seats, Lee stutters, look like he's about to cry, and squeaks out a "yes, sir" before scurrying away.

What's going on, you ask? Lee was approached by a man named Marvin Zhizhi before the game and given two hundred bucks to "upgrade" Khao's tickets to a location easier for the Lotus sniper to shoot the girl. (He was also given a ghostly-white complexion from what Zhizhi told him he'd do if he didn't cooperate.) Lee knows nothing about the whys or hows of the situation — just that he's supposed to send Donald Khao and his little girl to better seats.

Make it clear that there is reasonable security at the stadium, and any attempts at bringing in weaponry could be highly dangerous. Besides, it's just a baseball game — the PCs are relaxing for a change. Try to downplay any suspicions your players might have about the game in general — everything and everybody seems hunky-dory. If possible, dryly comment on the proceedings of the game, giving a broad overview of the play through the seventh inning. What happens in the seventh, you ask? Well . . .

Right as the PCs see Tuggy Jones, the American-born outfielder for the Buffaloes, smash an 88-mile-an-hour fastball to deep left field, they hear the tremendous CRACK of a gunshot whizzing way too close to them. Any PC using Perception (Difficulty 8) sees the culprit: a sniper high on the other side of the stadium. He has fired and hit the seat the PCs' little girl was sitting in just moments before (she had just moved a bit to see the batter). Before the PCs can fully react, a man in a Giants shirt a few rows back yells "Now!" and a bunch of tough-looking guys standing with him (there are twice as many of them as there are PCs) throw off their Buffaloes caps and storm them. If the PCs didn't move to the second-row seats they were "supposed" to, the fight still happens this way, but add two more toughs into the mix. Serves 'em right.



Marvin Zhizhi

Marvin is the leader of a contemporary gang that has allied itself with the Eaters of the Lotus. He's freakishly thin, with a devilish smile that makes him appear marginally smarter than he really is (this isn't a hard feat, however). His main goal is to impress his Lotus superiors and Fang Nuxu in particular. He fights with reasonably quick wits about him and is callous enough that he can slither his way out of any dangerous situation.

THE FIGHT

The toughs and sniper are Lotus mooks led by Marvin Zhizhi, who is the man in the Giants uniform. Their mission, as dictated by Fang Nuxu (who is not in attendance), is to eliminate the girl's companions and nab her as quickly as possible. If that's not feasible, they have been given authorization to kill her outright. Since they were only told the seat numbers the girl and her companions would be in, they have no idea the PCs and their girl aren't the real deal.

While Marvin Zhizhi hangs back, waiting for a good time to grab the girl, the mooks have no such sense of self-preservation (they're mooks, after all) and charge the PCs head-on. They aren't expecting a serious fight and are overwhelmed quickly by even a modest show of force from the PCs. However, they can certainly make things dangerous, as they tend to fire their guns and attack indiscriminately into the area, not caring whether bystanders are harmed. The PCs should get the idea fairly quickly that the little girl is the focus of the attack. Another concern is the sniper, who takes occasional pot shots into the vicinity.

Cool Things That Could Happen During the Fight

- At the very beginning of the fight, the baseball hit moments before sails into the stands and conks someone in the head, stunning him for the next sequence.

- The developing fight pops up on Diamond Vision. Vain characters care deeply about their appearance.
- The mascot for the Buffaloes, a guy in a big brown suit that looks more like a moose than anything else, plows into a mook while trying to escape the fray. This knocks his moose head off and onto a PC.
- The left fielder for the Giants gets the bright idea to jump into the fray in order to be a hero and rescue some fans. He panics, though, and needs to be rescued.
- When the situation looks bleak for them, one or two mooks attempt to escape by stealing one of those relief pitcher golf carts on the field. They discover the carts max out at about ten miles per hour. Whoops.
- The girl takes a hit, either from the sniper or a mook attack.

WINNING THE FIGHT

Sooner or later, the PCs take out the Lotus mooks. While the security staff was caught off-guard by the incident and haven't gotten a serious response up yet, you can be sure they will if the PCs dawdle too long. However, the characters do have time to glean some information from their adversaries.

Marvin Zhizhi:

- Informs the PCs they will die soon for their treacherous ways.
- Opines that the girl will eventually be "ours;" the PCs' attempts to stop them are unsuccessful.
- Rants, "What I have done I have done for the glory of my masters."
- Believes "That punk with the old man must have set us up."
- Can describe Khao, in case the PCs want to look for him.
- Wants to know "Who are you freaks, and how did you get lucky enough to beat me?"
- Defiantly proclaims, "The crystal girl will not be our downfall!" Then he dies.

The mooks:

- Properly threatened, say they are present to kidnap the girl or kill her.
- Cry for Master Nuxu, whining about how they want to go home.
- One bursts out “The legends were true . . . the girl is our doom . . .”
- The bravest one spits in a PC’s face, then gurgles and dies.

The sniper:

- Has a scrap of paper on him with the PCs’ seat numbers.
- Has Tim Lee’s driver’s license in his back pocket. (So he could find Lee later to “keep him quiet.”)
- Has a sniper rifle with strange, ancient runes carved into it. Anyone with experience in Chinese history recognizes them as being from the 69 juncture.
- Says, “My death is not in vain. The rest will take care of you and the others . . .”
- Yells and pouts, “I am Zhizhi’s elite point man, I can’t die like this . . .” Then he dies.

POST-GAME LEGWORK

At this point, the PCs should be motivated to find out who gave them the tickets. If they aren’t, the police get a full report from the characters and stress how important it would be to find the guy that gave them the tickets — you know, to alleviate doubts that perhaps the PCs weren’t innocent bystanders like they claim.

The PCs may want to look for Tim Lee, the usher who moved their seats. They can find him easily near the ticket offices, and he breaks down like a chemical compound at their first inquiry. He sobs out what he knows, highlighting Zhizhi’s threats and his own ignorance of the situation as a whole. With even the slightest provocation, he finds Donald Khao’s home address for the PCs from the ticket office.

Even if the PCs don’t follow up on Lee, it shouldn’t be difficult for the group to find out where the tickets came from on their own. Fortunately for the PCs, Donald

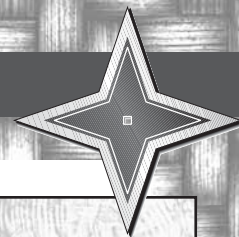
Khao didn’t anticipate any fallout from his plan; he ordered the tickets over the phone in Master Gongen’s home and gave his real name. Info/Computers or Detective (Difficulty 8) would be sufficient to trace the ticket purchaser in the Hong Kong Stadium’s computers. Seduction, Deceit, or even outright Intimidation can get the same information out of front office workers or other ticket sellers at the stadium. If they got the tickets through someone else, that person could shine a little light on who Khao is. Regardless of how the PCs get to it, the conclusion points to Khao’s address. Try to set a mood of urgency so the PCs don’t dawdle, planning some massive operation against the house.

Some characters might follow up on the little hints of the legends the Lotus let slip. Someone with Info skills or other knowledge about Chinese history and legends, particularly from the 1850 juncture, might be able to recall a few details about the Crystalline Child. Someone with exclusive knowledge of 69 AD won’t, however, as the stories didn’t start building up until decades later. Feel free to pick out a few bits and pieces of the legend for that character to remember. Don’t let the characters take up lengthy research at a university or library. Make it clear that the character is right about what she remembers of the legend, so they have to move fast before the Lotus (or whoever) advance their plans.

One last note: the PCs might get the idea that the girl they brought to the game is, in fact, the *real* Crystalline Child. That’s fine, let them waste a bit of time trying to get her to do something magical or stashing her in a safe place. They’ll be proven wrong quite nicely in the next scene anyway.

IN THE MEANTIME...

While Marvin Zhizhi and the Lotus mooks attack the PCs at the game, the Guiding Hand steps into the picture at Master Gongen’s home. They send a sizable number of troops, but Peng Guo, their leader, has no intention of taking the girl forcefully. He doesn’t think that will be necessary. He calmly speaks to Gongen and convinces him to give up the girl once she



gets back from the baseball game. Little does he know that Baobai and Donald Khao are hiding in the shack and overhear everything. They sprint out the back, jump in Khao's car, and drive off before the Hand can stop them. A small contingency of Hand members breaks off and follows them to their destination.

Mere minutes after Khao and Baobai flee, a reinforced Lotus squad, including the leader of this mission, Fang Nuxu, arrives on the scene, having discovered the baseball game was a set-up. A huge battle ensues between the Hand and Lotus forces, and the warrior-monks are overwhelmed. Fang Nuxu strings his former ally, Peng Guo, upside down by his legs and leaves him bleeding to death. Fang applies more invasive torture techniques against Master Gongen and forces him to reveal the location to which Khao and Baobai must have fled. He leaves both in incredible pain (aided by a bit of magic) and near death. In a last bit of maniacal evil, he puts up a magical clay wall around the shack so no one will be able to enter and interrupt their slow agony. He then heads off with his Lotus mooks to kill Khao and Baobai.

SHACK FU

It's at this point the PCs arrive at the shack. It's a small, isolated, but well-kept place surrounded by a small patch of marshland. They can immediately tell some sort of fight took place here recently, involving mostly hand-to-hand weapons (there are several Hand members' cut-up bodies lying about). Right now, however, everything is calm.

As they move carefully towards the front door, the PCs can see there is a massive slab of gray clay smothering the entire front of the shack, blocking passage inside. One of the PCs will probably get tired of staring at the darn thing and try to smash through it. Instantly, the clay shapes itself into a ten-foot-tall beast (think of the Thing, just a bit softer and evil). The clay also activates if the characters get the bright idea to go to the back or side of the building to get in. The clay golem attacks the PCs immediately, starting with any magic-wielding warriors.

Clay Golem

The Clay Golem is a named character.

Sample Dialogue: "MWAAAH!"

Attributes: Bod 14, Chi 0, Mnd 1, Ref 3

Skills: Martial Arts 15, Creature Powers 12

Creature Schticks: Foul Spew (slippery slime), Armor x2

Unique Schtick:

Procreate: The Clay Golem splits off a Half Golem whenever he takes any damage. His stats stay the same when this happens, though he himself becomes smaller. He splits off four Half Golems before he finally becomes one himself.

Weapons: punch (15), kick (16), bite (17)

Half Golems

Half Golems are unnamed characters.

Attributes: Bod 8, Chi 0, Mnd 2, Ref 5

Skills: Martial Arts 12, Creature Powers 10

Creature Schtick: Armor

Unique Schtick:

Split: When dealt enough damage to destroy it, a Half Golem splits into two Baby Golems.

Weapons: punch (9), kick (10), bite (11)

Baby Golems

Baby Golems are unnamed characters.

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 0, Mnd 3, Ref 12

Skills: Martial Arts 11, Suffocate 13 (see below)

Unique Schtick:

Suffocate: A Baby Golem can jump into an opponent's mouth and try to force itself down into his throat, suffocating him. If the Golem succeeds in an attack using his Suffocate AV, the opponent takes doubling damage (1 the first time, 2 the second, 4 the third, 8, 16, etc.) during each subsequent shot in which the Golem would attack. He also suffers 4 Impairment. The victim of a suffocating attack can dislodge a Baby Golem by passing a Body check (each check is a 3 shot action), Difficulty 6. Bystanders can attempt to assist choking comrades by performing the Heimlich maneuver (Medicine, Difficulty 8 in this case). Bystanders could also attack the Golem where it's lodged at a -3 AV penalty, but the choking victim suffers the same damage done to the Golem.

Weapons: punch (6), kick (7), bite (8)



Clay Golems

Clay golems are created in the 69 juncture by eunuch sorcerers who sacrifice victims and store their souls in hunks of clay. There are a dozen or so souls in each lump of clay, so when the PCs fight back, slashing/shooting/smashing the first giant clay golem, the parts that split off form themselves into new, smaller golems and keep right on attacking. These are “Half Golems.” When a Half Golem is destroyed, it splits into two “Baby Golems.” When Baby Golems are destroyed, their bright white eyes stream out of their bodies, collecting into ghostly-white apparitions that fly around. De-clayed souls stick around, moaning (comically, even) about their sad state of affairs.

Water and fire both work well in attacking the golems (+3 AV). Also, magic cops can use their unique schtick (*Feng Shui*, p. 30) to force a soul out of a golem, which reduces that clay to a mass of jelly.

When the characters finally defeat the golems and get up to the shack, they find a small, intricately carved wooden box on the front step. To their surprise (and probably frustration) they still can’t open the door. All of the souls need to be caught in the box before the magic seal over the shack will be undone. If the PCs can’t figure this out themselves, any magic user or expert in Chinese history can read the carvings on the outside of the box: “The souls of the unrepentant open doors.” Alternatively, one of the souls accidentally swoops down and gets caught in the box. The box then glows red and makes a buzzing sound. If your players still don’t get the idea, it’s time to give up and go play backgammon.

To be captured, a soul can either be shut in the box or grabbed by the “tail” and shoved inside. Either way, the box gets redder as the souls collect. Don’t ask how it works, it just works, okay? Play this for laughs. The characters should fall over themselves trying to get these souls so they can get on with the adventure!

LOVE SHACK BABY

Finally, the PCs make it into the shack. What do they find for all their trouble? Two old men, hanging upside down, bleeding to death. Both are held up by an intricate system of knots, pulleys, and rope. Razor-sharp knives line the ropes, making the task of freeing them more than a one-two-three job. Two Fix-It checks are required, Difficulty 10. If the PC fails but doesn’t botch he can get the men down, but both he and the victim take 3 Wound Points of damage (not reduced by Toughness). If there’s a botch, think of something interesting to happen.

Once they’re down, Peng Guo is not coherent, but Gongen has plenty to say. He explains who he and Khao are and what happened here. He doesn’t know much of anything about the Secret War, but the characters will be able to easily infer any information they need from what he says. Most importantly, Gongen tells the characters that Chun Baobai saved her from the apartment fire three years ago. Remember, he doesn’t know anything about the legends of her, just what he has experienced taking care of her over the last three years. Feel free to let the characters ask whatever questions they want of Gongen; he has nothing to hide. However, make it clear that the man is irrevocably dying, and it’s only a matter of moments before he’s completely gone. He asks the PCs for their help in saving Baobai from the animals that attacked him. He opens his mouth, one last time, to tell them where Khao took her . . .

WHAM! A tiny blade whips across the room, right at Gongen’s throat. A quick-thinking PC can make a Speed check (Difficulty 10) to block the knife. If the PC is willing to let the weapon hit him, lower the Difficulty to 8. The blade does 15 Damage (roll normally) to a PC, but immediately kills Gongen if it strikes him. A look of shock and pleading falls over his face as he passes on.

The blade came from Peng Guo. He didn’t want another group interfering with the Hand’s attempt to get the girl. He is an honorable man and did not want to throw the weapon, but felt he had no choice. The action drains him completely, both physically and mentally, and from now on he cooperates totally with



anything the PCs ask him (assuming they don't just kill him outright). He is willing to tell the PCs the whole legend behind the Crystalline Child, including both the Hand and Lotus' involvement with her.

One of the two men is also able to tell the PCs where Khao probably took Baobai: back to the apartment complex where she performed her greatest feat three years ago. If there's anywhere she can perform a miracle large enough to save Gongen and herself, Khao figures it must be here. Considering the apartment was a feng shui site that focused her powers back then, he may just be right.

The PCs can do whatever they want to the shack, the soul box, and anything else they find, but both Gongen and Peng Guo die before they leave. Their deaths can be as touching, insightful, or comical as you wish, but the PCs must leave them behind and move as fast as possible to reach Baobai in time.

NO MORE SHACK JOKES

It takes about ten minutes for the PCs, at top speed in a car, to get to the area where Gongen found Baobai. Night falls while they're on the road. Make sure to keep the tension going: the Hand or the Lotus might be carting off the little girl *any second now*.

When the PCs finally arrive, they are as surprised as Khao and Baobai were when they showed up here: the apartment complex was leveled a few months ago when the government decided to erect a new electric power plant here. The electric plant is in the middle of a residential district, and the government had to demolish six apartment complexes to make room. It's not huge, as power plants go, but it's a maze of pipes, corridors, processing rooms . . . you get the idea. Also, it's far from complete, so there are wires strewn about carelessly, half-built catwalks, and building materials left and right.

All of a sudden, the PCs hear a gunshot crack somewhere within the facility, followed by a blood-curdling (female) scream. As they

Chun Baobai

Sample Dialogue: "I don't want the bad men here anymore . . ."

Attributes: Bod 2, Chi 10 (Mag 30) Mnd 10, Ref 6

Skills: Cute Little Girl 18

Unique Schtick:

Enormous Plot Device: The Crystalline Child can alter time in order to do pretty much anything at all, as long as it helps further the plot.

Weapons: punch (3), kick (4)

begin to react to these events, the walls start collapsing and the ground begins to quake.

REWIND

In an act of desperation, the girl is uncontrollably reversing time three years, to the point when Master Gongen rescued her. The PCs can do little but dodge debris and watch as the entire power plant unbuilds itself, piece by piece, and the apartment complex comes back into being. Workers and equipment and day and night swirl in frenzied motion until, finally, things seem to settle. Now, standing at the ground floor of a twenty-story apartment building, one of the PCs notices a fire breaking out on one of the middle floors. The girl is reliving the horrible fire she so narrowly escaped years ago, and there's no Gongen to save her this time. The PCs need to get up to the tenth floor as quickly as possible before the woman from three years ago throws Baobai out the window.

Cool Things That Can Happen in the Apartment Complex

- People run through the hallways, screaming and confused. Brownie points for any PCs that stay behind, helping them to safety.
- The fire moves quickly, spreading down from floor to floor as the PCs run up. They're going to have to dodge, contain, or battle through the flames.
- When the PCs finally get to the tenth floor, it is almost completely destroyed. Flying or especially acrobatic characters have an advan-



Fang Nuxu

Sample Dialogue: "You putrid imbeciles have no conception of what you are entering yourselves into!"

Attributes: Bod 4 (Tgh 6), Chi 7 (Mag 11), Mnd 7, Ref 6

Skills: Martial Arts 15, Intimidation 13, Deceit 16, Sorcery 17

Magical Shticks: Blast (acid, chi, disintegration), Divination (prediction), Influence (illusions, inspiration), Weather (heat, lightning, wind)

Weapons: punch (5), kick (6), Blade of Sorrows (11)

Unnamed Lotus Mooks

Sample Dialogue: "Give us the girl and we'll spare your heads!"

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 6

Skills: Martial Arts 9, Guns 8

Weapons: punch (6), kick (7), Glock 17 (10/1/17+1)

Unnamed Guiding Hand Monks

Sample Dialogue: "Our destiny is now!"

Attributes: Bod 6, Chi 0, Mnd 6, Ref 7

Skills: Martial Arts 12

Weapons: punch (7), kick (8), edged cane (10)

tage, as the floor is very weak and may give at any point.

- A woman holds five-year-old Baobai like a baby; Khao is across the room being overwhelmed by flames. Panicking, the woman throws Baobai out the window. Someone must jump out after her, or if one of the PCs stayed outside the building, he can catch her like Gongen did.

At the moment the PCs bring Chun Baobai to some kind of safety, the world returns to its regularly scheduled time period, and everyone is back in the power plant. If the PCs are split up when this happens, the stragglers waste the next few sequences getting to the action.

The Crystalline Child

The five-year-old girl at the center of everyone's attention seems normal enough. She's cute, with short black hair and a yellow

flower-patterned sundress she picked out herself. It can almost make you forget the fact that she can make your entire reality disappear in the blink of an eye. She acts like a normal, frightened girl a majority of the time, but when her temper flares, watch out.

THE STANDOFF

As the world flashes back to the present the PCs' vision blurs, their minds disorient, and they enter a general state of psychic disarray.

Instantaneous time travel sucks.

They look to one side to see twenty Lotus fighters with guns drawn, a sinister eunuch at the forefront. They look the other way to see ten Guiding Hand monks glaring at the Lotus warriors and the little girl, who's right beside the PCs, being shielded by Khao.

This is worse.

This is the final, no-holds-barred, climactic battle to decide the fate the Crystalline Child once and for all. The tension is thick in the air, as neither the Lotus mooks nor the Hand monks want to throw the first metaphorical punch. Everyone knows this is going to end in a slaughterhouse, and if the PCs aren't careful, courageous, and lucky, they'll be the first ones down.

Fang Nuxu demands, in his screechy-high voice, that the PCs step away from the girl and the monks leave at once. When this doesn't happen he flies off the handle, then — BOOM! — one of his men panics and fires his pistol at Khao. The bullet stops in mid-air, two inches from the back of Khao's head, then retraces its path slowly (for a bullet) back into the mook's gun. This causes the gun to blow up right in the mook's face, causing everyone to start firing their guns, causing the monks to charge, causing . . . let's just say all hell breaks loose.

The PCs start the fight in a wide-open, mostly unfinished section of the plant's main floor. There are computer parts, construction equipment, and boxes lying about, and a catwalk above them.

The Lotus mooks try to encircle the room as quickly as possible so no one will be able to escape. They shoot at anyone but their

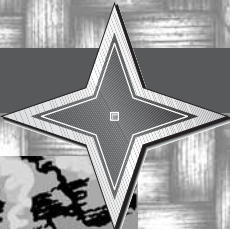


Illustration by Steven Sanders



own. Their goal is simple: kill Baobai at any cost. Nuxu uses his Inspiration special effect (*Feng Shui*, p. 96) to bring the girl out in the open for a clear shot.

The Guiding Hand monks know they are outnumbered and outgunned, but have the resolve to get this girl into their possession and out of here — alive. Any member is fully willing to sacrifice himself in a heartbeat if it means helping get the girl. They focus their attacks on anyone interfering with their plans.

For their part, Khao and Baobai move from hiding spot to hiding spot, trying not to die. Unless interrupted (by gunfire, the Hand, or the PCs), Khao carries the girl around, almost completely enveloping her with his body — any attacks aimed at Baobai hit Khao instead. If Khao dies during the fight, Baobai stands over him and takes on a strange, bluish glow that gets stronger and stronger as the battle progresses.

Cool Things That Could Happen During the Fight

- Someone can turn off the power off from main board (Fix-It check, Difficulty 6), using the ensuing darkness to make a move.
- Loose wires can be grabbed to electrocute an opponent (Damage 12).
- A Guiding Hand monk comes face-to-face with the PC nearest to the girl. The monk, unarmed, keeps coming — is the PC willing to shoot him down in cold blood to keep him from taking the girl?
- A Lotus mook or two takes to the catwalks for a clearer field of fire.
- Forklifts run people over, and are powered by gas that's under pressure.
- A massive circular gate made of glowing blue crystals forms in the middle of the room, courtesy of the Crystalline Child. A giant Brontosaurus stumbles out, causing quite a ruckus. The crystals flash purple for a moment, and silver metallic robots stomp out. The crystals flash red, and tons of water rush out onto the floor. Half a wooden sea ship follows the water and pirates mill around, giving the scene a much-needed "Argh, matey!" factor. None of these

actively participate in the fight unless it would make things more fun.

- Another, smaller crystal gate opens up in the floor. Throw a mook down it and watch him enjoy the German trenches of World War I.
- Lotus backup arrives.
- The police show up.

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

Assuming the PCs survive the battle and get away with the girl, they have a critical decision to make: what is this young girl's future? With Master Gongen's death, she has no home to return to. If Khao died as well, it leaves even more of a problem. Even if Khao is alive, the PCs might not be friendly with him, considering that he set them and some other little girl up for potential death. In addition to any decisions the PCs must make, you also need to decide whether you want the Crystalline Child — and the vast power she has at her disposal — in your continuing campaign.

Here are some ideas:

- If the Lotus or Hand know the PCs have the Child, their machinations to recover her will certainly continue.
- If the PCs decide to take the Child in as their ward, they have all the problems normally associated with taking care of a five-year-old along with all the problems of taking care of the most powerful magical force in the Secret War. Fun!
- Neither Khao (if he's alive) nor Baobai are interested in allowing unscrupulous PCs to manipulate the time stream for their own purposes. For that matter, they may or may not agree with Dragon PCs that their cause is necessarily just or good.
- If you're at a complete loss as to what to do with the Crystalline Child, she opens up a mysterious portal with her powers and steps through . . . "to claim her destiny," someone says in a hushed whisper.