

THE
ULTIMATE CHALLENGE
TEA GARDEN

A Kapcon 16 Scenario Design Contest Entry

SYSTEM



by
Green Ronin Publishing

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INTRODUCTION

The Ultimate Challenge Tea Garden is a scenario for DragonFist by Green Ronin Publishing. DragonFist is an OGL product and uses a variant of the rules found in Dungeons and Dragons. The scenario is designed to be run in three hours. No prior knowledge of DragonFist or D20 is needed to play this scenario, though knowledge of the wuxia genre is helpful.

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The central story of this scenario revolves around He Shen, the hero of the people, who has just rescued his nephew Ping from the clutches of one of Emperor Jianmin's palace servants, an evil eunuch sorcerer called Merciful Mao. Mao is in hot pursuit and He Shen is forced to take refuge at the Ultimate Challenge Tea Garden, where the other PCs are also present.

The Ultimate Challenge Tea Garden is a large palatial complex in the central province of Xin in the Yishu Hills, close to the only pass over the Ling Mu mountains. The Garden is renowned for its Wulin Tourney Fight! at which Martial Artists from all provinces in Tianguo converge to test their skills against the best. Imperial representatives avoid the Tourney as anti-Imperialist sentiment amongst the World of Martial Arts is currently at an all time high.

The main conflict and drama in this scenario arises from the fact that that the PCs either do not know each other or have not seen each other for a long time. The PCs will be pursuing their own agendas whilst the trying and work out who they can trust and solve the mystery of who is responsible for the strange events that occur at the Tea Garden. To encourage this sense of intrigue, this scenario uses two specific tools.

The first is the use of handouts. There are many handouts to be given out to the players and these are designed to give a sense that there is information unique and secret to each PC. It should also help avoid the need to go out of the room to discuss issues with one player, which can be disruptive.

The second is the use of companions. As the PCs are not a part of the same group, it is likely that some scenes will not involve all the PCs. To deal with this, each PC also has a "companion". During any scene where one or more of the PCs are not present, a player may choose one of those PCs' players to play his companion. Companions have no game statistics and are present only for role-playing purposes. When another player is elected, he should be handed the short description of the companion. The companions can also be used by the GM to encourage greater interaction between players where he may consider it lacking, as playing companions teases out the background elements of each PC.

The scenario's anticipated climax is when Merciful Mao storms the Tea Garden in the morning following He Shen's arrival. It is hoped (but not required) that the PCs will have resolved a majority of their own agendas by this stage and are left to focus on the decision of how to deal with this climatic event.



THE CHARACTERS

The characters are the central part of this scenario. Each of the PCs has a different reason to be at the Tea Garden where their paths will cross and become entangled. What follows is a summary of the PCs and their agendas.

HE SHEN

He Shen is the famous hero of the people and the famous pupil of Grandmaster Fei Gan, the leader of the Righteous Fists Clan. He rescued his nephew, Ping, from Merciful Mao, a eunuch sorcerer who collects souls to feed the immortality of Emperor Jianmin. Unbeknownst to He Shen and the Emperor, Merciful Mao has received an I Ching prediction that should he train this child to be an ultimate Martial Artist, he will be unbeatable. Mao is now in pursuit of He Shen with the imperial army.

He Shen sought to flee over the Ling Mu mountains into the Bei Ji province but an early winter squall has temporarily closed the pass. Desperate for some refuge, He Shen entered the Ultimate Challenge Tea Garden. He poses as a rookie entrant called Dragon Cloud in the hope of blending in with the other Martial Artists (and forcing Mao to take a more cautious approach) whilst he await his chance to escape.

TOY MIAO~YIN

Toy Miao-yin owns the Tea Garden and is the host of the Tourney. She is a beautiful woman known for her Martial Arts and her ability to exploit any commercial opportunity presented to her. She demands absolute obedience from her employees, ruling them with an iron hand. She does not tolerate her patrons causing trouble unless it also causes her profit.

Despite the elegant façade she maintains, Toy Miao-yin is deeply unhappy and unsatisfied with her current situation. She wants for nothing but finds herself irritated by those who try to impress, obey or even defy her. On seeing He Shen she is filled with long forgotten passion. The two had a romantic affair many years ago which ended in disaster when their morals clashed. She still loves him desperately and despite what she may threaten to do to him, she would not betray him.

KONG FU~PO

Kong Fu-po travels to the Tea Garden due to an I Ching prediction that by doing so he finally fulfils his destiny and atones for his sins.

When he was young, Kong Fu-po stole the Essence of Immortality Manual from his teacher. Since then he has consumed the Alchemical Elixir of Youth to slow down his aging. This secretive process consumed him. Several years ago, he was confronted by an Imperial representative who sought the secret of eternal youth for his master, Emperor Jianmin. Kong Fu-po could not bear to reveal the secret. Since then Emperor Jianmin has discovered another unholy process for his immortality, one that scars Tianguo deeply. Kong Fu-po sees this as his responsibility and payment for his sins.

LILI AN~MEI

Lili An-mei is the adopted daughter of a Shadow Magistrate of the Ghost Eaters Clan and, unbeknownst to all outsiders, a descendant of Empress Peiyan. She was brought up to wield the Flying Phoenix Sword, a powerful Kung Fu Weapon that has a reputation of being cursed. The Ghost Eaters forced her to devote her life solely to her confrontation of Jianmin. However, this brutal upbringing has bred in her a fierce independent streak and eventually she rebelled and fled her Clan.

She has travelled to the Wulin Tourney Fight! to show off her exceptional skills. She often fantasises that she is her Martial Arts hero, He Shen. She desperately wants recognition for her skills but lacks the patience to be a true warrior demonstrating the highest xia virtues. She is a boiling pit waiting to explode.

CHO JIAN

Cho Jian is in the employ of the Ghost Eater Clan and has been hired to bring Lili An-mei back safely and kill anyone who learns of her destiny. Cho Jian does a lot of the Ghost Eaters' dirty work and is a capable bounty hunter and street fighter. However, he knows Lili An-mei is a more capable warrior than he is so he needs allies. Luckily, many are to be found at the Tourney.

Cho Jian secretly detests Jianmin with devotion. However, he controls it with his cold professionalism. He is not below taking advantage of any opportunity that should arise but his doubts are showing as cracks in his otherwise implacable façade.

NUMBER ONE MOUNTAIN

Number One Mountain is a regular participant in the Wulin Tourney Fight! Number One Mountain has lived his whole life near the Tea Garden and he sees it as his second home. He wishes to marry Toy Miao-yin one day.

He is a good natured fellow who believes in going out of his way to help others and that everyone has the Heavenly adorned right to resolve their conflicts by the contest of Kung Fu. He has recently developed Number One Mountain technique and wishes to promote its virtues at the Tourney.

COMPANIONS

The Companions of each PC are briefly:

- ~ **Ping**: He Shen's nephew, the target of Mao and destined to kill the Emperor. However, he is just a ten year old boy with enormous love for his uncle.
- ~ **Humble Servant Yang**: Toy Miao-yin's head servant who desperately wants to see his mistress be happy again.
- ~ **Mummy Demon**: Kong Fu-po's guilt given form as a twisted, bandaged child. It tempts and taunts him and he often isn't strong enough to resist.
- ~ **Flying Phoenix Sword**: Lili An-mei's magic sword who wants to see Lili remember her duty to destiny and achieve greatness.
- ~ **Tortured Past**: Cho Jian's past is never too far from his mind, especially as he finds out that this mission is more complex than he had expected.
- ~ **Auntie Bu**: Number One's aged yet sprightly aunt who occupies her time between berating her nephew for his actions and trying to find him a suitable match.

OTHER

There are only two major NPCs in this scenario whose plans are detailed later. In brief, the major antagonist is Merciful Mao. Mao is the main momentum behind the central story. Inside the Tea Garden, there is Golden Aura of the Pagoda Unbroken, the fourth entrant into the Wulin Tourney Fight! Golden Aura is a tool for the GM to adjust the difficulty faced by the PCs as he sees fit.



WHAT IS WUXIA?

Wuxia is a genre of Chinese literature and cinema that centres on the Martial Arts philosophy of chivalry or Xia. Protagonists of wuxia are normally skilled Martial Artists who use their kung fu to mend the ills of the World of Martial Arts, also known as Jianghu.

Jianghu (Gong Woo) is a fictional world of martial artists, usually congregating in sects, disciplines and schools of martial arts learning. It bears many similarities to Ancient China. Wuxia sits between pure fantasy and reality. Though many tales are set in clearly defined historical periods, the people and actions in them are highly improbable.

In the context of DragonFist, Ancient China is replaced with the fantasy world of Tianguo. The World of Martial Arts consists of nine secret Martial Arts societies who oppose the evil Emperor Jianmin.

Wuxia heroes are not necessarily moral in the Western sense (or even Eastern sense) of the word. They are focused on doing great deeds of righteousness and honour. There is a strong emphasis on the importance of the gracious deed received and revenge of not so gracious deeds suffered, over all other ethos of life.

Although wuxia is based on true life martial arts, the genre elevates the mastery of their crafts into fictitious levels of attainment including:

- ~ fighting using a codified sequence of movements,
- ~ use of everyday objects such as ink brushes, clothing and musical instruments as lethal weapons,
- ~ use of light foot kung fu or qinggong, the ability to move swiftly and lightly, scale walls, glide on waters or mount trees,
- ~ the ability to control chi or inner energy, and
- ~ the ability to kill or paralyze opponents by hitting or seizing their acupuncture points with a finger, knuckle, elbow or weapon.

These skills are closely guarded, passed from master to favourite pupil and are often kept in abstrusely written and/or encrypted manuals.

This scenario draws upon many wuxia inspirations. The primary one would be the movie Dragon Gate Inn which shows the dynamic of a wuxia scenario centred on one location. It also was inspirational in the relationship of He Shen and Toy Miao-yin and the antagonist Merciful Mao. Barry Hughart's novel the Bridge of Birds was inspirational for its overall depiction of an Ancient China That Never Was and the characters of Kong Fu-po and Number One Mountain. Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon inspired Lili An-mei and her relationship with He Shen. Iron Monkey and Hero both helped inspire Cho Jian.

Beyond these inspirations, I highly recommend Weapon of the Gods, Hero and Big Trouble in Little China. The first is inspirational for how to frame wuxia scenes in terms of an RPG, the second is the best example of wuxia the writer knows about and the third translates a lot of wuxia ideas for a western audience.



THE SETTING OF DRAGONFIST

DragonFist is set in the world of Tianguo (Tyen Woo). Tianguo draws heavily on many common wuxia elements. Knowledge of this setting beyond what is set out in this scenario is not required to run or play in it.

Tianguo, the “Heavenly Kingdom,” is a complex land with a long history. At the apex of Tianguo is the Emperor, the Son of Heaven, divinely chosen ruler of the land. He is served by seven ministries, which regulate life in the Empire, and the army, which defends it. Anyone can take the civil service exams and rise through the ranks of officialdom. Similarly, anyone can enlist in the army and advance in rank if of proven ability.

The cities are full of merchants and trades people. They keep the economy thriving and move goods between town and country. They are aided in this by the Empire’s extensive road system, busy sea lanes, and regular army patrols. The peasants in the countryside grow food, harvest the ocean’s bounty, and mine or otherwise gather the raw materials needed by artisans. Travelling judges provide imperial justice when it’s needed.

In both city and country are the gentry. These nobles trace their lineage back to the Three Kingdoms era and have used their family wealth to ensure a pride of place in Tianguo. Some have rural estates that are worked by countless peasants, while others choose careers in government or the military.

Throughout the Empire, clans form an important feature of social organization. These extended family units provide opportunity for their members and look out for the clan interests. Some villages belong entirely to one clan.

The Emperor, Jianmin, is corrupt. Despite assurances that he would be deified on his death and take his place in Heaven, he aged. He began to gather all the information he could on the subject of immortality and soon became obsessed with it. He offered untold wealth to any who could make him immortal. As the Emperor’s despair reached its lowest depth, a simple peasant appeared in court holding a wilted lotus. He claimed that the Emperor would realize his dream by eating the flower. Ji Dayi, the Lord Shaman, advised against it, but Jianmin ignored the advice and ate the lotus.

Since Jianmin ate the tainted lotus, things have changed in the Heavenly Kingdom. He rules unchallenged, but for those with eyes to see, it is clear that the Emperor has lost the Mandate of Heaven. The governmental structure remains in place but has been subverted. The eunuchs, once mere palace servants, have become the Emperor’s right hand, with nearly limitless power to act in his name. The remaining officials are largely corrupt and are more interested in maintaining their position than serving the nation. Similarly, the army has become a refuge for thugs and hooligans, padded out by peasants who have been conscripted.

In the country, life is chaotic. Some regions are untouched, while others consist of nothing but burnt-out ruins of former villages. The imperial army has become a source of terror rather than protection for the peasants. Its appearance usually heralds confiscation of food, conscription into the army, or forcible recruitment for the Emperor’s building projects. Many people - sometimes entire clans - are whisked off to the capital and never seen again. Dark stories of the Emperor’s inhuman appetites have filtered back to the countryside and only confirm the peasants’ worst fears.

In the cities, merchants try to maintain business as usual, but it's increasingly difficult when imperial troops simply confiscate goods. Peasants seeking refuge from the terrors of the countryside have swelled the cities, and many are hovering on the brink of starvation.

Meanwhile, the remaining gentry have their own problems. Holdovers from a bygone era (even if they don't realize it), they are confused and have no unity in purpose or action. More than one noble family has been dispersed and its monies taken for the imperial treasury. Some of the gentry have found a safe place in the army, while others continue their outdated ways, squeezing the peasants in a vain effort to appease the Emperor. It is likely that the Emperor will simply destroy them piecemeal.

This then is the Empire under Jianmin. A man of monstrous evil sits on the throne and crimes are perpetrated in his name daily.



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THE RULES OF DRAGONFIST

DragonFist is published under the Open Game Licence. As such, its system is a variant of the system used in Dungeons & Dragons 3rd Edition. Though the system is known to many RPGers, this scenario contains an even more simplified version that is inspired by the DragonFist system (taking many ideas from Green Ronin's True 20 RPG) that is suitable for convention use and those who aren't familiar with the system at all. If the rule system doesn't suit then it shouldn't be difficult to modify the scenario to use any system the GM is comfortable with or even to run the scenario without a system.

All rolls in this game are d20 + a modifier. When a PC or NPC wishes to perform an action, the modifier is normally the appropriate Combat modifier, Skill or, if the PC has no Combat modifier or Skill that applies the appropriate Ability (Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Wisdom and Charisma) modifier. If the result equals or exceeds the Difficulty Class (DC) set by the GM, the action succeeds.

The general guideline for setting DCs are:

Very Easy = 5
Easy = 10
Moderate = 15

Difficult = 20
Very Difficult = 25
Legendary = 30

Where two PCs and/or NPCs are contesting against each other then rather than using DCs, the winner is simply the one who rolls the highest.

Each PC and NPC also has a number of special abilities which should be self explanatory from the information set out on the character sheets.

COMBAT

Combat presents a few additional complications. Time is broken into rounds of 6 seconds. Each PC and NPC can take one action on their turn. Should it be required to determine who acts first in a round, it is suggested that the PCs and NPCs act in the following order:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Dragon Cloud/He Shen | 5. Toy Miao-yin | 8. Nuns of the Eagle's Claw |
| 2. Merciful Mao | 6. Golden Aura of the Pagoda Unbroken | 9. Number One Mountain |
| 3. Cho Jian | 7. Hopping Vampire | 10. Imperial Soldiers |
| 4. Lili An-mei | | 11. Kong Fu-po |

Attacks and Defences by PCs are performed like any other roll i.e. by rolling a d20 + the Attack or Defence modifier. The DC is the target's Defence or Attack respectively. The NPCs in this scenario have all been presented as a series of DCs for ease of use. The GM should not need to roll any dice.

If the Attack roll succeeds, the PC rolls Damage against a DC equal to the target's Toughness. If the PC is successful, the target is down and defeated.

If the Defence roll fails, the PC rolls Toughness. Each NPC has a damage track which will indicate the relevant injury the PC has suffered.

~ **Stunned:** If the Toughness roll fails, the PC is Stunned. He may not perform any stunt on his next action, though he may still take an action.

~ **Injured:** If the Toughness roll fails by 5 or more, the PC is Injured. He misses his next action. Also, his Chi flow has been blocked and he may not use the type of stunt he was using the round he was injured until he performs a Constitution stunt or the fight ends.

~ **Beaten:** If the Toughness roll fails by 10 or more, the PC is Beaten. A Beaten PC is out of this fight. He also suffers internal injuries and may not use the type of stunt that he was using when beaten in the next fight.

If a PC ever suffers 3 blocked stunts, they are considered to have been beaten and are out of the fight, though they do not suffer the lasting harm caused by suffering Beaten.

Guidelines on how to handle Wulin Tourney fights are discussed in more detail in the section entitled "Event C: The Wulin Tourney Fight".

STUNTS

At the start of combat and then on the start of each of their turns thereafter, each PC may choose to perform a stunt by narrating a kung fu styled action. There are six types of stunts and a PC may only perform one each turn. The type of stunt and the player's narration should match. The GM has the final say on what kind of stunt is performed.

When performing a stunt, the PC gains a bonus to certain Abilities, Skills and Combat bonuses. The PC sheets have been colour coded for ease of reference and it is recommended that each PC has a colour bead and place it on the stunt related ability for ease of reference.

~ **Strength:** adds to Damage and any successful hit blocks one type of stunt of the attacker's choice. Sample feats: using large pieces of scenery to attack, having your footsteps break the paving stones, flinging opponents.

~ **Dexterity:** adds to Attack and Defence. Sample feats: running across the heads of a crowd; leaping over rooftops, attacks involving multiple strokes.

~ **Constitution:** adds to Toughness and heals one type of stunt that is blocked. Sample feats: using one's Chi to expel bad blood, remaining planted to the earth, grimacing coolly whilst being hit.

~ **Intelligence:** adds to any one Combat bonus (Attack, Defence, Damage, Toughness) this round. Sample feats: spouting Daoist philosophy, display great learning, use of herbs and acupuncture.

~ **Wisdom:** allows the PC to take an additional interrupt action at any time before the PC's next turn (two interrupting PCs go in order of the highest Insight bonus) and attempt to cancel an opponent's stunt bonus (must succeed in a contested roll modified by the relevant stunt bonus). Sample feats: studying one's opponent, using prediction techniques, countering manoeuvres.

~ **Charisma:** adds to any one combat bonus (Attack, Defence, Damage, Toughness) in any later round. This bonus is cumulative with another stunt bonus. This is the only way to get more than one stunt bonus in a turn. Sample feats: relying on luck, using hidden weapon, smack talk.

The GM should feel free to add any other rules that he or she thinks may enhance the overall wuxia feel of this game. For example, the play-test of this scenario included the handing out of fortune cookies to provide badly translated sounding dialogue at opportune times.



DESTINY, FATE AND PREDICTION

NB: The boxed text on this page is safe to be handed out to the player of Kong Fu-po should the player wish to know more about the art of prediction.

In wuxia, destiny, fate and the art of prediction is a common theme. These derive out of Chinese philosophies and beliefs that are beyond the scope of this scenario. However, given the frequency that these ideas appear in wuxia and in this scenario, this section is included to provide a basic summary of how to use these concepts.

Wuxia heroes are often concerned with their own destiny and fate. Some strive to fulfil it but most strive against it; struggling to make their own fate. In this scenario, two of the PCs and one of the NPCs have strong destinies. He Shen is the hero many see him being destined to be, even if he doesn't see it himself. Lili An-mei is destined to assist in destroying Emperor Jianmin. How this occurs is yet to be seen. Finally, Ping is destined to bring an end to Emperor Jianmin's tyranny. Like Lili's destiny; it is a little light on the details.

The art of prediction is often tied with the concept of destiny and fate. Prediction is often seen as a mystical art but in actuality it is nothing more than insight: the art of understanding the world. It combines tactical genius, matchmaking, magical divination, and political acumen. The art of prediction may seem supernatural, but in reality, like kung fu, it is about hard work.

There are a number of prediction techniques. Two prominent ones are I Ching divination and the other is Shang divination.

I Ching brings Heaven and Earth together in infinite wisdom by providing six choices - each represented by a broken line, an unbroken line, or a line in one state that is transitioning into the other. Three lines combine to form a trigram; two trigrams combine to form a hexagram. Every I Ching reading shows both the world as it is and the world after any impending changes.

Shang divination involves reading the cracks in a Shang tortoiseshell, caused by the tip of a hot poker, which form letters. Shang tortoiseshells are a rare and valuable artifact that can hold potentially dozens of secrets.

In this scenario, one PC and one NPC have formidable prediction abilities. Kong Fu-po sees his destiny and that of others. It serves to motivate the PC and those around him. Merciful Mao is also versed in prediction and it drives him to distraction.

Kong Fu-po's prediction ability is represented by a combination of his handouts, his high Wisdom stunt bonus and his Prediction advantage. The GM should use all three to drive home the concept of destiny and fate to the extent desired.

The Prediction advantage works by providing a bonus to those who take actions to make the predictions come true. This avoids pressuring the GM from needing to predict the future and then trying to favour that outcome in some way. The bonus may seem self serving but the impact is accurate. The GM should feel free to disallow the bonus should the advantage be abused.



THE ULTIMATE CHALLENGE TEA GARDEN

NB: This page is safe to be handed out to the player of Toy Miao-yin should the player wish to know more about the Tea Garden, in particular the secret passage.

The Ultimate Challenge Tea Garden plays centre stage to the entire scenario. No map is provided as the drama is more important than the locations. The GM should improvise details as he sees fit.

The Tea Garden is a palatial double story building, set in a beautiful Chinese style garden. It has a number of locations listed below. The regular income from traders means that it is in good repair and lavish. The main building is even elaborately decorated with dragon statues and gold paint.

The scenario is set in winter, so snow is everywhere. The GM should use the backdrop to convey purity and beauty as well as danger from the cold and the expense making hiding impossible. Over the walls and through the falling snow can be seen the white shape of the Ling Mu mountains. The Tea Garden should feel like an island helping to discourage the PCs from leaving it during the course of the scenario.

~ **Tavern:** The Tea Garden has a large central tavern room which is the centre of activity. It is always warm and the walls, furniture, spacious balcony and long bar are all made from a rich dark wood. Dumplings, pork buns, rice cakes, and other delicacies are in abundance as well as tea and alcohol.

~ **Sleeping Rooms:** Upstairs are many spacious rooms overlooking the gardens. The walls are thin wood and there are many decorative (and flimsy) screens. There are multiple criss-crossing corridors allowing people to slip to and fro.

~ **Fighting Arena:** In the centre of the gardens is the arena. It is circular and the boundary is marked with small engraved statues representing the many Martial Artists who have died here. The floor is made from thousand of small polished white stones. The arena is viewable from the tavern room from a deep dual level balcony. A person couldn't ask for a better place to fight. Tekken eat your heart out.

~ **Secret Passages:** The Tea Garden is riddled with secret passages and peepholes that Toy Miao-yin uses to conduct her business. Most servants know some, but not all, of these nooks and crannies.

~ **Servants' Area:** The servants' area is an area of utility and bustling activity. In contrast with the spacious common areas, it is a dark warren of storerooms, dumb waiters and pantries.

~ **Gate House:** The Tea Garden has a defensible wall and a large, solid gate house. At all times, several impressive looking guardsmen stand ready in ceremonial tiger armour. In fact, the security's bark is worse than its bite and sneaking over the long wall at night would be an easy task for even a novice thief.

~ **Miao-yin's Rooms:** Miao-yin resides and does her most important business in a building that is separated from the main building except for an ornate bridge and an underground tunnel. This building is well defended and also hides an escape tunnel that leads far into the foothills of the Ling Mu mountains.



TIMELINE OF EVENTS

This scenario is flexible in terms of the sequencing of events. The sequence depends upon the actions of the PCs and their reactions. This section sets out a timeline of the likely or recommended course of events. There are 4 events or plot lines that drive most of the scenes and these are detailed in the next four sections. They are:

- ~ **Event A:** Merciful Mao's Machinations
- ~ **Event B:** Golden Aura of the Pagoda Unbroken
- ~ **Event C:** The Wulin Tourney Fight!
- ~ **Event D:** The Big Showdown

Some of the events in the timeline are listed with a letter referring to one of these 4 events where appropriate. The timeline also notes the likely times that the PC handouts should be given, though most of them are not specific to any single event.

The timeline covers an in-game period of time that starts in the early evening and goes through the night until the following morning. The timeline is split into roughly 6 half an hour blocks of out-of-game time called phases.

PHASE ONE

- ~ Handout the PC sheets, explain the rules and setting and answer any player questions.
- ~ All the PCs arrive at the Tea Garden.

1. *Opening - sets the scene and allows players to describe their PCs.*
2. *He Shen 1 - he remembers his former love of Toy Miao-yin.*
3. *Toy Miao-yin 1 - she recognises He Shen's true identity and remembers her love for him.*
4. *Lili An-mei 1 - she recognises He Shen's true identity.*
5. *Kong Fu-po 1 - predicts He Shen is in immediate danger.*

PHASE TWO

- ~ (Event A) Nuns of the Eagle's Claw storm the Tea Garden. Their target is unknown.
- ~ (Event B) Golden Aura of the Pagoda Unbroken arrives as fourth entrant of the Wulin Tourney Fight!

1. *Lili An-mei 2 - she identifies the Nuns as imperial assassins.*
2. *Lili An-mei 3 - she recalls her childhood and forms a bond with Ping.*
3. *Kong Fu-po 2 - he predicts that a bond between Lili An-mei and Ping is necessary if he is to fulfil his true destiny.*
4. *Number One Mountain 1 - he recalls his rivalry with Golden Aura.*

PHASE THREE

- ~ (Event C) The Tourney begins with a fight between He Shen and Golden Aura of the Pagoda Unbroken.
- ~ (Event A) Golden Aura falls ill and cannot finish the fight. Poison is the cause.

1. *Toy Miao-yin 2 - her servants discover crushed centipede on Number One Mountain.*
2. *Cho Jian 1 - he recognises the poison as deadly centipede poison used as one used by imperial assassins, and he recalls the antidote.*

PHASE FOUR

~ (Event C) Lili An-mei and Number One Mountain fight, revealing Lili An-mei's considerable ability. Number One Mountain is weakened by Golden Aura's taunts during the fight.

~ (Event A) A dead servant is discovered carrying poison and letters regarding the secret passage into the Garden.

~ (Event B) Golden Aura arranges for a hopping vampire to get free to cause havoc.

1. *Number One Mountain 2 - he identifies Lili An-mei's fighting style.*
2. *Cho Jian 2 - he finds the dead servant and entrance to the secret passage.*
3. *He Shen 2 - he recalls Cho Jian to be a member of the Ghost Eaters.*

PHASE FIVE

~ (Event A) Before the confusion dies down, the Nuns of the Eagle's Claw infiltrate the Tea Garden and kidnap Ping.

~ (Event A) The Nuns confront He Shen with an ultimatum and his identity is revealed to everyone.

~ (Event C) The final fight of the Tourny begins (probably between He Shen and Lili An-mei).

1. *Cho Jian 3 - he detects the attempt to kidnap Ping and sees the Imperial Death Seal.*
2. *Kong Fu-po 3 - he divines Ping's true destiny as the one to bring down the Emperor.*

PHASE SIX

~ The patrons retire to bed, though several PCs may wheel and deal during the night.

~ (Event D) Several patrons ready to defend the Tea Garden, try and find the Tea Garden's secret passage or attempt to flee and are killed.

~ (Event D) At dawn, Merciful Mao attacks the Tea Garden in force with the Imperial Army.

1. *Toy Miao-yin 3 - Merciful Mao sends her an offer of truce.*
2. *Number One Mountain 3 - he overhears the offer made to Toy Miao-yin.*
3. *He Shen 3 - He Shen has a dream of the doom that will befall if he doesn't escape immediately.*

龍拳

EVENT A: MERCIFUL MAO'S MACHINATIONS

Merciful Mao is a corrupt eunuch sorcerer employed by the Emperor Jianmin to retrieve and extract souls for his immortal youth. Merciful Mao is notorious throughout Tianguo and has never been a sympathetic person. However, he has only recently become ambitious. During his daily routine he became aware that one of his captives, a boy called Ping, was destined to bring an end to the Emperor's reign. If Mao could harness this destiny for his own ends then he could replace the Emperor.

Mao faces a number of hurdles to his success. The first is that the Emperor would be unhappy if he found out Mao's plan. So Mao is desperate to keep his plan secret. He is deathly afraid of discovery.

The second is that Ping happened to be the nephew of the hero of the people and famous Martial Artist, He Shen. He Shen stole the boy from under Mao's nose. Mao has had to call in considerably resources to retrieve Ping and these actions make it even more likely that the Emperor may take an interest in Mao's goals.

The scenario begins with Mao in pursuit of He Shen. Mao is about half a day behind and has gathered a force of the Imperial soldiers. However, Mao has sent ahead his fanatical Nuns of the Eagle's Claw who are right behind He Shen.

MAO'S PLANS

Merciful Mao's plan is two fold. The first is by force and the second is by subterfuge.

~ **Force:** Mao has a number of minions willing to fight for him. Initially, the most prevalent are the Nuns of the Eagle's Claw. These are a group of women who he found as orphans and sent to the Monastery of the Eagle's Eerie in the Dragon's Spine Mountains in the west. These women are fanatical hunters and assassins and versed in Eagle Claw technique. Each bears a hideous claw mark across their face. Acting as Mao's vanguard, they are unwilling to give up their prey so easily and attack the Tea Garden shortly after He Shen's arrival in phase 1. They are unfocussed and tired and as a result are easily repelled. They regroup and take instructions from Mao, attacking again in phase 5.

His second group is the Imperial Army. Though powerful and disciplined, they are slow. Mao stays with the Army until their arrival in phase 6. However, he stays in communication with the Nuns who remain present at the Tea Garden throughout using bewitched ravens.

~ **Subterfuge:** Mao tries two avenues of subterfuge. Despite his talent of fawning over the Emperor, Mao's corrupt and vile nature makes him a poor manipulator, as seen in both attempts.

The first avenue involves bribing a servant of the Tea Garden to poison He Shen using deadly centipede poison, and then reveal the location of the Tea Garden's secret tunnel entrance. Mao does not fathom that anyone, even a mere servant, would not know the nine sacred rituals required to safely handle a deadly centipede. As a result, the servant predictably poisons Golden Aura in phase 2 and then himself in phase 4.

The second avenue is that Mao transforms into a raven to visit Toy Miao-yin during the night in phase 6. He has heard of her mercenary nature and hopes to win her over to his cause through promises of wealth and power. Again, Mao fails to understand the strength of her bond to He Shen. Her refusal is unexpected.

A STORY OF MISTRUST

At the start of this scenario, Mao is desperate, fearful and murderous. He is also the official “big bad” of this scenario. Despite this status, his identity, target and goal remain hidden for much of the scenario. This adds to the fact that the PCs don’t know much about each other either, leaving a lot of ambiguity with which to interpret events that occur.

What follows is a break down of Mao’s plan showing the likely levels of mistrust and recommended disclosure throughout the scenario:

~ **Phase One:** Mao is unknown to all but He Shen. Mao’s first attack comes as a surprise and the fact that Ping is the ultimate target remains unknown. The attack should start a certain level of paranoia as the PCs cast a lot of suspicion around the group. Lili An-mei is likely to suspect that the assassins are after her.

~ **Phase Two:** The servant’s accidental poisoning of Golden Aura will increase suspicion but cast several red herrings into the mix. All fighters in the Wulin Tourney Fight! are suspects.

~ **Phase Three:** Number One Mountain becomes a prime suspect as he is discovered by Toy’s servants to hold incriminating evidence (a decoy as the servant tries to cover his mistake).

~ **Phase Four:** Before the offending servant can be discovered and interrogated, he is found dead. This can be interpreted as some other villain covering his tracks but it will also cast suspicions on Toy Miao-yin and her servants (who were also the ones to quickly accuse Number One Mountain). Cho Jian’s continued timeliness and knowledge of the events and his pursuit of Lili An-mei may also put some spotlight on him. Lili An-mei’s deception is slowly crumbling too after the fight.

~ **Phase Five:** Mao tries the direct approach once more and, thanks to Golden Aura’s use of a hopping vampire, he is slightly more successful, though ultimately still a failure. He Shen is revealed to everyone as is the fact that his continued presence threatens everyone. Also, Ping seems to be the target for much of the problems so far. Mao’s presence may be revealed by He Shen at this time but given his deception, few may believe him.

~ **Phase Six:** Mao tries to consolidate his successes so far by trying to lure Toy Miao-yin to his side. Though she is unlikely to agree, Number One Mountain’s partial overhearing of this conversation may cast further suspicion. Number One Mountain may look to use this information to gain influence over Toy Miao-yin or he may seek aid to help her. After that, it’s Mao time! Actually, the group should at this stage be ready to work together to escape or defeat Mao. He is the one clear threat to everyone after all. If they still have a few issues of mistrust, this is great and should result in an interesting finale with the possibility of betrayal or redemption. See Event D for more details.

龍拳

EVENT B: GOLDEN AURA OF THE PAGODA UNBROKEN

Golden Aura of the Pagoda Unbroken is the scenario's official red herring. He is an "honest", if incredibly arrogant, entrant into the Wulin Tourney Fight! Golden Aura is essentially a tool by which the GM can have someone inside the Tea Garden keep things moving and the accusations flying.

THE SAGA OF GOLDEN AURA

Golden Aura is the master of the Golden Bells technique which originates from the teachings of Buddhist monks. It utilises the fighter's Chi to protect him from harm and make his attacks fly true. Its use is rumoured to be accompanied by a golden glow. Whether this is true is hard to discover in this scenario as Golden Aura wears lots of jewellery, golden robes and even has someone light him using a golden lantern when he fights.

Golden Aura has made a lot of money from selling scrolls that teach this technique (every three sets bought come with a free gold medallion featuring the beatific face of Buddha who has a remarkable resemblance to Golden Aura). Due to his kung fu skills, he is well respected and widely considered to be a wise philosopher, as well as an expert on medicine.

RELATIONSHIP WITH NUMBER ONE MOUNTAIN

Number One Mountain was Golden Aura's number one fan. When his mother was dying, Number One Mountain spent all his money to hire Golden Aura to heal her. Golden Aura made his diagnosis and performed a ritual cleansing of the bad blood in her. It was impressive. He then took the money and left. Two days later, Number One's mother died. Ever since Number One has striven to discredit Golden Aura and beat him in combat. To do this Number One Mountain has developed his own technique, imaginatively called the Number One Mountain technique. Despite his thirst for revenge, Number One Mountain is a gentle soul. So he is in no rush to prosecute this revenge and will happily wait until the opportunity arises.

GOLDEN AURA'S PLAN

Golden Aura doesn't have a plan but the players will not know that. He arrives at the Tea Garden to fight and show off his Martial Arts skill. He hopes to woo Toy Miao-yin, belittle Number One Mountain and increase his reputation. Unfortunately, he accidentally drinks misplaced deadly centipede poison before his first fight and falls ill (not dead as it is only deadly when applied direct by a bite).

Insulted and embarrassed, Golden Aura wants revenge. He isn't sure who poisoned him and he doesn't really care. First, Golden Aura taunts Number One Mountain during his bout. Then, a little shame faced at his pettiness, Golden Aura persuades some local tomb robbers to release a hopping vampire that they stole from a nearby gravesite in a hope to disrupt the evening.

After this miserable attempt fails due to the second attack by the Nuns of the Eagle's Claw, Golden Aura realises that something bigger is afoot and remains at the Tea Garden to cause trouble for the PCs in whatever way the GM thinks is appropriate.



EVENT C: THE WULIN TOURNEY FIGHT

The Wulin Tourney Fight is a grand tradition of the Ultimate Challenge Tea Garden. It has been running for over 300 years and is held on each of the eve of the year's twelve festivals. It consists of three fights throughout the evening between four Martial Artists. Toy Miao-yin continues the Wulin Tourney Fight as it is very good for business. Many customers travel great distances and all stay the night until the festival the next day. The Wulin Tourney Fight is not meant to be to the death but quite a few entrants are killed. The expected schedule of fights are:

~ **Round One:** He Shen and Golden Aura of the Pagoda Unbroken in phase 2. He Shen is expected to win due to Golden Aura's poisoning.

~ **Round Two:** Lili An-mei and Number One Mountain in phase 3. Lili An-mei is expected to win due to her superior skill and Golden Aura's taunts.

~ **Final Round:** The final in phase 5. The expected fight is between He Shen and Lili An-mei though any combination is possible. This fight may also be skipped due to the other events. However, there should be considerably pressure from the patrons, Toy and the call of honour to see this fight happen.

STORY ASPECTS

The Wulin Tourney Fight may just seem like an excuse for some random PC on PC fighting and this is certainly one aspect of its appeal. However, it also has several story aspects.

~ One on one duels are common place in Wuxia.

~ Wuxia often tells character stories through fights. A good example is the final fight between He Shen and Lili An-mei being the potential climax of her story.

~ This scenario centres on suspicion and intrigue. The ability for PCs to express this physically opens the way for interesting confrontations. For example, Lili An-mei may interrogate Number One Mountain about his past with Golden Aura, to see if he had motive to poison him or not.

~ The Wulin Tourney Fight will weigh on the PCs resources and will make them ask a number of important questions, such as the strain of xia virtue (fighting to one's best, even against a potential friend and ally) against doing what is in the greater good (saving Ping and defeating Mao).

RUNNING THE WULIN TOURNEY FIGHT

The Wulin Tourney Fight should be run as any other fight though the rolls will be all contested. It is worthwhile encouraging the players to show real flair and smack talk. It is recommended that the players stand at the start of each fight to allow them to physically show his or her PC's pose.

Starting a Wulin Tourney Fight is simple. Toy has appointed one of her servants as the August Herald of the Ultimate Challenge. He takes his job seriously and calls all fights as they fall due. As a GM, call the fight when a scene is lagging or at an appropriate cliff-hanger. This should allow you to keep the scenario moving, add time pressure and also sidetrack the PCs if they seem to be making too much progress or getting on to well.



EVENT D: THE BIG SHOWDOWN

The Big Showdown is not able to be defined in much detail as it can take many shapes in this scenario. This section contains a brief overview of those things to keep in mind, those things that will happen, and those things that might happen. For inspiration of how to narrate the finale, the siege of the writing school in Hero and the finale of Dragon Gate Inn are both excellent.

THOSE THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

The main thing to keep in mind is that this is the Big Showdown. It should try and resolve all remaining strands whilst being fast paced and exciting. The players should feel the approach of the Big Showdown from around phase 5. The scenario is designed to do this by having the revelation of He Shen and the impending sense of Mao's arrival at this time. The build up to Mao's "siege" can be highlighted through the growing tension of the patrons.

THOSE THINGS THAT WILL HAPPEN

Mao will arrive at the start of phase 6 with the imperial army. He is the inevitable ticking time bomb that brings the scenario to an end, normally culminating in a fight against him to save Ping. It is assumed that the PCs will have resolved their issues enough at this stage to have decided how they will deal with this fight. Try and leave 20 minutes for the final fight to save Ping from Mao. Mao's attack can be introduced at any time to propel events forward to a conclusion.

THOSE THINGS THAT MIGHT HAPPEN

If the location of the secret tunnel has been discovered by the PCs or disclosed by Toy, then the PCs may wish to use that. So will everyone else including the servants and patrons. If the PCs choose this option, feel free to apply some pressure by pointing out that they are leaving the patrons behind whilst they flee to safety. Even if the tunnel is used, Mao will be able to foresee this and intercept them, leading to a smaller fight between him, the Nuns and a handful of his swiftest soldiers against the PCs trying to save Ping.

The PCs may decide to make a stand against Mao with the patrons. This will result in a hard pressed larger scale fight and siege with flaming arrows and imperial soldiers climbing the walls. Even though there is greater scale, the events should still culminate with an intimate confrontation with Mao to save Ping as above.

The PCs may decide to fight each other. This fighting may be direct, such as Number One Mountain forcing Toy Miao-yin to escape with him or Cho Jian trying to kidnap Lili An-mei. This will need to be juggled with any final showdown with Mao but it is best to resolve it first, only to have Mao arrive straight after hell bent on taking Ping. The fighting may also be indirect such as one PC deciding to sell out the others, Toy agreeing to Mao's offer, or Cho Jian playing both sides of the fence. Such betrayal could also happen before the final fight or right at the same time for extra drama.

Golden Aura may also still be present. He should get whatever send off is considered best. It could be a final attempt to get revenge, the kidnap of Toy or a redemption fighting side by side with Number One Mountain.



NPC STATISTICS

IMPERIAL SOLDIER

Attack: 12

Damage: 13

Defence: 12

Toughness: 13

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--------|----------|---------|----|---|---------|----|----|------|----------|
| 2 | or below | 3 | to | 7 | 8 | to | 12 | 13 | or above |
| Beaten | | Injured | | | Stunned | | | None | |



NUNS OF THE EAGLES CLAW

Attack: 13

Damage: 12

Defence: 13

Toughness: 12

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--------|----------|---------|----|---|---------|----|----|------|----------|
| 1 | or below | 2 | to | 6 | 7 | to | 11 | 12 | or above |
| Beaten | | Injured | | | Stunned | | | None | |

Special:

Eagle's Claw Technique: After a successful attack, opponent must make a Strength check DC12 to be able to take any action on next turn.



HOPPING VAMPIRE

Attack: 14

Damage: 13/17*

Defence: 14

Toughness: 16/18*

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--------|----------|---------|----|-------|---------|----|--------|--------|----------|
| 2/6* | or below | 3/7* | to | 7/11* | 8/12* | to | 12/16* | 13/17* | or above |
| Beaten | | Injured | | | Stunned | | | None | |

Special: May Stunt in Strength and Constitution*. If an opponent succeeds at a Knowledge check DC15, he knows that by holding one's breath one becomes invisible to the vampire and it cannot attack that person. Holding one's breath is a Constitution check DC15.

Diehard: May ignore the first Beaten in any combat.

Terrifying: Opponents must make a Wisdom check DC15 to be able to attack it.



GOLDEN AURA OF THE PAGODA UNBROKEN

Attack: 13/17*

Damage: 12/14*

Defence: 12/16*

Toughness: 14/18*

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--------|----------|---------|----|------|---------|----|--------|--------|----------|
| 1/3* | or below | 2/4* | to | 6/8* | 7/9* | to | 11/13* | 12/14* | or above |
| Beaten | | Injured | | | Stunned | | None | | |

Special: May Stunt* in Strength, Dexterity, Constitution and Charisma (stunt bonus +4).

Golden Bells technique: +1 Attack, +1 Toughness (already included). On the turn that he uses a Charisma stunt all successful attacks on him until his next turn miss 20% of the time (1-4 on d20) due to Golden Aura.

Taunt: May verbally inflict a Stun on an opponent on a successful contested Charisma check.



MERCIFUL MAO

Attack: 15/20*

Damage: 13/15*

Defence: 15/20*/22**

Toughness: 12/13*

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--------|----------|---------|----|------|---------|----|--------|--------|----------|
| 2/4* | or below | 3/5* | to | 7/9* | 8/10* | to | 12/14* | 13/15* | or above |
| Beaten | | Injured | | | Stunned | | None | | |

Special: May Stunt* in Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence (stunt bonus +7), Wisdom (stunt bonus +5) and Charisma (stunt bonus +2).

Deadly Viper style: +1 Attack, +1 Damage (already included), may use Intelligence bonus and stunt bonus (already included**) on Defence, a successful attack blocks any one stunt bonus of Mao's choice and opponent must make a Constitution check DC20 or suffer a -1 penalty to all rolls due to poison.

Diehard: May ignore the first Beaten in every combat

Prediction: May make predictions and others may gain a +4 bonus to one action to make such predictions come true.

HANDOUT ONE: SETTING



Tianguo: "The Heavenly Kingdom". A vast and complex land with a long history. Located in the world's southern hemisphere, its north is hot and tropical and the south cool and windswept. The Empire is divided into nine provinces.

Emperor Jianmin: At the apex of Tianguo is the Emperor, the Son of Heaven, divinely chosen ruler of the land. Jianmin is obsessed with immortality and has gone on a mad quest to ensure that he lives forever. In the twenty years since his ascension, Tianguo has become an evil land, and its Emperor, a brutal tyrant.

Zuyang: The imperial capital located in the province of Xin, home to the Emperor Jianmin, his imperial Palace and the government.

The World of Martial Arts: Nine secret Martial Artist societies. These societies have recently banded together in a pact to overthrow Jianmin and put a new Emperor on the throne.

Xia: The heroes of the World of Martial Arts are the xia, simultaneously rebels and exemplars of virtue ~ they deviate from the social order of Tianguo and they don't show proper respect in their pursuit of justice. Many xia are also easily provoked, but otherwise pursue admirable goals and try to help people.

Xia Virtues: There are five xia Virtues (Justice, Benevolence, Righteousness, Loyalty and Force) that the xia revere. If achieved, the common folk and any other martial artists nearby will pass on tales of that person's greatness.

Chi: Chi represents the power and vigour of the body and mind. Becoming a great martial artist is often referred to as "cultivating your Chi."

I Ching: A divination technique centred on six choices ~ each represented by a broken line, an unbroken line, or a line in one state that is transitioning into the other. Three lines combine to form a trigram; two trigrams combine to form a hexagram.

Shang divination: A divination technique involving reading the cracks in a Shang tortoiseshell, caused by the tip of a hot poker, which form letters.

The Ultimate Challenge Garden: A famous tavern (marked by the red star on the map) located at the entrance to the only pass over the Ling Mu mountains.

The Wulin Tourney Fight! A Martial Arts tournament held at the Ultimate Challenge Tea Garden on the eve on each of the year's twelve festivals.

HANDOUT TWO: OPENING

GM: Tianguo has not seen a snow storm like this one since the reign of the Winter Emperor, Chaoshi. The world is a stark contrast between the darkness of night and the pure white of the freshly falling snow. At the foot of the only pass over the Ling Mu mountains lies a fragile jewel shining against the cold. The Ultimate Challenge Tea Garden protects its patrons who are hunkering down for an evening of fine Martial Arts entertainment.

The Tea Garden is grand palatial building with beautifully sculpted gardens, sheltered behind high decorative walls. At the centre of the gardens an arena stands expectantly, surrounded by statues and covered with smooth white stones. Looking on, a wide dual level balcony leads to the warmth and dark wood of the tavern room filled to the brim with patrons coming here to see the Wulin Tourney Fight! Everyone watches the entrants' board with anticipation, cheering as each name is written up by the August Herald of the Ultimate Challenge.

Dragon Cloud: A cold breeze washes over the room as the door opens to let in a bedraggled latecomer. He carries on his back a small boy, asleep from exhaustion and cold. The servants go to ask him to leave, thinking him a vagrant. They stop when they see that he has a warrior's stance. He looks toward the August Herald and says in a quiet voice "Dragon Cloud". The stunned silence of the crowd is broken with cheers as the third name goes up on the entrants' board under Lili An~mei and Number One Mountain. **[Player to describe Dragon Cloud here].**

Toy Miao~yin: Beautiful and graceful as the Tea Garden she owns, Toy Miao~yin, smiles at the sound of cheers. A consummate entertainer and merchant, she can smell money being made. She barks a few more orders for pork buns at her servants who scurry away. Several patrons look on with a mixture of lust and fear. She smiles to herself: that is exactly how she wants them to be. "Time to greet the entrants" she says to herself. **[Player to describe Toy Miao~yin here].**

Kong Fu~po: In the corner sits a man recalling old tales to any patron willing to listen. He looks to be a hundred years old and his body is more twisted than a gnarled tree branch. He strokes his long wispy beard and puts his feet toward the roaring fire. A curious glint lights his eyes as he seems to scan the patrons for something. **[Player to describe Kong Fu~po here].**

Lili An~mei: As Dragon Cloud pushes through the tavern room, he is confronted by a beautiful young girl. Her stance is defiant and she carries a sword on her back, bundled in cloth. "May the Gods grant you an honourable defeat tonight" she says in a loud voice. The patrons watch with bated breath. Dragon Cloud responds "I just hope the Gods allow me the comfort of some hot tea to keep out the cold". He then pushes past her as a look of frustration runs over Lili's face. **[Player to describe Lili An~mei here].**

Cho Jian: In the crowd watching on is a man, his face partially concealed. Dragon Cloud looks toward him, as if sensing something, but by the time he does the man has melted back into the crowd as if he was never there. **[Player to describe Cho Jian here].**

Number One Mountain: Standing by the board, drinking a tankard of hot cider is a mountain of a man. He laughs in a loud and open manner. A group of patrons watch on taking turns punching him in the stomach. "Ha! Ha! Ha! You can see that my Number One Mountain Technique is supreme. Feel free to watch it in action later this evening. Ha! Ha! Ha!" The man beams broadly. **[Player to describe Number One Mountain here].**

HANDOUT ONE - HE SHEN HIS LOVE FOR TOY MAO-YIN

You always knew that you would meet Toy Miao~yin again. She is as beautiful as you remember and no doubt as ruthless. You had a long affair with her many years ago when you were both young. She taught you that there was more to life than Martial Arts. Your strict adherence to the xia virtues conflicted with her love of the rich life. You both burnt brightly for a few months but then it was gone. She then left you without saying goodbye. You are sure she will recognise you. You can only hope she won't reveal you until after you have left. You know that will only happen if you don't offer her a "better deal".

HANDOUT TWO - HE SHEN CHO JIAN IS A GHOST EATER

This is the man you saw in the crowd earlier. He tugs at your memory. Finally it hits you ~ you met him once whilst fighting against a group of Ghost Eaters who had taken their dark path too far. The Ghost Eaters are one of the nine secret societies of the World of Martial Arts. Ghost Eaters are spies, assassins and "problem solvers" for anyone without legal recourse. He can not be here to watch the Wulin Tourny Fight! He must be here for some other purpose. The Ghost Eaters have no love for Emperor which may somehow serve your goals. However, they have little love for anyone at all. Feel like making a deal with the devil?

HANDOUT THREE - HE SHEN DREAMS OF IMPENDING DOOM

You cannot rest. You have failed poor Ping more than once despite all your so called Martial Arts skills and adherence to the xia virtues. A lot of good they have done you. In fact you have failed for so many people, you have lost count. You have no peace of mind. You can't help feeling like your death is close at hand and many innocents may suffer. The confrontation with Mao will decide the matter one way or the other. But what can you do? Escape? But to where and how? The right thing to do is to stay and fight. But without help you will not succeed. Surrender is not an option.

HANDOUT ONE - ΤΟΥ ΜΙΑΟ-ΥΙΝ HER LOVE FOR HE SHEN

You recognise Dragon Cloud, the third entrant into the Wulin Tourney Fight! He is no newcomer but the legendary hero He Shen. You feel a flush of passion, excitement and regret. You treated him so badly before. But how good would it be to rekindle your romance? What has he been doing for the past ten years? You never thought you would see He Shen look as beaten as he does now. He Shen wouldn't use deception unless his life (and others) depended on it. You would never reveal his lie but he doesn't know that. You could use this to your advantage. Just how far would he go to keep his secret? Would he stay here with you? You just hope that kid isn't his! You can't stand children.

HANDOUT TWO - ΤΟΥ ΜΙΑΟ-ΥΙΝ EVIDENCE OF NUMBER ONE MOUNTAIN

Humble Servant Yang approaches you. In his hand are the crushed skins of several centipedes. They serve only one purpose: a potent poison when mixed with food or drink. You arch an eyebrow at Yang who quivers in fright. "I found these in Number One Mountain's room, milady. I thought it best to show you first." You nod your head, your mind already working at the possibilities. "Does anyone else know?" "I am afraid that Maggie found them. It is likely the whole staff knows by now" he cringes. "Damn!" you snap. Hell hath no fury like a woman's scorn.

HANDOUT THREE - ΤΟΥ ΜΙΑΟ-ΥΙΝ MAO'S OFFER OF TRUCE

You return to the peace and solace of your rooms. It has been a busy night. However, something is not right. Someone is here. Before you can act, a raven flies in a window and lands in front of you. It morphs into the shape of a man. Though attractive at first glance, he makes your skin crawl. "Mistress Miao~yin, I have come to you in a hope that we can avoid any further unpleasantness. I want you to give me Ping and He Shen. In exchange, for your help I offer you wealth, power, your dreams made real, and your life. What is your answer?" You can't help but ponder what is being offered to you for a moment. **(Please write your response and hand it to the GM)**

HANDOUT ONE - KONG FU-PO DRAGON CLOUD IN DANGER

Your old bones are slowly being warmed by the fire. However, you can't help feel that a chill has entered the room. You quickly perform I Ching on your fingers forming trigrams and hexagrams. What you read shocks you so much that you try once more. Dragon Cloud is surrounded by mortal danger. He will also somehow assist you in fulfilling your destiny. Unfortunately, the prediction is light on details. You keep getting strong readings for Emperor and Death. Those two concepts are closely linked and could be very good or very, very bad.

HANDOUT TWO - KONG FU-PO LILI AND PING

When you see Lili and Ping together it is as like seeing two souls forming into one ~Yin and Yang. Together they will rise and together they will fall. You shuffle around in your bag for a Shang turtle shell. Grabbing a hot poker you sear the shell, cracking it. The crack forms letters. "Become" "Friendly" "Grandfather" "Both". You are getting too old for these kinds of shenanigans.

HANDOUT THREE - KONG FU-PO PING'S DESTINY

Sometimes the universe speaks to you. Often when you don't expect it. You weren't even trying for a prediction but your mind suddenly sees a long and complex series of events stretching off into the future. The Gods want to see Jianmin dealt with. Ping is their tool to achieve this end. He will call around him all those who will be needed. Lili is instrumental in helping Ping succeed. If they live they will be the only chance to destroy Jianmin... and bring you the peace you seek.

HANDOUT ONE - 龍雲 - 龍雲 INFATUATION WITH HE SHEN

The reason you let Dragon Cloud pass is because you suddenly recognise the man. He is He Shen, hero of the people and greatest son of the Righteous Fists clan. You have read all his exploits and idealise him to this day. He is the perfect warrior: fierce and uncompromising. Just like you wish you were. As soon as you recognise this, you can't help but back down like a stunned adoring fan. Your emotions boil between humiliation and exhilaration at your reaction. He is obviously keeping his identity a secret and as a xia, so will you for now. At least until such time as you defeat him. Then all will know you as the greatest warrior in the Martial Arts World.

HANDOUT TWO - 龍雲 - 龍雲 ATTACKERS IMPERIAL ASSASSINS

The Nuns of the Eagle's Claw are known to you. They are a group of young orphans fostered by imperial officials. They are sent to the Monastery of the Eagle's Eyrie in the Dragon Spine mountains where they are ritually scarred and taught the Eagle's Claw technique. They are imperial agents and they are dangerous. Have you been discovered? Has someone revealed your presence? If the Emperor knows of your identity and destiny, he will stop at nothing to kill you.

HANDOUT THREE - 龍雲 - 龍雲 TORTURED CHILDHOOD

After the battle, you put on a brave face. However, deep down you have never really got used to killing. You remember as a young girl when you were forced to witness such violent acts in order to harden you to committing such acts yourself. But it never really worked. It just shunted the pain and regret behind walls of lost opportunity and scars. Looking around the room, you see the trembling form of the young boy, Ping, who travelled with He Shen. He needs a friend at this moment, and to be honest so do you. For moment, you catch each other's eyes and you manage to get a weak smile from him. That smile fills you with hope and regret.

HANDOUT ONE - CHO JIAN IMPERIAL POISON

Golden Aura of the Pagoda Unbroken's symptoms all point to one thing. However, only a trained assassin would know them. Fortunately, you are such a person. Deadly centipede poison. If he has been bitten, rather than ingested it with food, he will die relatively soon. The antidote is relatively simple. He needs to counteract the deadly centipede poison with deadly scorpion poison, causing them both to burn each other out. You normally wouldn't even consider treatment to a stranger but deadly centipede poison is used almost exclusively by one group: imperial assassins. Agents of that which you despise the most. Perhaps this man has information you need to help you exact revenge.

HANDOUT TWO - CHO JIAN DISCOVERS CORPSE

Your finely tuned senses pick up a distinct odour. A freshly deceased corpse. Within a couple of minutes you find the body behind a secret sliding section of wall. A servant of Mistress Toy Miao~yin: poisoned and clutching a piece of paper. This time the deadly centipede poison has been introduced through a bite making it lethal. You crush the centipede under your toes and grab the letter. It seems to be a map of a secret entrance into the Ultimate Challenge Tea Garden. You barely have enough time to slip this into your pocket when another servant rounds the corner. Predictably, she raises the alarm by hollering at the top of her voice.

HANDOUT THREE - CHO JIAN KIDNAP ATTEMPT AND IMPERIAL DEATH SEAL

You are proud to say that no one has ever got the drop on you more than once. Though the night's previous assassins' footfalls make no sound greater than falling snow, you can hear them clearly. They are coming in force. You catch a glimpse of a shape flying past a window. Your sharp eyes see a flash of an Imperial Death Seal. These assassins mean business. Only two people could give that Seal. The Emperor Jianmin or one of the eunuchs that act as his palace servants. Either way ~ something important is happening. The issuer of the Seal is enraged, afraid and vulnerable.

HANDOUT ONE - NUMBER ONE MOUNTAIN RIVALRY WITH GOLDEN AURA

So, Golden Aura of the Pagoda Unbroken has decided to enter the Wulin Tourny Fight! You are pleased. You used to be Golden Aura's number one fan. He was an exemplar of the Golden Bells technique. When your mother lay dying you were sure he would save her. You spent all your money seeking his consultation. Golden Aura performed an impressive ritual cleansing of the bad blood in her. He then took the money and left. Two days later, your mother died. Ever since then you have taken every opportunity to discredit Golden Aura and beat him in combat. He was even the main reason you developed your own Number One Mountain technique. You are not out for revenge. You are too gentle a soul for that and your mother wouldn't want you to. But a bit of egg on his face would be nice.

HANDOUT TWO - NUMBER ONE MOUNTAIN LILI AN-WEI'S FIGHTING STYLE

Seeing Lili fight, you are impressed. Her sword technique is superb. She would be almost perfect if she could calm her rage and her desire to prove herself. Then you recognise the technique: Flying Phoenix Sword! It is a rare style taught for simply one purpose: to kill the Emperor by countering those techniques traditional used by the imperial guard. If this is so, why is Lili flaunting the technique in front of everyone? She is being reckless and most probably the cause behind the recent attacks. She is putting everyone in danger. You must convince her to stop her folly.

HANDOUT THREE - NUMBER ONE MOUNTAIN OVERHEARING MAO AND TOU MAO-YIN

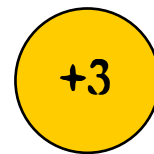
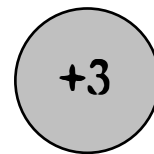
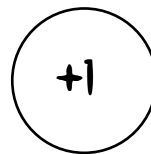
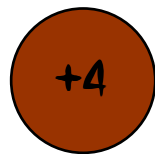
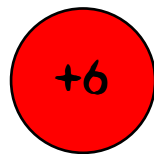
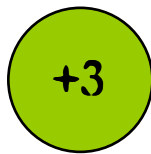
What a night! You were thinking of turning in but thought it wise to check on Toy Miao-yin first. She is under a lot of pressure. You know she doesn't like you stalking around but tonight is an exception in your book. As you approach her rooms, something chills your soul and you see the shadows moving. You hear a terrifying voice say "I want you to give me Ping and He Shen. In exchange, for your help I offer you wealth, power, your dreams made real and your life. What is your answer?" There is a pause and a muffled reply. Surely Toy wouldn't take such a bargain? Fortunately, she has you to look out for her. If you help her, she will surely thank you for it. Maybe you should get help? Then again maybe this is something you need to handle alone.

DRAGON CLOUD

Dragon Cloud is a strong, proud warrior. He carries with him a sword at all times. He is constantly aware of his surroundings and is able to move from relaxed to fighting at a moment's notice. He is softly spoken. He dresses in traveller's clothes which are somewhat incongruous with his posture. Though he keeps a low profile, his adherence to xia virtues prevents him from hiding his strength.



STR: +2 DEX: +4 CON: +2 INT: ~ WIS: ~ CHA: +2



SKILLS

Acrobatics +7, Climb +5, Concentration +3, Intimidation +5, Jump +5, Notice +3, Ride +7, Search +3, Sense Motive +3, Survival +3

ADVANTAGES

Attractive: +4 to Charisma checks when dealing with the opposite sex

Diehard: You may ignore the first Beaten you suffer in each combat

Inspire: You may make a Charisma stunt and grant the bonus to any action performed (Charisma or other) by another person in the same scene

Righteous Fists Technique: +2 Attack; +1 Damage (already included)

COMBAT

Attack: +7

Damage: +6

Defence: +5

Toughness: +3

On a successful attack, you may block any one of your opponent's stunt types

You may unblock any one of your blocked stunt types

You may add a bonus to any one combat bonus this round

You may take an extra interrupt action and attempt to negate an opponent's stunt

You may add a bonus to any one combat bonus in a subsequent round

BACKGROUND

You are actually He Shen. You are one of the most famous martial artists in Tianguo and known as "the hero of the people".

You are member of the Righteous Fists secret society. They are descended from a contemplative monk order called the Jade Brotherhood. They are outspoken about Emperor Jianmin.

You were trained by Grandmaster Fei Gan in Righteous Fists technique. In your youth, you won many battles and made quite a name for yourself. However, the society's activities eventually came to the attention of the Emperor and he had many of the society killed.

As you have grown older, you have become less concerned with justice and martial arts. You are instead concerned with consequences. It seems like every time you act, people get hurt. The more skilled you become to prevent it, the less you seem to be able to do so. So you retired and tried to drift into history. You still live your life according to xia virtues but you do so mostly out of form rather than any real belief in them.

Your self-imposed isolation was broken when your orphan nephew Ping was kidnapped by one of the Emperor's most corrupt eunuch palace servants, Merciful Mao. Before Ping's soul could be fed to the Emperor's loathsome immortality, you rescued Ping and fled. You have been running ever since and Mao is hot on your heels.

You now find yourself at the foot of the only pass over the Ling Mu mountains. A snow storm has descended blocking the pass. Desperate for somewhere to hide, you enter the Ultimate Challenge Tea Garden, which sits at the mouth of the pass, posing as Dragon Cloud. To further integrate yourself with the patrons, you have even put your name down for the Wulin Tourney Fight! Hopefully, the pass will be open tomorrow so you can move on. Until then you must participate and keep Ping safe.

PING

- ~ You are a ten year old boy.
- ~ You are the nephew of the mighty hero, He Shen.
- ~ You were orphaned as a baby
- ~ You were brought up by Greyhair Lao, one of He Shen's sifus.
- ~ You want to be a martial artist, like He Shen, when you grow up.
- ~ You were recently kidnapped by Merciful Mao, one of the Emperor's eunuchs.
- ~ Greyhair Lao was killed defending you.
- ~ Merciful Mao says you are special and have a great destiny.
- ~ He Shen rescued you a few days ago and you have been on the run ever since.
- ~ Merciful Mao is chasing you.
- ~ He Shen has taken the name Dragon Cloud to hide his identity.
- ~ He Shen has told you not to reveal to others who he is or who you are.
- ~ Despite this, you would be really proud to see He Shen being a hero.
- ~ You dislike others who don't respect He Shen and will say so.
- ~ You are friendly and like others who are genuinely interested in you.

TOY MIAO-YIN

Toy Miao-yin is a mature, elegant and beautiful woman. She no longer has youth on her side but she makes up with experience. She dresses in alluring outfits. She always carries several concealed weapons, which she uses with cold-hearted efficiency. She has a hint of dissatisfaction and sadness about her current position.



| | | | | | |
|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|
| STR: ~ | DEX: +3 | CON: ~ | INT: +1 | WIS: ~ | CHA: +4 |
| +1 | +4 | +2 | +4 | +1 | +6 |

SKILLS

Acrobatics +6, Bluff +6, Diplomacy +6, Disguise +6, Gather Information +6, Jump +3, Perform +6, Sense Motive +3, Sleight of Hand +6, Stealth +6

ADVANTAGES

Connected: You may make a contested Charisma check with a patron to obtain a favour

Redirect: Once per round, you may redirect any failed attack against you towards an adjacent opponent who must roll against the same attack roll as normal

Suggestion: You may make a contested Charisma check to have someone do one action that you suggest (that is not life threatening or against firmly held beliefs)

Taunt: You may verbally inflict a Stun on an opponent with a successful contested Charisma check

Unseen Strike: +2 Damage to surprise attacks or those using Charisma stunt bonus

COMBAT

| | |
|-------------|--------------|
| Attack: +3 | Damage: +1 |
| Defence: +3 | Toughness: ~ |

On a successful attack, you may block any one of your opponent's stunt types

You may unblock any one of your blocked stunt types

You may add a bonus to any one combat bonus this round

You may take an extra interrupt action and attempt to negate an opponent's stunt

You may add a bonus to any one combat bonus in a subsequent round

BACKGROUND

You were born on the streets of Zuyang, the Imperial Capital. You don't remember your parents. For the first years of your life, you ran free and feral like an animal.

That all changed one day when you came across a beautiful young noble woman. You don't remember her name but your wild state must have made her feel pity for you. She ordered you taken from the streets to the House of the Peony Blossom, where the arts of becoming a noble concubine were taught. The House Mistress took an instant dislike to you, but you learned fast and put several of the other students to shame. You manipulated them all with ease.

It looked as if you were set up for a great and noble match. It was then that you met He Shen, hero of the people. He was only just coming into his prime. He was a magnificent figure and an icon of virtue. He is the first and only man you have ever loved. You cherish and resent his memory as a result. He taught you how to fight and you gave him knowledge of pleasures beyond the endless pursuit for justice.

However, you were not destined to be together. Your rebellious streak eventually came between you as He Shen found himself distracted by other affairs more and more. One night, you left and never said goodbye.

You moved to the Bei Ji province where you opened a brothel called the House of the Peony Blossom in revenge of the House Mistress' cruelty. As owner, your many skills all worked together and you realised you had found your calling.

A few years later, you saw an opportunity to marry the owner of the famous Ultimate Challenge Tea Garden and did so. His health failed shortly afterwards and you became the Tea Garden's sole owner.

Life has been good since that time. You are making more money than you could ever spend and you have many men who beg to spend their time with you. However, you are starting to feel bored with it all. You are beginning to wonder whether you just always spoil those things that are good for you. Either way, you feel yourself getting edgy, short tempered and dissatisfied.

HUMBLE SERVANT YANG

- ~ You are a man in his thirties.
- ~ Your family used to serve nobility in the Bei Ji province.
- ~ This position was overthrown when the nobles your family served were disgraced.
- ~ Your family then became destitute.
- ~ You met Toy Miao~yin over ten years ago at a brothel you were attending.
- ~ You discovered that despite being a young woman, she ran it.
- ~ You were impressed with Toy and you requested she take you on as a servant.
- ~ You were madly in love with her.
- ~ Your passion has now cooled but you remain loyal to her.
- ~ Toy married the owner of the Ultimate Challenge Tea Garden.
- ~ Her husband survived 6 months.
- ~ You suspect Toy may have killed him but have never disclosed your doubts.
- ~ You have shared in her subsequent success and are head servant.
- ~ You sense Toy's growing dissatisfaction and are desperate to find a solution.
- ~ Ideally you want the current situation to continue but with Toy being happy again.

KONG FU~PO

Kong Fu~po looks over 100 years old. In fact, he is older. His body is gnarled like an old tree but his mind and humour are sharp as a thorn. He has a cynical view on the world and a dry sense of humour. He loves to hear himself talk and becomes fast friends to anyone who listens to him. He often says: "Oh what wouldn't I give to be ninety again."



| | | | | | |
|--------|--------|--------|---------|---------|--------|
| STR: ~ | DEX: ~ | CON: ~ | INT: +3 | WIS: +3 | CHA: ~ |
| +1 | +1 | +1 | +4 | +6 | +3 |

SKILLS

Bluff +3, Craft +6, Handle Animal +3, Knowledge +6, Medicine +6, Notice +6, Search +6, Sense Motive +6

ADVANTAGES

Assessment: You may reveal someone's Combat bonuses with a successful contested Wisdom check

Canny Dodge: You may use Intelligence bonus and stunt bonus to add to Defence

Master Plan: You may make an Intelligence stunt and grant your bonus to any action performed (Intelligence or other) performed by another person if you have had a chance to prepare a plan beforehand

Prediction: You may make predictions and others may gain a +3 bonus to one action to make such predictions come true. The GM may use this advantage to give you information such as warnings of danger

COMBAT

| | |
|-------------|--------------|
| Attack: ~ | Damage: +2 |
| Defence: +3 | Toughness: ~ |

On a successful attack, you may block any one of your opponent's stunt types

You may unblock any one of your blocked stunt types

You may add a bonus to any one combat bonus this round

You may take an extra interrupt action and attempt to negate an opponent's stunt

You may add a bonus to any one combat bonus in a subsequent round

BACKGROUND

You are very, very old. Possibly the oldest man alive. You even remember the ascension of Emperor Jianmin around 100 years ago.

Your early life was dull and unworthy of a tale. Your father was a village blacksmith, your mother a midwife. They were both industrious and hard working. You were not. Despite being naturally clever, you were lazy. At a loss to shape you into anything respectable, your parents consented to you studying with a local wise man, Jade Ox. You saw it as an opportunity to pass the time, if nothing else.

The years slipped by and before you knew it your parents had passed on and you were an adult. You didn't know what to do and the future scared you. You continually disappointed Jade Ox with your lack of moral fibre and inability to take things seriously. It was these traits that allowed you to discover the blessing (now curse) of immortality. You stole the Essence of Immortality Manual from Jade Ox and mastered the making of the Alchemical Elixir of Youth, mostly due to your intelligence rather than your dedication. It answered all your doubts at the time and you were content.

More of life slipped by. One day, you were approached by a representative of Emperor Jianmin regarding the blessing of immortality. You flippant said that such a blessing could not be shared and required years of training, dedication and true enlightenment. The representative left unsatisfied and you laughed at how much you sounded like your old master.

Then the killings started. Emperor Jianmin became obsessed with immortality and was willing to consume the souls of thousands of innocents to get it. You ignored them at first but each weighed on you. Now you understand that each one of those souls is your responsibility. You had to do something but you found yourself an old man by that time. The souls of those slain by Emperor Jianmin haunt you in the form of a misshapen bandaged child that only you seem to be able to see. You desperately learned arts of prediction to find your path forward. That path led you to the Ultimate Challenge Tea Garden where your last hope of saving your own soul lies.

NUMMY DEMON

- ~ You are a figment of Kong Fu~po's guilt that has been made real.
- ~ You look to others like a slightly odd small child.
- ~ You manifest to of Kong Fu~po as a misshapen child wrapped in bandages.
- ~ You are as physically capable as a child.
- ~ You are as intelligent as Kong Fu~po.
- ~ Kong Fu~po knows the secret of immortality through the use of alchemy.
- ~ Kong Fu~po could have given this secret to Emperor Jianmin but didn't.
- ~ He now blames himself for the Emperor's mad quest for immortality.
- ~ You are the amalgamation of the minds of all of Emperor Jianmin's victims.
- ~ Kong Fu~po's suffering has given you a form.
- ~ You now spend your time tempting and tormenting Kong Fu~po.
- ~ You know he has a plan with which to destroy you.
- ~ You want him to trust you enough to reveal this plan.
- ~ You then want to stop him from accomplishing it.
- ~ You would also like to get revenge on the Emperor.
- ~ You encourage Kong Fu~po to take action to hurt imperial agents of any kind.

莉莉安美

Lili An~mei is a beautiful young woman. Her martial arts skill makes her seem older. However, her brash actions and rage make her seem younger. She tries to fit in but often misjudges the situation due to her naivety in any matter that isn't combat. When fighting she likes to wear impressive outfits to match her skills. Her fighting style is graceful and intense.



STR: +1

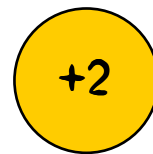
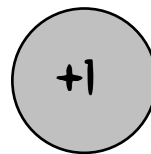
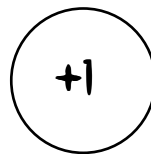
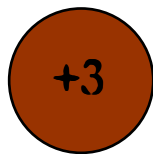
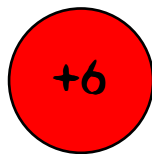
DEX: +4

CON: ~

INT: ~

WIS: ~

CHA: +2



SKILLS

Acrobatics +7, Climb +4, Disguise +5, Intimidate +5, Jump +4, Ride +7, Stealth +7

ADVANTAGES

Flying Phoenix Sword: Once per combat, you may change your stunt for another

Flying Phoenix Sword Technique: +1 Attack, +1 Defence (already included), +2 Attack, +3 Damage against imperial agents

Rage: You may gain +2 Damage but suffer a ~2 Attack and Defence on next round

COMBAT

Attack: +6

Damage: +4

Defence: +6

Toughness: +1

On a successful attack, you may block any one of your opponent's stunt types

You may unblock any one of your blocked stunt types

You may add a bonus to any one combat bonus this round

You may take an extra interrupt action and attempt to negate an opponent's stunt

You may add a bonus to any one combat bonus in a subsequent round

BACKGROUND

You were born an orphan and brought up by the mysterious and nefarious Ghost Eaters secret society. The Ghost Eaters have a long history. During the Era of the Seven Kingdoms, they were formed to keep the cities clear of the hungry dead. However, since that problem has passed, they have applied their talents elsewhere. They now hire themselves out as "problem solvers", assassins and spies. They often provide solutions for those with no legal recourse. They have become feared even by Emperor Jianmin himself.

You don't know what happened to your parents. Chang Chen, the Shadow Magistrate of the Ghost Eaters, told you that Emperor Jianmin killed them. However, he has never offered any proof. You overheard once that you were the descendant of Empress Peiyan. You were brought up in isolation from the world. You were trained since you were a child for one thing: to fulfil your destiny to kill Emperor Jianmin. You were taught Flying Phoenix Sword technique which counters the techniques used by the imperial palace's guards. You were even blessed with the legendary Flying Phoenix Sword itself. It has proved your only real companion for many years. It became a part of your very body to the point where it can speak to you. In your hands, it sings. As you grew up the only escape you had was the stories you were told. You especially liked those about He Shen, the hero of the people. He Shen used to fight the Emperor practically single handed. He extolled the xia virtues, living his life as the perfect Martial Artist. You strongly believe that in the World of Martial Arts, fighting to the best of your abilities is both a sign of respect and a deadly contest of skill.

On your sixteenth birthday, something snapped. You want to live the stories you have read. How could you hate a man, even the Emperor, unless you enjoyed what he looked to spoil? You fled the Ghost Eaters sanctum and went out into the world with only Flying Phoenix Sword as a companion. It was during this time you began to question your life and decided that you wanted to be a hero more than an assassin. You ended up at the Ultimate Challenge Tea Garden and entered the renowned Wulin Tourney Fight!

FLYING PHOENIX SWORD

- ~ You are a magical spirit bound to the world's finest sword.
- ~ The sword is called Flying Phoenix Sword.
- ~ You were originally crafted by the legendary sword-smith Jinghui.
- ~ You are capable of communicating in telepathically with your wielder.
- ~ Your current wielder is a young woman who reminds you of yourself.
- ~ She is powerful, beautiful and a true artist in combat.
- ~ She is also bound to a form she is trying to rebel against, an assassin.
- ~ She has been brought up in isolation by the Ghost Eaters secret society.
- ~ She has trained all her life to kill the Emperor Jianmin.
- ~ You consider this task difficult, though it will earn her ultimate prestige.
- ~ You want to see this task carried out for your own prestige as well.
- ~ You understand that humans are more fragile than steel but easily malleable.
- ~ You are beginning to feel a touch of sorrow for her plight.
- ~ You were the one who suggested that she compete in the Wulin Tourney Fight!
- ~ You also use her idealising of He Shen, hero of the people, to encourage her.
- ~ Once she has had some fun, she will be ready to return to fulfilling her destiny.

CHO JIAN

Cho Jian is a professional in all things, be it hunting, assassination or diplomacy. He can be unassuming or impressive. He can be as cold as ice or as warm as summer. He wears practical clothing that doesn't draw attention to him. He doesn't look like a martial artist as he isn't one. He often thinks of things in terms of predator and prey.



STR: ~

DEX: +2

CON: +1

INT: +2

WIS: +1

CHA: ~

+3

+3

+1

+4

+2

+3

SKILLS

Bluff +3, Concentration +4, Disable Device +5, Disguise +3, Escape Artist +5, Gather Information +3, Sense Motive +4, Stealth +5

ADVANTAGES

Hide in Plain Sight: You may use Stealth whilst being observed

Stunning Attack: Your successful attacks always inflict a Stun

Trackless: You leave no trace of your passage

Well Informed: You may make a Gather Information check to see if you have heard something about a person you meet

COMBAT

Attack: +2

Damage: +2

Defence: +2

Toughness: +2

On a successful attack, you may block any one of your opponent's stunt types

You may unblock any one of your blocked stunt types

You may add a bonus to any one combat bonus this round

You may take an extra interrupt action and attempt to negate an opponent's stunt

You may add a bonus to any one combat bonus in a subsequent round

BACKGROUND

You were brought up as a peasant in the idyllic town of Two Lakes. You remember your childhood as a time of joy and peace. You remember playing and exploring with your brother Li. That all changed on your sixteenth birthday, when the imperial army raided your village for supplies. They burned the village and killed many of your family and friends. You still see you brother's dead body burning as you desperately scream for it to end. You have never told anyone about your past and try and not to think about it yourself. It hurts you to tears. For some reason you cannot let it go.

Your life changed from that time on. You were dead inside and there is money to be made for such men. You found yourself in the employ of the Ghost Eaters, a secret society and enemy of the Emperor Jianmin. The ends justified the means and your life became a blur of assassinations, bounty hunting and other atrocities.

You became a cold professional proficient in many disciplines, though you never officially joined the World of Martial Arts. Your combat skills are superb but your hunting abilities are better. You take a lot of comfort from the thrill of the hunt. That thrill and the disgust you felt were the only things that penetrate the miasma you found yourself in.

You eventually realised that your actions were not actually having any contribution toward your revenge against Emperor Jianmin. By that stage, it did not really matter, though you desperately hoped it would. You sometimes find yourself wishing that you could return to your youth.

Then hope appeared. You were asked to recover a young sixteen year old member of the society. A woman who was destined to kill Emperor Jianmin. Apparently, she has fled in an attempt to shirk her duty. You understand that she must be under great pressure. Your task is to bring her back at whatever cost. Her skills are meant to be superb and you will need help to do so. She has led you on a merry chase and you have finally tracked her to the Ultimate Challenge Tea Garden, where she has entered the Wulin Tourney Fight!

TORTURED PAST

- ~ Cho Jian is intelligent and analytical. His mind is always working.
- ~ He has an implacable exterior of professionalism but underneath is a man.
- ~ His past has been one of atrocity, both suffered and committed.
- ~ He suffers bouts of fury and regret which he fights to keep in check.
- ~ You are his tortured past.
- ~ You often manifest as images in his minds eye, preceded by a burst of flames.
- ~ Cho Jian often thinks of his dead brother, killed by imperial soldiers.
- ~ He recalls kneeling in flames, his brother lying in his arms, and screaming "WHY!"
- ~ He often ignores his thirst for vengeance but he never fully succeeds.
- ~ Cho Jian miserable existence is due to his own actions.
- ~ The consummate professional is nothing without a task.
- ~ Cho Jian no longer defines what he does, what he does defines him.
- ~ He is helpless and needs your help to get back control of his destiny.
- ~ He is currently looking for a renegade member of the Ghost Eaters call Lili.
- ~ Lili's life has been one of involuntary slavery to the Ghost Eaters' cause.
- ~ When Cho Jian sleeps he feels sympathy for her and her own tortured past.
- ~ You know Cho Jian will be lost if he successfully returns Lili to the Ghost Eaters.

NUMBER ONE MOUNTAIN

Number One Mountain is a huge man. He has an equally huge smile. He often greets people with a hug or a sound clap on the back. Despite his good nature, he is a determined fighter. He practices Number One Mountain technique and has little mercy to those who stand before it unsuccessfully. Number One Mountain comes across as dumb but he does this so people will underestimate him. He is otherwise honest and his enemies know they are so, and his friends also know they are so.



| | | | | | |
|---------|--------|---------|--------|--------|--------|
| STR: +3 | DEX: ~ | CON: +3 | INT: ~ | WIS: ~ | CHA: ~ |
| +4 | +1 | +7 | +1 | +1 | +1 |

SKILLS

Climb +6, Handle Animal +3, Intimidate +3, Jump +6, Notice +3

ADVANTAGES

Number One Mountain Technique: +1 Toughness (already included), may reroll one Toughness roll each round

Sweep Attack: After inflicting a Stun on opponent, you may make a second attack on a different adjacent opponent

COMBAT

| | |
|-------------|---------------|
| Attack: +1 | Damage: +5 |
| Defence: +1 | Toughness: +4 |

On a successful attack, you may block any one of your opponent's stunt types

You may unblock any one of your blocked stunt types

You may add a bonus to any one combat bonus this round

You may take an extra interrupt action and attempt to negate an opponent's stunt

You may add a bonus to any one combat bonus in a subsequent round

BACKGROUND

You grew up in the Ling Mu mountains in the Xin province. Your life centred around the Ultimate Challenge Tea Garden and its Wulin Tourney Fight! You would sneak into it as a child to see all the best fighters from all over Tianguo. You read about their exploits and collected sightings to share with your friends.

You have been blessed in that your life has never been marred by true tragedy. Your mother died when you were a young adult. You foolishly called in martial artists to try and heal her but they all failed. You understand that your idolising of martial artists didn't help her but she was old and even a doctor would have been unlikely to have succeeded. Auntie Bu has looked after you ever since.

Your decision to become a famed martial artist was an obvious one. At first, it was to teach those martial artists that let you down a lesson but soon it became fun. The Ultimate Challenge Tea Garden is now your second home and you are a regular competitor.

You developed Number One Mountain style based on your love for the Ling Mu mountains and you have attained great skill. Deep down you know that you don't have what it takes to become a true martial arts master. But if you can just make people's lives better or perhaps assist a real martial arts master in being truly great then you would be happy.

Still time is growing short. You really want to settle down and raise a family. You are deeply in love with the owner of the Ultimate Challenge Tea Garden, Toy Miao-yin, and have attempted to propose to her on a number of occasions. She is the most beautiful thing in the entire world, despite Auntie Bu saying that such a thought is an insult to your poor dead mother. You suspect that you don't have a chance but you are optimistic and ever on the look out for a way to help her see that a life with you is a good choice for her.

AUNTIE BU

- ~ You are the older sister of Number One Mountain's mother.
- ~ His mother died from an illness at the tender age of 86.
- ~ You know he blames himself for her death but he is an innocent angel.
- ~ Number One Mountain is a perfect little boy with a gentle spirit.
- ~ He is easily distracted and needs constant reminders of what is best for him.
- ~ You have vowed to do this in place of his mother. It's what she would have wanted.
- ~ You are not afraid to raise his poor mother to get him to do what he should.
- ~ You don't think Number One Mountain's current occupation is a real one.
- ~ You really want to see him get married to a nice girl. He has his sights set on Toy Miao-yin.
- ~ You aren't so impressed with Toy Miao-yin and are critical of her.
- ~ You do realise that she is better than nothing though.
- ~ You will not abide other women being critical of Number One Mountain.
- ~ You make nice ginseng tea, which you use to alleviate your aches and pains.
- ~ Life at 102 is boring. You are thinking of a fourth marriage to spice things up.
- ~ The lucky man would need to fit your criteria
- ~ You can be incredibly sweet and charming to the right man when you want to.