

DHARMA BOOK DEVIL-TIGERS™



A Dharma Book for Vampire: The Masquerade®
and Kindred of the East®

HEARTS of GLASS and FIRE

Funny, how it hits you...



...like falling out of love...



...or sexual climax...



...Enlightenment comes to us when we least expect it.



She was young, beautiful and innocent.



The daughter of a traditional family who had nodded and smiled as the modern era passed them by.



Our romance was secret, of course. I was an important young man in the party, and her parents would never have approved.



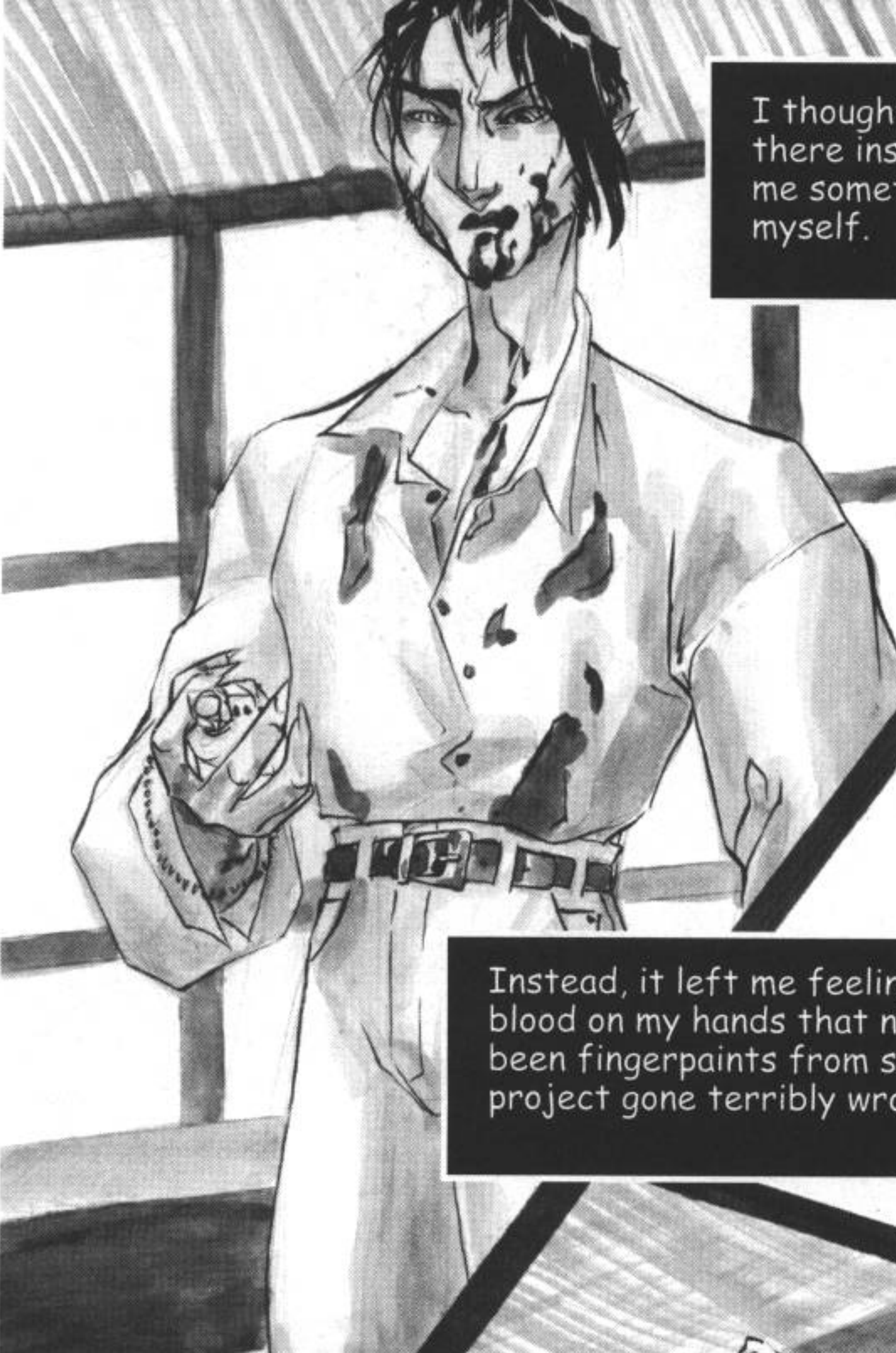
The night we eloped, I had two bakemono violate and excruciate her, and I oversaw the agonies. At the climax of the evening, I took her life.

[illegible]

月曜 9 時

「アミシヨ」レンタルビデオ
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人及び保証人を要する）
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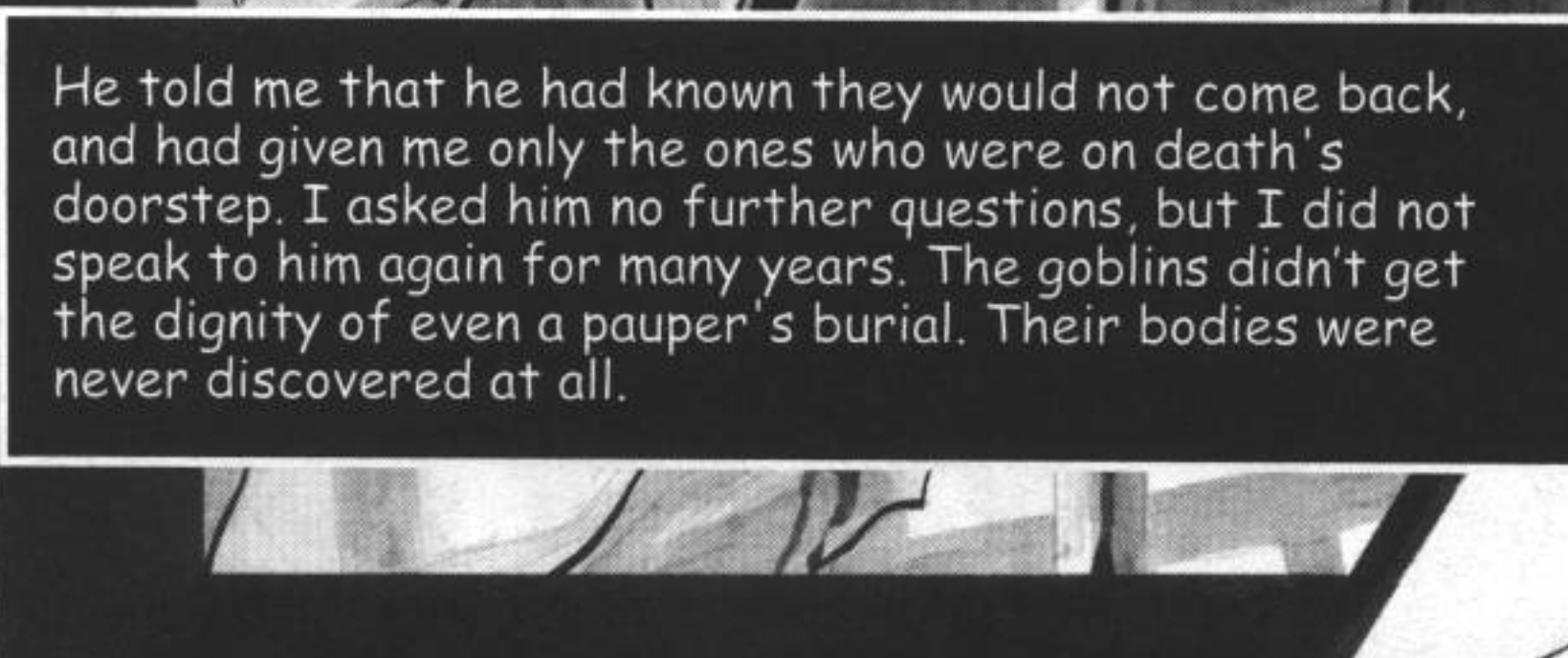
I thought seeing her trapped there inside the glass would teach me something, if only how to hate myself.



Instead, it left me feeling empty. The blood on my hands that night might have been fingerpaints from some child's art project gone terribly wrong.



I grew angry, and the bakemono suffered for my mistake. I had borrowed them from my master, and he was unsurprized when they did not return.



He told me that he had known they would not come back, and had given me only the ones who were on death's doorstep. I asked him no further questions, but I did not speak to him again for many years. The goblins didn't get the dignity of even a pauper's burial. Their bodies were never discovered at all.



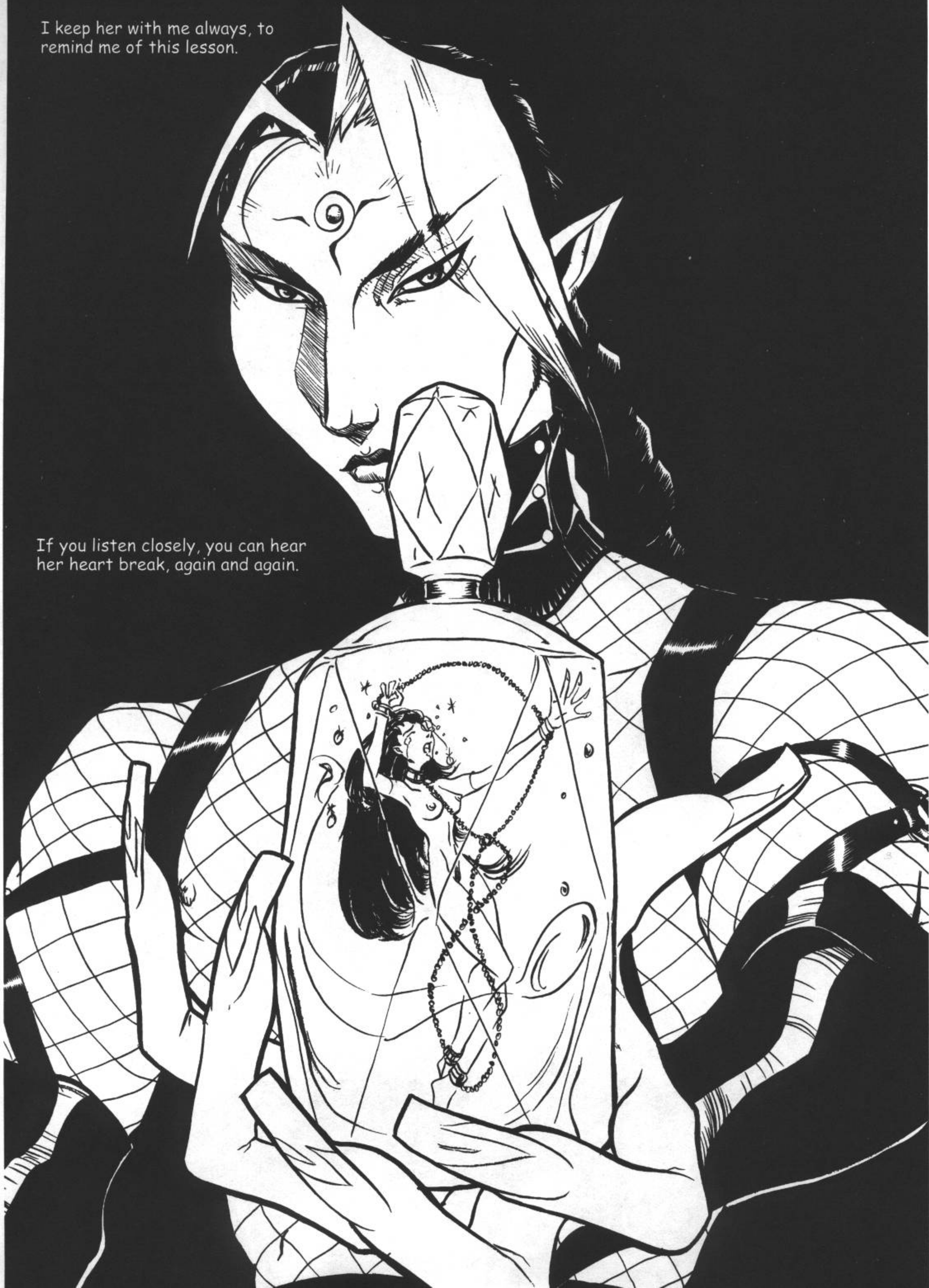
I considered that night for many years,
wondering what might have gone wrong.

It seems odd that it would come to me now that I had
learned something; a lesson about the banal character
of evil. Nevertheless it came to me, while playing music
at the Great Hokkaido Devil Festival, that I had been
motivated in my action by nothing more than childish
curiosity, mixed with childish cruelty.

Evil is as evil does. A flash like lightning,
and the glory of the devil hangs before
me. It is ling, and I am reborn. I do
not even miss a note of my music, but
I put away the man I used to be with
the finality of a hatchet and a chopping-
block.

I keep her with me always, to
remind me of this lesson.

If you listen closely, you can hear
her heart break, again and again.



DHARMA BOOK **DEVIL-TIGERS**



THE FIRE WHOSE FUEL IS MEN AND STONES

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Author's Dedication:

To Renee Leferriere, sculptress and tattooist, who taught me how to be a serious artist in a medium nobody takes seriously.

To David Kablack, fellow horrorist and student of the occult. Words cannot express my regret that you never got to show us all the toys in your dark bag of tricks. Rest in peace, Doc.

And to The Other Gretchen, muse and trusty companion, without whom I'd probably still be sitting in the basement of a Moroccan police barracks, and not writing this book. I promise never to make fun of you again for speaking Czech.

This book is for you all, with my heartfelt thanks.

Special Thanks:

To everyone who's read, enjoyed, been infuriated or otherwise moved to respond to a book I've developed, thank you. That's what it has always been about. Enjoy the games, folks. That's what they're here for.

Developer's Note:

This is the last book I'm developing for White Wolf, and in some ways it's a fitting conclusion. It brings me full circle to my first development project, **Dark Reflections: Spectres**, but I've come a long way since that book. So has gaming, so has White Wolf, and hopefully so have you. Here's hoping you enjoy this last go-round, and that you've enjoyed the ones that have come before. Whether you dove into **Doomslayers** or mucked around with **Mediums**, read **Charnel Houses of Europe** or had fun with a poofy shirt and **The Shining Host**, I hope you've gotten as much satisfaction and enjoyment from reading these books as I've gotten from making them. Thanks for making it all possible, and have fun — or else I just might have to come back, and nobody wants that, do they?

Richard E. Dansky
 "The Dead Guy"

LIVE-ACTION ADAPTATIONS FOR LAWS OF THE EAST

Beginning here and continuing throughout the rest of the Dharma Books for **Kindred of the East**, you'll find a section of material designed to dovetail with the newest **Mind's Eye Theatre** release, **Laws of the East**. This material strives to adapt the Dharma-specific rules information in the Dharma Books to the live-action environment in a consistent, cohesive manner. No need to worry about converting these rules yourself or having your players do so for you. Everything you need to know about roleplaying a Devil-Tiger (with dice or with Rock-Paper-Scissors) comes built right into this single book. And the best part is, you're getting more pages at the same low price. The extra **MET** material costs you not one cent more.

Throughout the rest of this book, look for sidebars set off by this same border for tips on how to incorporate the Devil-Tigers into your live-action game.

DHARMA BOOK **DEVIL-TIGERS™**

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LET THE REVELS BEGIN, LET THE FIRES BE STARTED

TOMORROW

So, Doctor Hsi, at least we meet. When you were alive, how I often wished to speak to you! Of course, my somewhat uncongenial physical appearance prevented me approaching you, but now I have a chance to converse with you about your theories!

Please, have a chair! You appear scarlet cycled, so take some tea. Don't be bashful! I have a very nice White Cloud I just obtained recently, and I would be pleased to share with you. Allow me to introduce myself. I am Ho Hsu-Tu, and before I died, I was a mandarin in the late Manchu dynasty. Like so many of my peers, I was swept up in the tide of Taiping and lost my place among the living. Now I am a jina, a lesser official, in the government of Canton's Gui Ren.

When I was alive, I styled myself to be a philosopher on matters political and economic. Fortunately for you, I continued this hobby after my return from dark places. While our own country languished in the muddled thinking of the late Empire and then under Marxist dogma, the Western world became quite sophisticated in its thinking about such matters. Which leads me to you!

You have quite an academic pedigree! Primary schooling at Eton, and a bachelor's from Harvard. Doctoral work at King's College. A triumphal return to Hong Kong, and tenure at a young age. Consulting work before you had even settled into your new office at the University of

Hong Kong. Of course, there were some problems. Women and horses, alcohol... and of course, drugs, which is what brings you here. As you can see, we know quite a bit about you! I must say, I was not alone in hoping that one with as much promise as yourself would walk the Road Back!

Do not be ashamed, you are in good company! Some of us may pretend otherwise, but every one of the Gui Ren you meet helped themselves with both hands at the table of sin when he was alive. Sip your tea, and let me tell you a little bit about why you are here.

Your tutor reports to the court that you are having problems making the transition to your new life. This news is very grave indeed. If you do not pass your Fire and Water Test, the court will destroy you as incorrigible. Your soul will fall into the Mouth of Yomi, and you will be lost forever. All in all, it is quite an unpleasant proposition. Mandarin Mo has asked me, as one closer to you in age, to explain to you the nature of the world you now inhabit, hoping that the instruction of someone who was more of a peer to you would resonate better with you. Please pay attention and take my words for their full value, because your very existence is at stake tonight.

Allow me to start by complementing you on your excellent scholarship. Your theories are quite correct! The world is, as you said, "on an inevitable downward slide, its global structure being torn unit from unit by the

centrifugal forces of regionalism." Perhaps hearing this from my lips will help you blame yourself less for your own untimely death. For one with insights such as your own, profound despair is quite understandable as a reaction!

What you could never have known is that the world's poor condition is not entirely contingent on the sloppy and misguided efforts of public figures. Indeed not! As you have no doubt become aware, there is an entire unseen world just behind the one you once lived in. You are now a citizen of that secret world, and you deserve to know the truth of the matter in a way that you can easily understand.

Our world stands at the doorstep of the Age of Sorrow. The political and economic disintegration your analysis detected is only the tip of the iceberg, the visible sign of an invisible tumult. All across the Middle Kingdom and the spirit worlds alike, the natural order is upset! Among men, there are hard times and strife. The land of the dead is wrapped in storms and war between the ghosts, and all throughout the world of Yang spirits, the Celestial Bureaucracy's orders are given less consideration with each passing day. Unclean things walk where they should not, and the Yama Kings pound on the very gates of Heaven, demanding the abdication of the August Personage of Jade.

Once, those who took the Second Breath were philosophers, sages and generals of great renown. These heroes were created to protect the Middle Kingdom from the excesses of the Yama Kings. Alas, the ancestors were proud, and that pride drove them to commit offenses against Heaven. Their breath was taken from them as punishment, and Heaven decreed that only unworthy fellows, such as you and I, should fill out their ranks from then on.

The Wan Xian — the Ten Thousand Immortals — were thus disgraced, and they became the Wan Kuei — the Ten Thousand Wicked Spirits. Cursed to exist as vampires, we have walked the Middle Kingdom as the secret governors and rulers of men for millennia. In that time, the world has darkened, and it stands now on the edge of a great storm. What your studies discovered, we have known for many centuries, though, of course, you could not develop the implications of your findings in the way that we have.

The Devil-Tigers stand ready to face that storm. We have known since the fall of Meru — the ancient capital of the Wan Xian — that there would be a time when the Yama Kings again attempted to march against the Middle Kingdom! Since then, we have been preparing. Does this revelation surprise you? Oh, we have been tending to our other duties as well! For centuries, we have been correcting the unrighteous and bringing about the fall of the dynasty when the Mandate of Heaven was withdrawn. Who, though, is more unrighteous than the Yama Kings, the wicked spirits who would cast the Emperor of Heaven from his throne and place one of their own number in his place?

The other Dharmas wish to deny this, but we know it to be true. The Resplendent Cranes beat their useless wings and attempt to fly against the winds of history, the Dragons and Bone Flowers continue their empty dances, and the Rootless Trees flex unthinking to the winds of the storm. Only the Crimson Tigers understand how soon the fire will erupt, for it is we who will ignite it!

Everywhere across the Middle Kingdom, we are always fighting. When the courts retook Singapore this spring, who was the First Oni who controlled the Quincunx forces? Chiu Bao, a Devil-Tiger! Who defended it? Yoshida Izaki, another Devil-Tiger! All across the Middle Kingdom, when there is fighting to be done, they ask the Devil-Tigers to do it. We fight happily, of course — it is mere rehearsal for the great battles to come!

You see, Dr. Hsi, the end is coming very soon, and the Devils of Heaven need you. As a mortal, you realized the true state the world was in, and, as a result, you ended your existence with a carelessly large dosage of morphia. You cannot afford the luxury of dissolution now. When alive, you were powerless to change things. Now, you have been reborn on the eve of great happenings! Now is your time to change things, indeed, to burn down the very pillars of Heaven, to set the torch to a wicked world! As the bamboo thicket burns and fertilizes the ground for fresh shoots, so will our world burn and fertilize bright tomorrows!

We would like the help of bright young minds such as you to aid us in our efforts, Doctor. There are places among the Celestial Devils for those naturally gifted in political and economic analysis. My companions and I fought quite hard for the right to claim you. There are great things waiting on the horizon, and room for a talented young Devil willing to get in on the ground floor!

What? Oh, no! Do not worry yourself about such things! We will make sure that nothing survives, not even ourselves. Half-measures breed half-successes, after all! Cheer up! We're going to end the world together. It's what you always wanted, isn't it? Now stand up straight, brush yourself off and go learn from Mandarin Mo. She may be severe, but she has your best interests in mind. I will speak more with you after you complete your *ré*.

Goodbye! Good luck!

Poor fellow. He may just make it.

YESTERDAY

The Devil-Tigers are the first coherent expression of Kuei-jin sentiment after the fall of Meru. *The Discourse on Iniquity* and *The Righteous Fire* appeared long before the Grand Arhat's departure — almost a two centuries before the *Ki Chuan*.

The spasmodic formation of the Demon Warrior Empire fell short thanks to the legendary Five Emperors. These beings could casually suppress other attempts at establishing a government after the fall of Meru, but the feelings behind the Demon Warrior movement persisted.

Shortly after the Emperors founded their courts, the first works of Kuei-jin theology appeared. Most early religious thought echoed the philosophy of the Demon Warriors. Though these early believers all sought to embrace their new station in the celestial order, there was much disagreement over ways and means. Factional strife over doctrinal issues began among these Kuei-jin.

In response, the Five Emperors granted the Resplendent Cranes recognition. At that time the Cranes were a radical new force in Kuei-jin politics. Balancing Yang with Yin, the Emperors used the Cranes to suppress the Heavenly Devil churches. This process both defined the concept of Dharma and established the system of the five Dharmic directions.

Heavenly Devils were forbidden to form cults, but the Dharma persevered and prospered. Celestial Devil soldiers supported the courts in their wars, and the Crimson Tigers brought about the end of kingdoms when they grew weak. Devil-Tiger demonologists learned the spirit ways and taught their fellow Crimson Tigers the ways of Tiger's new station.

Xue departed the Middle Kingdom, leaving behind his wisdom. Then the first bodhisattvas began to appear, and at that time, the Emperors also began to depart, until only the Emperor of the Jade Court remained. The courts became more political at that time. With the spirit courts placated and the paths to Heaven found, the community of the early years dissipated.

Years of warfare resulted as the Wan Kuei found their place. Heaven sent the Excellent Archer to punish the Wan Kuei again for their hubris, and the Ten Thousand Devils were made unable to walk in the sunlit world. Servants of the Yama Kings masqueraded as Crimson Tigers and devoured some of the Household Gods. Great strife erupted then between the *hsien* and the Crimson Tigers.

The Azure Dragon Court was destroyed, but the teachings of the civilized Dharmas had spread to the *gaki* of Japan. Warriors among the Bishamon learned to follow the way of the Crimson Tiger. By embracing the flame within them, *ketsuki* put fear to flight. Nevertheless, these barbarians are without true *jên*.

In the Scarlet Phoenix Court, the Yang attitudes and Yang thoughts overwhelmed the civilizing balance. Individuals overwhelmed the society, and a place of grave disorder was created. Courts became mere assemblages of gossiping magpies and petty queens. Sages were made to wear women's apparel, and other grave offenses against dignity were committed. It was not long before civilized Gui Ren ceased to receive these barbarians in their courts.

In civilized regions, the August Body of Sagacious Devils was founded. Created by the bodhisattvas to educate younger Devil-Tigers in the essentials of righteous existence, the August Body tested and trained Crimson Tigers for service to the courts. Brave scholars, the Sagacious Devils sent instructors even to the uncivilized



regions of the Green and Golden Courts, and even to the savages of the *uji* courts.

For decadence, Heaven withdrew its Mandate from the mortal dynasties. Barbarian invaders conquered the north of China. Politics in the Yellow Emperor's court became quite heated, and the Ancestor of the court was murdered in his chambers. These were difficult times for the Imperial Courts, and at that time, only two survived, the Jade and Black Tortoise Courts.

It was at that time that the barbarian bodhisattva Piyau Piyang defeated the *akuma* of the Golden Courts. Though Piyau was of the Thrashing Dragon Dharma, she had once followed the path of the Heavenly Devil, and she retained the characteristic fierceness of the Crimson Tiger. She gathered about her many Devil-Tiger *penangallan*, and set about cleansing the court in an effective, if barbaric manner. It is said that the victories, to which her companions led their *wus* of students, were very great.

The poet called O Faced the Eye of Heaven as a poetic statement in the Jade Court. An inquisitive mandarin discovered corruption in the court. That mandarin, Nu Pai, returned in haste with this news to his own court. He and his fellow mandarins — with the aid of Khan tiger-warriors and Heavenly Devil soldiers from the host of Piyau Piyang — deposed the Emperor. The *akuma* in that place were ferreted out. A copy of *The Broken-Winged Crane* was found in the belongings of the Changan Emperor.

Shortly after *The Broken-Winged Crane* was discovered, barbarian *shen* were seen in the Middle Kingdom for the first time. It was by these signs that the bodhisattvas of the Young Forest Temple came to know that the Fifth Age had arrived. A great conference was called, and the courts were re-created as the Quincunx, the Five August Courts. The Ancestor was installed in Peking as tribute to the Yellow Emperor, who had been First among the Five Emperors.

Westerners came to the Middle Kingdom, perniciously selling poison to the people of China. The Manchu dynasty had begun to lose the Mandate of Heaven. There were uprisings against the government, and against the westerners who had gained control of China at that time. Many Crimson Tigers did battle with Western *shen*. This was a good time for the Devil-Tiger Dharma. Many young Gui Ren converted, and many of those who took the Second Breath came to swell the ranks of the Celestial Devils.

With the Flesh and Flame Courts weak and in turmoil from the many wars, the barbarian *ketsuki* of Japan invaded China with the Japanese army. Colonies of Kin-jin took root, and Japanese *gaki* marched with their barbarian feet through the cities and dragon nests of South China. Devil-Tigers of the Blood Court fought always at the

forefront of the resistance, carrying the banner of the Quincunx high.

At the end of the war, the United States used a nuclear device against the Japanese city of Hiroshima, and then another against the city of Nagasaki. These attacks were moments of glory for the Devil-Tiger faith, and all across the Middle Kingdom, Devil-Tigers put aside their difference to celebrate. Although the war was ended and the Japanese troops expelled, barbarian vampires remained on Chinese soil.

Today, the war against barbarian Kuei-jin continues. Devil-Tiger soldiers lead the battle against the enemies of the Five August Courts. Shouting down the immoderate Ash Plan, they instead support the trusty Two-Fanged Serpent Plan. However, even as the Five August Courts purify their soil of foreign influences, the Crimson Tigers ready for the Age of Sorrow. Valiantly, they prepare to bare their fangs against the Yama Kings.

Tomorrow is the place from which all hope springs. The tomorrow of the Devil-Tigers holds great strife, and also great glory. As the World-Destroying Warriors of the Age of Sorrow, our time of glory is nigh. Soon, the time of the Demon Emperor will arrive, and we shall rush at him with the fury of waves against the shore. Like the sparks, we shall catch the tinder. Like the flames, we shall consume the fuel. Like the smoke, we shall pass away as if we had never been.

— A 19 verse meditation on the situation of the Devil-Tiger Dharma by jina An Ning, Brass Trusty Devil, Second Assistant Minister for Internal Protocol, Blood Court of the Quincunx

FOREVER

From the mouth of Heavenly Fire, Devil-Tiger bodhisattva.

Like irresponsible children, the Wan Xian betrayed their posts. Like erring young scholars, they were sternly reprimanded. Because they had stolen the breath of the righteous, their own breath was taken away. Because the Wan Xian chose to follow the path of iniquity, it was determined that only the iniquitous should join their ranks. Because they were so well-educated in sin and the abuse of power, the office of punishing the wicked was given into their hands. Because they knew only devilishness, it was decreed that devilry would provide them with their salvation.

The P'o is the Lower Soul. It is the animal urge. A compass needle, it points only toward the most simple, base and immediate urges. A P'o is not a slobbering beast. Rule your P'o with iron rods and burn it with the lash of your tongue. Let the P'o inform you and understand that your P'o is (at some level) an expression of your Self, but do not ever let your dark side rule you. You are not a mad dog. You are a monster.



For a world with much wickedness, Heaven has seen fit to appoint few Celestial Devils. To be a Devil is to be an agent of the Celestial Bureaucracy. Do not trouble yourself with sinners of little account. Karma will reward these worthless ones for their deeds when they next travel across the Wheel. Wickedness and injustice are as inevitable and as necessary as the turning of the seasons. Punish only those who truly deserve the attention of Heaven's own agents.

You are a Devil of Heaven. Comport yourself in a dignified fashion, and be elegant in your evil. You injure the dignity of your office by sinking to small sins.

THE ALL-TOO-NECESSARY DISCLAIMER

In case it isn't obvious, you are not a monster from beyond the grave. You are a normal person. If you have problems distinguishing between fantasy and reality, please put this book down and seek professional help before you injure yourself or someone else.

Look around you. Pain is the great teacher. Savor pain, and cherish the insights that agony brings. Show others pain, so that they can understand. By tormenting the iniquitous, not only do we punish them for their acts, we also give them one final chance to understand the agonies that await them in Yomi. It is possible that if a sinner experiences sincere repentance when subjected to our excruciations, her soul may escape Yomi.

Do not ever narrow your vision of pain. Pain lies not only in the rubber hose and the dental drill, but in the lost love, the dashed hope and the child's broken toy. As a devil, you are a painter in pain. Embrace the breadth and subtle variations of your palette.

When you open your eyes with pain, it is vision that you seek, not agony. When you hurt, your world is vibrantly real. As a Devil, you must be real enough to match it. Love with all your heart; hate like the torments of the Thousand Hells. Greet each new night by kissing it full on the mouth, and then beat it with iron rods until it releases its every opportunity. The fire is always leaping, never still.

The coming Age will be the glory of the Crimson Tigers. We will paint the sunset of the Middle Kingdom in a thousand shades of blood. Let others weep for their yesterdays. We will take tomorrow, and we will take it now!

You wish to drink water, so you need a cup. To make the cup more pleasing, you ornament it. To keep the ornamented cup safe, you lock it up. A cup in a locked box is no good to drink from. That is all I have to say about enlightenment.

ROLEPLAYING THE DEVIL-TIGERS

Evil is a difficult topic to address, yet if you're reading this book, it's fairly certain that — either as a Storyteller or a player — you're going to portray one or more Devil-Tigers. Doing so pretty much requires you take up the unpleasant and socially taboo task of thinking about evil. How does wickedness work? What does a celestially mandated devil think like? This chapter is an attempt to make the potentially difficult task of roleplaying a Devil-Tiger a little easier.

PORTRAYING EVIL

It can be very difficult to portray evil effectively. Keep in mind that doing so is just as much of a problem for the *character* as it is for the player. Devil-Tigers are not Spectres or Bane-spirits. Whatever they may wish, they were not created by Heaven solely to commit evil deeds. The whole process of picking up the devil is a major part of the Dharma, and it continues even after the Cathayan achieves *ling*. A Devil-Tiger character who commits some act of banal evil or kills as if he were little more than *chih-mei* is not just boring and annoying for the group, he is also suffering a Moment of Blindness.

When portraying a Devil-Tiger, remember that there is much more to it than making things scream and bleed. *Chih-mei* are rampaging killing machines, Devil-Tigers are that and *more*. They are part of the celestial order, entities ordained to wickedness by the mandate of Heaven, and that belief is at the heart of the Dharma. Each Heavenly Devil has his own way to live up to this mandate of malevolence, but what every Crimson Tiger knows is that evil is much larger than life.

When working up a Devil-Tiger, keep in mind what the *character* perceives evil to be. How does *she* think a Devil should behave? Does she see Devil-Tigers as mighty warriors of darkness or as slick tempters? What sort of wicked deeds does the character perpetrate, and what sort of iniquity does she feel most compelled to punish? Why? Does she see a devil's place as in the mortal spotlight, like John Milton in *The Devil's Advocate*, or is she a denizen of the unseen world, like Louis Cyphre in *Angel Heart*? Whatever the answers to these questions may be, remember that this is a horror movie in which *you are the monster*.

You are bigger than life, louder than thunder and cooler than Jet Li. You have to be — it's your religious duty.

Make sure that the answers you find to these questions are reasonable for game play. The most well-developed character in the world is nothing but a liability if he ruins the game for everyone. Keep in mind that Kuei-jin society is intensely formal. Devil-Tigers may spill immense quantities of blood, but they do it according to the forms of the court — shadow war and pronouncements of *akuma*. A violently antisocial Devil-Tiger would never pass her Fire and Water Test. Likewise, the reason that there is no Masquerade in the Middle Kingdom is because it is assumed that Kuei-jin are intelligent and discreet enough to avoid mortal scrutiny without being specifically instructed to do so. Devil-Tigers who are overly zealous about cleansing the mortal herd (or just plain sloppy) will get a chance to eulogize their actions to the Eye of Heaven.

In summary, try to make your character a celestially mandated devil without making him two-dimensional. It bears repeating that Kuei-jin are vampires rather than wicked spirits. Free will is inherent to their condition. They may *know* they should act like monsters, but they must still *choose* to act on that knowledge. What lends depth to a Devil-Tiger is how she chooses to interpret her imperatives of iniquity and righteousness, and how those imperatives conflict with her urges as a Running Monkey. **Kindred of the East** is the story of the character's journey to *ling* and beyond. It is an arduous path that is not easy for an aspirant of *any* Dharma, and the Howl of the Devil-Tiger is up there with the Path of a Thousand Whispers as the most difficult of the Dharmas for its practitioners to embrace.

YOUR OPINIONS ON SIN

As a player, you probably have beliefs about what is right and wrong. Quite possibly, they differ markedly from the pseudo-Legalistic moral code of the Devil-Tigers. Roleplaying a Devil-Tiger while holding a faith that differs markedly from the Dharmic beliefs can be difficult. If it makes you extremely uncomfortable to portray a Crimson Tiger, or to be in a game where Devil-Tigers are portrayed, it is probably better if you find a different game to play in. There's no reason to keep doing something you don't find enjoyable. Horror gaming should not necessarily be a light-hearted romp, but you shouldn't dread going to the next session either.

Keep in mind that the Devil-Tigers see themselves as evil creatures who perform a very useful and necessary function in the universe. If there were no Devil-Tigers, the wicked would go unreprimanded. Those avaricious or unwholesome beings who wish to destroy the social or cosmic order for personal benefit would proceed unopposed. Devil-Tigers suppress the wicked and moderate the excesses of the evil spirits. The Heavenly Devils are unpleasant, but nowhere has Heaven dictated that the world should be a nice place. Devil-Tigers are not self-

loathing, or rather, they have embraced self-loathing completely and come to love their place. Also keep in mind that Devil-Tigers don't generally tempt people into sin, though they often use the temptation of a favorite vice to drag down sinners. From their point of view, they

don't need to tempt. Sinfulness is built into the human condition. The Devils of Heaven do not to sew the seeds of corruption, they punish those who prove unable to restrain their own base urges.

ROLEPLAYING A LIVE-ACTION DEVIL-TIGER

While our conscience forbids us from leaving out this sidebar, hopefully, your conscience forbids you from taking part in the sorts of activities that necessitate it. You know by now just how nasty and dangerous the Kuei-jin are in general, and how especially vicious and cruel are the Devils of Heaven. Righteousness is an easy directive to uphold on paper and in action, but the others are more tricky. Passion and pain are guideposts on the way to enlightenment that require (ironically) a delicate hand when used in a live-action context. Devil-Tigers do not rationalize and contemplate, they act. *Immediately*. However, you the player have to think when you act, for the good of the game as well as the other players.

The most important things you have to think about and be aware of at all times are the core, inviolate rules of **Mind's Eye Theatre** play. Those rules include:

- 1.) No touching or stunts.
- 2.) No weapons.
- 3.) No drugs (including alcohol).
- 4.) Be mindful of others.
- 5.) It's just a game.

These rules exist for your safety and the safety of those with whom you're playing, and they stretch across all **Mind's Eye Theatre** games. If you can't abide by these rules, you should probably go back to table-top. People slip, people make mistakes, and accidents happen. These rules safeguard against as many eventualities as are likely to come into play.

The most important rule, however, is "Be mindful of others." Devil-Tigers have a duty to Heaven (and to themselves) to punish the wicked and bring down the unrighteous, and by all rights, they revel in that duty. Flaying the skin off an unrighteous sinner is a rush of power and self-gratification. Ruining an empire from which the Mandate of Heaven has been withdrawn is a holy war fought (and enjoyed) by only one side. The Devil-Tigers are Heaven's incarnate angels, doing their duty and loving every second. However, *you* are not. Consideration must be paid to the needs of the game you're playing in and those of the other players. A vengeful, misdirected or simply bored player of a Devil-Tiger can run rampant by deciding that events in the game are "unrighteous." A player whose character is acting on his divinely inspired sense of duty is a good roleplayer; a player whose character is a whirling dervish of destruction for no good discernible reason is an ass. If your character is tormenting, torturing or generally wrecking other characters (or their carefully laid plans) just because your character can, not only is your character suffering a Moment of Blindness, you're being an ass. Your character can do his duty and enjoy fulfilling his cosmic role in the universe, but remember that there are other players in the game whose feelings are hurt by random acts of destruction against the fruits of their creative labor. Temper your character's actions with that realization. If you're making someone uncomfortable (or just dogging him because your character's bigger and badder), you're overdoing it, and it's time to back off.

On the other hand, don't be afraid to play your character. People may complain when someone foils their plans or calls them on their wickedness, and Devil-Tigers will encounter that at some point. They also tend to laugh and say, "You should have kept to your Heavenly duty more tenaciously." Remember, the Devil-Tigers are the beings chosen by Heaven to punish and destroy that which is offensive to Heaven. They do not have to be nice about it. They do have to be *right*, but they don't hold anything back when they are.

Above all, remember that this is *only a game*. Taking the Devil-Tiger ideal out of game and into real life crosses a very dangerous line. In this world, there truly are beings motivated to destroy the unrighteous — we like to call those people Storytellers, parents, clergy, teachers and police. Heaven (and White Wolf) supports those people wholeheartedly.

Play your character, play the game and have fun (which is **MET's** biggest rule), but remember: It's only make-believe.

Furthermore, remember that the Devil-Tiger outlooks outlined in this book are the vanilla, ecumenical outlooks of the "average" Devil-Tiger. They represent the official views of major religious sects, and were arrived at by those groups after a great deal of wrangling and compromise among the senior membership. Individual differences on doctrinal matters are often quite pronounced. To give the most common example, many Devil-Tigers, particularly Running Monkeys, also adhere to mortal religions. It is from the beliefs of these faiths concerning matters of right and wrong that individual Heavenly Devils draw their moral compass. The things a Devil-Tiger thought were wicked during life are the things that each vampire punishes in death.

Typically, Devil-Tigers operate at a level where religions share a common morality. Moving to bring about the spectacular downfall of a murderer and serial rapist works for Christian and Taoist Kuei-jin alike. However, some severe sins have specific cultural reference. Kuei-jin response to these sins varies from individual to individual. For example, adultery and homosexuality are often stringently persecuted among mortals, but most Kuei-jin just consider them part of the natural order. Likewise, slavery is seen as a historical process, but mistreating one's slaves is generally considered sinful. However, not every Devil-Tiger sees slavery or adultery or homosexuality as "just another thing people do." Likewise, Muslim Kuei-jin's hatred for recidivists and the way Confucian Kuei-jin despise those lacking in filial piety are two common causes of strife among Cathayan courts.

In most cases, the Devils of Heaven just ignore any differences they may have with their co-religionists. Heaven would not have chosen their fellow vampires for its agents if it didn't expect the Crimson Tigers to use their discretion. However, conflicting interests do arise, and tempers can flare to blast-furnace temperatures over the disposition of souls one Devil-Tiger considers irredeemable sinners and that another Heavenly Devil favors or finds blameless. Usually, northerly Devil-Tigers and Devil-Tigers who no longer adhere to mortal faiths attempt to arbitrate these disputes, but the matter can be taken to the ancestor, and twilight shadow wars over individual mortals are not unknown.

Regardless of details, try to stick to your character's moral code, not your own. The clearer you make the difference between your own moral code and that of your character's, the less chance you'll have your feelings hurt by an in-game incident. Likewise, the more distinct you keep the character from your own persona, the less likely you'll be to offend another player who can't distinguish between your feelings and those of your character.

BOUNDARIES

You should come to a horror game understanding that you may not find the experience entirely amusing. The core of horror involves things that frighten or unsettle us. If you're not willing to experience some potentially unpleasant stuff, you're probably not in the right place. On the other hand, each of us has at least one thing that we just do not want to deal with, be it spiders, child abuse or whatever. You have every right not to have to deal with it in the course of an evening's entertainment.

When you're working up a Devil-Tiger character, you should probably find out what sort of material the other players in the group don't want to deal with. Naturally, not everyone will tell you (because it's stuff they'd rather not talk about), but the more honest answers you get, the more of an effort you can make to avoid those hot-button topics and the more pleasant your gaming experience will be for everyone. If you realize during play that you're really squicking someone, don't try to play amateur therapist; just let it go and remember not to do that again.

It's easy to say "respect other people's comfort zones," but it's hard to do so in practice. There has to be a give-and-take: People who are sensitive to various things have to deal with accidental references to their problems in a reasonable fashion, and their peers should refrain from repeatedly pressing sensitive buttons once they find them. You shouldn't be dreading the next session of a game, but it is a Storytelling game of personal horror.

CHARACTER CONCEPT

What makes up a Devil-Tiger? By developing a strong context for the character's attitudes, you can make it significantly easier to know what he would think and do next. It's easy to see a character as he might be at a single moment, but for him to change and develop over time like a real person, you need to know more than just what he dresses and acts like. You need to know what made him who he is and where he wants to go from here.

PRELUDE

What made you into a Crimson Tiger? Most Devil-Tigers lived violent or abused lives, building up a thunderous wrath inside their hearts. With their torment in Yomi Wan, that thunderbolt was released, and a Crimson Tiger was born. For the average Devil-Tiger, rebirth is an exaltation, an elevation to a sublime state. At least during their better moments, most Devil-Tigers feel that their Dharma was the next natural step for them in their progress along the Wheel of Life.

Obviously, not every single Devil-Tiger in the Middle Kingdom was a secret policeman or murder camp victim. Some people hide the heart of a monster quite carefully during their mortal lives. Regardless, you cannot follow a

Dharma unless you *believe* with a frightening intensity. Those who follow the Howl of the Devil-Tiger have reasons to make a religion out of their diabolical nature. Whatever the origin may be, the end point is the same — an unlife wreathed in darkness, lit by fires and fierce lightning. What put your character on the road that ended in this storm?

DYNAMISM

Though the Devils of Heaven have many faults, complacency and sloth do not number among them. As a force of Greater Yang, the Heavenly Devils are forever in motion. Creatures of passion and action, they are always pushing and pulling, driving and dreaming. A Devil-Tiger is never at rest. This nature, however, does not mean that Heavenly Devils have minuscule attention spans. Rather, it implies that complacency is almost totally absent among even the most ancient Heavenly Devils. If there is a new place to go or a new thing to do, you can be sure to spot the Devil-Tigers there, hunting sinners and measuring the financial and political geometry of the situation like pool-sharks over a smoky table.

Just as they are dynamic, Devil-Tigers are also some of the most modern of the Kuei-jin. Obviously, this temporal adaptation isn't universal. Some Kuei-jin of every Dharma pick a place in history and stay there. However, as a Dharma, the Devil-Tigers are always reaching out for tomorrow with both clawed hands, ready to cheat it of its every thrill. Also, the Devils of Heaven aren't just gangsters and samurai warlords. It's perfectly possible to be a Devil-Tiger science-fiction writer, system administrator, CEO, pop musician or party functionary.

DIRECTION

Direction has a great deal of influence on Kuei-jin existence. Blood astrology is fairly precise, and Kuei-jin are thus often pigeonholed by their direction. While the readings are not always totally accurate, Cathayans generally fulfill their duties remarkably well. More common than an inaccurate reading is a Kuei-jin who fulfills her direction in an odd or unusual fashion. Kuei-jin often say of a fellow vampire who is acting seemingly in contradiction of his direction, "He is heading north to go east."

North: Northerly Heavenly Devils, known as Blue Ice Tigers, are thought to make excellent administrators and magistrates. Northerly Kuei-jin traditionally provide the scholars and philosophers who meditate over human crimes and suitable punishments. Similarly, it is traditional that an informal tribunal of Ice Tigers mediates disputes between Devil-Tigers that are not yet severe enough to merit the attention of the local court. Those who do not like the Devil-Tigers call these vampires "Striped Cranes" or "Feathered Tigers," much to their irritation.

South: South is the direction of the Devil-Tigers, and Dharma members of the southerly direction are known as

Twice-Crimson Tigers. These Kuei-jin are especially short-tempered and aggressive. The Twice-Crimson Tigers are the sword-dancers and the spearheads of the Kuei-jin. They are war leaders, artists, philosophers, visionaries and zealots. Devil-Tigers of the southern direction are thought to be impulsive, violent and especially virile or sexually adept. Many *penangallan* are south-directed, as the strong Yang Chi currents of the Golden Courts lead many of the Gui Ren in that area to take their Second Breath during southern periods.

East: Called "Big-Eyed Cats" or "Sinner-Devouring Devils," Heavenly Devils of the east direction walk among the mortals searching out wrongdoing. These Kuei-jin collect information on the unrighteous, and the Big-Eyed Cats are among the first vampires the court turns to when it needs to apply leverage to politicians, criminals or businessmen of questionable moral character. If a mortal public figure has done wrong, the local Sinner-Devouring Devils know of it. Crimson Tigers of this direction also perform the duty of marking the truly blameless, putting them side-by-side with the Devil-Tigers of the north when disputes about the suitability of certain sinners arise. Eastern Devil-Tigers are thought to be particularly good merchants, and others often ask them to help lead or advise Devil-Tiger trading groups.

West: Called "Bone Tigers" or "Ghost-Hunting Devils", Kuei-jin of the western direction travel between the Yellow Springs and the Middle Kingdom on missions of vengeance for both the living and the dead. Some oppose iniquity and corruption among the ghosts of the Yellow Springs. These scourges of corrupt ghost-magistrates are known colloquially as "Knightly Ghost-Tigers," and they champion honesty and probity much more openly than among the living. Other Heavenly Devils, called "Stern Notice-Delivering Spirits," search the lands of the dead and the living alike for those who are held back from their vengeance by the Wall. These vampires evaluate such matters to see if they merit the attentions of the Heavenly Devils. If they do, then the Notice-Delivering Devils see that justice is done. Western Kuei-jin are quite rare, and they are stereotypically considered social cold fish.

Center: Center-direction Crimson Tigers are called "Burning Thunders Sages" or "Black Axis Scholars." As has been related elsewhere, the Devil-Tigers are great catchers of *chih-mei*. The Black Axis Scholars lead the Heavenly Devils in these efforts. Center-direction Kuei-jin also study creatures of negative spiritual resonance, and it is from their pens that the Devil-Tiger scholarship on demonology flows. Theologians, mystics and scholars, these Devil-Tigers are particularly close to the spiritual roots of the Dharma, though difficult for more worldly Devil-Tigers to communicate with. Center-direction vampires are also the ritualists of Devil-Tiger society, and a Devil-Tiger dragon nest without a Burning Thunder to tend it is considered most inauspicious.

LEXICON

DEVIL TIGER TERMINOLOGY

August Body of Sagacious Devils — One of the three traditional institutions of Devil-Tiger society. The August Body is an independent testing body that certifies the competency of individual Devil-Tigers through a series of rigorous tests of aptitude and ability.

Ban Ren Guei — "Half-Demon People." Bakemono born from the union between a human or Yang-imbalanced Kuei-jin and a succubus-like Sleeper-Seducing Bane.

Big-Eyed Cats — Devil-Tigers of the eastern direction, who walk among the mortals seeking out the unrighteous and the servants of the Yama Kings.

Black Iron Talons — An inquisitorial sect of the Devil-Tigers, concerned about fighting the servants of Yomi in the here and now. Dedicated to the extermination of heretics, *akuma* and similarly unrighteous beings.

Blue Ice Tigers — A nickname for the northerly Devil-Tigers, who serve as magistrates among the Devil-Tigers and mediate over the proper punishment for sinners whose crimes are of a questionable nature.

Bone Tigers — West-directed Devil-Tigers who undertake missions of vengeance for the living among the dead, and for the dead among the living.

Brilliant Embers — A Devil-Tiger sect common in the Golden Courts and related to the Thousand Ember Righteousness Society.

Burning Thunders Sages — Center-direction Devil-Tigers. The Burning Thunders Sages are the ritualists, sorcerers of Devil-Tiger society, and they also maintain the Dharma's dragon nests.

Celestial Devil — Another term for Devil-Tiger, used mostly in the Infinite Thunders Court and Gold Courts.

Day of Two Suns — A-Day, the day of the bombing of Hiroshima, a holy day for the Devil-Tiger Dharma celebrating the moment when it became possible to destroy the world at the turning of the Age.

Devils of Heaven — Another term for the followers of the Devil-Tiger Dharma.

Distinguished Sinner-Punishing Society — A proscribed sect that believes that highly visible sinners should be destroyed openly for their wickedness as a lesson to mortals.

Electric Money Wickedness Club — The largest and most prosperous of the Devil-Tiger trading and investment groups.

Golden Mandarin — A mandarin whose has attained enlightenment not from experience and learning, but from their consumption of the golden Chi (also called Yugen) used to power *hsien* magic.

Guanxi — Not only the mystical bonding between members of a *wu* but also the term used to describe a non-

magical relationship built on the giving of gifts, favors and other exchanged kindnesses.

Heavenly Devils — See Devils of Heaven.

Righteous Earth-Prison Smiting Fist — A proscribed sect of Devil-Tiger extremists in the Quincunx dedicated to the overthrow of Qin Shihuang for the sin of constructing a false "Hell" and usurping the honors due to Heaven.

The Searing Wind — A large, well-organized and highly illegal extremist sect of Devil-Tigers containing several bodhisattvas and led by their self-proclaimed Grand Arhat, who plans to face the Demon Emperor in single combat when the Age turns.

Society of Brigands and Decadent Dynasty Toppling Devils — One of the three traditional institutions of Devil-Tiger society. Called out by the bodhisattvas of the Dharma in times of social turmoil, the Society of Brigands serves to hasten social reform by assuring the destruction of old social edifices. It also serves to prevent the Devil-Tiger hierarchy from becoming too fixed.

Thousand Embers Righteousness Societies — One of the three traditional institutions of Devil-Tiger society, the Thousand Embers Righteousness Societies take the place of social groups and temples and serve both as *guanxi* networks and as terrorist cells for the Devil-Tiger's upcoming destruction of human civilization at the turning of the Age.

Twice-Crimson Tigers — southern-direction Devil-Tigers, known for short tempers and extreme passion.

TRANSLATIONS

August Body of Sagacious Devils — *Lian Zhe Kuei*

Ban Ren Guei — "Half-Demon People"

Big-Eyed Cats — *Da Yen Mao*

Black Iron Talons — *Hei Tie Zhao*

Blue Ice Tigers — *Lur Bing Hu*

Bone-Tigers — *Gu Hu*

Knightly Ghost-Tigers — *Guei Hu Shi*

Brilliant Embers — *Liang Yu Jin*

Burning Thunders Sages — *Sao Lei Zhe*

Celestial Devil — *Shang Tien Kuei*

The Day of Two Suns — *Liang Re Tian*

Devils of Heaven — *Tien An Kuei*

Distinguished Sinner Punishing Society — *Da Jie Zhu*

The Electric Money Wickedness Club — *Dien Chien*

Golden Mandarin — *Jing Ju*

Righteous Earth-Prison Smiting Fist — *Tu Yu Kui*

The Searing Wind — *Sao Fung*

Society of Brigands and Decadent Dynasty Toppling Devils — *Dao Fei He Yu Yao Yu Zuei De Sui Kuo Wang Tsao Shi Huei*

Thousand Embers Righteousness Societies — Chien Yu Jin Zheng Shi Huei

Twice-Crimson Tigers — Liang Zhu Hu

Jade Devil — Yu Kuei

"Sturdy Jade Devil" — Qian Yu Kuei

Sapphire Devils — Lan Bao Shih Kuei

Emerald Devils — Fei Kuei

Gold Devils — Jing Kuei

Silver Devils — Ing Kuei

Brass Devils — Tong Kuei

Bamboo Devils — Zhu Kuei

Perfected — Bei

Ranks

Apprentice Devil — Xiao Guei

Journeyman Devil — Nien Ching Guei

Skillful Devil — Da Guei

Sturdy Devil — Ing Guei

Talented Devil — Li Hai Guei

Wise Devil — Shue Guei

Sagacious Devil — Lao Guei

Searing Wind Ranks, Highest to Lowest

Grand Arhat — Kai Ming San

Enlightened Master (Arhat) — Kai Ming Zu Ren

Distinguished Heavenly General (Bodhisattva) — Zu Ming De Tien Jiang Jun

Righteous Commander (Mandarin) — Lian Ming De Zu Huei Guan

Bloodthirsty Young Officer (Jina) — Tsan Ren De Nien Ching Jun Guan

Courageous Soldier (Older Disciple) — Yuon Gun Shih Bing

Brave, Untested Warrior (Young Disciple) — Xing Wu Shih

Sturdy Footman of Hell — Kuei Bing

Crusader for Celestial Justice — Tien Fa Shi

Searing Wind Directions

• North Direction

The Seven Venom Tempest — Chi Du Tai Fung

Great Depth — Da Shen

• South Direction

The Unquenchable Bonfire — Bu Nuen Xi Mie De Ying Huo

Crimson Peony — Fei Shuo

The Immortal Forest — Xian Lin

Graceful Crane — Ya He

• West Direction

The Fearless Iron Blades — Bu Pa De Tie Dao

Winter Morning — Dong Tien Xi

• Center Direction

The Sky-Scraping Mountain — Tien Sang San

Nine Tongues — Jio Hua

Searing Wind Special Branches

Righteous Apostles of Extraordinary Valor (Akuma Hunters)

— Te Bieh Yuan Wu De Zheng Zhih Tsuan Diao Zhe

Black Magicians of Terrible Might (Ritualists/Bane-Trainers)

— Ke Pa Shen Li De Hei Mo Shu Jian

Cat-Footed Gatherers of Secrets (External Affairs)

— Cian Mao Jiao De Me Me Shou Je Zhe

Doubly Fearsome Excisors of Treasonous Behavior (Internal Security)

— Jia Bei Ke Pah De Pan Guo Cian We De Shou Dang Zer

Skillful Manipulators of the Mortal Press (Human Relations)

— Chio Mao De Tsao Tsuon Nu Liang Chian De Ren Chun

Healers of Wounded Comrades-in-Arms (Medical)

— Dai Fu Shou Shon Zhang Yiao De Zhe Liao Zhe

Striped Cranes — Ban He

Feathered Tigers — Ling Hu

Sinner-Devouring Devils — Jie Chue Kuei

Ghost-Hunting Devils — Kuei Liao Kuei

Stern Notice-Delivering Spirits — Yan Shi Shen

Black Axis Scholars — Hei Zhou Shi

Heavenly Fire — Tien Huo

Silver Chime — Ing Gong

Marble Gong — Ching Gong

Seven Morning Princess — Chi Dan Gong Zhu

No-Shadow Raven — Mei Ying Wu

Jade Rose — Yu Mei

Eight Thunders Sage — Ba Lei Shi Fu



HUDDLESTON 99

WHERE THE DEAD MEN LOST THEIR BONES

At its heart, the Devil-Tiger philosophy embraces an exceedingly simple set of beliefs. It is this essential simplicity that has allowed the Dharma to persevere despite a millennia-long history of schisms and internal conflicts. These beliefs were first summarized in the text known as *The Righteous Fire*, one of the first Kuei-jin philosophical

documents. This text poetically expresses the inarticulate urges of the former Ten Thousand Immortals, their attempt to accept their new condition and establish a path to spiritual redemption. It was not until the appearance of the texts now known as *The Blood Sutras* and *The Songs of Hell* that this movement was decisively given voice,

MANY A SLIP

In the ideal, the Devil-Tigers are immaculate monsters. They are sophisticated, enlightened, passionate, righteous, inhumanly wicked and sure-handed in their control of their P'os. The reality is that enlightenment is never easy. Only those Kuei-jin with Dharma scores of higher than 5 have transcended their humanity, and even elder mandarins and ancestors can stray from their path through hasty action or by neglecting their spiritual well-being.

Devil-Tiger philosophy is much easier to read than to practice. It is one thing for a vampire to say that he is a creature of malevolence and passion, a force of violence and righteousness made incarnate. It is another thing entirely for the Kuei-jin to be such a creature. A mortal lifetime inevitably leaves compunctions and hesitations in even the blackest and most inhuman of hearts. Yomi may begin the process of polishing away those tender spots, but no vampire begins the Road Back devoid of human feelings. It often requires a century or more of careful self-application to eradicate these residual weaknesses.

Each Devil-Tiger must also master her P'o on an intimate level that Kuei-jin of most other Dharmas would find terrifying. The Devils of Heaven do not overmaster their lower souls or turn a deaf ear to their demands, but instead come to a harmonious coexistence. It can take decades for the Hun to master the complexities of maintaining the undisputed upper hand in its relationship with the Demon while still admitting the validity of the P'o's urges.

This process of systematically extinguishing every last spark of humanity in the vampire's heart is often traumatic, and it cannot be trivialized. Excising the frailties of even a short and painful lifetime is a torturous process. Likewise, mastering the P'o is a difficult task, a hard road to self-recognition and coming to terms with the dark side of the vampire's own spiritual nature. Together, these processes are called "picking up the devil," and they absorb most of the Kuei-jin's early unlife. A misstep in this process can send the Kuei-jin into Shadow Nature, cause a Moment of Blindness or, worst of all, lead the vampire down a path of incorrect reasoning. Such theological errors can cost a Kuei-jin dearly, delaying her Dharmic progress by years or decades, sending her off her Dharma entirely or even leading her to the service of the Yama Kings.

Difficult though it may be, every Celestial Devil must pick up the devil successfully to progress along his Dharmic path. It is but a single step of many along the Road Back.

triggering a series of schisms that produced the five modern Dharmas.

At its heart, the Devil-Tiger Dharma recognizes three great imperatives: Passion, Pain and Righteousness. While opinions may differ greatly in the particulars of the path to The Hundred Clouds, all Devils of Heaven recognize these three central tenets as necessary to their Dharmic journey.

The parable of Xue and the Mantra of Pain, in *The Blood Sutras*, illustrates the core of this belief clearly and poetically. The parable relates that Xue, torn by anguish and self-hatred at the fall of Meru, wandered among the burning ruins with tears of blood streaming down his face. He uprooted nettles and rubbed them over his body until his fingers were too swollen to grasp the stalks. His self-loathing still unfulfilled, Xue then began to gash his flesh with a knife. At the pinnacle of his self-hate, Xue drove the knife into his face. With his swollen fingers and the sharp blade, the Grand Arhat sought to erase his very identity, that the face of Heaven might not look upon him and know of his disgrace. As he cast the tattered scrap of flesh into the flames, *dên* came upon Xue as if a shutter were opened in a dark room, and the arhat was Enlightened.

PASSION

Xue was a creature of fire and passion at the time of his enlightenment. Likewise, the Kuei-jin do not walk the Road Back because of profound education and love of heavenly moderation. They return from Yomi because of their talent as devils. The Kuei-jin rise from their graves as devils, and the Devils of Heaven feel that they must embrace this nature fully. "To do otherwise," a Devil-Tiger would say, "is to dwell in denial. The Gui Ren are not the Ten Thousand Immortals — the failure of their ancestors to cleave to the heavenly virtues stripped that title from them forever."

"We are the Ten Thousand Wicked Spirits," they would say, "and we are creatures of burning emotion!" Such is the heart of the Devil-Tiger philosophy — to embrace one's new nature fully. The P'o drives the Kuei-jin the way the heart drives a mortal. The P'o loves, hates, covets and lusts with an intensity that is undimmed by moral concerns. The Gui Ren can harness this dynamo, or they can spend their existences walling it away. For the Devil-Tigers, the choice is obvious.

A Kuei-jin should not be controlled by his P'o, for without control, the P'o is a simple-minded monster, unable to distinguish righteousness from hunger. Yet a Guan Ren cannot live in denial of his P'o without negative effects, any more than a human can live in denial of her instincts. Thus, what the other Dharmas seek to rationalize and abjure, the Devil-Tigers embrace and harness.

A model Devil-Tiger lives her every day with a complete and unflinching zeal, as if it were her last. An enlightened Devil-Tiger, like an animal, does only one thing at a time. When they fuck, they think of nothing but sex; when they kill, they know nothing but the joy of strife. They are mercurial, violent and imbued with an animal surety so strong that they sometimes find it difficult to walk among mortals undiscovered.

This is the peace the Devil-Tigers make with the P'o: The Hun accepts its primal brother. It will feel the passions of the animal soul and revel in them. In return, the P'o does the bidding of the Hun without complaint, for the Hun is a planner, and it knows paths to gratification the P'o could never dream of. While the Howl of the Devil-Tiger is the most easily understood and primal of the Dharmas, it is also the most difficult. A Devil of Heaven prospers or fails by the strength of her P'o, and to bow to the demands of the P'o is to accept a Moment of Blindness.

The P'o must be forever enslaved by force of will, harnessing the dark power of its animal soul and reveling in the lower soul's tumultuous desires and fierce yearnings without compromising the Hun's own agenda of righteousness. This knife-edge must be carefully balanced upon; it's one that many Kuei-jin begin but few complete. Those Gui Ren who fail become *chih-mei*, are destroyed or change to other, more placid Dharmas. Those who succeed become tempests in human shape, incarnate devils whose passions, they claim, blaze bright enough to burn the world to ashes in the coming Age of Sorrow. As Xue was exalted by his anguish when he tore the flesh from the bones of his skull, so too are the Devils of Heaven exalted by the intensity of their own passions. Just as the door to Enlightenment was opened for the Grand Arhat, thus does it open to those who would follow in his footsteps.

PAIN

Agony brought Xue to enlightenment. Not simple pain, but the terrible anguish of knowing that Heaven had withdrawn its favor from his people. Walking through fallen Meru, he knew that the Wan Xian had committed a sin so great that the very breath was taken from their bodies, leaving them to rot as no more than walking corpses. His world in ruins, the glory of the Immortals fallen to ashes, his own wickedness at the very surface of his heart, Xue could see matters clearly for the first time. So it is that the Devil-Tigers first perceive their situation clearly amidst the agonies of Yomi, brilliantly illuminated by the torments of the Thousand Hells.

The Devils of Heaven blow up from Yomi like storm clouds, but they know that complacency is never far away. The Wan Xian became corrupt and greedy while their mortal foes, the Yama Kings, grew ever stronger. Likewise, despite the urgency of his plight, the natural state of the Gui Ren is still the lassitudinous rhythm of a vanished

mortal life. To combat this complacency, the Devils of Heaven seek to keep themselves awake with reminders of their time in Hell. "There is nothing but rest in the Mouth of Yomi!" is the traditional shout of masters as they swing hot poker to beat sluggish disciples from their beds.

Though she may lurk in her den to recover from lost battles, the enlightened Devil-Tiger never rests on her successes. Where the P'o fails to provide impetus, needles dipped in salt and acid are applied instead. Sloth is the gateway to complacency, and ultimately to decadence and decline. Only pain staves off this ever-encroaching torpor. Agony is a glowing white reminder of the torments of the Thousand Hells, and a wakeup call for those whose attention has begun to drift toward matters of self-gratification. Of this, the Devil-Tigers are certain.

Indeed, the Devils of Heaven are veritable missionaries of pain. All around them, they see a world asleep and decadent. How ready it is for the burning poker of an enlightened master to come turn it out of bed and set it to training in the ways of righteousness! The Devil-Tigers seek to bring pain not just to themselves, but also to those around them, a reminder of life's urgent mission that is too awful to ignore.

The Devil-Tigers are not cut-rate sadists. Simple physical punishment has its place, but overindulgence in the primitive arts of agony not only serves the P'o, but it is spiritually limiting as well. Xue was not enlightened by a broken leg or battle wound, but by the disgrace and destruction of his immortal race. Likewise, the Devil-Tigers were not awakened by the banal brutalities of life, but by the sublime torments of the Yomi Hells.

Physical excruciation is certainly useful for persuading reluctant mortals or even awakening them spiritually; yet the hearts of the living would explode from agony or stop from shock long before the pain became great enough to make the gates of *dên* swing wide. Similarly, the excruciation of a being that has been exposed to the agonies of Yomi can consume an extraordinary amount of time. While such torments may have appeal as a leisure activity, they quickly lose their novelty — for both torturer and victim — when used as a teaching tool.

Well aware of this fact, the enlightened Devil-Tiger seeks to cause agony to herself and others that far surpasses the bounds of mere physical experience. The torments she inflicts are the agonies of the soul. If the touch of lye along a nerve is agony, how much greater is the wrenching emptiness of abandonment or the abject helplessness of grief? The greatest torturers among the Devil-Tigers never lay a hand on their victims. Instead, these enlightened monsters arrange vast tragedies and spectacular ruination with a master architect's or a professional flower arranger's sense of balance.

Not even the souls of the Unrighteous are proof against the Devil-Tiger. Those who have mastered the Dragon Tear may assail the soul directly, using their P'o to

TRAINING

Enlightenment hurts. Devil-Tiger training is harsh. Particularly during the *ré*, the student is tortured physically, emotionally and spiritually. On one level, this brutality keeps the student receptive during training. However, such brutality has other uses. Kuei-jin recently risen from Yomi Wan often have a great deal of difficulty maintaining their enlightenment if given time to focus on their recent circumstances. These *hin* either lapse into denial or become hysterical and fall to the P'o. This testing is one of the largest weeders of young *hin*, and half of all Kuei-jin that fail to survive past their *ré* are destroyed in the first few weeks.

By keeping the young vampire's mind firmly focused on where the next attack is coming from, the Devil-Tigers keep the student from pondering his condition too deeply until after he has had his feet planted firmly on the Road Back. This approach works, and it is the one the majority of Kuei-jin experience, but alternate methods exist. The Thousand Whispers and Resplendent Cranes use strictly regimented lifestyles and a religious atmosphere to bring about the same effect. However, the sheer size of the Devil-Tiger Infant Devil Civilizing movement guarantees that the average vampire's first clear memory is a fishing-hook-covered slap in the face.

brutally torture or even devour the spirits of the iniquitous. But such crass brutalities are extreme, and to be used on sinners in only the most extreme of circumstances, (including, of course, a pressing need on the Devil's part). Still, those *shen* who must confront the Devil-Tigers do so only with great trepidation, for centuries of enlightenment can end with but a single sharp glance from an elder Crimson Tiger.

RIGHTEOUSNESS

Xue stood in the burning ruins of Meru, his heart torn asunder by an excess of grief. Once a resplendent sage, he had become a faceless devil-corpse. His world was reduced to broken stones, destroyed not by the host of his enemies, but as punishment by the very Heaven the Wan Xian purported to serve. Xue was nothing — stripped of rank and breath — and he was crushed beneath the weight of his shame.

It was at this time that *dên* came to Xue. Faceless now, and with no identity save his wickedness, Xue still existed. Heaven had not destroyed the Wan Xian, only made them different and less than they had been. To believe that the fall of Meru had changed the nature of the world,

Xue realized, was the utmost height of self-involvement and hubris.

The world and the demands of the world had not changed, only the Ten Thousand Immortals' station in it. Though Xue might be a lifeless vampire, a blood-drinking Devil, he was still free to choose his way in the world. He might continue his degeneracy and turn his face downward and become a servant of the Yomi Lords, or Xue might mend his decadence and become a magnificent and cultured devil.

The Wan Xian would never be again: To seek redemption was to be a drunkard, crying over spilled wine. An official who proves inadequate and is transferred and demoted might prove himself in his new office and thus rise to become distinguished in another branch of the bureaucracy. Likewise, Xue might gain honor in the eyes of Heaven by embracing his new station and seeking to excel at it. It would not be easy, but it was not impossible. If Xue was to be a devil, then he would be the greatest devil that he could, and excel at all manner of devilish endeavor. Yet it is the obligation of all right-thinking creatures to pursue Enlightenment, and this Xue also resolved to do. Though he might be an abomination in the eyes of Heaven and Man, never again would he turn his face away from the road of wisdom and spiritual refinement. Thus was Xue enlightened, and the burden of his guilt became as light as a feather when he clasped his arms around his failure and embraced it.

OTHER DHARMAS

The Devils of Heaven see themselves as preserving the Wan Kuei from unrighteous behavior that endangers their society as a whole. The Devil-Tigers set Heretics (whom they see as misguided) firmly back on the path of righteousness, utilizing violence only if the heretic proves recalcitrant. Devil-Tigers see this role as an extension of their mission of Infant Devil Civilizing, and Heavenly Devil missionaries make their ways to the fringes of the Middle Kingdom and beyond regularly looking for *kanbujian* to educate. They treat followers of truly heretical faiths as *akuma* — they remove them from the Middle Kingdom quickly and efficiently, so that their poisonous faiths cannot contaminate the courts of the Wan Kuei. The five canonical Dharmas are almost universally tolerated. After all, the Grand Arhat and the Five Emperors ordained the Five Roads, and only the most fanatical of Devil-Tiger extremists question this judgment.

That tolerance doesn't mean that the Crimson Tigers think all the other Dharmas are just dandy. The Heavenly Devils are insufferably arrogant about their role in the cosmic order. If you ask him his thoughts off the top of his head, the average Devil-Tiger will tell you that the Heavenly Devils *are* the greater Yang force, and that the other Kuei-Jin should stand aside and take care of their little patches of turf. The Crimson Tigers will deal with this upcoming Age of Sorrow.

CHANGING DHARMAS

Devil-Tigers are a fractious lot, and they move rapidly between social groups and sects within the Dharma. Yet leaving the fold to try another Dharma is accepted as something young vampires do. Devil-Tigers who seem discouraged with the Dharma will be encouraged by their elders to shop around and try out different sects before they decide to depart, but it's generally accepted that some Kuei-jin just aren't cut out of Devil-Tiger cloth. Still, those Kuei-jin who were Devil-Tigers when they were young are habitually treated with a certain degree of respect by Devil-Tigers, even long after they've found new paths. "There's always a little devil left inside," or so the saying goes.

However, a mandarin who chooses to change his faith is a different matter. Many Kuei-jin quit once they discover that they cannot learn to be devils. That is acceptable. But to have achieved that exalted state and then *renounce* it! That is an insult to the Dharma and all the Gui Ren who follow it. The amount of time Devil-Tigers spend thinking about their Dharma would startle (and probably frighten) most outside its scarlet circle, but some things come straight from the heart. The hatred for recidivist mandarins is one of those things. Older Kuei-jin who leave the Dharma often go to great lengths to fake their deaths, change their identity and otherwise leave their old existences behind.

They do not do so out of fear of violence; no vampire survives to be an elder Devil-Tiger without being ready, willing and able to wield the tools of war and death. This decision is more motivated by the fact that if it ever becomes known that the Kuei-jin was a Devil-Tiger, Crimson Tigers forced to interact with him will give him no Face. As he has already given up on his Dharma, how can his judgment ever be trusted? Cooperation from Heavenly Devil peers and superiors is forced at best, and independent initiative on the part of Devil-Tiger subordinates vanishes in a wave of foot-dragging and pointless arguments.

The degree to which they display this attitude varies from Devil-Tiger to Devil-Tiger. Some, like those of the Searing Wind cult, are fanatics devoted to wiping out or suppressing the other Dharmas. Other Devil-Tigers adhere very strictly to an ecumenical view of the Dharmas as just one of five routes on the Road Back. As in most things, the majority of Devil-Tigers walk somewhere in the middle, embracing the fact that they're destined to be

ORIGINS

It is the Devil-Tiger view that the other Dharmas broke away from their philosophy at various points in the evolution of the Dharmic system. Needless to say, followers of other Dharmas don't necessarily agree with that assessment.

the key players of the next Age, while still attempting to honor the Way of Origin.

RESPLENDENT CRANES

The Resplendent Cranes broke away from the Devil-Tigers early in Kuei-jin history, during the Five Emperors period and near the tumultuous end of the Wan Kuei's first organized religious movements. Unsurprisingly, the primary reason for this schism was the matter that continues to divide the Dharmas today. While the faiths share a common thirst for righteous existence, Devil-Tigers make their fallen state as Gui Ren a keystone of their faith. In contrast, the Resplendent Cranes seek redemption in the eyes of Heaven and a return to the glory of the Wan Xian.

At the time, there was a great deal of acrimony between the Devil-Tigers and the schismatic Resplendent Cranes, made all the more heated by the political backing the Cranes received from the Five Emperors. While there is still a great deal of hard feeling today, intervening millennia have dulled hatred to an almost friendly contempt. Today, both Dharmas spend far more effort on sectarian disputes within their respective faiths than on inter-Dharmic conflicts.

Nevertheless, violence between Tigers and Cranes is not unknown, and emotional temperatures often run high. Both Dharmas indulge in a great deal of sophistry over which faith is more important to the cosmic cycle. The Devils of Heaven perceive the Cranes as millenarian, wasting their time speculating preparing for a pie-in-the-sky return to Meru rather than accepting the facts of the situation and preparing for the warfare of the Sixth Age. Furthermore, the Resplendent Crane predilection toward legalism leads them to be perceived as hidebound old women who look for a justification from Xue and the Sages to scratch their asses rather than acting from what their hearts know is righteous. For their part, the Resplendent Cranes think of the Devil-Tigers as blood-smeared savages reveling in their barbarism. The Cranes make



little secret of the fact that they plan to rebuild the world as an edifice of righteousness after the Devil-Tigers have destroyed the Demon Emperor. Most of them will know no happier day than the one on which the Eye of Heaven looks down on a world where the Devil-Tigers are no more.

Despite this ugly rivalry, the Devils of Heaven and the Cranes share the leadership of Kuei-jin society. Not only do the two groups comprise a majority of the Kuei-jin population in most areas, they share an agenda and worldview. While views on their roles in the rapidly looming turning of the Age may differ, the faiths are built on the same foundation. Mandarins and jina of the August Body of Sagacious Devils (see pg. 34) work side-by-side with Crane bureaucrats routinely on matters of concern to their courts, though both groups spend a lot of time proving which is the better.

THRASHING DRAGONS

The Devil-Tigers generally enjoy less cordial relations with this Dharma, their other direct offshoot, than with the Cranes. While both Tigers and Dragons place great emphasis on passion, most Heavenly Devils see the Thrashing Dragons *en masse* as degenerates who place self-gratification before spirituality. Where the Resplendent Cranes are fussy children determined to curry favor with the August Personage by tattling on their brothers and sisters, the Laughing Rainbows are simply base.

To the Heavenly Devils, wickedness and perversity are holy duties, and they are taken very seriously as a result. Most Devil-Tigers see themselves as responsible for tending the world's garden of darkness as well as the one within their individual souls. To these Kuei-jin, the habits of the Thrashing Dragons smack of either unsophisticated self-indulgence or the sort of decadence that led the Wan Xian to turn their faces away from Heaven. The Devil-Tigers usually tolerate the Thrashing Dragons, but they don't take them seriously.

In the southern reaches of the Middle Kingdom, where the Passion Bloodflower sect of the Thrashing Dragon Dharma displaces the Laughing Rainbows, the matter is quite different. In some places, the Bloodflowers live in harmony with the Devils of Heaven. Such is particularly true where sympathy for the Brilliant Embers sect of the Devil-Tigers runs deep. In other areas — most notably Thailand and some parts of the Malay interior — the Bloodflowers are much more extreme in outlook. Devil-Tigers not of the Brilliant Embers sect are sometimes subject to prejudice and violence, and even the Brilliant Embers tread lightly.

BONE FLOWERS

The Devil-Tigers regard the Song of the Shadows with a mixture of contempt and curiosity. As followers of the Lesser Yin virtue, the Bone Flowers are as diametrically opposed to the Devil-Tigers as a Dharma can be. The primary interactions between the Dharmas are very businesslike. The Devil-Tigers purchase information from the knowledge-loving Bone Flowers, and in turn, the followers of the Song of the Shadows use the Heavenly Devils to perform such tasks of distasteful violence as they find necessary.

Both groups hold the other in a distant sort of contempt, but interactions between the mainstreams of the Dharma are generally either very formal or part of a *wu*-relationship and thus very informal. The Devils of Heaven find the Bone Flowers to be annoyingly fleeting, irritatingly yielding and often irresistibly fascinating. In return, the Bone Flowers find the Devil-Tigers to be crass, ignorant and fascinated with just a single note in the symphony of the Tapestry, yet possessed of a vibrancy that is invigorating in a repulsive sort of way. Repelled yet mutually attracted, the Dharmas exist in an odd sort of symbiotic stasis that is the subject of much comment among Thousand Whispers scholars. Few Dharmas complement one-another so openly and so well, and strong emotional interdependencies whose precise nature is very difficult to describe often spring up between members of these Dharmas when they come together in a *wu*.

ROOTLESS TREES

The Devil-Tiger's relationship with the Rootless Trees is complex and marked by an indifference rare among such passionate beasts. Because the path originated with the Grand Arhat and has produced bodhisattvas, it is seen as valid. Nevertheless, it is also seen as profoundly different than the other Dharmic paths. The Way of Origin is more than mere words; those who walk the Road Back are remade in the agonies of Yomi. Heavenly Devils see themselves and other Kuei-jin as lost to the mortal world.

Yet the Rootless Trees cling in many ways to mortal roots, symbolically walking the Buddha's path and living a thousand fabricated lives to arrive at the Hundred Clouds. The Thousand Whispers *dāh*, the Devil-Tigers believe, is unlike the *dāh* of other Kuei-jin. Rather than apotheosizing as a perfect servant of the Heaven, they instead become a true bodhisattva, an enlightened saint whose soul is microcosmic of the universe.

This path is neither good nor bad. Many of the Celestial Devils see the Hollow Reeds as cowardly yet clever, but the Devils of Heaven do not judge the Thousand Whispers by Devil-Tiger standards. Most Devil-

Tigers feel a sincere unstated respect for the Wise Centipedes, and some Devil-Tiger mandarins habitually act as volunteer tomb-guards for Rootless Trees who would not otherwise be able to undergo the ritual to properly shed a current mortal identity.

HERETICAL DHARMAS

Flame of the Rising Phoenix

To the Devil-Tigers, a Kuei-jin following the Flame of the Rising Phoenix is not on the Road Back but instead languishes in denial. Coming to grips with the residues of his earthly life is a part of every Kuei-jin's spiritual journey. Clinging to the Running Monkey stage is simply a sign of unwillingness to admit an atrocious karmic situation. If all that was required for a Kuei-jin to reach the Hundred Clouds was self-acceptance, most Wan Kuei would disappear by the time they had existed for a mortal lifetime.

To become a mandarin requires a level of enlightenment beyond the ability of a mortal to achieve, and self-acceptance is part and parcel of that state. The bodhisattvas point out that despite similarities, Kuei-jin clearly are not ghosts — there is no Transcendence for those whose karma is poor enough to land them a Second Breath, only the millennia-long quest for the Hundred Clouds. When asked about the lack of bodhisattvas for the Rising Phoenix path, most Devil-Tigers helpfully point out that a broken path leads nowhere, and that it is difficult to contact those who have fallen into the Mouth of Yomi.

The Tempest of Inward Focus

While followers of the Tempest of Inward Focus act differently than followers of the Path of the Thousand Whispers, most Devil-Tigers find the philosophies just as alien as those of the Rootless Trees. Wise Centipedes are afraid to live one life too much, and the Tempests are afraid to live at all. What's the difference, really? Young or ambitious Devil-Tigers sometimes participate in hunting Tempests where the Dharmic path is persecuted. For the most part, however, the Devils of Heaven don't hunt out followers of this faith, and when they come to the attention of the Devil-Tigers, they're usually just chased off or forced to recant their heresies rather than destroyed.

The Face of the Gods

Few things will cause a Devil-Tiger to stop the hunt for an *akuma*, but even the fanatics of the Black Iron Talons will ignore their devil-eaten quarry to erase one of the self-proclaimed "Godlings" from the face of the Middle Kingdom. As all right-thinking Devil-Tigers know, O was driven to madness by the *akuma* who infested his court as punishment for his insight into the nature of Yomi. To believe that his final rantings are anything more than the plaintive scratching of a mad creature is the height of wishful thinking. And to presume to usurp the title of God when Heaven stripped the Ten Thousand Immortals of their station for hubris? That arrogance is an insult to the

August Personage of Jade, Xue, the Arhats and the Celestial Order as well as a slap in the face every breathless and accursed Kuei-jin who is not a self-deluding fool. The Devil-Tigers see the Godlings as abscesses in the body of the Tapestry, and themselves as the Surgeons of Heaven, come to burn out the pus and cauterize the wound. There may be pain and scars from the operation, but the Heavenly Devils know in their black hearts that even amputation is better than letting such a gangrenous infection persist.

Spirit of the Living Earth

Inasmuch as Devil-Tigers are ever compassionate, most of the Devils of Heaven find the Cerulean Veils to be sadly misguided. While the Veil's misunderstandings of the Celestial Order are just as serious as those of the Godlings, they possess none of the Godlings' hubris. Rather than elevating themselves, the Cerulean Veils underrate themselves, doing obeisance to spirits who are no more than officials in other branches of the Celestial Order. That the spirits do not find some tactful way to explain the truth of this embarrassing situation is just another sign of the Natural Order's decay.

Some malevolent Devil-Tigers take advantage of these sadly misinformed heretics, posing as powers in the spirit world and bending Cerulean Veils to their will. Most instead attempt to educate these sad souls in the true nature of the Middle Kingdom, as part of the Devil-Tiger's task of Infant Devil Civilizing. If the Veil does not or will not listen, then how things proceed depends on the Devil-Tiger in question. Some take direct action, some inform elders of their court, and a few just let the sadly misinformed creature go on its way if it is not in danger of becoming *chih-mei*. Such generosity is rare, however, in the case of such a severe heresy.

THE FLOATING WORLD

The Wan Kuei do not walk the world alone. The dark corners of the Middle Kingdom teem with *shen*, and there are more topics for an aspiring mandarin to master than mere religious politics. Extreme creatures, the Devil-Tigers have extreme interactions with the world around them. The attitudes that follow are, as always, that of the fictional "average" Devil-Tiger. Individuals have unique backgrounds, personalities and habits that may cause them to act strongly at odds with Dharmic stereotype.

SPECTRES, BANES AND BAKEMONO

To understand the Dharma's attitude toward Banes and Spectres, it is important to remember that the Devil-Tigers do not see themselves as *acting like* devils, they see themselves *as* devils. The Devils of Heaven believe themselves to be just that — divinely ordained agents of the Celestial Bureaucracy. As a result, the Heavenly Devils' attitude toward wicked spirits is not one of fear or hatred, but of command and authority.

Though lesser evils can be dangerous or destructive to the Heavenly Order when in the command of the Yama Kings or some other unrighteous being, the Devil-Tigers believe that such forces of wickedness are essential to the turning of the Ages — provided they are controlled properly. By the estimation of the Devil-Tigers, they are the beings best suited to provide this control.

Just as the Bone Flowers traffic with the spirits of the Yin world and the Thrashing Dragons with the spirits of Yang, so the Devil-Tigers make their way among the spirits of darkness. To put none too fine a point on it, many members of the Devil-Tiger Dharma are casual demonologists. While bargaining with one's soul or acknowledging a wicked spirit as master is cause for a Moment of Blindness as well as a capital offense, to command or demand obedience is no sin at all: It is the Kuei-jin's right by the Mandate of Hell.

Rare indeed is the Devil-Tiger jina or mandarin whose home and person are not protected by bakemono, and who does not have wicked spirits at her beck and call. The practice is hazardous, for wicked spirits are often quite fierce or bound to the service of unrighteous evils like the Yama Kings or their western counterparts, the Onceborn and Maeljin Incarna. Existence without peril is not existence at all, however, and to enforce their mandate the Devil-Tigers have developed what may be the World of Darkness' largest store of demonological information unrelated to the worship of dark powers.

Among the *shen*, only the Lightning People can rival the Devil-Tiger's knowledge and command of evil spirits. While this claim does nothing to endear the Devils of Heaven to hengeyokai and *hsien*, who have difficulty distinguishing Devil-Tigers from *akuma*, most vampires of more than a few years of age are as accustomed to this traffic with dark powers as we are to electricity. However wondrous or frightening it may be to the outside observer, demonology has been the unvarying custom of the Devils of Heaven since the Five Emperors period, and it is considered in no way out of the ordinary.

MORTALS

The Devil-Tigers divide mortals into two types: Those who are righteous, and those who are sinners. For the Devils of Heaven, just as for mortals, the line between sin and righteousness is a fine one, and one that is often difficult to locate. Few Tigers find this vagueness to be a paralyzing problem, however. Unlike the Resplendent Cranes, most vampires of this Dharma view sin and iniquity as inescapable components of the human condition. The tenets of the Devil-Tiger Dharma recognize explicitly the essentially banal character of most evil. "Even if the Celestial Devils murdered a sinner at the moment of his first transgression," these Kuei-jin say, "new sinners would spring up instantly to take his place."

As a result, most Devil-Tigers see themselves as groundskeepers in the garden of iniquity. Their mission is not to monitor the progress of each individual leaf and

flower. The beauty of the world is in its natural vibrancy, and such careful tending would inevitably spoil the effect. Instead, the Devil-Tigers trim the bushes and pull the weeds that endanger the garden as a whole. By lopping off the most egregiously malformed branches, the Heavenly Devils protect the entire tree from its own weight.

This is not to say that the Tigers have not devised exhaustive catalogs of sins and their prescribed punishments. Such literature is actually quite common among followers of the Dharma, but most of it is of a strictly academic character. Not only are there few Devil-Tigers and many sinners, it is demeaning and far below the station of an agent of the Celestial Bureaucracy for these Kuei-jin to go about excruciating adulterers.

Other than as an intellectual exercise, there are two primary reasons the Devil-Tigers take interest in minor sinners. First, many Devil-Tigers have a compunction about feeding on the pure of heart. Sinners are the purview of the Heavenly Devils: Unlike the behavior of the stereotypical western devil, tempting the righteous to iniquity is of little or no interest to the average Crimson Tiger. Most followers of this Dharma are perfectly content to leave the blameless to their own devices. Thus, many of these Gui Ren find it important to rest assured that a potential vessel is under their jurisdiction before feeding.

The second reason is the need for practice. Young Devil-Tigers must learn their art somehow, and it would be terrible for an especially infamous sinner's punishment to go awry because inexperience made his tormentor clumsy or unsure. While the Devils of Heaven can, of course, practice the strictly technical aspects of torture on one-another, a certain amount of practical training is necessary for a truly well-rounded education. Leaving aside details like the mortal propensity for heart failure when subjected to prolonged agony, torture of any sort is a profoundly psychological act, and that aspect cannot be simulated anywhere outside the field.

Accordingly, a certain number of the Middle Kingdom's shabby con men, dishonest tax accountants and sleazy used furniture salesmen are utterly destroyed each year, or else they vanish without a trace. Presumably victims of poor fortune or on the run from creditors, these unfortunates serve as learning experiences for novice Devil-Tigers, or as dress rehearsals for the ruination or excruciation of particularly infamous sinners.

THE TRULY WICKED

The deeply iniquitous, however, attract much closer scrutiny from the Devils of Heaven than the average mortal. Most obviously, punishing the wicked is part of the devilish vocation. Devil-Tigers see punishing sinners is a combination of sport and religious activity. Some pursue solo careers, while others join social societies similar to sports clubs and punish the wicked as a team effort. These clubs often specialize in particular sins, and there are national and international invitation-only or-

ganizations where the masters of the art congregate to refine their techniques and work together to bring about the downfall of the truly irredeemable.

Simple anguish and agony aren't the only goals of the Devil-Tigers when walking among the unrighteous. In the same way that many Devils of Heaven are compelled to feed from only the immoral, a great portion of them likewise prefer to use the wicked and corrupt to build their power bases. The Celestial Devils do not acquire power simply to further their personal agendas and their wars against the Yama Kings. There are always the needs of tomorrow to plan for, and elegant evil is expensive. For the Devils of Heaven, evil and acquisitiveness typically go hand-in-hand, and many Devil-Tigers apply themselves diligently to the pursuit of wealth and influence as part of their Dharmic path.

As luck would have it, wealth and influence tend to congregate naturally in the hands of the wicked. Thus, through bribery, blackmail and intimidation, they channel the sins of the unrighteous toward the cause of Heaven — as embodied by its duly designated representatives, of course. Though the sins of the guilty may seem to go unpunished, serving a Devil-Tiger master for the remainder of one's miserable existence is, in most cases, far greater punishment than any simple torture could ever be.

But bilking the wicked of their money and influence is not the only practical way the Heavenly Devils deal with them. Not every sinner is politically and financially adept. Much of society's refuse is composed of nothing more than piggish, uncultured thugs. Devil-Tigers blackmail or buy some of these rapists, abusers and cold-blooded murderers for use as cheap muscle. More often, those servants whose intellectual and social integrity aren't essential to performing their function are given special treatment — why should the Devils of Heaven use mere mortal servants when they can command bakemono?

More loyal than mere humans and considerably more resilient, bakemono are the Devil-Tigers' menial servants of choice. While bakemono cannot usually compare to dhampyrs or Ban Ren Guei in terms of flexibility, there are some tasks for which one flavor of gibbering fiend is as good as another. Over the millennia, the Devil-Tigers have compiled a vast catalog of minor spirits and the bakemono which they create. While the Devil-Tigers cannot tailor their bakemono to particular circumstances, most of them have a fair assortment of possibilities at their disposal, provided that they can obtain the proper spirit and mortal host. Devil-Tigers call mortals capable of being made bakemono "little urns."

CHIH-MEI

The Devil-Tigers have a paradoxical relationship with *chih-mei*. Capturing *chih-mei* and subjecting them to the Rite of Restoring the Dharmic Balance is known as "infant devil civilizing," and is considered as much a sport as punishing sinners. Reports of a *chih-mei* in the area bring Infant Devil Civilizing Societies from several dis-

tricts away looking to get the prestige of the capture. Unrighteous persons whom the Heavenly Devils kill in the course of their duties are traditionally watched for three lunar months after their deaths in case they take the Second Breath. The *hin* that result from successful applications of Restoring the Dharmic Balance are questioned and evaluated, their horoscopes drawn, their directions determined and their spiritual balance pondered.

Those whom seem likely to become successful Devil-Tigers are either put through their *ré* by their captors or shipped out to the Dharma's extensive network of volunteer teachers. The Devil-Tigers normally exhibit a startlingly ecumenical streak when caring for their young charges. Those Kuei-jin who are obviously destined for another Dharmic path are generally given to members of that Dharma for instruction. However, sectarian allegiance can and does play a role in the decision about tutoring. For example, the Searing Wind keeps the *hin* that gets a hold of, regardless of each soul's predilections. Likewise, Devil-Tigers from Chi Virtue-oriented sects like the Brilliant Coals and the Righteous Earth-Prison Smiting Fist tend to retain students positive to their Chi Virtue, even if a given student doesn't exactly seem to fit the Devil-Tiger mold.

The Devil-Tigers show no sympathy to those *chih-mei* who do not respond to Restoring the Dharmic Balance. These unfortunate creatures have incurred the ultimate wrath of Heaven: Torn from the Great Cycle, they are destined to live again as the feral hunting dogs of other vampires until they meet the Final Death and descend into the Mouth of Yomi. Just as the Devil-Tigers use bakemono and Ban Ren Guei impassively to serve their ends, they likewise accept without squeamishness their station as masters of these degenerate souls. Few non-Devil-Tiger Kuei-jin are so accepting of this fact, and so the duties of the court's First Oni usually include keeping the kennel for the court's *chih-mei*.

DHAMPYRS AND BAN REN GUEI

Most Devil-Tigers are notably reluctant to create dhampyrs. Though they have no compunctions about coupling with humans, the Heavenly Devils find the offspring of such unions to be problematic, at least inasmuch as they are to be used as mortal underlings. Even the half-living offspring of the Gui Ren are born innocent — raising a dhampyr solely to participate in wickedness deeply offends many Devil-Tigers' sense of propriety. As a result, few Devil-Tigers reproduce unless for some reason they genuinely wish to bear and raise offspring. It is a rare desire, but hardly unknown.

Inauspicious though it is, the practice of creating dhampyrs would probably thrive among the Devil-Tigers as it does among Kuei-jin of other Dharmas save for a simple fact: The Celestial Devils have access to something comparable in effectiveness to dhampyrs yet more in line with their Dharmic philosophy. This something is the Ban Ren Guei, the Half-Devil People. Born from the



union of a succubus-like Bane-spirit and a sleeping mortal, the Ban Ren Guei are born into wickedness and predisposed to loyalty toward the master of the Sleeper-Seducing Bane that bore them.

Half-Devil People are born as bakemono, naturally loyal to the Devil-Tiger who caused them to be created and inherently evil. On the downside, the Ban Ren Guei have short lifespans compared to dhampyrs — a normal mortal lifespan, more or less. Because Ban Ren Guei are born as children (and because they mature at a normal rate), a Kuei-jin who chooses to rely on Half-Devil People as her daylight servants will spend nearly a quarter of the Half-Devil Person's effective lifespan raising and training her. Also, while her bakemono gifts are powerful and naturally concealed inside a body superficially indistinguishable from a normal mortal's, they are all the supernatural ability the Half-Devil Person will ever possess. Half-Devil People are not half-vampire, thus they cannot learn shintai, nor do they have Demon Chi unless it is one of their bakemono gifts.

Regardless of these weaknesses, the inherent loyalty and naturally malevolent disposition of the Ban Ren Guei make them attractive servants to Heavenly Devils in ways that normal dhampyrs can never be. Not only are they less morally repugnant to use, Ban Ren Guei may be created without resort to permanent Yang imbalance, mastery of the Equilibrium Discipline or a difficult and expensive fertility regimen on the part of the Devil-Tiger. Kuei-jin who are permanently Yang imbalanced can even mate with a Sleeper-Seducing Bane themselves. While the resulting offspring is a normal Ban Ren Guei and not a dhampir, the Sleeper-Seducing Bane gestates the child regardless of the partner's sex. Among other things, this property allows female Kuei-jin to reproduce, after a fashion, without massively increased Chi intake or the inconvenience of actually carrying a child to term (or as close to term as is necessary). Many female Devil-Tigers who choose to bear dhampyrs cut the infant from their bodies early, trusting in the half-damned child's supernatural resilience to keep it alive after only seven or eight months.

THE YAMA KINGS

The Wan Xian were charged to protect the Middle Kingdom from the depredations of the Yama Kings, and it was the blandishments of the Lords of Yomi that led the Ten Thousand Immortals down the path of decadence and disgrace. These facts alone have earned the Yama Kings the enmity, not just of the Devils of Heaven, but also of all right-thinking Wan Kuei.

Yet the Celestial Devils bear the Yama Kings an especial hatred. In their quest for spiritual power, the Yama Kings have abandoned their Heaven-mandated position as punishers of the wicked and the unrighteous. The Devil-Tigers feel themselves to have inherited this position. Thus, not only do they bear the Yama Kings

enmity for the downfall of the Wan Xian, most Devil-Tigers consider it their spiritual duty to see to the punishment of their indisputably wicked and unrighteous predecessors.

The degree to which the Devil-Tigers should devote themselves to holy war against the Yama Kings and the method by which the war should be carried out is one of the main divisive forces in Devil-Tiger society. Doubtless, this fact amuses the Lords of Yomi Wan, but the Devils of Heaven take it very seriously. There are a number of important Devil-Tiger sects whose beliefs are defined primarily by their outlook on the war against the Yama Kings. These apparently irreconcilable doctrinal questions caused great strife in the early Five Emperors period, until the Emperors decreed that the Devil-Tigers should not form large organized religious bodies or make war on one-another over their methods for combating the Demon Emperor.

Today the primary sects of the Devil-Tiger faith are defined by their belief that each Devil-Tiger must choose his own path in determining where his devilish duty lies. While proscribed sects thrive on the edges of Kuei-jin society, the prohibition on compulsion has become institutionalized in most courts. Sectarian aggression among the Celestial Devils is generally punished severely by the mandarins in an attempt to preserve the peace. Demotion, transfer, public shaming and severe excruciation are all common punishments, and over-zealous Devil-Tigers have been known to Meet the Eye of Heaven for their sins.

Perversely, this strict individuality has aided the efforts of the Devil-Tigers, forcing the Yama Kings to deal with warfare on a thousand fronts and forestalling ill-advised attempts to storm the gates of Hell *en masse*. Radical decentralization has also spared the Devils of Heaven the brutal rivalry between sects and temples that seemingly wracks the Resplendent Cranes and the more organized sects of the other Dharmas.

AKUMA

Devil-Tigers may hate the Yama Kings, but they reserve their uttermost abhorrence for those *shen* who become the slaves of Yomi. The Devils of Heaven have arrested their downward slide and turned away from the decadence that caused the fall of the Wan Xian. To the eyes of the Devil-Tigers, there is no greater abomination than willingly choosing to continue the spiral into Yomi. To destroy an *akuma*, the Black Iron Talons say, is to do the degenerate soul a great favor. It is better to end an existence of shame and indignity with a plunge into the Mouth of Yomi than to continue on, bound in chains of spiritual slavery to the Yama Kings.

Every Heavenly Devil is expected to seek out and destroy *akuma* wherever they occur. *Akuma* hunting is as much a Dharmic tradition as Infant Devil Civilizing or the torturing of sinners. Some Devil-Tigers are particularly devoted to this practice, however. The Black Iron Talons, perhaps one of the Dharma's most exotic sects,

specialize in this practice. Of particular interest to the Talons are former Devil-Tigers in the service of the Yama Kings. Kuei-jin of other Dharmas who succumb to the blandishments of the Yama Kings are seen as having committed an unforgivable but understandable sin. Tiger *akuma*, however, are seen as having fallen from the True Path, and Black Iron Talons hunt these renegades with particular fervor.

Though the Talons are not the only Kuei-jin who hunt the devil-eaten, they are indubitably the best-connected, with ties to the Wu Lung and Shih demon hunters and rumored alliances with the Tengu and the *hsien* society known as the Yü. The proscribed Devil-Tiger cult known as the Searing Wind also boasts a division — the Righteous Apostles of Extraordinary Valor — that hunts *akuma*. Whispered by some to have unofficial ties with the Black Iron Talons, the Righteous Apostles take advantage of their strictly illegal nature to hunt servants of the Yama Kings too politically powerful for more legitimate demon hunters to investigate. A victim of the Apostles is left covered in white lotuses and red pepper, with a prayer strip affixed to his forehead commending the August Personage to show mercy on his unworthy soul.

THE SIXTH AGE

The Devil-Tigers look forward to the coming Sixth Age with a breathless expectation. For the Heavenly Devils, the coming Age of Sorrow will be their finest hour. With the August Personage in self-imposed exile and the Demon Emperor enthroned, the chains of propriety that have held the Heavenly Devils back for so long will be shattered and they will stride the world unleashed and unfettered.

Glorious in their brilliance, the Devils of Heaven will show the Yama Kings their true face; that of wickedness without bound, the grinning mask of a hatred so great that it can only be depicted in caricature. Where there is order, the Devil-Tigers will sow chaos. Where there is harmony, the Crimson Tigers will perpetuate discord. Where one stone stands atop another, the Heavenly Devils will knock it down, and where the minions of the Demon Emperor are greeted with bowed neck, the Devil-Tigers will wield the headsman's axe.

The Devil-Tigers plan to make a blaze so great that the very pillars of Heaven will burn down and the sky will fall. The Earth will be razed and the spirit worlds left barren. The rule of the Demon Emperor will be troubled and unsure, and when that great evil finally falls before the burning claws of the Heavenly Devils, there will be nothing but the cold ashes of a great fire left to greet the morning of the Seventh Age.

That the Devil-Tigers will perish in their war is assured. A hatred as great as the one the Heavenly Devils hold in their hearts cannot fail to encompass the one who does the hating. It may even be that the Devil-Tiger's war is ultimately futile, and that they will be crushed beneath

EATING YUGEN

Kuei-jin wouldn't risk censure and murder at the hands of the Kuan-Yü if there weren't a good reason to consume Yugen. What cannot be portrayed in mechanics is the fact that the unified Chi of the *hsien* is immensely euphoric to the Gui Ren — similar to the best parts of both cannabis and cocaine, but combined with a sense of spiritual elevation that no mortal drug can match. As might be imagined, Yugen is almost instantly addictive.

Mechanically, Yugen is handy to have. Yugen is quite concentrated, circulating around the heart as an opalescent gas, or concentrating in the fissures of the brain as quicksilver. A Kuei-jin with Yugen in her body should note the amount somewhere, as it takes up none of the space the vampire normally uses to store Chi.

Yugen may be spent as either Yin or Yang Chi to power Disciplines, but most addicts consider doing so a waste. More often, Yugen is spent to aspect the corpse. In this case, it animates the Kuei-jin's body for 10 days as if it were Yin Chi while providing all the benefits of scarlet cycling. More importantly, a Kuei-jin who has fed on Yugen is a subject to the previously mentioned euphoric effects for the entire period that the substance is used to animate his body. Ancient kaja texts relate that this state is similar to day-to-day existence as one of the Wan Xian. Certainly, it is conducive to spiritual enlightenment. While a Kuei-jin is Gold Cycled (as addicts call it), the maximum cap of her Dharma score lifts, and Auspicious Occasions become much easier, as if she were ranks below her actual rating. Moments of Blindness are not made more common by Yugen abuse.

Nevertheless, there are some drawbacks. First, the Gold Cycled Kuei-jin tends to be manic, and he often becomes aggressive and overconfident. All difficulties when rolling for Fire Soul increase by two, and the Storyteller should consider inflicting one or more derangements (like mania or megalomania) for those on a long-term high. Also, being euphoric for every waking hour of 10 days is immensely addictive. A Kuei-jin who comes off a Gold Cycle needs a successful Willpower roll (difficulty 8) to avoid either Gold Cycling himself immediately or (if he is out of Yugen) finding a *hsien* to feed from. The player must make this roll every time the Kuei-jin awakens or is presented with the opportunity to feed from a *hsien* for 10 times as many days as he was Gold Cycled.

There is no crash like a Yugen crash. A Kuei-jin is listless, enervated (unable to spend temporary Willpower for automatic success) and he suffers a difficulty penalty of two on all actions, not including his P'o's rolls for soul states, for as many days after he comes down as he was Gold Cycled. Note that becoming Gold Cycled again simply puts off the inevitable crash. Keep a running total of the vampire's days of withdrawal and addiction remaining. They just keep adding up until the Kuei-jin goes cold-turkey through the withdrawal and beats the habit.

Also, the synthetic enlightenment gained by a Kuei-jin while Gold Cycled evaporates instantly when he comes down. Note the vampire's Dharma at the moment he becomes Gold Cycled. That is the Dharma he returns to the moment he ceases to be Gold Cycled, even if he spent several centuries high on Yugen and became a bodhisattva in the meanwhile.

When the euphoria goes, the concomitant cosmic understanding dissipates with it. Even if the Kuei-jin becomes Gold Cycled again, he must regain the knowledge from the ground up. As one might expect, the suicide rate among so-called "gold mandarins" forced to kick the habit is extremely high, and many Kuei-jin who rise quickly to high station either use Yugen, or they are rumored to have done so by their enemies.

The Yama Kings are known to have stores of synthetic Yugen synthesized from mortal bodhisattvas they've forcibly restrained from passage into the next incarnation. Some Yama Kings, particularly Mikaboshi, supply addicts with their fix via Iris Bulb Commerce. Others break the chains of addiction for a fee. Of course, all the Lords of Yomi provide for their favored servants, the greater *akuma*, and Yugen addiction has led to the fall of many a distinguished young mandarin.

the iron heel of the Demon Emperor in the coming Age. To the Celestial Devils, it matters not. In the Age of Sorrow, the Devil-Tigers will once again unfurl the battle-banners of the Wan Xian and enter the affray as the emissaries of Heaven.

The flame burns brightest just before it winks out. The Sixth Age, the Devil-Tigers say, shall be the Gui Ren's brilliant moment of redemption before the blackness of the Mouth of Yomi. The Wan Xian failed — the Wan Kuei shall not. They will burn the palace of the Demon Emperor down around his ears, and then walk into the blaze themselves. From the ashes of the blaze shall spring new life. "What," the bodhisattvas ask, "could comprise a more auspicious occasion?"

HENGEYOKAI

Individual Devil-Tigers and hengeyokai get along poorly as a rule, though constant diplomacy between the courts of the Emerald Mother and the Kuei-Jin courts allows the hengeyokai and Kuei-jin to coexist in relative peace. Some Kitsune and Tengu even have ties with the Black Iron Talons. But diplomats aside, the average skin-changer wants nothing to do with a Devil-Tiger. The Devils of Heaven reek of the Centipede, and it is their professed intention to destroy the Emerald Mother in the coming age.

Though wise heads may say that the fire opens up the forest for new growth, Rage and the high ideals of youth make conflict inevitable. Hengeyokai exist to fight menaces to the Emerald Mother and Devil-Tigers are unmistakably such a menace in need of fighting. While pressure from above holds younger hengeyokai back from a general conflict, scattered outbreaks of violence are a constant backdrop to relations in locations where Devil-Tigers and skin-changers are forced into close proximity. Even those hengeyokai who consider the Celestial Devils to be minions of the Harmoniously Annihilating Centipede, rather than mere undead servants of the Universe Trampling Centipede, often find the Devil-Tigers difficult to bear. Masters of Bane-spirits and unrepentantly evil, the Devil-Tigers can be painful for even the wisest of the Middle Dragons to keep company with.

HSIEN

Compared to the Crimson Tigers' relationship with the *hsien*, the Devil-Tigers and the hengeyokai are great friends. *Hsien* power their magics with a form of unified Chi derived from answered prayers. This rarefied substance, called Yugen, is very similar to the purified Chi that once flowed through the bodies of the Wan Xian. To the Gui Ren, ingesting Yugen is a heady and highly addictive experience. Needless to say, the behavior of Yugen-addicted Kuei-jin has bred some serious ill feelings, particularly in areas — like much of the Golden Courts — where such behavior is seen as shameful or offensive only if one is caught.

While they are, by no means, the sole offenders, Devil-Tigers are definitely the Kuei-jin most likely to prey on the Little Gods. Individual Heavenly Devils may have quite serious qualms about the morality of such actions, but the Crimson Tigers as a Dharma are no more reluctant to drain *hsien* of their Yugen than they are to devour souls. Many Devil-Tigers see feeding on these "lesser" spirit beings as similar to commanding Banes — just another privilege of high station.

The *hsien* object quite strongly to being preyed on by walking corpses clinging to a long-vanished station as Princes of the Earth. This feeling is particularly strong since the fall of the Wan Xian led more or less directly to the *hsien*'s own current predicament. Over the centuries, the Household Gods have made quite clear — often through action by the Yü, their chamber militant — the totally unacceptable nature of attacking *hsien* for their Yugen. In most courts, it is at least theoretically illegal to harass the *hsien*, and in most civilized areas, offenders can expect to be actually punished.

Still, even in the best areas there are Running Monkeys who have not yet learned their manners and older deviants who use cunning and high station to protect themselves. Many of these unrighteous individuals are Devil-Tigers, and those who aren't often claim allegiance to the Dharma to muddy investigations of their misdeeds. For the own part, Devil-Tiger responses tend to run in the vein of "kill your assailant next time to teach other hooligans a lesson, or at least maim her so she can be more easily identified." However, Devil-Tigers who take the capabilities of the Little Gods lightly often find themselves suffering as emphatically as they would have at the hands of the most skilled member of their own Dharma. The *hsien* are not to be trifled with, and the typical Devil-Tiger combination of predatory wickedness and thoughtless arrogance can rouse fierce responses.

Wise ancestors seat *hsien* and Crimson Tiger delegations a prudent distance from one another, preferably with someone between them able to keep the peace. Better yet is to never force the two groups into the same space, since a delegation of Khan warriors is difficult to come by and inappropriate for many events.

THE DEAD

As cousin to the Restless Dead and frequent travelers of the spirit worlds, the Kuei-jin are no strangers to the Yellow Springs. Typically, Kuei-jin interact with ghosts in a high-handed fashion. While they are *shen*, ghosts have no place in the Celestial Bureaucracy, and young ones are fairly weak compared to the Wan Kuei. Theoretically, with the exception of *kuei* and other Spectral menaces, the Kuei-jin have been forbidden by treaty since the Five Emperors periods from feeding on the Restless Dead of the Yellow Springs. In reality, there are Kuei-jin who feed from ghosts. The Kuei-jin can bribe officials with jade, which is trivially easy for the vampires to obtain and precious beyond accounting to the dead.



Those Cathayans who are too poor or antisocial to pay for the privilege can simply terrorize a region. As long as their depredations are not excessive, local magistrates cover up the losses rather than risk poor performance reports. In addition, some Kuei-jin work for the Imperial government as part of the Protectorate of the Prosperous Realm, and many others serve in a volunteer or irregular fashion at all levels. When in the Occupied Territories, these vampires often feed from ghosts. However, the Kuei-jin is expected to make up the cost for destroying any of the barbarians that make up the Emperor's possessions. As might be imagined, for every wrong the Chinese Kuei-jin can cite as perpetrated by invading *ketsuki*, Japanese vampires can name another committed on *nihonjin* ancestor spirits by Quincunx Kuei-jin.

While sects like the Knightly Ghost-Tigers and the Righteous Earth-Prison Smiting Fist walk among the dead, they do not do so in nearly the same numbers as the Bone Flowers and the Resplendent Cranes. For the Devil-Tigers, the Restless Dead are neither objects of enlightenment (as for the Bone Flowers) nor political allies (as for the Resplendent Cranes). They are just another facet of unlife in the Middle Kingdom, and one that is at least superficially opposed to the Heavenly Devil's Dharmic path. There are those Devil-Tigers who do interact with

the Restless Dead a great deal, but most of these Kuei-jin reside in the West, marching with Yu Huang's troops against the Emperor of Stygia.

CHI'N TA

Like all the Wan Kuei, the Devil-Tigers dislike the Lightning People. If the Gui Ren are as they name themselves — bureaucrats — then the Namebreakers are imperial princes, or eunuchs with access to the ear of the August Personage. The Miracle Walkers sprint where the Devil Tigers must walk with trembling care, and some accomplish in mere lifetimes deeds that require centuries from the Gui Ren. Yet Heaven often frowns on these prodigal children, and these expressions of Heavenly displeasure make the Moments of Blindness seem genuinely pleasant.

The Devil-Tigers can at least tolerate the Wu Lung. Traditionalists and well-ordered, the Dragon Wizards understand the manner in which matters are to be transacted between devils and sorcerers. Though they may be arrogant, they obey the forms and leave the Devils of Heaven to their tasks. The Tigers see the Akashic Brotherhood, however, as self-righteous fools, always willing to leap in where they don't belong and trouble a Devil's existence. Pity the Akashic nephandus whose fallen sta-

tus becomes known to the Black Iron Talons. For their own part, the Akashics reciprocate their feeling, and meetings between the groups are never dull.

As for the Five Metal Dragons, they have learned to tread widely around the Devils of Heaven. The Crimson Tigers have a "push back harder when disturbed" reflex, and so, a quiet but tense truce has come into existence between the Stone People and the Kuei-jin after a few unfortunate incidents. It may be that the *zaibatsu* will make a concerted effort to wipe the Crimson Tigers from the Middle Kingdom some day, but that day is unlikely to come very soon.

WITCH-HUNTERS

Devil-Tigers have an interesting relationship with human witch-hunters. While they are easily the most common target of amateur witch-hunters like police and holy men, the Shih rarely find quarrel with the Heavenly Devils. The Shih hunt *shen* who have overstepped the bounds Heaven set for them. The Devil-Tigers hunt mortals who have overstepped those boundaries.

Unlike many Kuei-jin, the Devil-Tigers have long since forgiven the Shih for the Burning of the Books. Both sides had overstepped their boundaries, and both sides were punished for their transgressions. The Black Iron Talons and the Shih are known to pass information back and forth and even to work together on occasion. Many Heavenly Devils, regardless of sect, pass money and assistance to the Shih when they can, either openly or covertly, seeing them as fellow Warriors of Righteousness down on their luck.

However good their relations are with the Shih, the Devil-Tigers learn to deal with witch-hunters as a part of the basic training. Sooner or later, every Devil-Tiger will have to face an intolerant holy man, a vice cop who won't take his bribe and go home or the vengeful family and associates of a sinner or former business rival. They train for that day, because they know it's going to come. As a result, the Heavenly Devils are a lot more clever in dealing with witch-hunters than many would expect.

While some hunters can be subverted or frightened and shooed away, others are more determined, and the compunction many Devil-Tigers hold for harming the innocent often makes for troublesome situations. The approach varies from Devil-Tiger to Devil-Tiger, but most of the Heavenly Devils have a good idea of when to cut their losses and move on.

KIN-JIN

To understand exactly why the Kuei-jin are intolerant of the Kin-jin, it's important to remember that they don't see them as "fellow vampires." The Wan Kuei are proud descendants of the Ten Thousand Immortals, and though they may be ruined and disgraced, they still hold station in the Celestial Bureaucracy. The Children of Caine are degenerate creatures, freakish parasites cursed by the legacy of a homicidal farmer. To say that they're the "same thing" is to call a dog and a person the "same thing" because they both have four limbs and hair.

However, other than finding them distasteful, most Devil-Tigers could care less about the Kin-jin. They are monsters in a world full of monsters, different from the Kumo or *hengeyokai* only in that they come from a foreign land where they occupy the same supernatural ecological niche as the Gui Ren of the Middle Kingdom. Where they oppose the Devil-Tiger's goals, they are dealt with through force or guile, as with any other competition.

This feeling has led many Quincunx Devil-Tigers into opposition of the Great Leap Outward. While securing the borders of the Middle Kingdom against Cainite infestation is critical, this crusade to cleanse foreign lands in the name of righteousness is coming a bit late in the day. The Young Turk extremists among the Cranes can launch all the crusades they want once the Demon Emperor has been defeated. Until then, most Devil-Tigers see the Leap as a misguided waste of resources, the equivalent of weeding the garden while your house is on fire. Devil-Tigers and Crane moderates have together formed a party called the Harmonious Menders of Broken Fences to advocate the so-called "Two-Fang Serpent Plan."

This plan has two goals, or fangs. The first is to secure the Middle Kingdom against Cainite invasion and reclaim the lost capitals of the Flesh and Flame Courts. The second is a concession to extremists, and it involves the establishment of a court in a single foreign city as a test case for the plausibility of a larger campaign. So far, the Fence-Menders have been successful in this first goal, reclaiming the Flesh Court and bringing the Silent Mandarins back under the Quincunx's wing. Now, all eyes are cast toward Los Angeles, where events rush nightly closer to the climax of the political battle between the moderate and extremists factions of the Quincunx.



GOD IS NOT MOCKED, HE KNOWS OUR BUSINESS

TEN THOUSAND RAZOR SPLINTERS

Called "ten thousand razor splinters/ a sea of hateful agony" by the Thousand Whispers bodhisattva Marble Gong, the internal politics of the Devil-Tiger sect are best described by the word "fractious." As vibrant, passionate and violent as the fire they idolize and personify, the Devils of Heaven are individualistic and schismatic *in extremis*. While there are organized and accepted Devil-Tiger political structures, all are marked by regular internal strife.

While this political energy makes the Dharma competitive with the better organized (but more sedate) Resplendent Cranes, it does have its drawbacks. It is believed that as many as one in five Devil-Tigers sympathizes to some degree with the beliefs of one of the Dharma's proscribed extremist sects. This chapter describes a number of important Devil-Tiger sects, both those that form the core of the Dharma and the more notable extremist groups.

GREATER SECTS

The two great sects of Devil-Tiger society coexist side-by-side in relative harmony, with about 80 percent of Devil-Tigers belonging to one, and about 60 percent of the Devils of Heaven belong to both. While polysectarianism is considered normal among the general adherents of the Dharma, there are always a certain number of zealots who consider their particular sect to be in exclusive possession of the truth.

These fanatics normally make up the administrative structure of their sect. Not only do these extremists sometimes lash out at other sects within the Devil-Tiger Dharma, factions within a sect can (and quite often do) resort to violence when debating matters of internal doctrine. These intra-sect feuds can become so intense as to figure prominently in local court politics. For example, the politics of the Malay Peninsula are marked by the peaceful coexistence of the region's Devil-Tigers and Thrashing Dragons, but by bloody sectarian disputes within the Sagacious Devil temples that form the core of the region's Devil-Tiger presence.

THE AUGUST BODY OF SAGACIOUS DEVILS

The Sagacious Devils trace their roots to the period of confusion immediately following the foundation of the Dharma system and the Five Emperors' ban on large Devil-Tiger churches. While it was clear even to the Devil-Tigers of the time that some sort of large scale organization needed to be established, it was through political alliance between the heads of several moderate groups that the August Body was formed. Wise even at that time, these half-fallen Wan Xian created an organization that could help Devil-Tigers as a group to walk the Road Back without causing further wars. Balanced by the Society of Brigands and Decadent Dynasty Toppling Devils, the Sagacious Devils have historically provided a non-sectarian body for the furtherance of the Devil-Tiger Dharma. Now, in the shadow of the Sixth Age, the Sagacious Devils administer a few last tests before the final tumult erupts, hoping to bring the standards of the Dharma up just that much further for the trying times ahead.

STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE

A council of bodhisattvas advised by a number of elder mandarins leads the Sagacious Devils. This organization composes and administers a series of competency tests that gauge not only a Kuei-jin's progress along the Road Back, but also his aptitude at various administrative skills.

THE PRICE OF HONORS

One of the less obvious means by which the August Body exerts its will over the followers of the Dharma is through prestation. A Kuei-jin owes a minor boon to the sect as a whole and a major boon to the mandarins who administered the test. Likewise, intensive tutoring is worth a major boon. As a rule, members of the August Body are quite generous in writing off these boons for service to the sect (though in times of crisis they can and do wring a boon for everything that it's worth).

However, the Sagacious Devils are extremely reluctant to accept payment in a form other than service to the sect (though they do reluctantly honor large payments of cash). This web of unpaid testing and tutoring fees holds many younger Devil-Tigers in iron chains, because there is no way they can repay the actual value of the boons they owe. It isn't obviously visible because no one wishes to make the shame of indebtedness a public matter, but scratch a court full of Sagacious Devils, and you will find a political web of obligation that is in many ways as strict as any Resplendent Crane temple's hierarchy.

By adhering to rigid quality standards, the Sagacious Devils have made an excellent reputation for the administrative acumen of their members. While August Body administrators are very different in method than those who emerge from the Thousand Crane temples that specialize in training Kuei-jin from public service, these Devil-Tigers are still the equal of any Crane of equivalent rank. Devil-Tigers who wish to be taken seriously in the administration of their court must usually achieve at least the second or third rank of the August Body's complex and highly competitive initiation system.

The Sagacious Devils also regulate and propagate classical works of Kuei-jin scholarship and literature to support the uniform base of knowledge assumed by their examination system. These texts are generally excellent translations and commentaries, and they are used by many Gui Ren outside the Dharma as standard references. These texts compete well against similar offerings of the Thousand Whispers Dharma. As a rule, Sagacious Devil commentaries are more scholarly in character, focusing on analyzing the various subtleties of meaning involved in the work. By contrast, the interpretations produced by the Cunning Centipedes have a broader focus, oriented as they are toward seeing from many distinct perspectives at once.

CENSURE AND EXAMINATION

The August Body governs its followers both directly, through the use of censure, and indirectly through a more complex process of political advancement. The direct process of censure is simple — when a member of the August Body is caught performing acts that transgress against the Sagacious Devils' interpretation of the Devil-Tiger code, certain of that vampire's ranks are suspended until she makes restitution for her misdeeds. In strictly traditionalist groups like the *Uji no Bishamon* and the Blood Court, where Devil-Tigers are required to hold certain rank in the Sagacious Devils to enjoy public office, this penalty is extremely severe. The vampire is deprived of his title and position as well as being disgraced until he satisfies the local elders of the Body.

Even in areas where governance partakes of a less formal character, to be stripped of one's degrees is a serious shame. The extent to which this penalty impedes the Kuei-jin's political career varies. In less "civilized" areas of the Middle Kingdom, like the Flesh and Flame Courts or the chaotic tangle of the Golden Courts, such punishment is often nothing more than a *pro forma* wrist-slapping. Likewise, some Japanese and Korean vampires can accept heimin status after such a disgrace and continue to exert their influence from behind the scenes. This tactic is a political ploy, however, and a strategy that only the most charismatic and politically adept mandarins can pursue. As a rule, to be censured is a setback, although sometimes a less severe one than one might think.



However, it is the August Body's control over the character and focus of the sect's membership that forms the real basis of their political power. The Sagacious Devils' use of an extremely competitive standardized ranking system yokes young Gui Ren's desire for self-advancement to the goals and ideals of the leadership. By determining what skills and attitudes are required to perform well on the tests, the August Body assures itself that Devil-Tigers all over the Middle Kingdom hone their skills in a particular area assiduously. Yearly, young Devils of Heaven spend countless hours training to out-perform their peers in the ability to perform whatever tasks the August Body chooses to emphasize during the composition of the examinations. Sectarian differences within the Sagacious Devils are reflected by conflicts within the testing and education bureaucracy, as various interest groups vie to encourage the adoption of questions and examination policies that favor their interests.

DOCTRINE AND BELIEFS

The August Body of Sagacious Devils has a decidedly ecumenical character. The August Body has historically seen itself as setting the baseline for Devil-Tiger training and behavior, which is very much the case. The lower levels of the examination system aim to produce a Kuei-jin with a firm grounding in the traditions of the Dharma. Early examinations focus on the vampire's knowledge of

classics of Dharmic literature, the development of an understanding of the Dharma's basic tenets, and a mastery of the "timeless" skills of human interaction.

An Apprentice Devil is expected to do the following: demonstrate a basic understanding of the *Ki Chuan*, write a series of short essays describing the Path of the Heavenly Devil, obtain a herd without arousing official suspicion, know the basics of effective torture and interrogation, then find (and suborn to his service) a sinner whose abilities and position will make him a useful tool for the Devil-Tiger. While the August Body stresses this mixture of classical education, interpersonal relations skills and administrative aptitude, the required education becomes increasingly diverse as the vampire advances in rank.

The requirement does not exist to inspire a mastery of an ever-increasing store of historical trivia: Sagacious Devils are some of the most relentlessly forward-thinking Kuei-jin in the Middle Kingdom. Basic firearm skills have been necessary to advance to Journeyman Devil since 1891, and basic computer skills were added to the Apprentice Devil examinations in 1985. A Skillful Devil is familiar with network and internet theory, basic chemistry, biology and physics, data security, modern espionage and forensic technology, basic office applications, modern administrative procedures and current political economy. He also knows the classical regimen of armed

and unarmed martial arts, torture and sin, human espionage techniques, classical human and Kuei-jin scholarship, penmanship, etiquette, linguistics and art. The August Body wants renaissance devils, and it has forever to train them.

SAGACIOUS DEVIL RANKS

Members of The August Body of Sagacious Devils must test up rank by rank, incurring the necessary obligations to the August Body and passing all the requisite examinations. Regular testing is required. Short refresher tests can be taken every 10 years, or the rank can be allowed to lapse into honorary status and then renewed when needed (typically to assume or hold some office in the Kuei-jin's court). In most courts that require degrees, a Devil-Tiger jina must be Skillful, and a mandarin must be Sturdy.

It should be noted that not every Devil-Tiger tests up to his capability. Very few positions require a vampire to be of higher rank than Talented, and meeting the requirements for the higher ranks is extremely difficult. Nevertheless, ranking confers status among Devil-Tigers and Kuei-jin society as a whole, and it gives the Heavenly Devil the reassurance that she is following a tried-and-true training program devised by righteous and enlightened individuals. Sagacious Devil ranking may be expensive and troublesome to maintain, but it has never served anyone badly to pursue a regimen of personal betterment developed by a panel of bodhisattvas.

In addition to the basic title, an elaborate system of comparative ratings exists within each rank. Those Kuei-jin who have taken the test some time ago have their scores compared to those who have tested more recently via an elaborate system that forces older vampires to constantly perform in order to retain their honorifics.

The best-scoring Kuei-jin in a region are awarded the title of Jade Devil, as in "Sturdy Jade Devil." The second highest two scorers are known as Sapphire Devils. This ranking system continues down through Emerald (3 per region), Gold (4 per region), Silver (6 per region) and Brass (10 per region) to Bamboo Devils, who are the undifferentiated mass of title-holders who passed the minimum requirements but did not distinguish themselves among their peers. Bamboo Devils often omit their honorific title.

Those Devil-Tigers who have scored perfectly on their latest test are given the title Perfected (as in: Sturdy Perfected Devil). The Devil-Tiger keeps his honorific title even if he later loses his perfect score or when advancing in rank, so a Skillful Perfected Gold Devil is possible).

Listed here are the ranks and current minimum requirements to hold them.

RANKS

Apprentice (Minimum Dharma 1, Confers Status 1)

Academics 1, Alertness 1, Brawl (or Martial Arts) 1, Dodge 1, Empathy 1, Etiquette 1, Intimidation 1, Investigation 1, Melee 1, Politics 1, Stealth 1, Subterfuge 1, Survival 1

Journeyman (Minimum Dharma 2, Confers Status 1)

Alertness 2, Athletics 1, Brawl (or Martial Arts) 2, Computer 1, Dodge 2, Drive 1, Empathy 2, Etiquette 2, Expression 1, Finance 1, Firearms 1, Intimidation 2, Investigation 2, Law 1, Leadership 1, Medicine 1, Melee 2, Occult 1, Performance 1, Politics 2, Science 1, Stealth 1, Subterfuge 2, Survival 1

Skillful (Minimum Dharma 4, Confers Status 3)

Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl (or Martial Arts) 3, Computer 2, Dodge 3, Drive 2, Empathy 3, Etiquette 4, Expression 2, Finance 2, Firearms 2, Intimidation 4, Investigation 3, Law 2, Leadership 2, Linguistics 1 (Kaja), Melee 2, Medicine 2, Occult 1, Performance 1, Politics 4, Rituals 1, Science 3, Stealth 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 3, Survival 2

Sturdy (Minimum Dharma 5, Confers Status 4)

Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Brawl (or Martial Arts) 3, Computer 3, Dodge 3, Drive 2, Empathy 4, Etiquette 5, Expression 3, Finance 3, Firearms 2, Intimidation 5, Investigation 4, Law 3, Leadership 4, Linguistics 3, Medicine 3, Melee 2, Occult 1, Performance 1, Politics 5, Rituals 2, Science 4, Stealth 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 5, Survival 2

Talented (Minimum Dharma 6, Confers Status 5)

Alertness 5, Athletics 3, Brawl (or Martial Arts) 4, Computer 3, Dodge 4, Drive 2, Empathy 5, Etiquette 6, Expression 4, Finance 4, Firearms 3, Intimidation 6, Investigation 5, Law 4, Leadership 4, Linguistics 5, Medicine 4, Melee 3, Occult 2, Performance 2, Politics 6, Rituals 3, Science 4, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 6, Stealth 4, Survival 3

Wise (Minimum Dharma 7, Confers Status 6)

Alertness 6, Athletics 3, Brawl (or Martial Arts) 4, Computer 4, Dodge 4, Drive 3, Empathy 6, Etiquette 7, Expression 4, Finance 5, Firearms 3, Intimidation 7, Investigation 6, Law 5, Leadership 5, Linguistics 5, Medicine 4, Melee 4, Occult 3, Performance 2, Politics 7, Rituals 4, Science 5, Stealth 5, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 7, Survival 4

Sagacious (Minimum Dharma 8, Confers Status 7)

Alertness 6, Athletics 4, Brawl (or Martial Arts) 5, Computer 4, Dodge 4, Drive 3, Empathy 7, Etiquette 8, Expression 5, Finance 6, Firearms 3, Intimidation 8, Investigation 6, Law 5, Leadership 6, Linguistics 5, Medicine 5, Melee 5, Occult 4, Performance 2, Politics 8, Rituals 5, Science 6, Stealth 6, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 8, Survival 4

Obviously, a Devil-Tiger must match the minimum scores listed before testing for the rank in question, rather than taking the test and having the Abilities bestowed magically as a result.

REMEMBER WHEN?

Historically, the Devil-Tiger faith is a three-legged stool, but the third leg of the stool has made its last appearance, and it is unlikely to appear again. Called the Society of Brigands and Decadent Dynasty Toppling Devils, these "societies" were actually mobs of socially disadvantaged jina and disciple Devil-Tigers who would spring up in times of major civil unrest, when the *shen* could operate more openly.

Through an elaborate combination of ethical calculus and astrological projections, the bodhisattvas of the Devil-Tiger Dharma (including several members of the Sagacious Devils) occasionally pronounced the Mandate of Heaven to have been withdrawn from the currently reigning mortal dynasty. This signal motivated the Devil-Tigers of the Quincunx to rise up and drag down the ailing government.

When the bodhisattvas announced that the Mandate had been withdrawn, these younger Crimson Tigers would spring into motion all across the Quincunx. Since there was generally little doubt when the Mandate was soon to be officially withdrawn, most jina who would be participating had prepared their plans for some time. Some Devil-Tigers roamed the countryside, frightening mortals and spreading the news that wicked spirits walked abroad. Others worked with the brigands and secret societies to organize uprisings. The Devil-Tigers saw the changing of the dynasties as similar to the changing of the Ages, and they sought to pull down old structures and make room for new growth.

This civic spirit was not always appreciated. Certainly the Resplendent Cranes and other Gui Ren holding the reins of power were traditionally less than pleased at the wave of spiritual unrest that sweeps across the Middle Kingdom to wipe their years of carefully built-up influence away. Likewise, the Shih and the *hsien* were hardly overjoyed to see vastly increased activity on the part of the Devils of Heaven. Yet while the Withdrawal of the Mandate had an effect on the Middle Kingdom, it was also invariably followed by (rather than anticipating or precipitating) the critical events in the fall of the dynasty.

The Withdrawal of the Mandate and the Brigand Society did not exist only to break down old mortal social institutions, but also (and primarily) to challenge the influence of the August Body of Sagacious Devils. By clearly defining periods of social turmoil, Devil-Tiger elders were able to flush out Crimson Tigers who were inflexible or who had not built the foundations of their power base strongly. Overwhelmed by a wave of profiteering and opportunistic jina now free to gather influence to the best of their abilities, mandarins who had secured their position through prestaton and politics were forced to prove their ability to function in a time of turmoil. This Darwinian motivation is one of the reasons the bodhisattvas of the Sagacious Devils supported the movement — it helped ensure that the August Body would never be a forum for professional politicians. Those who were strong survived, and those who were weak were as chaff in the fire of history.

The Society of Brigands and Decadent Dynasty Toppling Devils was last called out during the Taiping Rebellion, and it persevered until the fall of the Manchu dynasty. It is unlikely that the Society will be called out again before the turning of the Age. Earlier this century, Japanese Kuei-jin took advantage of the strife among Quincunx Devil-Tigers to launch an invasion of China during the fall of the Manchu dynasty. More importantly, the onrushing Age of Sorrow has washed away simple concerns about social advancement.

The Righteousness Societies are counting on toppling the governments of the mortal world systematically at the dawn of the Sixth Age. It is crucial to their plans for chaos that a large number of governments fall at once. The bodhisattvas recognize this, and they have indicated that they will not signal the end of the Mao Dynasty until the Age turns. Now, ironically, jina who should now be waiting restlessly for the announcement that the Mandate has been withdrawn instead struggle furiously to prop up the Chinese government so that it can be made to collapse at the dawn of the coming Age. In some cases, these Kuei-jin struggle against only the decaying totalitarian structure's own weight, but in other cases, they must battle the servants of the Yama Kings, who labor diligently to throw the government into chaos before the Age of Sorrow begins so that a successor dynasty can have begun to develop by the time the Demon Emperor is enthroned. Thankfully, the Yama Kings spend at least as much time fighting one another as they do the Wan Kuei.

Equivalents to the Brigand Societies exist in Japan and Korea, but not in the Golden Courts, where the *penangallan* have their own social rules and customs preventing the holders of power from becoming too ossified.

THE THOUSAND EMBERS

RIGHTEOUSNESS SOCIETIES

If the August Body provides for the political and administrative existence of the average Devil-Tiger, then the Righteousness Societies provide for her social and moral center. Like the August Body, the Righteousness Societies trace their origins to the Five Emperors period. However, unlike the Sagacious Devils, the Righteousness Societies were externally mandated.

Weary of sectarian violence between nascent sects of what would become the Devil-Tiger Dharma, the Five Emperors decreed that, for the common good, no Devil-Tiger sects of great size would be permitted to continue existing. With the help of the Resplendent Cranes, the Emperors then broke the backs of the major sects. Not only did this crusade shift the structure of Kuei-jin spirituality forever, it also defined the concept of the Dharma.

Over the centuries, the resulting structure — the Thousand Ember Righteousness Society — has persevered and prospered. The Societies have become central to both the Dharma's social structure, and to its beliefs as generally practiced. In the Green Courts, Quincunx and in the *uji* of Japan, the Righteousness Societies are a facet of everyday existence for the Devils of Heaven. While this social order has entered a state of profound decay in Southeast Asia since the expulsion of the Golden Courts, it still has a strong residual influence. The Golden Courts are home to countless extremist sects and heretical cults, but the heritage of the Thousand Embers is clear to see — these splinter groups that throng the southern nights are defined by their relation to Thousand Ember beliefs. Though the sect itself is on the wane in the outlands, it still defines the mainstream of Devil-Tiger Dharmic thought, even on Middle Kingdom's border marches.

STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE

In place of large religious orders, the Devil-Tigers have developed a system of organization which might be likened to Bible-study groups, neo-pagan covens or other small faith circles. Each group supports between two and 30 Devil-Tigers, with eight to 14 being the most typical range. These organizations typically span court boundaries, and any densely populated area will have at least two or three such groups.

In contrast to the Sagacious Devils, the Righteousness Societies are not usually hierarchical in structure. Instead, each member has a partner assigned to him shortly after joining the Society. This partner — almost always a Dharmic peer — serves as an all-purpose buddy in a symbiotic relationship of mutual support. These partnerships can be loose or strong, binding or easily dissolved, depending on the Society. Regardless, they are one of the common features of the Thousand Embers, and they serve much the same purpose as a partner in any difficult endeavor.

Above the level of partner exists a loose meritocracy of talented warriors, planners and mystics who each contribute their skills to the Society. Because this rank is not based on political position, it serves as a counterweight to the more formal August Body hierarchy. This structure naturally helps combat the strength of the Sagacious Devil hierarchy. Most Devils of Heaven are quite aware of this, and support it — in most cases, with the implicit backing of the local ancestor and mandarins.

While the ambitious Devil-Tiger does occasionally claw her way into a position of dominance in both the regional Sagacious Devil hierarchy and a major Righteousness Society, such acquisitiveness is unseemly. Power-hungry elders are likely to be dragged down by fellow Crimson Tigers, who see the rising stars and their cronies as monopolizing political advancement. In this often-bloody drive for equal opportunity, both elder Heavenly Devils and mandarins of other Dharmas aid the younger and more egalitarian-minded members of the Dharma. Disgrace and death are not the only ways to eliminate such an ambitious elder. Promotion and transfer to a position as an ambassador, shrine guardian or other politically impotent role is just as effective as a jade knife in pulling the teeth of hungry Tigers.

The overall effect is a resilient stasis of incredibly fine grain and detail that is built on constant conflict. The August Body provides the Dharma with the skills and political unity it needs to survive in the tumult of the dying Fifth Age, while the Righteousness Societies allow Devil-Tigers the freedom to develop their own responses to the coming Age of Sorrow. Most of all, both branches of this Byzantine social order provide the Devil-Tigers an outlet for the boundless energy every Heavenly Devil keeps under leash.

The fact that the Crimson Tigers keep busy with their internal warring and hold back from disrupting the fabric of the Middle Kingdom is a most attractive state of affairs to ancestors and mandarins of other Dharmas, who would otherwise have to clean up a constant mess of impromptu vendettas. A majority of Devil-Tigers has come to approve of this condition as well. The formal systems of the August Body are supplemented by an informal meritocracy and *guanxi* network. By focusing their aggressive energies inward, the Celestial Devils hone their skills against opponents as energetic and ruthless as themselves. For now, this arrangement suits the Devils of Heaven; there will be time enough for blood in the coming age. Indeed, one might say that there will be nothing *but* time for bloodletting in the Age of Sorrow.

DOCTRINE AND BELIEFS

The centerpiece belief of the Thousand Embers Righteousness Societies is that the Demon Emperor will come to the Throne of Heaven with great strength. Such will be his strength that any immediate, concerted effort by the Devils of Heaven to confront him, however organized, is doomed to total failure. Instead, these Devil-Tigers be-

THE DAY OF TWO SUNS

August 6th, 1945, the day of Hiroshima's destruction in an atomic fireball, is celebrated as one of the greatest holidays of the Thousand Embers sect. While many *shen* bewail the damage to Honshu's chi lines, it was a moment of near-messianic validation for the Embers. For millennia, the bodhisattvas had claimed that when the time was right, the Devil-Tigers would destroy the mortal world. Lamely their disciples had drawn tentative plans, knowing that even the best efforts at spreading pestilence or mass extermination of the mortals would prove at best temporary disruptions.

Now, suddenly, the means to ruin the Floating World utterly had been delivered into the claws of the Heavenly Devils. Devil-Tigers across the Middle Kingdom rejoiced. Many Celestial Devils achieved a moment of *dên* upon hearing the news of the nuclear blast, and many others who had fallen from the Devil-Tiger path and into other Dharmas returned to the fold.

Heavenly Deviljina and mandarins have very fond memories of the attack. Most elder Celestial Devils can relate exactly where they were when they heard the news of the blast. In fact, Devil-Tigers often travel to Hiroshima on pilgrimage. Although the city has been rebuilt, the blast is replayed again and again in the Mirrorlands of the Yin World. The trip is difficult and dangerous, yet Crimson Tiger after Crimson Tiger braves the dangers of the devastated zone to witness for himself the glory of the second sun.

lieve that the Celestial Devils should each act as a spark cast on the volatile tinder of the world at the changing of the Ages — thus the name of the sect. By forcing the Demon Emperor to divide his forces, Devil-Tigers gain a chance to organize resistance and fight the emergent Emperor's *akuma* and demon warriors piecemeal. Most importantly, it will allow them to destroy the social structures and infrastructure that make effective rulership possible.

Without the organized mortal world at his fingertips, the Demon Emperor will find it considerably more difficult to consolidate his reign. Thus, when the Age turns, the Thousand Embers will set themselves to kindling the funeral pyre of mortal civilization as a firebreak. By acting in pairs or as individual Righteousness Societies, the Thousand Embers will be impossible to predict as a group, and almost certainly impossible to stop as they go about their errands of sabotage and terror.



The Righteousness Societies delight in the high technology and crumbling global order of the late 20th century. All across the Middle Kingdom, Righteous Embers stockpile biological and nuclear weapons that slip through the fingers of the dying Soviet giant. In basements, Devil-Tiger zealots prepare neurotoxins and hallucinogenic agents for dispersal in public places. Celestial Devils lay plans for the assassination of key public figures and decision-making bureaucrats. The more technically adept of these Kuei-jin slip into the telecommunication and power grids, planting back doors and hacking scripts to assure that the Demon Emperor comes to the throne of a world without phone service or electricity. Each a self-guided weapon in the last and greatest war the world will ever see, these lethal sparks worm their way into the bone-dry straw of the Middle Kingdom — an inferno waiting to be born.

After they have destroyed human civilization, the Thousand Embers plan to wage a guerrilla war against the Demon Emperor, rallying mortals, Kuei-jin and other interested *shen* to the banner of Righteousness. Plans for this phase of the resistance are sketchy. Devil-Tigers with oracular abilities find the turning of the Age difficult to predict clearly. While accurate local scryings seem possible, general forecasts of the Middle Kingdom's future produce only hazy images of strife and turmoil — a phenomenon common to times when many great powers move across the Tapestry.

Most Thousand Embers see the conflict as a protracted struggle, taking decades or possibly even centuries to resolve as the various factions attempt to establish power bases in the ruined Tapestry and Floating World. The end result, they believe, will be both the final destruction of the Demon Emperor and the end of the Devil-Tigers, but no one can tell if this resolution will be the dawn of a new age or the final sunset for the Floating World. In truth, few even care. If asked, the Devil-Tigers answer, "Why does the fire burn? Because it has fuel!"

Obviously, the Embers don't spend their entire time on the Road Back planning for the turning of the Ages. Preparations for the coming of the Demon Emperor have only begun in the last few centuries, and have only kicked into high gear since the Taiping Rebellion. Historically, the Righteousness societies have been friendship circles, study groups and mutual advancement societies. Even leaving aside a vampire's personal interests in passion and wickedness, there was, and still is, much for an individual Kuei-jin to do other than plan for the coming apocalypse. There is the quest for Enlightenment, the duty to find and punish the truly wicked and the night-to-night needs — sustenance, security, resources and politics — that even the most dedicated Crimson Tiger must tend to. In all of these facts of unlife, the vampire's Righteousness Society provides him with assistance.

As with any small religious community, the services available and their quality vary from Society to Society. Members of a small, poor Society who don't really involve themselves with the community *might* be able to impose

on their fellows in the Society for a place to sleep and a few hundred American dollars. For active and popular members of a large, rich Righteousness Society, things brighten considerably. Vessels, loans, investment funds, weapons and short- and long-term havens are all potentially available.

An organization as small as a Righteousness Society inevitably derives its identity from the character of its parts. Most Societies have a closed-door policy, interviewing applicants closely to determine their suitability for the group. Thus, each society has a unique character. Some Righteousness Societies are nothing more than mutual-advancement clubs, while others are genuine spiritual communities. Most fall somewhere in the middle.

The three primary functions that are made available to any member in good standing of the community are tutelage, advocacy and fellowship. Tutelage includes Discipline training and (more routinely) spiritual instruction. Its value is obvious: Only with rare exceptions do a Kuei-jin's abilities and enlightenment develop naturally, and by helping those who are worse off today, the vampire develops *guanxi* with her fellow Society members. When it is inevitably her turn to be the one asking for aid, she can expect those favors to be repaid.

How much of this relationship is genuine human feeling and how much of it is calculated varies from individual to individual and Society to Society. Certainly, this situation is hardly unique to the Kuei-jin, or even to Asian society. In any culture that finds patronage and reciprocal gift-giving to be acceptable, questions of nepotism and favor-currying inevitably arise. Devil-Tiger responses run the entire gamut of human feeling; the Devils of Heaven are not simply "bad people." The proper practice of the Dharma and obedience to the dictates of Heaven are of critical importance to the Crimson Tigers. On the other hand, more than any other Kuei-jin, the Heavenly Devils are subject to the human frailties of vanity and the desire for power.

Advocacy is equally important. Kuei-jin society, particularly formal society, is very hierarchical when it comes to power relationships. Without access to older members of their Dharma, young Devil-Tigers have almost no ability to gain the benefits of their society or assert their status. Travel papers, permission to meddle in mortal affairs and domain over areas and arbitration of disputes — either through judgment or shadow war — all require the intervention of elders. Without a mandarin or jina to advocate his cause before the ancestor, a Disciple is worse off than a heimin, who at least has the privilege of representing himself.

Finally, fellowship is never to be underrated. No being can walk the Road Back every waking moment. Every Kuei-jin must from time to time relax and reap what joy it can from existence. The company of like souls at moments like this is a great comfort, and so Devil-Tigers often congregate together take a time out from their efforts. What these vampires do together varies. Many

Kuei-jin take their jobs home with them and unwind through excruciation and violation of themselves and others. Other Gui Ren relax via a gamut of diversions that encompass both human (sports and hunting, video game leagues, music and dance, debauchery and romance) and distinctly inhuman (the dream theatre and bottled emotions of the Yellow Springs the incomprehensible gambling games of lesser Bane-spirits) amusements. In any case, most Kuei-jin prefer the company of like-minded fellows when taking their leisure. Many Righteousness Societies are well-known for pursuing a particular diversion, and thus, they tend to attract Devil-Tigers interested in that diversion, even from across the Middle Kingdom.

Whether the structure of the Thousand Embers dictates their doctrine or the doctrine dictates their structure is a question that has never ceased to vex the sect. Certainly, most schisms in the Dharma come about due to the belief that the structure that arose so many millennia ago was a matter of political expediency rather than consideration of the Dharma's needs. The counterpoint to this argument is the postulate that the Wan Kuei who forced the reorganization of the Dharma were highly enlightened individuals, as were the Devil-Tigers who spearheaded the formation of the Thousand Embers Righteousness Societies. All of these Gui Ren were too enlightened to compromise on an issue of such crucial importance as the fate of the world in the coming Age.

Of the very few arhats remaining from those distant eras of history, none will speak at any length on the subject. History, young Devil-Tigers have become used to hearing, is for the young and the restless to create, not for the old and settled to dwell on. The issue has never been resolved to the satisfaction of the majority of Celestial Devils, and given the late date, it probably never will be.

LESSER SECTS

Most of the Dharma's countless splinter sects are of limited geographic influence, or driven by a single charismatic leader, and very few are of a stable character. Such sects can form very quickly and dissolve just as rapidly from internal dissension.

A jungle of lesser beliefs has proliferated in the shadow of the three great Devil-Tiger sects. In coming to understand this culture of religious diversity, it must be kept in mind that the Devils of Heaven embrace a polysectarian existence. Many sects in no way attempt to provide for the whole of a member's spiritual existence, because it is assumed that the Cathayan will be a member of another group which *does* deal with those issues. These "sects" are really much more like professional organizations or special interest clubs than religions. Obviously there are some exceptions. The Searing Wind cult, for example, is the very model of a rigid monosectarian system. However, belonging to multiple sects is accepted, and unless the sect you chose to join is proscribed by the

political authorities of the area, there are no real penalties associated with cross-membership. Though there might be social problems for Devils of Heaven who belong to unpopular sects, the ancient prohibitions against religious coercion among the Devil-Tigers are still quite well-enforced.

The basis for sects can vary wildly. The structure of the Thousand Embers Righteousness Societies makes every different gathering of Crimson Tigers essentially an independent religion, a perfect breeding ground for extremist and deviant beliefs. After all, every Devil-Tiger perceives her role as a Devil slightly differently, and thus, she perceives different ways of going about it. The foundations for sects range from carrying out local political agendas to the genuine extremist sects who back some Kuei-jin or another as their Chosen Champion to battle the Demon Emperor. In reality, the only difference between the average lesser sect and a number of Righteousness Societies working together informally is that the sect takes a special name for itself.

PROSCRIPTION

Proscription for individual sects can have its roots in politics or theology, and it is always a hazard for minor sects. Political proscription is fairly common. In a society where religion and politics are inextricably intertwined, the difference between "political opponent" and "heretic" is minimal. Religious proscription is much more rare, at least in the Quincunx, because of the permissive nature of both the society and the Devil-Tiger Dharma. It is generally undertaken only when a sect is both militant and unrepentantly hostile to other sects or Dharmas, and by tradition, formal proscription requires three or more bodhisattvas of two different sects to testify that the sect is spiritually corrupt or ill-founded.

Proscription for political reasons is undertaken for reasons of expediency, not out of a direct concern for the theological soundness of the sect. Membership in a politically proscribed sect is no shame, just very dangerous. Membership in a sect that has suffered the Three Bodhisattva Denouncement is treated as quite a different matter than membership in some Righteousness Society that made the wrong enemies. For example, Black Iron Talons and other Kuei-jin who see themselves as the swords of righteousness take the time to hunt and dismantle sects proscribed for religious reasons, something they would never do for mere political proscription.

PENALTIES FOR PROSCRIPTION

In theory, belonging to a proscribed sect is punishable by meeting the Eye of Heaven. In the case of genuine heresies, this fate is the penalty an unrepentant heretic can expect. The heresiarchs can expect much worse. The Kuei-jin, particularly the Devil-Tigers, have had many centuries to think on manners in which to make the demise of the unrighteous both extremely unpleasant and fitting to the crime.

The reality is that a religious proscription is enforced much more widely and emphatically than a political one. If a Kuei-jin who belongs to a denounced sect is caught, the actual penalty varies. Political proscriptions are undertaken with judicially-sanctioned murder in mind, but they sometimes fail to achieve their goal. A strong personality, important allies or a weak opponent can reduce the punishment. An astute politician can usually manage to secure accepting exile, *heimin*, or *akuma* status. In very good circumstances, one might be forced to accept a demotion, to issue an empty formal apology or to receive some other token slap on the wrist. The outcome really depends on the situation of the court at the time.

Religious proscription, however, draws in Kuei-jin *akuma*-hunters from around the court to collect the bounty, increase their fame and do their duty to Heaven. Many vampires in sects proscribed for religious reasons are "killed during their apprehension." Those who are dragged before the local authorities are usually unwilling to recant their heresies, and thus, they end their Road Back with a defiant hymn to the rising sun. While few religious heretics are willing to recant their ways, those who are willing to renounce their false beliefs are generally pardoned. By way of contrast, those under prosecution for belonging to a sect that has been proscribed for political reasons can expect as much mercy as they have the political capital to buy, and not one iota more.

THE BLACK IRON TALONS

The Talons are certainly one of the best-known, if least-loved, of the Devil-Tigers' lesser sects. The Black Iron Talons take it as their duty to hunt and destroy the minions of the Yama Kings in the here and now. Most particularly, the Talons hunt *akuma*, but they also stalk Kumo, Kura Sau, nephandi, Spectres and whatever other prey crosses their path. This list also includes followers of blasphemous Dharmas, whom the Talons see as at least as bad as, and probably worse than, direct servants of the Yama Kings.

Many low-ranking Black Iron Talons are also Thousand Embers, Electric Money investors and what have you, but the Kuei-jin who form the core of the Black Iron organization hold titles from the Sagacious Devils at most, if they belong to any other sect at all. The Talons implicitly accept Thousand Embers philosophies on the Sixth Age, but they feel that the Righteousness Societies tie sect members too closely to the politics of the courts. Talons who wish to rise in the sect should be careful to sever their other sectarian ties.

Tightly organized on a regional basis, the Talons have a strongly paramilitary structure. The Black Iron Talons are particularly notable for their heavy use of bakemono and Ban Ren Guei servants. Talon Devil-Tigers fill a role similar to military officers and police detectives, leading combat teams and performing investigations. However, the foot soldiers who perform the assassinations and



GENDER AND THE GOLDEN COURTS

It may seem odd that a culture of master shapeshifters can be built on a foundation of gender bias, when to most *penangallan*, sexual characteristics are just another part of their wardrobe. Gender among Golden Courts Kuei-jin is much more a sign of social status and enlightenment than of reproductive status. Feminine characteristics are symbols of enlightenment, whereas masculine characteristics are base.

While the *penangallan* may sport outrageously exaggerated feminine sexual traits and revel in their sexuality, females of low status are forced by custom to masculinize themselves. This simulation can be done either through shapeshifting or via dress and manner, but for a disciple to be mistaken for one of her spiritual betters is an offense against the honor of the *penangallan* as a group, and it is punished as such. Past a certain critical point of enlightenment (generally Dharma 6) gender-masculine Kuei-jin are seen as a threat to the social system of the court. These enlightened males must either change their gender through either shapeshifting or transvestitism, or be driven from the courts. Likewise, Kuei-jin visiting from regions of the Middle Kingdom where enlightenment, gender and mastery of Flesh Shintai do not fit together quite so intimately would be wise to adopt gender-neutral dress and mannerisms during their stay.

As if it needed to be said, attempting to “unmask” a transvestite Cathayan or speculating on someone’s “actual” gender is a killing insult in the Golden Courts. Outsiders *may* be permitted one misstep, if the aggrieved parties are of a generous nature, but this offense is one for which there is rarely a second chance given, and never a third. Gender politics in the Golden Courts are immensely complex, with submissive partners in relationships assuming quasi-masculine attire and mannerisms, and with male traits often denoting depression or sadness. Ambassadors and well-informed travelers quickly pick up the habit of strictly avoiding the use of gender-specific pronouns, and instead always referring to the subjects of discourse by name.

kidnappings for which the Talons are justifiably famous are rarely Wan Kuei at all.

Interestingly, senior bakemono and devil-people effectively outrank Crimson Tiger disciples within the sect. While the disciples nominally have the authority to

command older non-Kuei-jin Talons, a Devil-Tiger still wet behind the ears can expect to be ignored or put aside (at best) until such time as he has earned the right to command. Eventually, he should fill his station properly, but until then, he is but an observer along for the ride and the experience.

Other than their unusual trust in and reliance on non-vampire members, the Talons are known for two exceptional traits. The first is their unerring accuracy, and the second is their incredibly methodical record-keeping. Unlike many witch-hunters, who cleanse first and investigate later, the Talons never, ever move until they are certain beyond the faintest shadow of a doubt that their quarry is *akuma*. This care is central to the sect’s beliefs. They believe that to kill an innocent Kuei-jin as an *akuma* is to do the Yama Kings three services; to have misspent effort investigating an innocent, to have destroyed a potential force for Righteousness and to have spoiled the name of the Black Iron Talons. While there have been some regrettable accidents in the history of the sect, they are a bare handful spread across the millennia, and the Talons aim to keep it that way.

Rumors persist that the Talons keep a list, jokingly called the Imperial Appointments, of the Kuei-jin they are certain are *akuma* but whom they cannot move against for political reasons or lack of evidence. Supposedly, the Talons will exterminate these suspected *akuma* systematically at the changing of the Age. Such talk is all conjecture, but what is known as almost certain fact is that the Talons cooperate with the Searing Wind’s *akuma*-hunting branch, the Righteous Apostles of Extraordinary Valor, and that the Apostles have a habit of striking at politically untouchable targets.

The Talon’s reputation for unexcelled record-keeping is an outgrowth of this meticulous investigative style. The Talons may keep a target under surveillance for decades, gathering information before they strike. During this time, every contact, every interaction and every other bit of potentially useful data is recorded and sent back to the regional superiors for collection and analysis of possible relevance to other pending cases.

Prior to the modern era, some very sophisticated systems came about for dealing with the vast amounts of knowledge accumulated by the sect. With the modern era, however, the sect’s dependence on Bane spirits and the strange constructions of the Yellow Springs known as Eunuchs has been reduced, and modern computer systems have been phased in. Equipped with Bane-driven search engines and ghostly database miners, these computers grind away constantly at the evidence gathered by the sect, attempting — with the help of their Devil-Tiger operators — to determine the topology of the Yama King’s labyrinthine schemes and keep ahead of the Lords of Yomi Wan. As is to be expected, success is limited, but the system definitely seems to have a positive impact.

BRILLIANT COALS

Though the structure of their local bureaucracy varies, the influence of the August Body of Sagacious Devils extends across the Middle Kingdom. The Thousand Embers, however, have a more strictly circumscribed authority. In the Golden Courts, the Brilliant Coals sect takes the place of the Thousand Embers as the dominant Devil-Tiger faith.

The Brilliant Coals is, in many ways, quite similar to the Thousand Embers. The Coals eschew large, formal organizations, instead preferring small groups. However, unlike the Embers, the Brilliant Coals are loosely hierarchical. Rather than organizing themselves into societies, the Crimson Tigers of the Brilliant Coals follow the general pattern of Golden Courts society instead, grouping behind a single, charismatic female vampire.

Generally, each vampire of this sort (often called a *penangallan*, in congruence with the title in the Golden Courts; indeed, many *penangallans* hold the rank both within their sect and their court) has between five and 15 hangers-on, who serve as an artificial family of students, servants and lovers. There is usually a clear division within the ranks of the attendants. Members of the inner circle, aspiring *penangallan* themselves, share a bond with their mistress and one another similar to the one created by the *guanxi* rite, and they are relatively close to her in terms of their progress on the Road Back. The outer circle are younger vampires, who move from elder to elder until they find a *penangallan* whose service they enjoy and whose fellow-followers they appreciate.

The Brilliant Coals emphasize passion and physicality. The Coals revel in the impulsiveness and the animal magnificence of the P'o, yet they hold the reins of the Demon much more tightly than the Devil-Tigers of the north. To the Coals, sexuality, hunger, violence and self-gratification are intimately intertwined with Enlightenment, but it is absolutely essential to an Ember that it is the Hun, the conscious mind, whose desires are satisfied, and not the P'o's.

A Thousand Ember Devil-Tiger would say that the Lower Soul is an integral part of the vampire's personality. While it must be unquestioningly subordinate, it must also be understood and accepted as part of the whole that makes up the Kuei-jin. By way of contrast, a Brilliant Coal sees the P'o as an unnatural aberration, a collection of instinctive drives given a voice by the Second Breath. A Thousand Ember attempts to come to harmony with himself, educating and disciplining his P'o until he and it share a single voice. A Brilliant Coal kicks her P'o and beats it with iron rods, sending it sniveling back down into the basement of her subconscious where hunger, fear and the sex drive belong. This vehement hatred of the P'o causes many Brilliant Coals to learn Cultivation, and for this power, they are particularly feared.

Many outsiders find it difficult to distinguish between the Passion Bloodflower sect of the Thrashing Dragons

and the Brilliant Coals, though the practitioners are quite aware of their differences (which often lead to violence between the groups). The Coals, like the Thousand Embers, embrace the philosophy of violent individual resistance to the Demon Emperor. But, where the Thousand Embers are abstract and detached, the Brilliant Coals are visceral and immediate. The Thousand Embers may lay their schemes to ruin the world like musicians tuning their instruments, but the Coals are improvisationalists. Gather a few hundred guns, 30 or 40 thousand rounds of ammunition and a ton or so of explosives, and the next step will become clear when the time is right. The Coals have no plan, other to make the Golden Courts a Hell so hot that not even the Demon Emperor can bear it.

In many ways, this more positive outlook on the Sixth Age reflects the web of intimate community the *penangallan* share. The Thousand Embers see themselves as tiny fires in a matrix of chaff, each liable to being snuffed out casually if it is noticed too soon. They believe their plans must be cunningly laid and meticulously detailed to have any chance of success. In contrast, the Coals see their families not as isolated sparks, but as many separate brands, all burning together in the community of the Golden Courts. Each may sport its own tongues of flame and glow a certain color, but together they can make a heat so great as to be unapproachable. Both approaches have their merits and drawbacks, and which set of assumptions is correct will be made clear soon enough.

THE ELECTRIC MONEY WICKEDNESS CLUB

Western perceptions of Asia invariably run to traditional temples and agriculture, or ultramodern skyscrapers and factories. This is a false dichotomy—the Chinese were the first to develop paper money, and Asian nations have had sophisticated economies since the dawn of history. Where there is money, there will be sin, and where there is dishonesty, greed, vice and corruption, there will be Devil-Tigers.

The Electric Money Wickedness Club is only the latest and largest incarnation of a Crimson Tiger mercantile tradition dating back millennia. There are dozens of similar but smaller societies extant today, and the Kuei-jin who make up these groups scatter and reform over the decades like leaves in a stiff breeze. Over the course of their long, long unlives, most elder Devils of Heaven have spent some time involved in business ventures, just as most become artists, priests, lovers, soldiers and thieves in turn. Diversity, like hardship, is unavoidable over a long enough span of existence. Nevertheless, the Wickedness Club is the current centerpiece of Heavenly Devil business and investment, and so it merits special mention.

The Electric Money is best described as an investment club. Members pay a certain yearly entrance fee that maintains the infrastructure of the club. By means of a

sophisticated message system relying on everything from pen-and-silk notes to email, the various members can advertise their own business ventures, make contact with other Kuei-jin who may wish to employ them or invest in businesses that are either being floated now or already established and seeking capital for expansion.

With one foot in the daylight world and the other in the sophisticated *guanxi* networks and black economies of the Pacific Rim, the Wickedness Club is an underground economy for the Devils of Heaven as built by the Devils of Heaven. Major drug deals and data piracy are transacted alongside blue chip insider trading and luck clubs whose only abnormality is that the members are dead. Money is laundered, partners are found and investments are made, all off the books and away from the prying eyes of government officials interested in troublesome questions like taxation and business ethics.

What makes the Electric Money unusual is that the organization itself has an agenda. Funded by entrance fees and the fact that the Club runs the best money-laundering operation in the Middle Kingdom, the board of directors of the Electric Money pursue their own war against the Yama Kings. It is an economic war, but unlike most such conflicts, it has nothing to do with the ownership of some profitable commodity or attractive monopoly.

The board knows that some of the Yama Kings, particularly Mikaboshi, have their fingers in developing economies across the world. The Club picks out the financial movements of the Lords of Yomi through a combination of espionage, open-source analysis and fortune-telling — bodhisattvas make excellent market analysts. Of particular interest to the club are physical plants and other such investments, which cannot be easily sold or transferred. Through skillful manipulation of markets and physical circumstances, the Electric Money seeks to destroy or devalue these assets.

The method of destruction varies. It may be accomplished directly through violent action, through tips passed to local hengeyokai or through the introduction of legislation or regulation designed to render the assets valueless. Mikaboshi's new cash cow factory will do him little good after it has been nationalized and paid a midnight visit by the local Hakken. Other, more indirect action might take the form of passing weapons to local guerrilla groups, spreading rumors that cause a major investment partner to pull out of a business venture or making a boatload of spare parts desperately needed for the gunships of the local dictatorship disappear *en route*. There is currently a great deal of evidence emerging that the Electric Money anticipated the Asian Crisis and pulled large sums from various investment funds at strategic points to exacerbate the downturn for unknown reasons.

This action hardly goes unopposed, but the Yama Kings have always been hostile to the Kuei-jin. A shadow war rages across the Middle Kingdom, as the various sides lash out at each other's economic strong points. In this financial conflict, it is the Devil-Tigers who have the upper hand. To the bodhisattvas and mandarins of the Wickedness Club's board of directors, the struggle is mostly just an elaborate game. When they lose all their money, they'll go do something else. Like a swordsman resigned to death, the members of the Wickedness Club do not care if they win or lose this battle, and so cannot be defeated, only destroyed. But money is life to Mikaboshi and Pentex, their mode of existence and ticket to power. If they lose their economic might, the Wickedness Club's enemies have lost everything.

THE SEARING WIND

Probably the most infamous of the widely proscribed Devil-Tiger sects, membership in the Searing Wind is grounds for Meeting the Eye of Heaven in every civilized court in the Middle Kingdom. Violent, bloodthirsty and above all highly organized, the Searing Wind follows the self-proclaimed Grand Arhat Hon Li. A blazing violation of the Five Emperors-period prohibitions against large-scale political organization among Devil-Tigers, the Searing Wind came into existence shortly after the treaty of the Quincunx was finalized.

In founding the Searing Wind, Hon Li made public expression of the widespread sentiment among Devil-Tigers that early decisions prohibiting Celestial Devil organization had been motivated primarily by political considerations (which was hardly the first time such sentiments had been expressed). The call for removing the proscription on large Devil-Tiger political parties was historically (and still is) one of the primary rallying points for Celestial Devil dissidents against the established political order.

However, with the corruption of the Changan Ancestor, the arrival of the Sunset People in the Middle Kingdom and the clear abandonment of the Five Emperors structures, the time seemed ripe for change. More importantly, Hon Li was already a bodhisattva at that time, and he had participated in the authoring of the Treaty of the Quincunx. The future Grand Arhat's call for reform was received, not as a voice in the wilderness or an extremist sentiment, but as a clarion call.

The reaction of Kuei-jin society was predictable. The newly minted ancestor of the Quincunx proclaimed the bodhisattva an *akuma* and slave of Yomi. The August Body duly stripped Hon Li of his titles, and all those Kuei-jin who saw slaying a renegade bodhisattva as a viable option for political advancement hunted Hon Li and his

SEARING WIND RANKS

The Searing Wind rejects the Confucian ideals of the August Body of Sagacious Devils, preferring instead a ranking system that rates each Kuei-jin based on his martial merit, not his administrative acumen. Parenthetically noted beside each rank is the minimum level of enlightenment required to hold that position. Promotion comes via military aptitude, not simple enlightenment, and all members of the Wind enter at the bottom and work their way up. Thus, it is possible for an elder Crimson Tiger mandarin of little martial talent who recently joined the Wind to hold only the rank of Courageous Soldier.

Two ranks, the Sturdy Footman of Hell and the Crusader for Celestial Justice, are used to give mortal auxiliaries a place in the Searing Wind chain of command. These two ranks are graded to provide relative ranking between different auxiliaries. The proper form for a graded title follows the format of "Third Class Sturdy Footman of Hell." Such a Ban Ren Guei would be outranked by a Second Class Sturdy Footman, but he would outrank a Fourth Class Sturdy Footman.

SEARING WIND RANKS, HIGHEST TO LOWEST

- Grand Arhat
- Enlightened Master (Arhat)
- Distinguished Heavenly General (Bodhisattva)
- Righteous Commander (Mandarin)
- Bloodthirsty Young Officer (Jina)
- Courageous Soldier (Older Disciple)
- Brave, Untested Warrior (Young Disciple)
- Sturdy Footman of Hell (Devil-Person or Dhampyr, five classes)
- Crusader for Celestial Justice (bakemono only, three classes)

SEARING WIND DIRECTIONS

North Direction: The Seven Venom Tempest, under the bodhisattva Great Depth. Uniforms are dark green, blue and black.

South Direction: The Unquenchable Bonfire, under the bodhisattva Crimson Peony. Uniforms are saffron, scarlet, crimson and black.

East Direction: The Immortal Forest, under the bodhisattva Graceful Crane. Uniforms are green, brown and black.

West Direction: The Fearless Iron Blades, under the bodhisattva Winter Morning. Uniforms are white, gray and black.

Center Direction: The Sky-Scraping Mountain, under the bodhisattva Nine Tongues. Uniforms are gray, white and green.

SEARING WIND SPECIAL BRANCHES

- Righteous Apostles of Extraordinary Valor (*Akuma*-Hunters)
- Black Magicians of Terrible Might (Ritualists/ Bane Trainers)
- Cat-Footed Gatherers of Secrets (External Affairs)
- Doubly Fearsome Excisors of Treasonous Behavior (Internal Security)
- Skillful Manipulators of the Mortal Press [in the sense of a pushy crowd, not a newspaper] (Human Relations)
- Healers of Wounded Comrades-in-Arms (Medical)

handful of loyal followers across the Middle Kingdom. Had matters progressed as was usual in the case of such zealots, Hon Li would have been eventually driven to ground and destroyed.

However, Hon Li was considerably more powerful than the typical Crimson Tiger rebel against Gui Ren society, as well as being a shrewd thinker and an extraordinarily charismatic speaker. The same skills that had served him in authoring the Quincunx Treaty also aided Hon Li in his rebellion. Gathering followers, the bodhisattva turned some of his pursuers to his own cause and destroyed others who were unwilling to convert. Over the next several centuries, the Searing Wind (as Hon Li called the sect) became a fixture of Middle Kingdom society. Like the Assassins of the West, the sect existed on the fringes of society, prosecuting a relentless war against the Yama Kings and their servants regardless of political consequences.

Less palatably, the Searing Wind also prosecuted a war against the Thrashing Dragons and Resplendent Cranes, striking particularly at those who had persecuted Devil-Tigers, or who were activists in causes that opposed the Celestial Devils. Multiple efforts were made to stamp out the Searing Wind, but the Wind's cellular structure, the meticulous character of its plans and exquisitely well-developed system of intelligence sources and secret strongholds made such efforts only partially successful.

The period around the Opium Wars, the Taiping Rebellion and the Boxer Uprising were excellent times for the sect, as unsettled times bred urns like flies, and the obvious menace of the Kin-jin caused many Devil-Tigers to realize how close at hand the Sixth Age truly was. It was at the end of the 19th century, flush with new resources and recruits, that the Searing Wind pulled their greatest trick and disappeared from the political landscape of the Middle Kingdom altogether.

It is not that the Searing Wind is actually gone, however. Searing Wind agents still roam the night on missions of slaughter, though the Wind blows mostly against the Yama Kings now, husbanding its strength for the upcoming Age. But the Grand Arhat and his inner cadre of mandarins and bodhisattvas have vanished utterly. Some claim they have gone to the depths of the Yin World, while others say that Hon Li and his people have gone to the badlands of Afghanistan, or that the Searing Wind has found a way to survive in the Himalayas and live among the ruins of Meru. Speculation is common, but facts are rare. All that is known for certain is that Hon Li has left the Middle Kingdom, and perhaps even the Floating World, until the abdication of the August Personage draws him back to do battle with the Demon Emperor.

STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE

The members of the Searing Wind follow a strict military hierarchy. The Searing Wind soldiers make up the Army of Righteousness, and they ready themselves for the final battle against the Demon Emperor. Enlightenment is important, but practical ability is more so. Rank is awarded based on individual merit. Normally, merit evaluation is based primarily on martial ability, but within the ranks of specialist troops (who make up about 10 percent of the Searing Wind) other criteria are applied.

Devil-Tiger military units parallel the pyramidal nature of Gui Ren power. The core of the Wind is the Grand Arhat, who will fight the Demon Emperor directly, supported and defended by his bodhisattvas. Each of the bodhisattvas will be supported and defended in turn by their mandarins, and so on. This structure assures a concentration of power on the most dangerous target in a battle on the open field, and it means that, in a more disorganized conflict, each soldier will take orders from someone he knows is older and wiser than himself. The Searing Wind divides itself roughly into five units each following one of the sect's bodhisattvas. Each of the bodhisattvas has her own distinctive personality and methods, and this individuality is reflected in the uniforms and demeanor of their subordinate troops.

The governance of the Searing Wind is strictly top-down. The Grand Arhat makes decisions in consultation with the bodhisattvas, who in turn discuss implementation with their subordinate mandarins, who pass the orders down to the jina, and so on until the lowest Bane and bakemono have gotten word of their duties.

Like the Black Iron Talons, the Searing Wind makes extensive use of Devil-Men and bakemono to round out its ranks. If one counts bakemono and devil-men, the ranks of the Searing Wind may number as many as high as 4000 members. The Wind also makes extensive use of Banes as spies, messengers, and weapons of warfare. There are several hundred powerful Banes in the direct service of the Wind, and three times that many bound into Inauspicious Objects or serving as menials to high-ranking officers.

DOCTRINE AND BELIEFS

The Searing Wind adheres to the belief that the Five Emperors' strictures on the Devil-Tiger faith have nothing to do with Righteousness or the final battle against the Demon Emperor, but were instead motivated by political concerns. Hon Li claims, on some fair authority, that when the Demon Emperor accedes to the Throne of Heaven, he will be at his weakest immediately thereafter. If there is to be any hope of defeating the Emperor without centuries of conflict, or perhaps even of defeating him at all, he must be assaulted with every force on Heaven and

Earth that the Gui Ren can muster. What precisely that means at this point is an open question. No one below the rank of Righteous Commander knows any details of the Searing Wind battle plan. With the exception of Special Branch troops (who are usually kept ignorant due to their exposed positions) only Bloodthirsty Young Officers and below have been seen in the Middle Kingdom for almost a century.

However devoted the Searing Wind is to the cause of defeating the Demon Emperor, they are still dangerous fanatics. Hon Li openly lays claim to the very same intolerance that motivated the Five Emperors in their long-ago decision against the Crimson Tigers. The Searing Wind would happily stamp out the other Dharmic paths and fight a great war to unify the Gui Ren under the Grand Arhat's banner, had it the time. For now, Hon Li only hopes that when the moment is right, the Wan Kuei will see the urgency of the need to combat the Demon Emperor immediately. From the number of known and suspected Cat-Footed Gatherers moving through the Middle Kingdom recently, it looks as if the Wind may be doing its very best — through bribery, persuasion and blackmail — to help ancestors and mandarins in making the right choice when the Demon Emperor accedes.

THE RIGHTEOUS EARTH-PRISON SMITING FIST

Another widely proscribed sect, the Righteous Earth-Prison Smiting Fist opposes the rule of Yu Huang, the lord of the Middle Kingdom's afterlife, violently. This cause is certainly popular enough. Many Righteousness Societies and other Devil-Tiger groups outside China oppose Yu Huang's racist policies openly or quietly, often with the tacit approval of their courts. Certainly, one of the reasons that Yu Huang has such difficulty holding the areas claimed by the Golden Courts is the penchant of the strong-headed *penangallan* to tear into his troops.

Generally, a mutual balance of terror reigns in the Occupied Territories, with the Kuei-jin often capable of killing anything they come across in a one-on-one fight. The ghosts in turn possess superior numbers and a much wider activity cycle. The wars are undeclared and furtive, but all across the Middle Kingdom, the Gui Ren wear away at the Chinese ghosts who oppress their ancestors, and the Restless Dead remove those *ketsuki* who become too daring in their resistance.

Not so in the Quincunx, where Yu Huang's policy of domestic mercy and his friendly relations with the Resplendent Cranes engender much kinder feelings between the Restless Dead and the Wan Kuei. Yet the Righteous Earth-Prison Smiting Fist exists primarily in the Quincunx, and is an implacable foe of Yu Huang as any.

The specific point of disagreement between the sect and Imperial policy is the existence of Feng Tu, the Earth Prison, though this issue is not the whole of the sect's agenda. In essence, the sect charges that Yu Huang is committing imposture and usurping the duties of Heaven and Hell by establishing himself as a spiritual and not a temporal authority in the Afterlife. By usurping the names and likenesses of characters in Chinese mythology for the officials of his Hell, Yu Huang commits an offense against the eyes of Heaven by claiming celestial titles for his ghostly kingdom.

More generally, the Earth-Prison Smiting Fist disagrees with Yu Huang's policies which portray his kingdom as a place of long-term residence, including encouraging the growth of "families," and policies which destroy ghosts rather than allowing them to continue on to Oblivion or rebirth. This particularly means Feng Tu, but it also extends to the creation of Eunuchs and white jade not made from *kuei*. These ideals have moderate support among Quincunx Devil-Tigers and even among non-Devil-Tiger Kuei-jin, but the sect is generally proscribed for political reasons. In some places, the condemnation is purely a formal matter required to maintain relations with the Yellow Springs, but where the Resplendent Cranes are strong the prohibition is actually enforced.

From its foundation in the 1600s until the middle of this century, the Fist had a brilliant leader in person of the Kuei-jin known only as Imperial Physician Fu Tu. Under his leadership, the Fist's adopted policies of disrupting the Imperial Bureaucracy through the destruction of Eunuchs and important bureaucrats. Infiltrators have never been able to slip into the Earth Prison directly, because they are reportedly unable to penetrate past the entity known as Mrs. Meng. Those who have attempted to do so are sent back unharmed, but unable to repeat what Mrs. Meng related to them before sending them away.

Imperial Physician Fu Tu and his bodyguards were attempting to organize communist starvation victims into a resistance force during the Great Famine when Resplendent Crane and Imperial Guard hunting parties finally caught up to them. Fu Tu and his followers met the Final Death, and it was expected that the sect would quickly fall apart. But Fu Tu kept no records save in his own mind, and he went to his final death fighting, as did all his inner circle. After the Imperial Physician's death, the movement became even stronger, as its dependence on the charisma and ingenuity of one man was reduced. The decades since the Famine have seen, if anything, the strength of the Fist increasing, particularly as the major cells have begun receiving aid from Swar, the massive city-state that forms the core of the Indian underworld.

For more information about Yu Huang, the Yellow Springs, the Earth Prison and the Chinese occupation of the Asian Shadowlands, see the **Wraith: The Oblivion** supplements **Dark Kingdom of Jade** and **Dark Kingdom of Jade Adventures**.

THE DISTINGUISHED SINNER-PUNISHING SOCIETY

The Distinguished Sinner-Punishing Society is a Devil-Tiger sect that believes that the duty of the Crimson Tigers is not just to punish sinners, but to provide stern examples for mortals who stray from the path of righteousness. This belief is not very far from the Devil-Tigers' mainstream. The Devils of Heaven pride themselves on the poetic, often quite demonstrative natures of the punishments that they inflict on sinners. Subtle as the Devil-Tigers can be, some of these punishments look so much like manifestations of instant karma that they are never even noticed.

Yet "subtle" is one word which in no way typifies the Distinguished Sinner-Punishing Society, and it is for this reason that they are one of the most brutally suppressed Heavenly Devil sects. The Punishing Society believes that by finding and publicly executing mortals well-known for their iniquitous behavior, they remind mortals that their misdeed have very real consequences.

Obviously, part of the persecution of the Punishing Society stems primarily from the fact that its policies run directly against the *shen's* aversion to publicity. Teaching mortals the lesson that if you beat your wife, undead monsters will tear your limbs off and leave you in the trunk of an abandoned car is not the sort of thing that can go on without drawing undue mortal attention. If a sinner must be murdered, it is best if the body is never found again.

However, the proscription on this sort of direct and public punishment is not entirely without Dharmic justification. The Wan Xian fell for the hubris of their attempts at rulership over mortals. As devils, the Devil-Tigers are present only to carry out a celestial function, not to guide mortals. Evil is a necessary constant in human existence. By attempting to abolish sin rather than just punishing it, the Distinguished Sinner-Punishing Societies are seen as overstepping their place in the Celestial Order.





PREPARING FOR THE WHIP-CRACK TIME

Like all Kuei-jin, Devil-Tigers see themselves as fulfilling a particular role in the Celestial Order. Over the centuries, members of the Dharma have developed a great number of tools and rituals to assist them in their tasks. This chapter details the specialized rituals, Artifacts and so forth that Devil-Tigers favor.

RITUALS

With one foot planted firmly in the spirit world, Devil-Tigers consider ritualism and black magic an integral part of their existence. Not that every Heavenly Devil practices the dark sorcery of their Dharma, but a large majority have at least some knowledge of these black arts. The rituals listed here are only those practiced by disciples and jina. Crimson Tiger ritualists of mandarin and bodhisattva status have developed rituals complex beyond the practice or understanding of their Dharmic lessers, and of commensurate power.

LEARNING RITUALS

The price of learning a ritual has always been problematic, as they provide serious in-game benefits for an unspecified price. Storytellers who wish to put an experience point cost on rituals are within their rights to do so. One experience point for each level of the ritual is a good rule of thumb, provided that the process of gaining access to the actual knowledge of the ritual itself is reflected in-game. Storytellers who waive study times and the need to seek out texts and tutors may wish to increase the cost of rituals to two or three times the level of the ritual.

SPIRIT RITES

Savage Joss (Level 2 Ritual)

Devil-Tigers don't always limit themselves to punishing the exceptionally wicked. Many Heavenly Devils also act as roaming forces of instant karma, inflicting little punishments on those responsible for the banal evils of our world. While this practice is theoretically far below their station as Devils, some Crimson Tigers derive a certain childish amusement from the use of this ritual. Such is particularly true of Running Monkeys in the throes of picking up the devil, but some jina and mandarins enjoy slumming, acting as unseen magistrates and meting out capricious justice on the mortal herd.

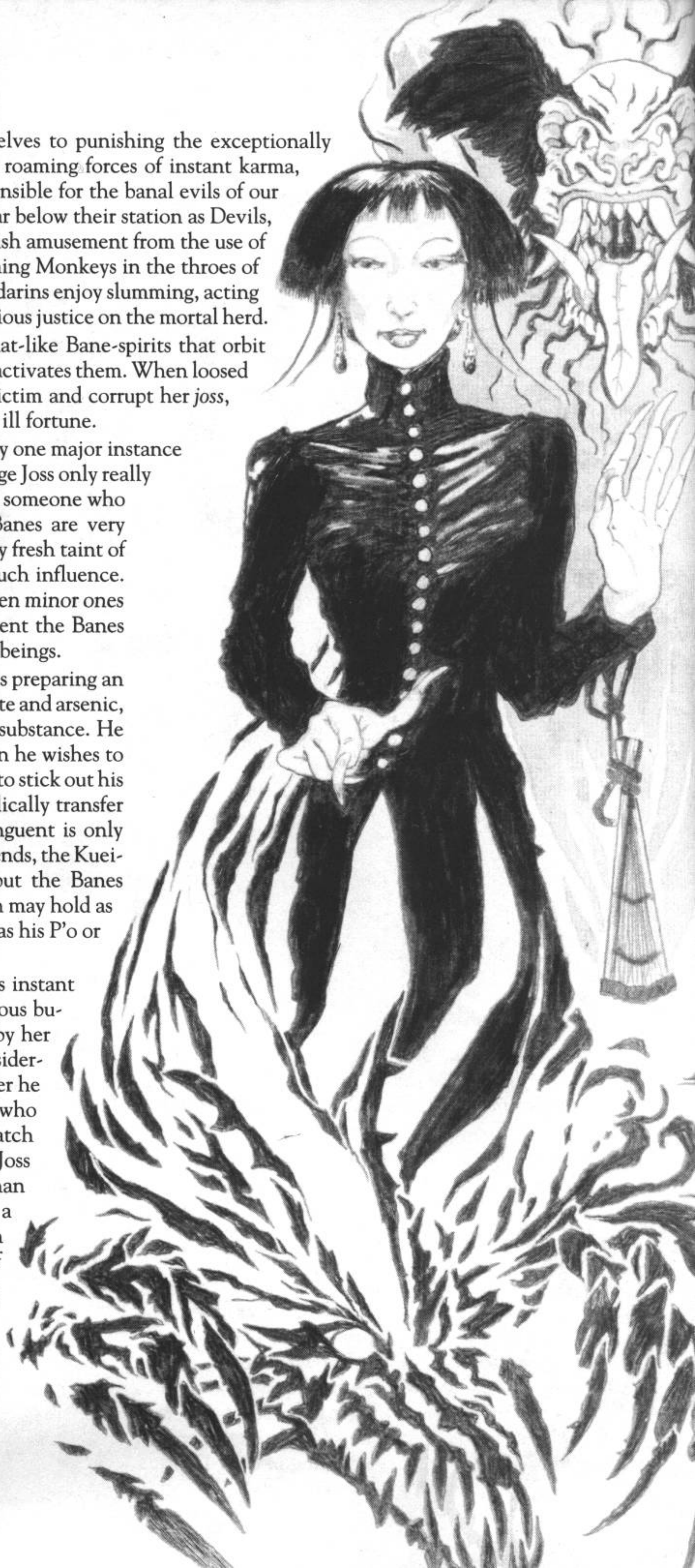
Savage Joss calls up a horde of tiny gnat-like Bane-spirits that orbit around the Devil-Tiger until the Cathayan activates them. When loosed on a target, the Banes swarm around the victim and corrupt her joss, causing her a very strong but brief streak of ill fortune.

Those targeted by Savage Joss suffer only one major instance of bad luck, but it hits nearly instantly. Savage Joss only really works when used to inflict poetic justice on someone who has just committed a wicked deed. The Banes are very weak, and the target's spirit must have a very fresh taint of corruption indeed for the spirits to have much influence. Also, the strong flows of joss around *shen*, even minor ones like Kinfolk and bakemono, generally prevent the Banes from having any noticeable effect on these beings.

System: The vampire spends 10 minutes preparing an unguent composed of honey, cayenne, aconite and arsenic, then spends a point of Chi to activate the substance. He smears the unguent across his lips, and when he wishes to set the Savage Joss on a target he needs only to stick out his tongue, blow her a kiss or otherwise symbolically transfer the attractant to the target. The honey unguent is only necessary during the ritual — after the Rite ends, the Kuei-jin can wash it off almost immediately, but the Banes remain with her until unleashed. A Kuei-jin may hold as many "swarms" of Savage Joss to his person as his P'o or Charisma score, whichever is higher.

Savage Joss, as noted, essentially causes instant poetic justice to strike the target. An officious bureaucrat will be immediately reprimanded by her superiors for some petty infraction, an inconsiderate jogger will twist his ankle mere steps after he brushes an old lady aside, and someone who refuses to stop talking in the theater will catch her finger in the chair. Note that Savage Joss doesn't really allow for anything more than minor justice. While it could be used on a murderer, it's unlikely that having a gunman burn himself painfully on the hot barrel of the murder weapon will really even up the karmic score.

Storytellers should go out of their way to discourage the use of the ritual in combat. That's not what it's for, and it doesn't work very well when used for that purpose.



Asserting the Heavenly Privilege of Yang Demon Command (Level 3 Ritual)

The Crimson Tigers believe themselves to have been granted authority over lesser evil spirits, a mandate of which they are not hesitant to take advantage. It is through this rite (and several other related ones) that Devils of Heaven bind wicked spirits to do their bidding.

Black sorcery is never without risk. Evil spirits are, by their very nature, violent and prone to turning on their erstwhile master should the sorcerer prove inadequate to the task of control. In this present Age of Darkness, with the Celestial Order in such profound decay, a Devil-Tiger can expect to have authority only where she enforces it. However, while this authority may spring from force, it is as genuine as any other. While certain entities of massive power (Yama Kings, Maeljin Incarna, greater *akuma* black magicians) may be able to wrest control of the spirits away from the Kuei-jin through sheer strength, there is no presumption in the vampire's mastery. Bane-spirits commanded by the Devil-Tiger can and will attack other Banes and evil creatures, even those of higher Power, without hesitation.

System: Asserting the Heavenly Privilege is a fairly complex ritual, which cannot be carried out without some preparation, including a lit brazier and a number of ceremonial objects (bells, censers, etc.). Therefore, using the ritual as a fast defense against hostile spirits is essentially impossible. Likewise, unless the Kuei-jin has some means of forcing the Bane to hold still (typically the Tapestry power Chi-shaping) it can be problematic to use this rite against a spirit intelligent enough to recognize what is happening and flee the area.

In addition, the Kuei-jin must be able to sense the Bane to be bound. Lifesight usually does the trick, but the Chi'iu Muh power Chi Sight (or other means of sensing the Yang Mirrorlands) will work as long as they are at least as precise as vision.

Typically, the Kuei-jin enters an area of the Middle Kingdom of which the Yang Mirrorlands are thick with Bane-spirits. After locating a relatively inactive Bane of the appropriate type (or immobilizing an active one with Chi-shaping) she begins performing the ritual of Assertion. This takes about 30 minutes, and while the Assertion can be performed in the outdoors, it looks exactly like what it is — a demonological ritual. For this reason, it is best done away from mortal eyes.

On completion of the ritual, a Manipulation + Rituals roll (difficulty of the local Wall rating + 1) is called for. If this roll succeeds, the player may then spend a point of Yin Chi and make a P'o + Occult roll with a difficulty of the spirit's Willpower. The Devil-Tiger can make as many attempts as there were successes on the initial Manipulation + Rituals roll, at a rate of one per turn. The Kuei-jin may choose to end the process early if he wishes, but the player must spend a point of Yin Chi for each roll. During the period when the player is making P'o + Occult

rolls, the Bane-spirit is aware of the ritual's effect, and it may resist by lashing out at the Kuei-jin. Obviously, unintelligent spirits are not likely to connect the magic with the vampire, and spirits immobilized by Chi-shaping or without combat-oriented Charms are essentially helpless.

When the vampire either runs out of time or her player chooses to make no additional P'o + Occult rolls, the Bane-spirit becomes bound to the Kuei-jin's service for a number of lunar months equal to the total successes accumulated on the P'o + Occult roll. The spirit carries out the Kuei-jin's orders in good faith and to the best of its abilities, though failure and mistakes are still possible.

It is possible to reassert mastery over a Bane, but the spirit is free for at least the period equating to the time when the player makes the P'o + Occult rolls. During this time, the Bane is sure to attempt to destroy the Kuei-jin or else escape. The latter can be dangerous, as the identity of the spirit's master penetrates into the understanding of even the dullest of Banes after several months of slavery. A Kuei-jin can safely control Banes whose combined Power is equal to or less than 20 times their combined P'o + Occult rating. The more Banes a Kuei-jin controls, the less control the Cathayan has over any particular spirit, and the Storyteller should emphasize the increasingly fractious character of the vampire's servants. If the total Power rating of a Kuei-jin's servants exceeds 50% of his safe total, they get unruly. If it exceeds 75%, the Banes can grow slow to carry out their orders, or sloppy in their work. If the number exceeds the safe limit, there may be attempts at escape and sabotage. If the Kuei-jin goes 50% above his safe limit, every time he issues a command, the player must succeed on a Manipulation + Occult roll (difficulty 6), or the spirit may break the Kuei-jin's control partially. If the Kuei-jin is so foolish as to double his capacity, that same roll may release his entire horde of servants, who no doubt will seek immediate revenge. A Bane, particularly a Bane with high Rage, is likely to be quite ill-disposed to its former master when its period of slavery lapses.

If the Kuei-jin uses the power from inside the Yang world, the difficulty of the initial Manipulation + Rituals roll is 4, but he should seriously consider his physical safety before wandering into an unclean area of the Yang Mirrorlands hunting Banes to enslave. Asserting the Heavenly Privilege offers no protection for the vampire, from either the target Bane or any companions it might have. This ritual cannot bind spirits with Power greater than 40, though there are more powerful versions available to Devil-Tiger mandarins and bodhisattvas. A botch during the casting of this ritual often has severe consequences, which are left up to the Storyteller to determine.

The Deceptive Jade Chains of Yin Demon Command (Level 3 Ritual)

This ritual is the Yin-oriented version of Asserting the Heavenly Privilege of Yang Demon Command. How-

ever, rather than binding Bane-spirits, the Deceptive Jade chains bind *kuei*, Spectres, Shadowed Plasmics and other Yin-spirits. While the particulars of the ritual differ vastly, the mechanics are essentially the same. If the Storyteller is using **Wraith: The Oblivion**, substitute the Spectre's Charisma + Being for its Willpower. The Deceptive Jade Chains cannot bind the Restless Dead, only the Shadow-eaten. Similarly, the Chains are effective against only Shadowed Plasmics, not the regular denizens of the Tempest.

It is worth noting that the Immortal Guard of the Yellow Springs has repeatedly proven immune to this rite, and that Kuei-jin who attempt to ensnare the terra cotta servants of Qin Shihuang have met with severe reprisals. Normally less effective than Asserting the Heavenly Privilege, The Deceptive Jade Chains have grown considerably more effective over recent months, as another of the Yin World's great storms has blown up, flooding the Mirrorlands with Spectres, *kuei* and other wicked Yin-spirits.

Inauspicious Object (Level 4 Ritual)

Just as the Devil-Tigers use rituals to coerce wicked spirits into serving the Gui Ren directly, so do they also command those spirits into indirect servitude. Through the ritual known as Inauspicious Object, an unrighteous spirit is forced into a object, imbuing it with mystical powers relating to the spirit's character. The object that houses the evil spirit must be of extremely fine quality, for though the spirit is of unrighteous nature, it is a representative of the Celestial Bureaucracy. Even in servitude, it deserves accommodations befitting its elevated station. Some spirits prefer lodgings that proudly display their unwholesome nature, while others desire objects of refined or regal appearance. It is wise to determine the spirit's preference before confining it, for unsuitable housing can lead to an Inauspicious Object with a distinctly rebellious character. In addition, the purpose of the object and the nature of the spirit should coincide. For example, a *no daichi* would make a highly unsuitable residence for a Bane that exists to lead mortals into lascivious behavior.

System: The Kuei-jin must first prepare the object. Though the vampire need not prepare it herself, the being who crafts it must be a master of his particular art (Crafts 4+). As stated, it is best if the item matches the spirit's preferences regarding abode. If it does not, the item will be unwieldy to use at best, and dangerous at worst.

Next, the spirit must be constrained to enter the object. There are two options. The first is the creation of a temporary Inauspicious Object, called a Little Inauspicious Object. A spirit bound via the Rites of Yin Demon or Yang Demon Command can be placed into such an object during an abbreviated version of the Inauspicious Object ritual that is four hours in length and involves a monkey sacrifice. This ritual must be conducted in a defiled dragon nest.

SACRIFICE

While monkey sacrifices may get the job done, any Devil-Tiger worth the oil it took to fry him in Yomi knows that the only way to perform this ritual properly is with the inclusion of a sinner. The more appropriate the sinner's crimes are to the intent of the ritual, the greater the reduction in difficulty, up to a -3.

The player rolls Manipulation + Occult when the character brings the knife down. The difficulty of the roll is 8. For each success, the Little Inauspicious Object may be used once. While the objects are good until used, in no case can the number of uses created via the rite exceed the number of lunar months left in the spirit's service.

Spirits do not willingly partake in the creation of a permanent Inauspicious Object, also called a Greater Inauspicious Object. In order to be forced into such an item, the spirit must either be beaten to 0 Power in spirit combat, or restrained via Chi-shaping. The sacrifice in this case is not the blood of a manlike beast, but rather a part of the Devil-Tiger's own higher soul, which is used to cement the bond between the spirit and its new vessel.

To create a Greater Inauspicious Object, The Devil-Tiger ritualist takes part in a night-long ritual that culminates in a Charisma + Rituals roll (difficulty 9). Again, this ritual must be performed in a defiled dragon nest. If the rite is successful, a Greater Inauspicious Object is created. If the rite fails, the vessel shatters and the spirit flees. Regardless of if the ritual is successful or not, the vampire loses a point of permanent Hun.

The Storyteller and the player should work together to determine the powers of any items created via the use of this ritual. Some examples of both Little and Greater Inauspicious Objects are provided later in this chapter. As a general rule, the maximum level of an Inauspicious Object is equal to the Power of the spirit divided by 10 and rounded down. Devil-Tiger ritualists cannot create Inauspicious Objects whose level is greater than their Hun score at the beginning of the rite.

Bakemono Rite (Level 4 Ritual)

Through this ritual, the Devil-Tiger invites an evil spirit to join with the soul of an iniquitous mortal, creating the unwholesome creature known as a bakemono. The targets of this rite must be chosen carefully. The Crimson Tigers must make sure they take as their servants only mortals who will not be missed. More importantly, Banes cannot join with the soul of a mortal unless an unrighteous life has readied a place for the evil spirit to dwell. While suitable candidates are entirely too common in some parts of the Middle Kingdom, they still do not grow on trees. Devil-Tigers in search of minions must often spend quite a while looking, particularly if they wish to recruit a number of such servants, and if the mortal

targets are too wholesome yet to accept the spirit melding, the Banes may well turn on the Kuei-jin who summoned them.

System: The Kuei-jin must bring the sinner in question to a defiled dragon nest. Likewise, the evil spirit with which they will join the mortal's soul must be present and bound to the Cathayan's service, either through a rite or through the Tapestry power Chi-shaping. The Kuei-jin's player must spend a point of temporary Willpower and make a successful Charisma + Rituals roll, with a difficulty of the local Wall rating or the target's Willpower, whichever is higher.

The Bakemono Rite takes several hours, and it is in no way pleasant. Even the most wicked mortal is likely to have second thoughts when a creature of elemental evil begins burrowing a new home in his soul. Even if the mortal does not regret his situation for some reason (which is, at this point, beyond any remedy save death), the convulsions and incredible agony that accompany the possession are truly horrific, and they may call for restraints on the victim. The ritual takes approximately one hour, and the initial period of possession last from four to six hours. The bakemono's character manifests itself over three to seven days. This time is the most difficult for the goblin's master — the bakemono's supernatural powers will have begun to manifest, but the mortal's will may not yet have succumbed completely to the influence of the wicked spirit.

If the spirit used to create the bakemono was restrained via a demonological ritual at the time of the binding, the goblin tends to be naturally subservient to the demonologist. Weakened as it is by the union with a mortal soul, the spirit will never be able to shake off the bonds of ritual binding. Those goblins restrained only by Chi-shaping are likely to be of a considerably more rebellious character, and generous use of Chi'iu Muh or Obligation are suggested to ensure such bakemono's continued loyalty.

As a rule of thumb, each 10 points of the spirit's Power, rounded down, allows the bakemono to manifest one supernatural power (aside from the ability to soak lethal damage, which is inherent to the bakemono's condition). Binding spirits of Power greater than 40 into a mortal frame is possible, but not recommended. While the resulting bakemono are often quite powerful, they rarely survive for long. The living mortal frame is not meant to contain such evil. Mortals who become bakemono cannot take the Second Breath — like a broken winged bird, their wounded soul spirals down into the Mouth of Yomi after death. For more on bakemono, see the **Werewolf: The Apocalypse** supplement **Freak Legion**.

DEVIL-TIGER SPIRIT LORE

Over the centuries, the Devil-Tigers as a Dharma have amassed a vast body of material about wicked and inauspicious spirits of every type. The habits, personalities and powers of thousands of varieties of evil spirit are set down in the libraries of the Crimson Tigers. Many elder Heavenly Devils know the habits of evil spirits as well as they know the shape of their hands, and they hold the allegiance or even friendship of beings whose wickedness and power are beyond the mortal scope of understanding.

What it does not mean is that every Devil-Tiger is a walking encyclopedia of Bane-spirit lore. There are and always have been more important things to teach young Celestial Devils than spirit lore that they are too weak and unenlightened to do more with than get themselves in trouble in any case.

Even though many mandarins and bodhisattvas have transferred their libraries to an electronic medium for easier reference, the databases are hardly in common circulation. First, the mastery of wicked spirits is a privilege as well as a right. Few disciples have the insight and discipline necessary to deal with these creatures properly, and so it is best if such wisdom is kept in the hands of the mandarins and jina. Secondly, knowledge is power. Elder Celestial Devils have often spent a great deal of effort gathering their lore, and if they are willing to share it at all, such Elders will wring the maximum possible prestation out of the act.

Thus, the majority of younger Crimson Tigers, even if they have access to demonological rituals, lack the practical knowledge needed to put the rites to good use. For most disciples, the first steps in learning the specifics of demonology are hesitant ones, hit-and-miss attempts to guess which Bane will produce which sort of bakemono or Inauspicious Object, and what propitiatory rituals are necessary to call it up. Storytellers are encouraged to use this state of affairs as a blank check to launch stories, and as a way to limit players certain that access to Bane spirits provides an avenue to unlimited power. Kuei-jin have been consorting with unspeakable forces for millennia, and every mandarin was himself a Running Monkey once. It may not be possible for the elders to check the petty ambitions of the young, but they can certainly anticipate them well enough by looking at their own experiences.

Beckoning the Unrighteous Spirit (Level 4 Ritual)

With their reliance on demonological rites, Devil-Tigers often have need to procure spirits of a specific type. Even in this era of jet travel and instant communications, Heavenly Devils cannot afford to spend their unlives tramping across the Middle Kingdom in search of this unrighteous entity or that one. By means of Beckoning the Unrighteous Spirit, the vampire attempts to call an unwholesome spirit of some specified type to her location. The process can often take a great deal of time, and calling a Nexus Crawler to one's dragon nest is an act of questionable wisdom even for a mandarin.

System: The Kuei-jin must set up an altar in a defiled dragon nest and perform propitiatory rituals at it every evening to draw the attention of the spirit in question. These rituals take about 10 minutes per evening. If the sort of spirit the ritual is targeting lurks in the vicinity (Storyteller's option), the player may make an Intelligence + Rituals roll (difficulty 7) every seven days. If the spirit must be attracted from far away, the roll may be made only once every lunar month, typically on the new moon. Rolls made on the nights of the new moon have their difficulty reduced by two. As a rule, the Kuei-jin can only propitiate as many different sorts of spirit as she has dots of Rituals.

The number of successes indicates how soon the spirit will arrive. If the spirit is common and many successes are rolled, more than one may be attracted by the ritual. It is entirely possible to be *too* successful when Beckoning the Unrighteous Spirit. Spirits which have unique identities also have enough free will to ignore a Beckoning. Also, if the spirit is very rare or only found at vast distances from the vampire, the Storyteller is perfectly within his rights to rule that the ritual will fail regardless of how long the propitiations are carried out.

CHI RITUALS

Ebon Wardings (Level 2 Ritual)

Just as mortals protect their houses from devils and other wicked spirits, so sometimes do devils need to protect their own homes from mortals. Through the use of this ritual, the Kuei-jin wards her haven with dark prayers and invocations of Heaven's less merciful ministers. After the ritual is performed, mortals find reasons not to enter or come near the warded area. Most mortals do not even notice the ward, ignoring the marked area as if it were not there. Some mortals occasionally develop an attraction to the location and hover outside unaware of what it is that draws them, not daring to enter until the ward ends. Note that mortals *can* enter the area, they just choose not to. Mortals may be led inside by one of the *shen*, or have their attention drawn unavoidably to the structure (say, by a burning nine foot tall monster bursting through the second story window). In either case, the ward no longer works against that mortal.

While the silk and rice paper prayer strips posted around the warded area cannot be perceived by mortals, they are quite obvious to other *shen*. A Devil-Tiger who performs this rite on an area for an extended period of time will draw attention to herself. Such claims are an open declaration of the Crimson Tiger's power, and they can draw servants of the Yama Kings eager to destroy an enemy of Yomi. Other *shen* may respond to the prayer strips as well, and the vampire may find herself drawing unwanted attention from local hengeyokai, *hsien* and *Shih*.

System: The Kuei-jin must ritually bless the structure, a process taking about 30 minutes. Doing so calls for an Intelligence + Rituals roll (difficulty equal to the local Wall rating), and the expenditure of a point of both Yang and Yin Chi to ward the area. The ward endures for three times as many days as the player rolls successes, and it can be restored an infinite number of times after it falls.

Ritual of Heavenly Defilement (Level 6 Ritual)

Devil-Tigers cherish dragon nests. Much to the consternation of their fellow Gui Ren, they prefer that such places bubble with dark Chi and teem with Bane-spirits and *kuei*. By means of this ritual, the Devil-Tigers defile the Chi of a dragon nest. While the effect of this ritual is similar to that of unleashing the P'o during osmotic feeding, it covers a much smaller area and operates in a much more carefully controlled fashion.

These defiled dragon nests are important to Devil-Tiger practice. Most Heavenly Devil demonological rituals must take place in a such a defiled Nest, and in any case, such areas naturally teem with wicked spirits for the Crimson Tigers to command. Hengeyokai call these defiled dragon nests "Centipede Burrows," and they either avoid them or actively seek to destroy them.

System: The Devil-Tiger ritualist performs a ritual that stretches over five nights. During each of the five nights, the venom of the five poisonous animals are poured onto the soil of the Nest, and the ritualist must make elaborate offerings to Heaven and the Ministers of the Celestial Bureaucracy. At midnight on the fifth night, the dragon nest's Chi curdles like sour milk. Next comes a Charisma + Manipulation roll, at a difficulty of the local Wall rating + 2. For each success on this roll, a Devil-Tiger of Dharma 6 or higher may absorb one point of Demon Chi from the dragon nest per night.

Unlike absorbing Chi from an area that has been defiled, this sort of feeding does not cause Shadow Soul. However, the nest cannot be used for normal osmotic feeding, and Kuei-jin who absorb Demon Chi beyond their P'o rating run a substantial risk of developing the Defiled Flaw (*Kindred of the East*, p. 95). This Ritual can be used to "purify" (in a manner of speaking) dragon nests defiled by the power of the Yama Kings, but only if the ritualist has mastered the Chi'iu Muh power Purification.

INDIVIDUAL RITES

Digesting the Feast (Level 5 Ritual)

The Crimson Tigers believe that with their mandate as devils, Heaven granted them the privilege of consuming the souls of the truly wicked through the use of the Chi'iu Muh power Spirit-Eating. The memories gained by such actions are fleeting, however. This ritual was developed by the Heavenly Devils as a method by which the memories of the consumed soul might be retained for later use.

System: The player rolls Willpower (difficulty of the target's former Willpower) and the character enters a profound meditative state in which he can assimilate (that is, spend saved-up experience points to buy) the target's memories. This trance lasts for one day per two experience points spent, and during this period, the vampire is essentially unaware of his surroundings. The Kuei-jin's stolen memories do not fade during the ritual, but the Crimson Tiger is essentially unable to communicate while under the influence of Digesting the Feast. Digesting the Feast must begin on the same evening that the vampire uses Spirit-Eating on his target, or else the memories will fade at their normal rate. The number of successes achieved on the Willpower roll is the maximum number of dots by which any given Ability or Discipline may be raised.

The Kuei-jin can learn from this ritual only if he has enough experience points saved to pay for the stolen knowledge. The Kuei-jin may, however, buy a special Lore skill called (Name of Victim) Lore, which essentially includes all the victim's mundane (that is, non-Ability, non-Discipline, otherwise unclassifiable) memories. Buying (Name of Victim) Lore to two or three dots should cover any plot-relevant memories that may come up during game play, but there may be special reasons to buy the Knowledge to higher levels.

ARTIFACTS

The Devil-Tigers are great enthusiasts for wonders and prodigies, both magical and technological. Rare is the Heavenly Devil jina or mandarin who does not own at least one such object of occult power. At times the competition among Crimson Tigers for the wonders of the Unseen World has grown so great that courts have been forced to pass sumptuary laws to restrain the more acquisitive Celestial Devils. Most Devil-Tigers prefer to use equipment which emphasizes their diabolical vocation, and as a result, most of these devices are constructed by Crimson Tigers for Crimson Tigers. Most Wan Kuei shake their heads sadly at these displays of infernal bravado. Nevertheless, the weaponry of the Devils of Heaven may be grotesque, but there is no doubting its efficacy.

UNRIGHTEOUS PRAYER STRIPS (LEVEL ONE ARTIFACT)

Strips of silk, fine paper or sinner's skin covered in a calligraphy of black prayers and unrighteous exhortations, these prayer papers are hurled at foes as a bundle. Swooping and slashing like wasps in flight, Unrighteous Prayer Strips seek out their target and strike him like a cascade of falling icicles. When struck, the target relives his memories of greatest torment and is gripped by waves of paralytic fear and remorse. While useless against Kuei-jin and *akuma*, who are hardened against remorse and pain, the effect can be debilitating against other *shen* and potentially lethal against mortals.

System: Tossing the bundle at the target requires a Dexterity + Occult roll (difficulty 8), after which the component prayers streak toward the target on dozens of different courses. The strips may be dodged, but the difficulty of the Dodge roll is 8. Unrighteous Prayer Strips do no actual damage, but each success removes a die from all of the target's dice pools. Missing dice return at a rate of one per turn.

Mortals who lose more dice than their Stamina rating are paralyzed by terror and regret, and they are too tormented by the demons of their past to act. Mortals in this paralytic state must make a base Stamina roll (difficulty 6) each turn that the penalty exceeds their Stamina rating. If the mortal does not achieve at least one success, he collapses of fright, and he will die within minutes without medical treatment.

Unrighteous prayer strips have a range of several hundred meters, but the difficulty increases at long range as if they were a rifle. These strips are normally created as Little Inauspicious Objects.

INCENSE OF INAUSPICIOUS ATTENTION (LEVEL ONE ARTIFACT)

Devil-Tiger ritualists most often perform their dark rites in the sanctity of a defiled dragon nest. However, they cannot always rely on such luxurious accommodations. Through the use of this spiritually impure incense, a Heavenly Devil may taint the atmosphere of a location for a short while, rendering it unclean and thus suitable for demonological rituals.

System: The Devil-Tiger burns the incense. Rituals which must be performed in a defiled dragon nest can now be performed in the fumigated location for the remainder of the night unless the atmosphere is somehow purified, as through True Faith or the Chi'iu Muh power Purification.

LIVE-ACTION ADAPTATIONS OF RITUALS

BASIC RITUALS

Savage Joss

This ritual is one not often practiced by Devil-Tigers except in rare fits of poetic irony. By turning a swarm of gnat-sized Bane-spirits loose on a victim, the Devil-Tiger corrupts the victim's joss and forces a short stint of bad luck on him. This bad luck is relatively minor (i.e., it won't make a serial killer fall down an elevator shaft), so most Devil-Tigers use it against perpetrators of small crimes, or those in need of a lesson in karma. This ritual takes 10 minutes, in which the vampire prepares a mixture of honey, arsenic and other choice ingredients that attracts the Bane-spirits to himself. He wears this mixture on his lips, then symbolically transmits it to his victim by spending a Chi Trait and blowing him a kiss, sticking out his tongue or something similar. A Narrator decides what sort of bad luck befalls the target.

Ebon Wardings

By calling on Heaven's less pleasant servants, a Devil-Tiger can use this ritual to protect her home against mortal notice and intrusion. This safeguard renders mortals unaware of the space in question, making them subconsciously fill in the gap taken up by the Kuei-jin's lair. This ritual does not disguise a dwelling *per se*; mortals simply fail to notice the protected area. The Kuei-jin spends one Mental Trait, one Trait of Yang Chi and one Trait of Yin Chi in a 15-minute ceremony. After this blessing is performed, mortals will pay the structure no notice, and they certainly won't enter it unless forced to do so by some supernaturally influenced circumstances. The Ebon Wardings ritual has no effect on other *shen*, and may actually attract attention from *shen* or demons. Mortals with numina or Merits like *Medium* will notice an utter lack of ghosts in the area, despite a high presence of Yin energies.

INTERMEDIATE RITUALS

Asserting the Heavenly Privilege of Yang Demon Command

Considered a privilege by virtue of its usefulness, controlling Yang-aspected demons is actually quite a bit of work. Bane-spirits are intractable by nature, and prone to tugging at their leashes for all they're worth. The Kuei-jin able to wrestle these spirits under his control, however, gains excellent tools in doing his duty to Heaven.

In performing this ritual, a Kuei-jin must meet all of the following requirements: She must find an area crawling with Bane spirits, she must locate a suitable Bane using *Lifesight* or *Chi Sight*, and she must immobilize the Bane in some way. At this point, the Devil-Tiger must set up and light a brazier and arrange ceremonial tools (such as bells, censers, beads) in preparation for a 30-minute ritual of chanting and praying. At the end of the ritual, the ritualist spends a Yin Chi Trait and makes a resisted Social Challenge against the Bane's Rage + Willpower. If successful, the ritualist ensures faithful service from the demon for a number of lunar months equal to her Willpower. She may also repeat this ritual to enslave a number of Banes equal to her Willpower total, but each extra demon under her command decreases by one the number of lunar months the lot of them remains under her control. Enslaving multiple Banes makes each one in her power more rebellious and contrary, although they will not rebel openly until their period of servitude is up.

Bakemono Rite

The *Bakemono Rite* offers a spirit servant quite a bargain. The spirit earns a home in the Middle Kingdom (that does not involve being imprisoned in an object) and a natural resilience to harm that many spirits find most attractive. The rite doesn't offer much to the potential human host, however, other than the oblivion of Yomi in return for a life of unrighteousness. The Kuei-jin must lead a mortal sinner to a defiled dragon nest and contain him (as well as the spirit with whom the sinner is to be bonded) for the duration of a multiple-hour-long ritual involving all forms of physical, mental and spiritual degradation. The Kuei-jin then spends a temporary Willpower Trait and make a Static Social Challenge against the higher of the Wall rating or the human vessel's Willpower. If successful, the new bakemono supplants the mortal sinner's personality in a torturous, horrifying process. It remains loyal to the Kuei-jin ritualist, and it gains one bakemono power for every 10 Traits of Power the original spirit possessed. There is no way to undo this rite that has yet been discovered.

(Note: See the fomer powers in *Laws of the Wild* for examples of appropriate bakemono powers.)

Beckoning the Unrighteous Spirit

Just as its name signifies, this ritual calls forth a spirit of a certain type. Doing so can come in handy when a Kuei-jin demonologist needs a spe-

cific type of spirit, yet one of that type is not immediately at hand. The Kuei-jin must set up an altar at a defiled dragon nest and perform a service to the type of spirit he needs. A spirit of cunning may respond to the destruction of a hunting snare, whereas a blood-spirit may be satisfied only by boiling away a portion of spilled human blood. At the end of the ritual, the ritualist makes a Static Mental Challenge against the local Wall rating. The cleverness of his offering and the thickness of the Wall determine how many of the requested spirits actually show up. They arrive in their own time (though they do approach directly), and they are under no compulsion to stay unless the Kuei-jin takes other steps to force them to do so.

The Deceptive Jade Chains of Yin Demon Command

The Deceptive Jade Chains of Yin Demon Command ritual allows the Kuei-jin ritualist to enforce his will over Yin-aspected demons, including *kuei*, Spectres and Shadowed Plasmics from the Labyrinth. Unfortunately, this ritual grants no control over *hun*-dominated Jade Kingdom wraiths or any other Yin-spirits not controlled by their *p'o* (or Shadow). This ritual functions in the same way that *Asserting the Heavenly Privilege of Yang Demon Command* does. If you're using **Oblivion** rules, you may substitute a Spectre character's Social Traits for its Willpower, if you prefer.

Inauspicious Objects

This category actually involves two sub-rituals, but both bond a spirit to an object in such a way that the object gains a supernatural power of some sort. The first, the *Rite of the Little Inauspicious Object*, creates a temporary bond between the object and the spirit that can be used only once before the spirit escapes. The *Rite of the Greater Inauspicious Object* bonds the spirit to the object in question permanently, but it requires a sacrifice of part of the Kuei-jin's higher soul to make it work. If these rituals succeed, they put very useful tools at the Kuei-jin's disposal.

In the case of both rituals, the spirit must be convinced to enter the object (or beaten to 0 Power and forced into it), and the object must be suitable to the type of spirit to which the ritualist intends to bond it. A warlike spirit, for instance, would not deign to bond with a teddy bear, and it would likely attack the Kuei-jin who insulted it by asking such a thing. It is also recommended that the object in question be constructed by someone with at least four Traits in the *Crafts* Ability, to make it seem an especially pleasing home to the spirit.

To create a *Little Inauspicious Object*, the Kuei-jin must sacrifice either a monkey or a part of his own body (like a hand, a foot or an eye) and make a Mental Challenge against the spirit's Willpower. The *Little Inauspicious Object* may be used once if a monkey sacrifice eased the spirit's transition, or once for every health level of damage the Devil-Tiger did to himself.

A *Greater Inauspicious Object* binds the spirit to the item in question permanently, but the sacrifice is even greater. Before making the challenge, the Kuei-jin sacrifices a permanent Hun Trait (which he loses outright if the ritual fails).

Either ritual takes approximately an hour, and both must be performed in a defiled dragon nest. The level of the object created should be equal to one-tenth of the Power of the spirit bound to the item, and it cannot exceed the Kuei-jin's (pre-rite) Hun total.

ADVANCED RITUALS

Digesting the Feast

When a Devil-Tiger uses the *Chi'iu Muh* power, *Spirit-Eating*, she retains portions of her victim's abilities and memories for a short amount of time. However, this ritual allows the Kuei-jin to retain those memories and abilities as her own. After using the *Spirit-Eating* power successfully, the Kuei-jin then engages in a Willpower Challenge against the victim. If he succeeds, he may then use any saved Experience Traits to purchase as many Abilities, Disciplines or Traits of Lore (representing the victim's memories) from the victim as he can afford at the time. He may not, however, spend more Experience Traits than his Willpower total. The Kuei-jin remains oblivious for a number of hours equal to the number of Experience Traits spent, representing a near-catatonic trance of meditative contemplation.

Ritual of Heavenly Defilement

Many Devil-Tiger rituals must be performed at defiled dragon nests, but the odds of just stumbling across such a place (that isn't already staked out by a fellow Devil-Tiger) are slim to none. Thus, those Tigers who have mastered many rituals of the Dharma use this process to create their own natural wellsprings of Demon Chi. Dragon nests defiled in this way are different from those corrupted by the Yama Kings, though they still teem with Bane-spirits and *kuei*.

After finding and laying claim to a dragon nest, the Devil-Tiger master ritualist performs a ceremony that lasts five nights. At the end of each night, the ritualist pours a mixture including venom from five poisonous animals (scorpion, spider, toad, snake and centipede, for instance) into the soil of the nest, while making offerings to Heaven. On the fifth night, the nest is fully defiled, and the Chi within is corrupted. Henceforth, the ritualist may absorb one point of Demon Chi from the site per night by winning or tying a Simple Test. Other Kuei-jin may absorb Demon Chi from the site as well, but only by winning a Mental Challenge against the Wall rating plus two Traits.

LIVE-ACTION ADAPTATIONS OF ARTIFACTS

Incense of Inauspicious Attention (Level One Artifact)

This incense is perhaps the most useful tool a young Devil-Tiger can employ in the pursuit of demonological study. By burning it and fumigating an area with the smoke, the Devil-Tiger can perform rituals anywhere that would otherwise have to be performed at a defiled dragon nest. By burning one stick of this incense (or merely representing the act in venues where doing the real thing proves troublesome), a Devil-Tiger may fumigate a three-meter-square room that becomes just as suitable for demonological rituals as a defiled dragon nest. The effect lasts for the rest of the night unless the area is supernaturally purified. At the same time, mortals who enter the fumigated area lose one Physical Trait for every turn they remain in the area, as they choke and gag on the stench. If they manage to lose all their Physical Traits, they collapse and begin to lose health levels at the same rate. Once they leave the area, the Physical Traits return at a rate of one per turn once all lost health levels have been replaced.

Unrighteous Prayer Strips (Level One Artifact)

These items, usually created as *Little Inauspicious Objects*, are bundles of prayer strips made of silk, paper or a sinner's skin. When these objects touch a victim (be they thrown from a distance or left to "accidental" discovery), they wrack the victim with images of guilt and torment, drawing on the victim's own imagination and repressed anxieties. These

objects have no effect against Kuei-jin or *akuma* (who have already been to Hell and back), but they are particularly effective against mortals and other *shen*. If touched by the prayer strips, mortals must win a Mental Challenge against the Kuei-jin creator or fall to the ground in a fetal position at the mercy of the memories dredged up. While less effected than a standard mortal, other *shen* make the same Mental Challenge. If they lose the test, they are considered one Trait down on all Mental Challenges for the rest of the scene.

Knives of Sublime Hunger (Level Four Artifact)

Vicious and almost absurdly deadly, these knives are testaments to visceral agony. By binding a hungry spirit of violence or destruction into a blade of worthy design, a Kuei-jin can create an incredibly effective weapon. The weapon-crafter must forge a knife of cruel intent (ones with barbed hooks at the base of the blades, spikes on the knuckle-guards or wickedly serrated edges do very well) and convince an appropriate spirit to inhabit and bond with it. The blade then gains the Traits and statistics of a standard *wakizashi* (or short sword), and it deals the standard amount of lethal damage. However, the spirit inside the blade makes it even more dangerous, changing the damage to aggravated damage if the user succeeds on a Simple Test after doing any damage to his target (which applies to any damage done that turn). Such a weapon gains the Negative Trait *Unwieldy* if a mortal attempts to use it. Many spirits are very particular about the craftsmanship of the weapons they choose to inhabit, making these creations extremely rare.

Demon Jade Talisman (Variable Level Artifact)

These exceedingly rare talismans work just as Yin or Yang Talismans do, except they store Demon Chi. This black jade material is only mined in the Yomi Hells, and such Artifacts can usually be found in the hands of the Yama Kings' servants. Carrying such an Artifact is considered to be damning proof of *akuma* status in many suspicious courts. Functionally, these talismans are no different from Yin or Yang ones. However, they may be recharged only at defiled dragon nests, and the Background cost to purchase such a thing at character creation increases by two.



As an added bonus, mortals not in respirator gear who enter an area that has been fumigated recently must make a Stamina roll (difficulty 6) each turn or choke and gag from the stench. The scent is unmistakable to anyone who has smelled it before, and use of the incense in an isolated area like a warehouse or abandoned factory is recommended. Mortals who breathe even a wisp of the fumes are haunted by nightmares for days or weeks afterwards (though these nightmares can sometimes have an oddly prophetic element), and they often become short-tempered and prone to unpleasantness.

KNIVES OF SUBLIME HUNGER (LEVEL FOUR ARTIFACT)

These knives are most famously used by the Golden Master to arm his *naijorpa* minions. However, the knowledge of the knives' construction is well-known throughout the Devil-Tiger Dharma, and they are especially favored by the Black Iron Talons. Knives of Sublime Hunger are constructed by binding a spirit of brutal hunger into the vessel of a knife suited to fulfilling these predilections. Were Knives of Sublime Hunger forged by mortals, they would be masterpieces of overcompensation. Their blades are wickedly curved, with saw-backs, secondary edges, spiked guards and an intricate series of blood grooves along the blade. When the Kuei-jin strikes with the knife, the demon inside strikes as well, resulting in horrific ripping wounds. Each blade is unique, but all bear a representation of the demon inside them on the hilt.

Handling a Knife of Sublime Hunger can be quite dangerous for mortals, and the spirit in the knife is often powerful enough to overwhelm them and use them to help quench the weapon's thirst.

System: Knives of Sublime Hunger are assassins' weapons, best used to kill an unprepared foe in a single stroke. The knife itself does only Strength +1 aggravated damage, but when a Kuei-jin attacks with a Knife of Sublime Hunger and succeeds in inflicting damage, the spirit of the Knife urges the blade forward, doubling the amount of damage inflicted.

DEMON JADE TALISMAN (VARIABLE LEVEL ARTIFACT)

Just as specially enchanted jade talismans can store Yin and Yang Chi, they can also be used to store Demon Chi. The translucent black jade used in these talismans is quite rare, however, and it is mined only in certain areas of the Yomi Hells. The last major quantity to come to the Middle Kingdom arrived shortly after the fall of the Yomi Realm Lanka, sold by inhabitants there desperate to make ends meet after the Monkey King's destruction of Ravana's city.

Since then, the only new black crystal jade to come to the Middle Kingdom has been that given by the Yama

Kings to their servants, or ornaments and talismans left in the ashes of *akuma* whose spirits were sent back to the Thousand Hells. As a result, these talismans are much more rare than Yin or Yang Talismans, and coveted by Devil-Tiger mandarins for the power they give to the Demon Arts. The heretic Crimson Tiger bodhisattva Hon Li is said to wear a tiara made entirely of black crystal jade into battle, but this rumor may be nothing more than propaganda spread by mandarins eager to connect him with the Yama Kings.

System: These Talismans work exactly as do normal Jade Talismans (See *Kindred of the East*, p. 86) with two exceptions. First, they are even more scarce than True Jade; the number of dots of Artifact Background that must be spent to begin play with a Demon Jade Talisman in the number of points of Demon Chi the Talisman can contain + 2. Second, Demon Jade Talismans can be recharged only in defiled dragon nests and other places of tainted Chi.

THE HOLY BOOKS OF HELL

No Artifacts, however powerful, no Disciplines, however cunning, and no rituals, however secret, can ever compete with the thing that every one of the Gui Ren truly covets — wisdom. Disciplines, rituals and Artifacts are all just a means to an end for the vampire, with that end being the conclusion of the Road Back and ascent into the Hundred Clouds. Knowledge and learning are not just ideals for the Gui Ren, they are real and concrete needs. The entirety of a Kuei-jin's Second Breath is spent walking the Road Back, and there is not a night that goes by that each and every Kuei-jin does not wish that she could grasp the mysteries of her condition and ascend into *dāh*. As such, study of sacred texts and works of wisdom is a duty for each and every Kuei-jin, with even the most fearsome Devil-Tiger not exempt from this compulsion.

Some of the texts listed here are common. Others are rare objects of mystery, veneration, and avarice.

PRE-DHARMIC TEXTS

Both the Pre-Dharmic texts exist only as fragments, most of the originals destroyed by Shih witch-hunters during the Burning of the Books. *The Righteous Fire* survives more-or-less intact, but only small pieces of *The Discourse On Iniquity* have ever been found. Most of what is known about it comes from reference and allusion, rather than first-hand experience.

The Discourse On Iniquity — *The Discourse On Iniquity* is the formative Kuei-jin religious text, laying down the groundwork of the Five Traditions of the Great Principle as formalized a few centuries later by the Grand Arhat. From what has survived and what is known of the text, it served as the basis for the Second, Third and Fourth Ways, the Ways that dictate proper behavior for one walking the Road Back. The First and Fifth Way, recognizing the unity of the five Dharmas and the equal validity of their individual roads to heaven, is seen as

Xue's great insight, bringing peace to the Wan Kuei and shaping the faiths that were being born at that time.

The Discourse on Iniquity is believed to have been a realistic (almost cynical) and succinct look at the situation of the Wan Kuei, and how the Wan Xian had arrived at their disgrace with thoughts on how they might be able to redeem themselves. It concluded with suggestions on means by which the paths back to Heaven might be divined, and some very well-founded assertions about the natural order. The appearance of the *Discourse* marked the birth of the first proto-religious movement among the Wan Kuei, the short-lived and ill-starred Demon Warrior Empire.

The Righteous Fire — Set down shortly before the *Ki Chuan*, this book is a 10-chapter meditation on the meaning of the material in *The Discourse On Iniquity*. Before the Burning of the Books, the texts were seen as companions, much like the Gospels and the Epistles of the Christian Bible, or the Qu'ran and the Hadiths of the Muslim faith. However, *The Righteous Fire* survived the Burning of the Books much better than the *Discourse*, partly because it was poetic and thus easy for readers to reconstruct from memory. Today, only the seventh chapter is fragmentary.

There is a great deal of speculation on if this text inspired Xue, was inspired by him or was actually written by him. It was anonymous when it appeared shortly before the Grand Arhat's Enlightenment, and some speculation of that time laid it at his feet. Since then, the matter has become less clear, and the matter remains a mystery today.

CLASSIC TEXTS

These texts were written following the publication of the *Ki Chuan*, but in ancient enough days that the authors and the vast majority of their close acquaintances have met the Final Death, departed for the Hundred Clouds, or slipped into the customary reticence of true enlightenment.

The Blood Sutras — This book was the first definitive work of Devil-Tiger philosophy, written by Revered Ancestor Silver Chime after the *Ki Chuan* became available and the proto-Devil-Tiger faith had been broken up by the Five Ancestors. While it was written independently, both Ki and Xue approved of the text.

This book is the charter of the Devil-Tiger faith as practiced in the Quincunx. It summarizes the Three Great Principles (Pain, Passion and Righteousness) and lays out the groundwork for what would become the Three Pillars of the Dharma. Unsurprisingly, Silver Chime became a member of the first August Body, as well as setting up the original method used by the Devil-Tiger to reckon when the Dynasty had fallen.

Every Devil-Tiger has read this text, and young Heavenly Devils are considerably more familiar with the verses within than they are with the *Ki Chuan*.

The Songs of Hell — An anonymous book of devotional and inspirational verses, *The Songs of Hell* was written just after the Burning of the Books, as part of the spiritual revival that accompanied the end of the Warring States period and the fall of the Shih witch-hunters.

The Songs of Hell is also the root of the Devil-Tiger demonological tradition, making a spiritual imperative out of what various Devils of Heaven had been doing out of utility and necessity for centuries. The work is presented as a series of poetic monologues and dialogues between various figures, including the August Personage, Xue, Ki, Xao-Lat and Mahanaga Visparakni.

It is quite popular for Devil-Tigers to derive the mottoes or sect names from more moving parts. For example the term "the Searing Wind" is taken from a speech from Xue to Mahanaga Visparakni about the mission of the Wan Kuei, and rare is the Devil-Tiger mansion that does not have on the lintel above the door or gate the classic motto "Diligence is the key to Heaven," as Xue says to Ki when asked what the key to the Road Back is.

MODERN TEXTS

These texts were written in unliving memory, though that doesn't mean they're not considered extremely influential. More than any other Dharma, the Devil-Tigers are always ready to seize new ideas and see what they produce.

The Book of Infinite Mercy — Part rules of procedure and order, and part philosophy text, this surprisingly short book was written by a promising young disciple in the 1450s. He was destroyed during the Manchu conquest, but Ju Lung's work of young genius has outlived him. *The Book of Infinite Mercy* is a textbook on establishing a flexible and equitable way to judge to what degree a given mortal's actions are morally impermissible. This book settled a debate that had troubled the Devil-Tigers a great deal for many years, a debate which had led to a complicated and often bloody series of arguments over precisely what needed to be punished, by whom and to what extent. In particularly busy districts, debates over punishment often outlived the mortals who inspired them.

Within a few centuries of the publication of *The Book of Infinite Mercy*, even the sternly traditionalist *Uji no Bishamon* were using the *Book* and its derivative works to judge mortal sins. It took a nearly legislative process and made it something that could be taken care of within a month or three with only a minimum of involvement from a tribunal of north-directed Kuei-jin. This work of excellence from a Kuei-jin who had taken the Second Breath less than a century before he wrote it is one of the points of pride of many Devil-Tigers. The Dharma as a

whole goes out of its way to encourage overachieving among the Running Monkeys and jina, and this sort of thing is shown proudly as the result of such ambition.

The Delectations of the Flowers of Blood — This book is the legacy of Seven Morning Princess, one of the most extraordinary bodhisattvas the Devil-Tiger Dharma has ever seen. The most deliciously wicked creature in the Middle Kingdom, Seven Morning Princess ascended into *dah* less than seven centuries after her Second Breath. She left behind her a book, a book which is on the surface a pastoral poem and indirectly a very well-stated erotic poem of intercourse between either two Gui Ren or a Hun and P'o.

However, it is also quite obvious on close reading that the allegory of lovemaking is also an allegory of some much higher sort, probably describing a powerful religious tract or magical ritual. The poem has attracted quite a following. Most Heavenly Devil mandarins believe it to be the secret of Seven Morning Princess' enlightenment, and many have come to see it as a sort of Devil-Tiger philosopher's stone; wisdom able to turn base Wan Kuei into perfected Devil-Saints in just a few short centuries. Nobody who's telling has yet figured out the key of the allegory, but a great many Kuei-jin are certainly trying.

DISCIPLINES

For all the Devil-Tigers' love of Rituals and Artifacts, the Disciplines are the heart of a Kuei-jin's power, and the Devils of Heaven openly acknowledge this fact. Certain Disciplines have become favored by the Heavenly Devils. Unsurprisingly, most of these favored arts are considered to be of a questionable nature by the more respectable members of Kuei-jin society. Even if a given Devil-Tiger does not practice these Disciplines openly, he will be treated as if he did. After all, one can never be too careful.

DEMON ARTS

Devil-Tigers tend to learn first Demon Shintai, then Black Wind as they age. The benefits of unlocking the Demon are such that very few Devil-Tigers pass their Fire and Water Test without at least basic tutelage in the Demon Form. In addition, the Demon Shintai form is regarded by most Devil-Tigers as being their "true" or "real" form. A Crimson Tiger who cannot bare a demonic visage to a gathering of its peers is at a *serious* social disadvantage.

On the other hand, despite stereotypes, the Crimson Tigers are careful not to rely too heavily on the Demon. Black Wind carries the risk of Fire Soul, and Demon Shintai is also problematic to use near mortals. Most importantly of all, Demon Chi replenishes slowly. A vampire can rely on entering her demon form only once every two or three nights.

Many Kuei-jin only fight when they must. For these Gui Ren, only being able to assume battle form once every two or three days is fine. However, for many Devil-Tigers, an unlife-or-death struggle is a nightly possibility. It is not

that these Crimson Tigers *do* fight every night, but they *may*. For these Kuei-jin, it is necessary that their combat Disciplines be able to sustain them through more than a single fight. Short-lived is the Devil-Tiger who does not learn one of the Pranas or one of the combat shintai as well as the Demon Arts.

SPIRIT-EATING

Spirit-eating is a tremendously powerful ability, especially and particularly for the Devil-Tigers, who do not suffer the automatic loss of Dharma associated with the consumption of a soul by other Gui Ren. Note, however, that this immunity does not preclude a Moment of Blindness stemming from consuming a soul. While the Devil-Tiger faith does not prohibit Spirit-Eating, it doesn't encourage it as a regular hobby.

The ability to consume souls is a privilege extended by Heaven to the Crimson Tigers. While it is left to the discretion of each individual Devil-Tiger how often and to what end this power is used, Spirit-eating is never something to be done frivolously or without good reason. When a being's soul is consumed, it is taken out of the Great Cycle. While a certain amount of this arrogance can be tolerated, casually consuming souls is as grave an offense as any the Wan Xian ever committed. This statement is particularly true when torment and reprogramming can often serve the same end as simply chowing down.

Devil-Tigers may consume souls for an advantage in combat, to punish some egregious offense against the cosmic order, to learn a skill or even to perform an interrogation in a hurry. Heaven has left this decision up to the discretion of individual Devil-Tigers, knowing well that sometimes a sledgehammer is the only suitable device for cracking a walnut. Devil-Tigers who use this power too often risk censure from their Dharmic peers and their court. Also, use of this power brings a Devil-Tiger very near the edge of the Road Back. Spirit-eating is just that: consuming souls utterly, completely and forever. While this sort of behavior is understandable *in extremis*, there is only a certain degree to which even agents of the Celestial Bureaucracy can justify these sorts of actions. If a Devil-Tiger consumes a soul without reason, the universe's punishment will be swift and sudden.



Chi'ju Muh

This non-Demon Art is the one almost all Devil-Tigers learn at some point. Younger Devil-Tigers tend to think of Spirit-Eating as the art that allows the elders to stay up to date with the modern world and makes them invincible in battle. Certainly the elders of the Dharma certainly do not hesitate to exploit the powers of the Tear. The Devil-Tigers make their capacity for Spirit-Eating an important part of their beliefs. Their ability to remove individuals from the Great Cycle and to torment sinners as they see fit is seen as Heaven's blessing on the Crimson Tigers' Dharmic place in the cosmic order.

Yet older Heavenly Devils come to value the Third Eye most for its less devastating applications. The sensory abilities and the foresight granted by the Tear are far more valuable, in the long run, than the ability to consume some computer programmer's soul and digest the knowledge within it. Devil-Tiger mandarins do not stay on top of the future because they chase after the latest thing and gobble it up.

OTHER FAVORED DISCIPLINES

Beyond their preference for the Dragon Tear and their moderated enthusiasm for the Demon Arts, Devil-Tigers do exhibit certain other preferences. Obviously, each individual Kuei-jin is just that, an individual. A Yin-imbalanced Kuei-jin who feeds from the residents of the

• • SPIT BLOOD

Through this power, the Kuei-jin fills his mouth with Chi-charged blood, which he then spits at his target. The blood snaps through the air, leaving a thin trail of shining black or glowing scarlet mist behind it. When it strikes the target, the blood flashes into pure Chi energy, causing burns and shock. Though this attack is not especially lethal, it can be used against spirit beings as well as against targets in the Middle Kingdom.

System: The player spends a point of Chi and makes a Dexterity + Athletics or Firearms roll (as detailed in *Kindred of the East*, p. 101). For each undodged success on the attack roll, the spittle does one die of lethal damage, to a maximum of the vampire's permanent Chi Virtue rating for the type of Chi used to charge the blood. The blood spittle also does damage to spirits. If the blood spittle strikes a spirit of the same type (i.e., Yang spittle striking a Yang spirit), it causes the spirit to lose Power or Corpus equal to the number of undodged successes rolled on the attack roll.

Blood Atemi and Spit Blood are both catalytic to unique understandings of the shintai. Once a Kuei-jin learns one, there is no going back to learn the other.

Yellow Springs is probably going to use the Bone Shintai in combat, regardless of her Dharma. That being said, there are some disciplines that Devil-Tigers tend to develop as a matter of course.

Blood Shintai: Highly traditional, the Blood Shintai is among the first of the modern five shintai to have been developed. Much-practiced in the Blood Court and among traditionalists elsewhere, Blood Shintai is often considered the "province" or the "natural talent" of the two Soul Dharmas. The schools in each of the Dharmas developed the same effects through somewhat different methods.

Traditionally, Iron Crane Blood Shintai uses Yin lashes, its students learn Blood Atemi as their second kata, and when those students Flow Like Blood, they are sinuous and liquid. In contrast, Burning Devil Blood Shintai practitioners use Yang Lashes, its students learn Spit Blood, and when these Devil-Tigers Flow Like Blood, they dodge little, if at all. (Instead, they atomize their bodies in the path of attacks) Generally, Iron Crane Blood Shintai is the more popular school, but Burning Devil is greatly preferred among the Devil-Tigers.

Ghost-Flame Shintai: It is unavoidable that many Devil-Tigers learn the Ghost-Flame Shintai, if for no other reason than that it is the southern shintai. At its low levels, it allows sight in the dark, defense against spirits and the creation of some very eerie haunting effects. At its upper levels, as the vampire internalizes the blaze, Ghost-Flame practitioners can channel the shade-time flame to do simply astonishing amounts of damage. Frightening people, doing damage and chasing spirits about are right up the Devil-Tiger's alley, and it never hurt anyone to see in the dark.

Tapestry: The Tapestry art Chi-Shaping is much coveted among Devil-Tigers. While its joss effects and ability to thicken or thin the Wall are useful, Chi-shaping is loved most for its ability to bind spirits. This ability is almost essential in controlling large spirits via ritual in the Devil-Tiger fashion, and so aspiring demonologists either learn Chi-shaping or make exceedingly good friends with someone who has mastered Tapestry to that level.

Cultivation: This discipline is common among the Devil-Tigers, since they spend a great deal of time dealing with their P'os. Relatively uncommon in the Quincunx, where it is thought of as improper, this art is at its greatest height in the Golden Courts. It is not for nothing that the standard version of this Discipline is taught with special exercises to be used by *penangallan*. In these southern climes, the philosophy of the Brilliant Ember sect forces Kuei-jin to beat their P'os into line. Visitors are well advised to be on good terms with their P'o before sojourning to the Golden Courts, as the Demon may be doing a lot of the talking.

BANES, BAKEMONO AND BAN REN GUEI

Devil-Tigers see dealing with the rest of the Middle Kingdom's wicked creatures as a religious duty. All of these creatures have been detailed elsewhere to one extent or another — this section is primarily to portray these creatures as the Devil-Tigers see them.

BANE-SPIRITS AND SPECTRES

Devil-Tigers view dealing with wicked spirits as just another facet of their Dharma. Spirits are used to observe targets, as guardians of objects and areas, to create Inauspicious Objects, and of course for combat. The spirits here are listed in the format used in *Kindred of the East*. Storytellers using the *Wraith: The Oblivion* rules for Spectres should use the appropriate statistics.

For more information on Banes, see the *Werewolf: The Apocalypse* supplements *Axis Mundi* and *Book of the Wyrms 2nd Edition*. For more information on Spectres, see the *Wraith: The Oblivion* supplements *Dark Reflections: Spectres* and *Doomslayers: Into The Labyrinth*.

Rat-Headed Dragonfly Demon (Yang)

Rat-Headed Dragonfly Demons appear exactly as their name suggests. From a foot to a foot-and-a-half long, and with a wingspan of up to two feet, the dragonfly demons have carapaces with the same brilliant iridescence as a fly's thorax or oil on water. Though they distinctly resemble a giant dragonfly with a rat's head, these minor Banes combine rodentine and insectile features along their length, and they are tufted with fur around the base of their wings and limbs. Dwelling in areas of corruption, Rat-Headed Dragonfly Demons flutter from object to object, feeding off the negative emotions that coat them. Devil-Tigers often use these spirits as messengers and observers.

Bakemono created with the spirits of Rat-Headed Dragonfly Demons are furtive and retiring. These creatures must be watched carefully, for they are invariably compulsive stalkers. While this trait may be useful on the job, it means leaving these bakemono to their own devices can make for some terrible problems, especially if the goblin is inclined to violence. Rat-Headed Dragonfly Demons seem to bond best with vagrants and drifters.

Willpower 4, Rage (P'o) 2, Gnosis (Hun) 3, Power 10 Yang

Charms: Dragon Sight, Mindspeech

Sleeper-Seducing Bane (Yang)

These succubus-like demons are anything but attractive. Indeed, Sleeper-Seducing Banes appear as wet, fleshy red masses a few feet across and studded with tentacles of various sizes. The Sleeper-Seducing Bane mates with sleeping mortals, stealing their seed or ova and using them to create Ban Ren Guei.

The Sleeper-Seducing Bane really has no place in the ecology of evil, and so it is comparatively rare. Most of the Sleeper-Seducing Banes out there are already owned by one dark master or another. While not many people would consider them worth dying the Final Death over, a Kuei-jin good at catching them can make a financially rewarding living at it among high society.

Willpower 5, Rage (P'o) 5, Gnosis (Hun) 6, Power 25 Yang

Charms: Dragon Sight, Breeding Trance (Power cost: 5; the sleeping victim of the trace is violated by the Sleeping-Seducer Bane, but afterwards believes the entire encounter was all a strange erotic nightmare. *Shen* may make a Willpower roll [difficulty 8] to awaken), Materialize (Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Stealth 5, 7 health levels; Power cost 9)

Face-Robe Demon (Yang)

Face-Robe Demons are unpleasant even by the standards of evil spirits. Dwellers among atrocities and despair, Face-Robe Demons are so named because of their unpleasant habit of dressing in elegant robes made from the faces of their victims. These Bane-spirits can be used to make bakemono who are highly aggressive, but who also tend to be quite controlled when violence isn't necessary. While not exactly the sort of creatures you would put in a position that required regular contact with mortals, Face-Robe bakemono are at least capable of basic social interaction. Face-Robes seem to bond best with academics, businessmen and health-care professionals like doctors and midwives.

Face-Robe Demons can also manifest in the Middle Kingdom directly. While not all that terribly much more effective than their bakemono and considerably harder to keep out of sight, Face-Robe Demons can use their powers freely and inflict horrendous damage with their stainless steel claws. It merits mention that Face-Robe Demons are quite intelligent, and they have distinct and well-developed personalities.

Willpower 6, Rage (P'o) 8, Gnosis (Hun) 7, Power 35 Yang

Charms: Dragon Sight, Materialize (Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Brawl 5, Dodge 3, Stealth 4, Tracking 4, 7 Health Levels, Claws do Strength +3 damage; Power cost: 23), Possession, Throw Glass

Unwholesome Nightmare-Inducing Ghost (Yin)

These beings are a form of Spectre, the powerful *kuei* that remains when a ghost falls to his P'o. Unwholesome Nightmare-Inducing Ghosts have the ability to cause the living to experience terrifying dreams. Each Nightmare-Inducing Ghost is an artist that expresses itself in a different way, but the Kuei-jin who controls one can dictate general themes. Nightmare-Inducing Ghosts are

usually used to torment or frighten mortals, but creative Kuei-jin have been known to use them to convey invitations and messages to their fellow Crimson Tigers.

Their ghostly flesh crumbled by the touch of Yomi or twisted into shapes of madness, Nightmare-Inducing Ghosts appear dressed in the stuff of nightmare — fabric of spider webs, cloth of blood, and the like. They and other Yin-spirits cannot generally be used to create bakemono, but some ghosts can become substantial or otherwise affect the lands of the living.

Willpower 6, Rage (P'o) 6, Gnosis (Hun) 4, Power 25 Yin

Charms: Dragon Sight, Nightmares (Power cost 5; causes the target to have terrible nightmares. Unless the victim makes a Willpower roll [difficulty 8], she suffers the same penalties the next night as someone who has failed her roll for the Flaw: Nightmares. In any case, the dreams are incredibly realistic and terrifying.)

Unrighteous Cult-Leading Ghost (Yin)

A form of ghost known as an Apparition in the west, these Yin-spirits delight in raising cults among the living. The fervently religious are always useful tools of the Devil-Tiger, but Yu Huang objects strenuously to the use of ghosts to influence the living without his permission. While a Kuei-jin can do largely as he wishes in rural areas or in the Occupied Territories, such activities are controlled strictly in urban areas by a system of permits and permissions. Kuei-jin who flout the laws of the Dead can expect to feel their wrath.

Unrighteous Cult-Leading Ghosts often appear quite unpleasant. Scabrous, tumorous or otherwise disfigured, these creatures are so full of Oblivion's degenerating influence that it is physically obvious. Normally, Unrighteous Cult-Leading Ghosts are beings of moderate power, however another of the great storms of the Underworld has blown up, and the natural order of the Restless Dead has been upset. Once again, the powerful priests of Oblivion wander the land seeking a way back into their dark houses under the Yin Mirrorlands. Depending on the vampire's skill, catching such a priest may be a great stroke of luck, or a terrible, final error.

Willpower 8, Rage (P'o) 8, Gnosis (Hun) 6, Power: 35 Yin

Charms: Dragon Sight, Foul Humor (Power cost 5; allows the creation of quarts and quarts of maggots, houseflies, blood, frigid slime and other delightful haunting effects), Stonehand Punch (Power cost 5; allows the spirit to use its Rage against normal objects, doing one level of lethal damage per success on a Rage roll), Flicker (Power cost 5; allows the spirit to make a Gnosis roll. Every success allows it one free round of movement), Maleficence

(Power cost variable; allows the spirit to invest power in a willing mortal host, usually a cult leader. For each investment, it can use one of the spirit's Charms once. If the mortal has more investments than he has Willpower, he goes irrevocably mad from the Yin energy in his bodies. This Charm requires twice the cost of activating the power normally).

BAKEMONO

Bakemono are the result of the joining of an evil spirit and a mortal host whose soul has decayed to the point where it can accept union with a creature of darkness. Normally, an unrighteous life causes this decay, but living in a spiritually tainted area for too long can wear down even the most upright souls. The resultant spiritual joining emphasizes all the worst traits of the human, as well as allowing the creature to manifest supernatural powers as it becomes one of the least among the *shen*. Bakemono are prone to violence and wicked behavior, and if they are created by using the Bakemono Rite on a bound demon, they have an effective *guanxi* rating of 3 toward the Kuei-jin who created them.

Goblins are born from a number of causes. Some are spawned spontaneously, while others are created using the rite. The shadowy cartel known as Pentex creates bakemono through exposure to its tainted products or with injections of an organic chemical known as Fomorol, said to be refined from the corpses of dead bakemono. Whatever the case, goblins are deformed creatures with short, violent lives, often driven quite mad by the experience of transformation. Many Devil-Tigers look on their bakemono not as mere servants, but as their subordinates in the Celestial Hierarchy. For more information on bakemono, see the *Werewolf: The Apocalypse* supplement *Freak Legion: A Player's Guide To Fomori*.

BAN REN GUEI

Ban Ren Guei, or Half-Demon People, are the offspring of a Sleeper-Seducing Bane and a mortal. Gestated in the Yang Mirrorlands for between three and five months, the Ban Ren Guei are born into our world as human-looking infants. Some are occasionally left in dumpsters or as foundlings, but at least in the Middle Kingdom, most offspring of Sleeper-Seducing Demons have eager surrogate families waiting to raise them (courtesy of Devil-Tiger scarlet screens, in many cases). Devil-Tigers make extensive use of Ban Ren Guei for the same roles that dhampyrs usually fill. Though they have shorter lifespans than dhampyrs, Ban Ren Guei have an inherent loyalty to the person who was the Sleeper-Seducing Demon's master when they were conceived (equivalent to a *guanxi* rating of 5). Ban Ren Guei have between three and five bakemono gifts, all of which are completely concealed. For more information on Ban Ren Guei, see the entries for Ferectoi in *Freak Legion: A Player's Guide To Fomori* and *Book of the Wyrms 2nd Edition*.

Sample Ban Ren Guei Statistics

Attributes: Strength 4 (Wiry), Dexterity 4 (Lightning Quick), Stamina 3 (Rugged), Charisma 3, Manipulation 4 (Slick), Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Brawl 2, Business 3, Computer 2, Dodge 2, Empathy 3, Enigmas 2, Etiquette 4, Firearms 3, Intimidation 4, Law 3, Leadership 3, Occult 3, Politics 3, Stealth 3, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 4

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 4, Finances 4

Powers: Berserker, Eyes of the Thousand Hells, Claws and Fangs

Willpower: 8





HUDDLESTON 99

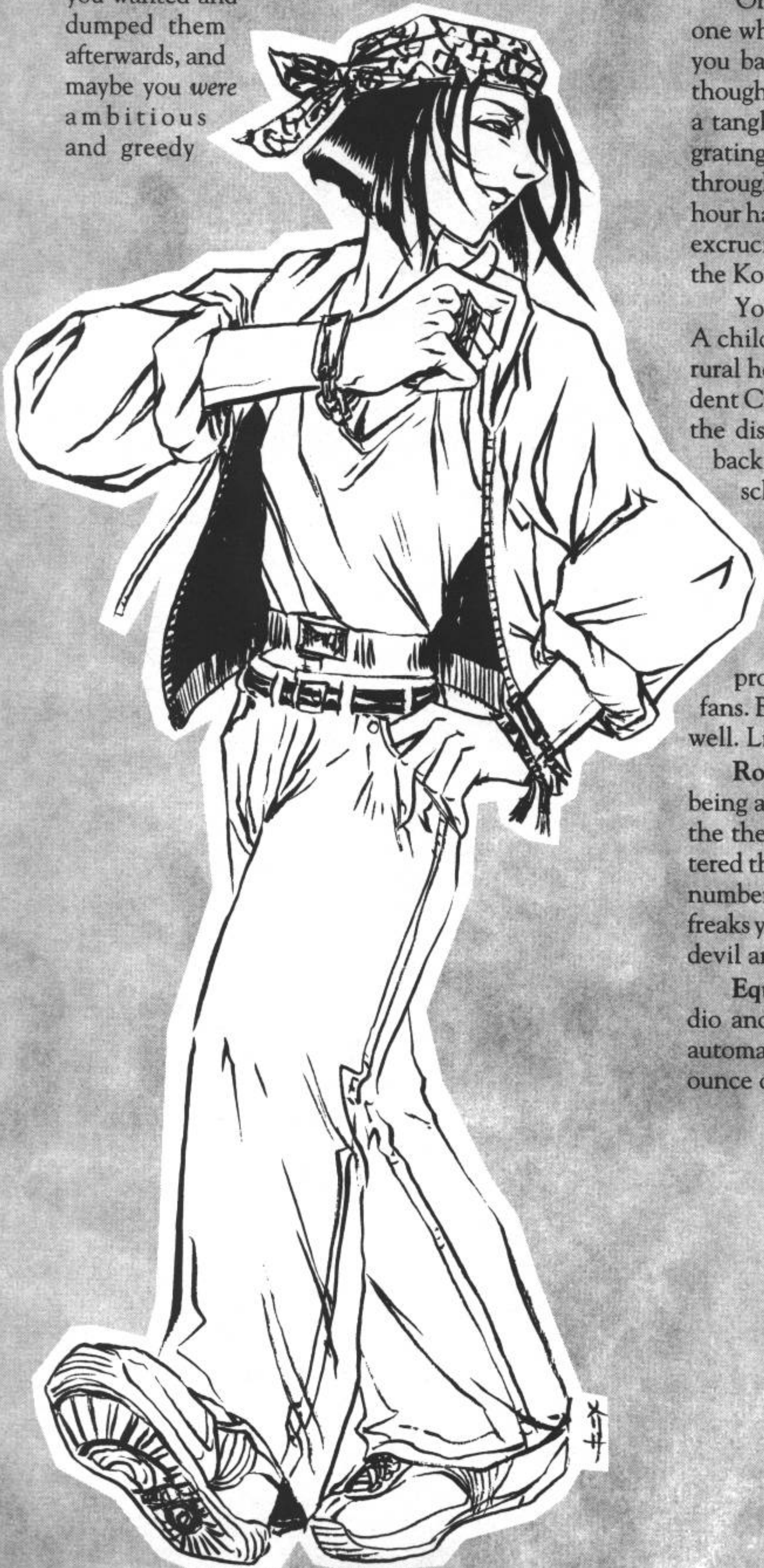
THE MASKS THAT THE MONSTERS WEAR



TECHNO STAR

Quote: Okay. I have to spin until two and then I'm going up to the studio. Come there and I'll have someone for you.

Prelude: So you were maybe not the greatest person in the world, right? You mostly just used people for what you wanted and dumped them afterwards, and maybe you were ambitious and greedy



and didn't give a fuck about who you used. But you could mix beats better than anyone else, and you were hot with the ladies, and best of all, you were 26 years old. Life was not looking bad.

One night you got yourself all fucked up while someone who was even more fucked up than you were drove you back from a gig. Maybe he hit something or just thought he did, but the next thing you knew, the car was a tangled wreck hanging halfway through a shop-front grating and you were a tangled wreck hanging halfway through the windshield. You spent a very, very long half-hour hallucinating wildly on the subject of your slow and excruciatingly painful death. It was a relief to wake up in the Kokuri Yomi, but not for long.

Your career as a *chih-mei* wasn't particularly exciting. A child of the city, you were interred near your parents' rural home. Within a few days of your revival, Resplendent Cranes had dragnetted you. You had problems with the discipline required for their training, and you fell back to *chih-mei* status while they were attempting to school you. The Cranes passed you to the Devil-Tigers, who knew just how to deal with your kind.

You graduated almost a year ago. As a gift from your Righteousness Society, you got a recording contract on a major techno-industrial label. You have also recently started working as a procurer for your elders, letting them feed on your fans. Both music and pimping out candy-ravers pay very well. Life after death is not looking bad.

Roleplaying Hints: You're still getting the hang of being a Devil-Tiger, and you haven't really caught onto the theological part yet. You're somewhat less self-centered than you were in life but you're still looking out for number one right now. The whole "devil" thing really freaks you out deep down, and your struggle to pick up the devil and achieve *ling* is going to be a hard one.

Equipment: \$25,000 in mixing gear, 1500 CDs, studio and living space in a college neighborhood, semi-automatic TEC-9, pet cat, 14 rolls, a ten-strip and an ounce of weed



NAME: Techno D.J.

PLAYER:

CHRONICLE:

NATURE:

P'O NATURE:

DEMEANOR:

BALANCE: Balanced

DIRECTION: East

WU:

ATTRIBUTES

PHYSICAL

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

SOCIAL

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

MENTAL

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

ABILITIES

TALENTS

Alertness ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Athletics ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Brawl ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Dodge ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Empathy ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Expression ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Intimidation ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Leadership ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Streetwise ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Subterfuge ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

SKILLS

Animal Ken ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Portents ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Drive ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Etiquette ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Firearms ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Martial Arts ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Melee ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Performance ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○
Stealth ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Survival ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

KNOWLEDGES

Computer ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Finance ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Investigation ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Law ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Linguistics ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Medicine ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Occult ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Politics ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Rituals ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Science ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

ADVANTAGES

DISCIPLINES

Demon Shintai ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Obligation ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

BACKGROUNDS

Resources ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○
Fame ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Herd ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○
Status ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

rites



YANG CHI

DHARMA Devil-Tigers / 1

HUN

● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

WILLPOWER

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

P'O

● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○



□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

DEMON CHI

HEALTH

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

DEMON SHINTAI CHARACTERISTICS

ELECTRIC DEVIL RISING STAR

Quote: No, today is not the day for open-market operations. I told you, the market's Yin-forces are out of balance, European employment numbers coming out today are expected to be positive, and I dreamt today that there was a monster loose in a snow-covered forest. Our horoscopes are bad for the next three to five business days — let's hold off until the Japanese consumer spending figures come out and the Moon and Mercury are no longer in the same House.

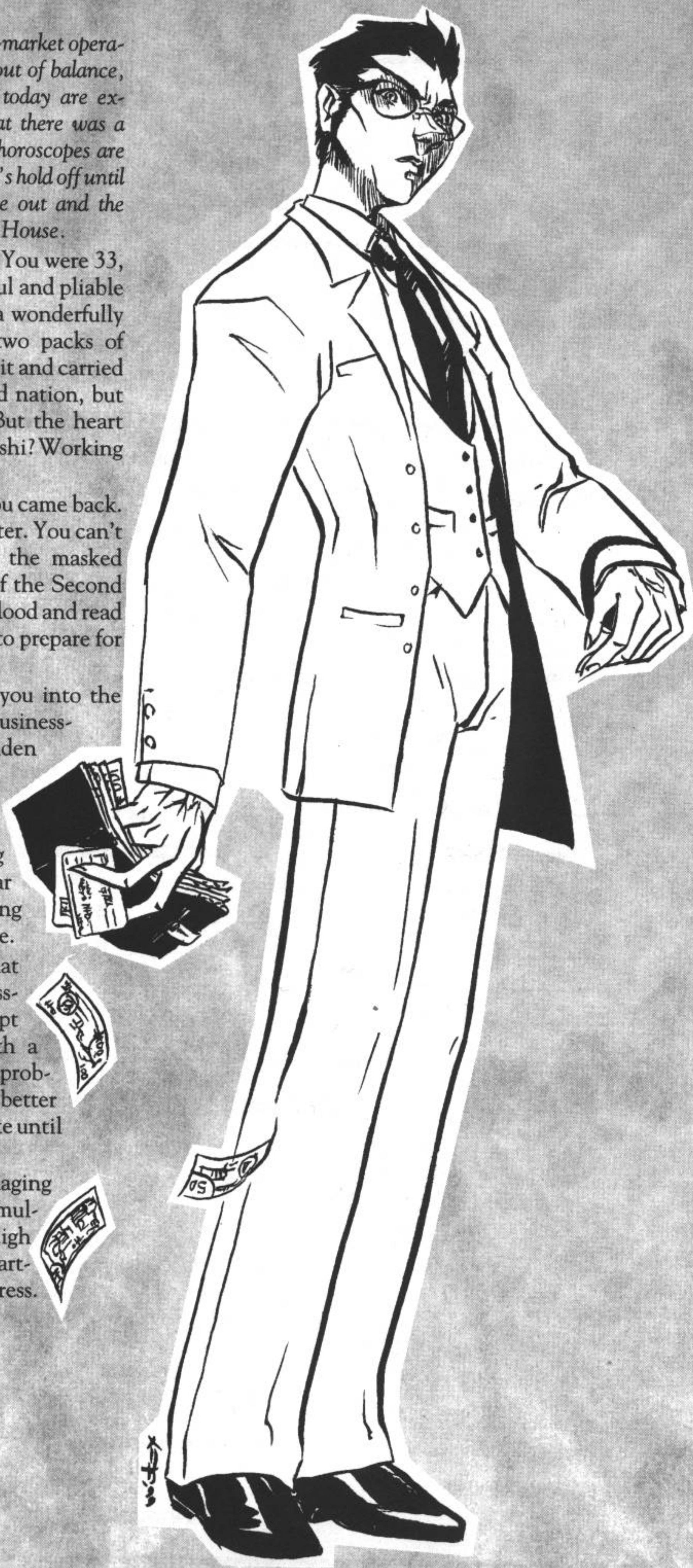
Prelude: It was just like in the movies. You were 33, a rising young executive star with a beautiful and pliable wife, a young daughter, a posh office and a wonderfully kinky mistress. Of course, you smoked two packs of Marlboro Reds a day, had a serious coke habit and carried enough personal debt to sink a third-world nation, but that's just the price you pay for success. But the heart attack? A trip to the Wicked City of Mikaboshi? Working as a *middle manager*? Un-fucking-fair!

So you came back. It wasn't easy, but you came back. You didn't mean to eat your wife and daughter. You can't even remember doing it. You remember the masked instructors who taught you the mysteries of the Second Breath and the Road Back. The drew your blood and read the stars, and gave you to the Devil-Tigers to prepare for your Fire and Water Test.

The Tigers who adopted you hooked you into the Electric Money, and *that* got you into a business-oriented Righteousness Society, the Golden Fortune Luck Club. Over the last year or so, you've really proven yourself to your associates, and you're rising fast. Even better, these people *expect* you to live like a fucking maniac. You haven't gotten in on the war councils or anything yet, but you're managing some serious fundage here in the meanwhile.

Roleplaying Hints: Everything bad that people think about successful young businessmen manifests in you. You're ruthless, corrupt and greedy, and you hate Mikaboshi with a passion. Once you pick up the devil, you'll probably make a fine Devil-Tiger, but you had better hope you don't find out what Yugen tastes like until you have a lot more self-discipline.

Equipment: Silver Audi TT, Taurus "Raging Bull" .454 Casull revolver, Iridium Kyocera multimode satellite/cellular phone, Ray-Ban High Street Metal Square sunglasses, penthouse apartment, four rottweilers and a 16 year-old mistress. Wardrobe by BillyBlue





NAME: Electric Devil

PLAYER:

CHRONICLE:

NATURE:

P'O NATURE:

DEMEANOR:

BALANCE: Balanced

DIRECTION: North

WU:

ATTRIBUTES

PHYSICAL

Strength ● ● ● ● ● ●
Dexterity ● ● ● ● ● ●
Stamina ● ● ● ● ● ●

SOCIAL

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

MENTAL

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

ABILITIES

TALENTS

Alertness ● ● ● ● ● ●
Athletics ● ● ● ● ● ●
Brawl ● ● ● ● ● ●
Dodge ● ● ● ● ● ●
Empathy ● ● ● ● ● ●
Expression ● ● ● ● ● ●
Intimidation ● ● ● ● ● ●
Leadership ● ● ● ● ● ●
Streetwise ● ● ● ● ● ●
Subterfuge ● ● ● ● ● ●

SKILLS

Animal Ken ● ● ● ● ● ●
Portents ● ● ● ● ● ●
Drive ● ● ● ● ● ●
Etiquette ● ● ● ● ● ●
Firearms ● ● ● ● ● ●
Martial Arts ● ● ● ● ● ●
Melee ● ● ● ● ● ●
Performance ● ● ● ● ● ●
Stealth ● ● ● ● ● ●
Survival ● ● ● ● ● ●

KNOWLEDGES

Computer ● ● ● ● ● ●
Finance ● ● ● ● ● ●
Investigation ● ● ● ● ● ●
Law ● ● ● ● ● ●
Linguistics ● ● ● ● ● ●
Medicine ● ● ● ● ● ●
Occult ● ● ● ● ● ●
Politics ● ● ● ● ● ●
Rituals ● ● ● ● ● ●
Science ● ● ● ● ● ●

ADVANTAGES

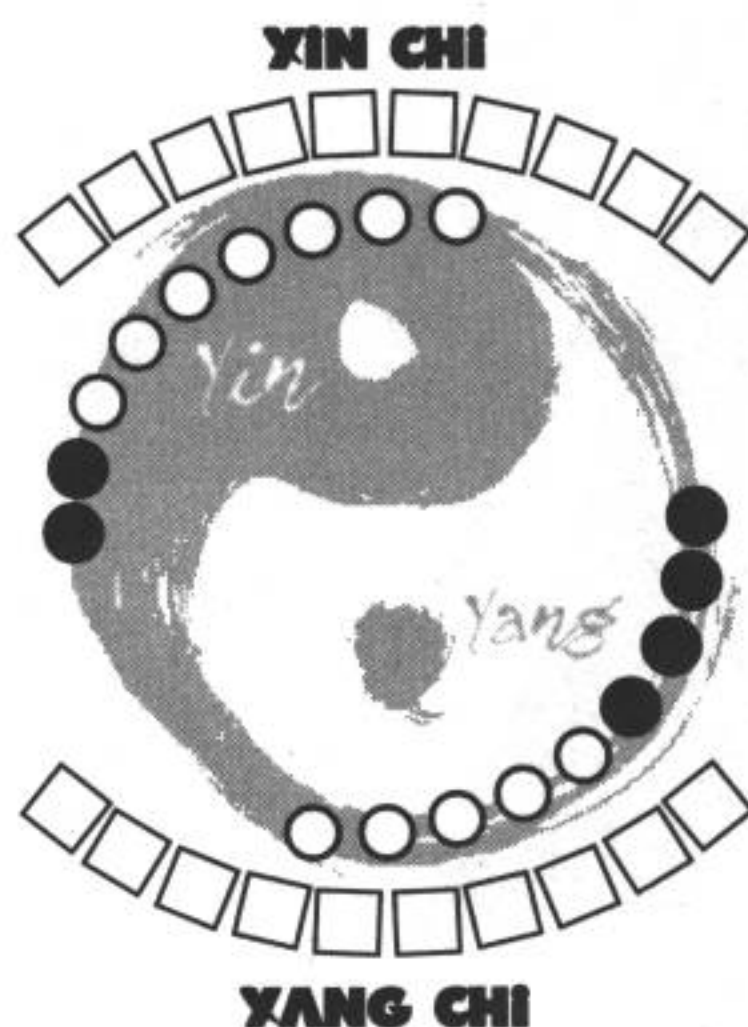
DISCIPLINES

Demon Shintai ● ● ● ● ● ●
Yang Prana ● ● ● ● ● ●
Chi'sh Muh ● ● ● ● ● ●
● ● ● ● ● ●
● ● ● ● ● ●

BACKGROUNDS

Status ● ● ● ● ● ●
Resources ● ● ● ● ● ●
Mentor ● ● ● ● ● ●
Influence ● ● ● ● ● ●
● ● ● ● ● ●

MITES



DHARMA Devil-Tigers / 1

HUN

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

WILLPOWER

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

P'O

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●



□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

DEMON CHI

HEALTH

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

IMBALANCE

HIGH-SOCIETY DEVIL

Quote: And not only is he rich, dear, he's the most notorious necrophile in town. It's positively scandalous! As luck would have it, I recently made his procurer's acquaintance. We'll be starting the festivities about 11. Meet us in the lane behind his house, and don't be late. I wouldn't want you to miss the look on his face when Chao Fa-Li opens her eyes!

Prelude: You had a good childhood, all things considered. Your parents quarreled a lot, and then you came home from Europe one year to find that they had divorced. They didn't even tell you they were doing it. They just expected you to be happy while they played tug-of-war over you at Christmas. Still, it was a good life. You married a nice man shortly after your debut, and all was good and right, and you were away from the barely veiled hostility that simmered when you spent time with your parents.

The neglect was painful. The mistress was a wound. The venereal disease he brought home was an icepick in the heart. You began drinking heavily and using prescription sedatives from pliable doctors, while your husband seemed to drift along just fine. He never noticed as you became paler and thinner and more withdrawn, a living ghost in the house. When he told you of his bankruptcy (or was it his plans for divorce? You forget), you chose to end it all with his beloved hunting shotgun. It would be after you ended him, of course. Your last thought was that they would never get the stains out of the white velvet drapes. You giggled around the thick, smoky barrel of the gun, and then blackness overwhelmed you.

You awoke to iron rods, and three years of brutal training as a Devil. It was like boarding school in Europe, but infinitely more difficult. Now, you've been released on an unsuspecting world with a pocket full of dollars and a personal mission. In your life, you learned how to pick out the dogs among humanity. Now, you are going to do something about them.

Roleplaying Hints: You are very well mannered, and you *think* you have pretty much finished picking up the devil. You are at home with your role as a celestial being, though you haven't had many trials yet. It remains to be seen if you're actually ready to achieve *ling* at such a young age.

Equipment: Pepper spray, custom wardrobe from Hong Kong, luxurious downtown apartment, developing profile in local "ladies society" functions





NAME: High-Society Devil

PLAYER:

CHRONICLE:

NATURE:

P'O NATURE:

DEMEANOR:

BALANCE:

DIRECTION: East

WU:

ATTRIBUTES

PHYSICAL

Strength ● ● ● ● ● ●
Dexterity ● ● ● ● ● ●
Stamina ● ● ● ● ● ●

SOCIAL

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

MENTAL

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

ABILITIES

TALENTS

Alertness ● ● ● ● ● ●
Athletics ● ● ● ● ● ●
Brawl ● ● ● ● ● ●
Dodge ● ● ● ● ● ●
Empathy ● ● ● ● ● ●
Expression ● ● ● ● ● ●
Intimidation ● ● ● ● ● ●
Leadership ● ● ● ● ● ●
Streetwise ● ● ● ● ● ●
Subterfuge ● ● ● ● ● ●

SKILLS

Animal Ken ● ● ● ● ● ●
Portents ● ● ● ● ● ●
Drive ● ● ● ● ● ●
Etiquette ● ● ● ● ● ●
Firearms ● ● ● ● ● ●
Martial Arts ● ● ● ● ● ●
Melee ● ● ● ● ● ●
Performance ● ● ● ● ● ●
Stealth ● ● ● ● ● ●
Survival ● ● ● ● ● ●

KNOWLEDGES

Computer ● ● ● ● ● ●
Finance ● ● ● ● ● ●
Investigation ● ● ● ● ● ●
Law ● ● ● ● ● ●
Linguistics ● ● ● ● ● ●
Medicine ● ● ● ● ● ●
Occult ● ● ● ● ● ●
Politics ● ● ● ● ● ●
Rituals ● ● ● ● ● ●
Science ● ● ● ● ● ●

ADVANTAGES

DISCIPLINES

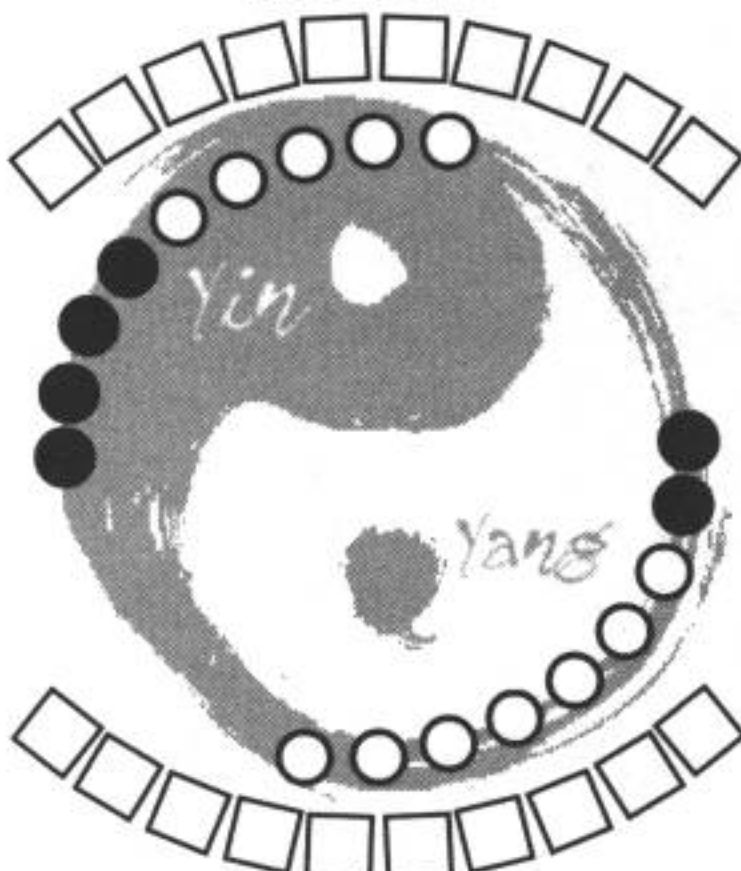
Demon Shintai ● ● ● ● ● ●
Obligation ● ● ● ● ● ●
Yin Prana ● ● ● ● ● ●
● ● ● ● ● ●
● ● ● ● ● ●

BACKGROUNDS

Resources ● ● ● ● ● ●
Status ● ● ● ● ● ●
Mentor ● ● ● ● ● ●
Contacts ● ● ● ● ● ●
Allies ● ● ● ● ● ●

MITES

XIN CHI



YANG CHI

DHARMA Devil-Tigers / 1

HUN

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

WILLPOWER

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

P'O

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●



□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

DEMON CHI

HEALTH

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

IMBALANCE

BLACK AXIS SCHOLAR

Quote: Slide the vivisection table over a few feet, we'll want room to move. And don't misdraw the Seven Footed Raven sigil this time. If this thing gets out, it'll kill us all.

Prelude: You were already part of the world of the Unseen before you died, a scholar and sometimes dealer in questionable antiquities. Books, curios, paraphernalia — all of them passed through your hands. You stayed out of the deep end, though, and you avoided trading in the things that could get someone killed for owning them. Or at least you thought you did. You could barely recognize the two goblins sent to fetch the formula for what they were, but they recognized you. It was ludicrous! Who would send *bakemono* after The Six Winter Formula? You told them what they wanted, but they tied you to a chair in the basement and filed away your teeth one by one anyway. And then, before they left, they injected you with... substances. Spiritual poisons. The seeds of the *bakemono*.

You knew enough to know what that meant, and that there was really only one way out. You were almost too much of a coward, but in the end, you drank the Five Venom Elixir before the infection could take root in your soul. Rather than a plummet into the

Mouth of Yomi, you awoke in the Wicked City. If only you had led a more righteous life, perhaps you might have gone on along the Wheel. Alas, it was a luxury you were not granted, and the Yomi world claimed you, at least for a little while.

On your return, you were captured by Infant Devil Civilizers before you caused too much damage. They educated you in the *real* lore of the Night World, and you realize now just how peripheral your old life was to the great scheme of things. Now you're *really* on the inside, and rising fast. One thing still bothers you, though. Who sent those *bakemono*, and why did they want that copy of the Six Winter Formula badly enough that two *bakemono* were sent to fetch it? Whoever sent those thugs is going to answer for what they did to you — and perhaps more.

Roleplaying Hints: Straddling the line between Indiana Jones and John Constantine, you're definitely becoming a lot more active in your pursuit of dark knowledge now that you've returned from Yomi as an apprentice devil. You understand your new position in the universe, but you haven't accepted it fully yet. You definitely see the benefits of this corpse-body thing, however, and you take full advantage of them.

Equipment: Loft apartment, extensive occult library, traveling clothes, extensive daylight survival gear, several sets of false IDs





NAME: Black Axis Scholar
PLAYER:
CHRONICLE:

NATURE:
P'O NATURE:
DEMEANOR:

BALANCE:
DIRECTION:
WU:

ATTRIBUTES

PHYSICAL

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

SOCIAL

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

MENTAL

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

ABILITIES

TALENTS

Alertness ●○○○○○
Athletics ●○○○○○
Brawl ●○○○○○
Dodge ●●○○○○○
Empathy ○○○○○○
Expression ○○○○○○
Intimidation ○○○○○○
Leadership ○○○○○○
Streetwise ●○○○○○
Subterfuge ○○○○○○

SKILLS

Animal Ken ○○○○○○
Portents ●○○○○○
Drive ●○○○○○
Etiquette ●○○○○○
Firearms ○○○○○○
Martial Arts ○○○○○○
Melee ●○○○○○
Performance ○○○○○○
Stealth ●●○○○○○
Survival ●●○○○○○

KNOWLEDGES

Computer ●○○○○○
Finance ○○○○○○
Investigation ●○○○○○
Law ○○○○○○
Linguistics ●●○○○○○
Medicine ○○○○○○
Occult ●●●○○○
Politics ○○○○○○
Rituals ●●●○○○
Science ●○○○○○

ADVANTAGES

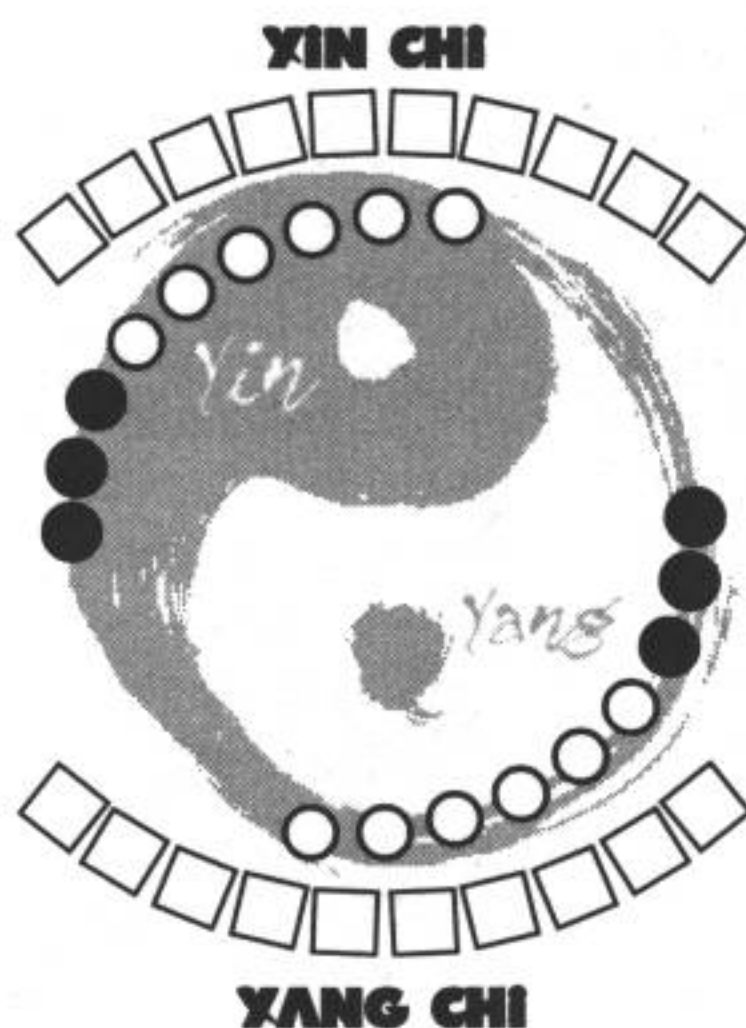
DISCIPLINES

Demon Shintai ●○○○○○
Tapestry ●○○○○○
Chi'in Muh ●○○○○○
○○○○○○
○○○○○○

BACKGROUNDS

Rituals ●●●○○○
Resources ●●●○○○
Contacts ●○○○○○
○○○○○○
○○○○○○

MITES



YIN CHI

YANG CHI

DHARMA Devil-Tigers / 1

HUN

●●●○○○○○○○○

WILLPOWER

●●●●●○○○○○
□□□□□□□□

P'O

●●●○○○○○○○○



□□□□□□□□

DEMON CHI

HEALTH

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

IMBALANCE

STAGGER LJ

Quote: *If it makes you feel any better, you could try thinking of him as travel-sized.*

Prelude: All your life, the world spit on you and kicked you when you were down. You father beat you, you brothers beat you, and your teachers beat you. You rebelled against a world that held nothing but hostility for you, and you found that your rebellion made it even more hostile. Lucky and mean, you were in and out of prisons and work camps all your life. They executed you at the age of 37, and you told the man with the pistol to hurry up because people were waiting for your organs.

You left the Hell of Being Skinned Alive like a rocket. You'd been in better-guarded office supply closets. When you took the Second Breath, you just took up your same old practices: robbery, arson and sodomy. You weren't so good at them as a *chih-mei*, though. The Infant Devil Civilizers woke you up, and you laid into them. The first lot weren't hard. You chased them out of the room and they called you a Three-Demon Student. A day later, this filthy old man and his fat, blind wife showed up to "take you away." He wasn't nearly as easy to beat. In fact, the two of them just sent you to The Little Death and took your body to a home that even you didn't think you wanted to spend much time in. The Mengs taught you what your duty to the cosmos was, and your role in the destruction of an unrighteous world. You liked that just fine. Then they told you it was okay for you to get rich and misbehave, just as long as you kept within the bounds of propriety. You liked that just fine, too, because these people's idea of propriety covered an awful lot of ground.

Since the Mengs kicked you out and sent you on your way, you're doing okay. You're part of the Righteousness Society, and you spend most of your nights as a glorified runner and leg-breaker for higher-ups in the court, but you have a fairly good idea that they could find you and kick your ass no matter where you ran. With that in mind, you're staying in line — at least for now.

Roleplaying Hints: You're the stereotypical Twice-Crimson Tiger. You're devoted, short-tempered, energetic, violent, clever and ready to end the world right now. If you can just get enough discipline to master your P'o, you'll be a bodhisattva when you're very young. If not, someone is going to whack you in fairly short order.

Equipment: Two big guns, a nice set of clothes, \$980 in US cash, apple-cheeked companion of the moment

Note: This character is *very* difficult to play. Unless you're familiar enough with the rules to know what you're getting yourself into, save this guy for later, or for a Storyteller character.





NAME: Stagger Li

PLAYER:

CHRONICLE:

NATURE:

P'O NATURE:

DEMEANOR:

BALANCE:

DIRECTION:

WU:

ATTRIBUTES

PHYSICAL

Strength ● ● ● ● ● ●
Dexterity ● ● ● ● ● ●
Stamina ● ● ● ● ● ●

SOCIAL

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

MENTAL

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

ABILITIES

TALENTS

Alertness ● ● ● ● ● ●
Athletics ● ● ● ● ● ●
Brawl ● ● ● ● ● ●
Dodge ● ● ● ● ● ●
Empathy ● ● ● ● ● ●
Expression ● ● ● ● ● ●
Intimidation ● ● ● ● ● ●
Leadership ● ● ● ● ● ●
Streetwise ● ● ● ● ● ●
Subterfuge ● ● ● ● ● ●

SKILLS

Animal Ken ● ● ● ● ● ●
Portents ● ● ● ● ● ●
Drive ● ● ● ● ● ●
Etiquette ● ● ● ● ● ●
Firearms ● ● ● ● ● ●
Martial Arts ● ● ● ● ● ●
Melee ● ● ● ● ● ●
Performance ● ● ● ● ● ●
Stealth ● ● ● ● ● ●
Survival ● ● ● ● ● ●

KNOWLEDGES

Computer ● ● ● ● ● ●
Finance ● ● ● ● ● ●
Investigation ● ● ● ● ● ●
Law ● ● ● ● ● ●
Linguistics ● ● ● ● ● ●
Medicine ● ● ● ● ● ●
Occult ● ● ● ● ● ●
Politics ● ● ● ● ● ●
Rituals ● ● ● ● ● ●
Science ● ● ● ● ● ●

ADVANTAGES

DISCIPLINES

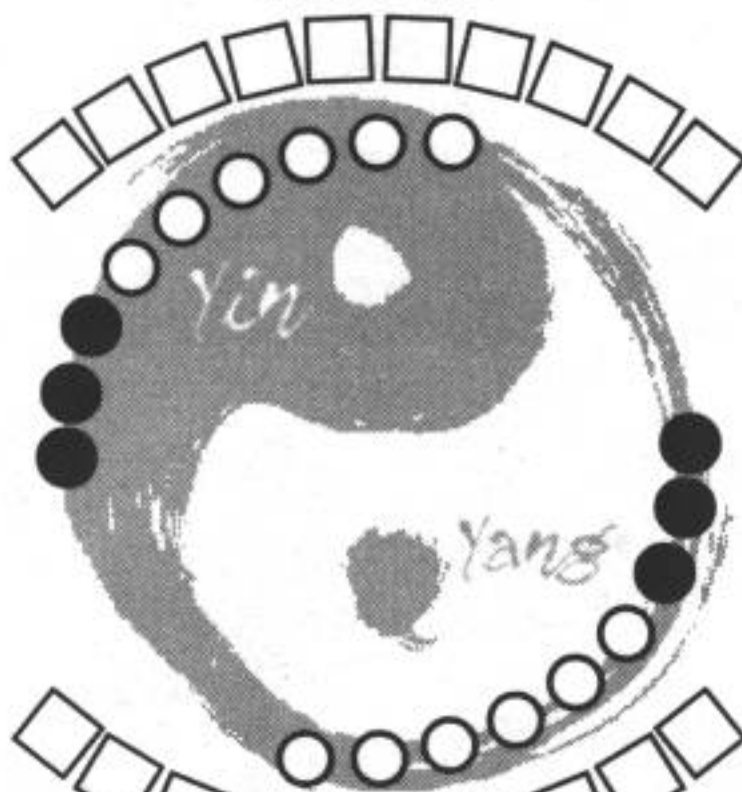
Demon Shintai ● ● ● ● ● ●
Bone Shintai ● ● ● ● ● ●
Yang Prana ● ● ● ● ● ●
● ● ● ● ● ●
● ● ● ● ● ●

BACKGROUNDS

Hokoskope ● ● ● ● ● ●
● ● ● ● ● ●
● ● ● ● ● ●
● ● ● ● ● ●
● ● ● ● ● ●

RITES

XIN CHI



YANG CHI

DHARMA Devil-Tigers / 1

HUN

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

WILLPOWER

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

P'O

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●



□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

DEMON CHI

HEALTH

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

IMBALANCE



APPENDIX: TITANS OF THE NUCLEAR AGE

MASAKI KEIKO

One of the most brilliant and disturbing performance artists in Japan (a land which has produced more than its share of disturbing performance art) Masaki Keiko has managed to conceal her identity as a Devil-Tiger for over a decade. Keiko was torn to pieces in late 1987 by hungry dogs in the basement of her warehouse in Kobe's industrial district, as part of suicidal piece of escape artistry and video art that was designed to commemorate the futility of human struggle.

Before the dogs had finished their meal, the Devil-Tigers arrived to collect the urn. On the way out, they collected the videotapes of the event (there was no live audience) and turned out the lights. Everything else, they left as it was. She would be needing it soon enough, they reasoned. They were not disappointed.

In life, Keiko was a talented but disturbed young woman, the sort of warehouse-dwelling post-industrial artist who would arrange to have her grisly suicide by dog attack videotaped from several angles without weighing concerns other than the artistic. In death, she has recovered somewhat, and she carries herself with the characteristic Devil-Tiger poise. Masaki's art has benefited greatly not only from the discipline of the Road Back, but also from her membership in the Temple-Haunting Spirits Righteousness Society, whose Infant Devil Civilizing arm

took her urn and tutored her through the Fire and Water Test. The Temple-Haunting Spirits include both Yoshida Ozaki and Tetsuo Shirow, Hakari's yojimbo.

With the Society's backing and her own undeniable talent, Masaki Keiko has expanded and diversified her



already successful art career into an international phenomenon. With regular installations, exhibitions and performances in Paris, London, New York and Tokyo, Masaki has recently signed a contract to compose and direct a major opera. She has also been approached on several occasions about work as a cinematographer and set-designer.

Keiko's strange nocturnal habits and insistence on subterranean accommodations don't really surprise the sort of people who hire her. If anything, they've improved her reputation in the international art scene. Of particular note is an incident where she was accidentally booked into a glass-ceiling penthouse in Paris, and she spray-painted the entire ceiling of the room with several layers of black primer. When early-rising guests on other floors complained about the smell, several hotel employees who had come to investigate were overcome by the fumes before Keiko was found sitting cross-legged on her bed and reading the latest issue of *Elle*. She was escorted triumphantly to the hotel's basement, where she spent the day asleep in a laundry hamper.

THE MENGs

It seems as if, in every run-down neighborhood, there is a shabby house where the unwashed and possibly feral elderly inhabitants live furtively in squalor and decay. Mostly, they're just unwholesome people, ignorant and fallen into degeneracy from poverty and old age. Sometimes they aren't, though. Sometimes they're the Mengs.

The Mengs originally lived in a Saigon slum in the early days of the French mandate over Indochina. They were never punished for their crimes in life, which included the murder of two young children, five transients, eleven dogs and innumerable cats during their quarter-century of residence. These crimes had no impetus other than the malice bred of a long, long lifetime of qualified success.

The Mengs died together in their sleep of asphyxiation while their house burned down around them one night. A neighbor whose child had gone missing put a torch through the Meng's window, and the tiny bones that were found in the ashes told the arsonist that he'd done the right thing. The Mengs' bones were found there, too, and other, less identifiable things.

Despite the authorities' best efforts to keep evil spirits from rising out of the mass grave the unidentifiable bones — including the Meng's — had been dumped into, the monstrous couple returned to earth in a terrifyingly short time. In three months as *chih-mei*, the Mengs wrought more havoc than they did in 25 years of married life. Their fame, if it can be called that, spread far and wide.

A Devil-Tiger hunting group came all the way from the temple in Wuhan to put a stop to the couple's career as *chih-mei*. After much training, the couple went through its Fire and Water Test. Shortly thereafter, the Mengs settled down to a life similar to the one they had led before their trip to Yomi and began doing their greatest service



to the Devils of Heaven. They began adopting what they call their "children."

Old Man Meng is a sadist so uncommunicative as to verge on autism, but an excellent ritualist. Mrs. Meng is nearly blind from cataracts as well as being morbidly obese, but she does possess a perfect knowledge of human iniquity. While they are both good Devil-Tigers (indeed, the two of them are mandarins, and well-respected throughout the Dharma as a whole) their real talent lies not in punishing sinners or battling the forces of Yomi, but in Infant Devil Civilizing. Over the last century, the Mengs have successfully passed 47 *hin* through their *ré*, more than any two other Infant Devil Civilizers put together. They sometimes even teach two or three students at a time. It is considered a great honor to have been trained in the Meng's shabby abode (the location changes every decade or so, but the state of profound squalor does not), and many Devil-Tigers who wish to train *chih mei* study the couple's methods to better their understanding of their art.

CHIU BAO

This young son of a petty 17th century Chinese warlord was ambushed and left to die by his father's servants. Chiu Bao took some time about it, finally dying of gas gangrene three weeks later. He returned from the Hell of Burrowing Maggots with a cold hate in his heart and killed his father and his retainers before the local Thousand Whispers came to collect him. Bao was pathless at that time but not *chih-mei*, and he migrated quickly to the Devil-Tigers. Among them, he completed his *ré* and took his Fire and Water Test.

A talented young devil, Chiu Bao rose through the ranks quickly during the Toppling of the Manchu Dynasty, becoming an important official in the provisional Flame Court capital of Canton. In 1964, he was appointed First Oni of the Quincunx Extraordinary Council on the



Rectification of Borders under Ancestress Elder Sister Plum.

A vociferous moderate, Chiu Bao is the striking arm of the Fence Menders. One of the patrons of the Flatbush and Stockton Posse, Chiu Bao has kept himself close to home, mostly moving in the Blood Court and the disputed zones of the Flesh and Flame courts. He was instrumental in retaking Shanghai from the Japanese *akuma* and installing Ancestress Pai with the cooperation of the Silent Mandarins. He is currently in Beijing, helping to keep the Mao dynasty together and defending the Two-Fang Serpent Plan from Ash Plan extremists. Though he is young for his post, Chiu Bao is warlord of an organization treated as a Quincunx Court by the Revered Ancestor, and he performs that role quite effectively.

YOSHIDA SHIMAZU

No relation to Yoshida Ozaki, Yoshida Shimazu was originally a minor warlord who died after a spectacularly protracted battle with bone cancer in the 16th century. Shimazu returned from Yomi as a Black Axis Scholar, and he spent the next several centuries tending to Devil-Tiger dragon nests, traveling the Spirit Worlds and mastering the black sorcery of the Dharma.

In the late 19th century, two major events changed the direction of Shimazu's work. The first was the Meiji Restoration and the resultant establishment of factories in Japan. The second was the introduction of chocolate and other Western sweets. In the first, Yoshida Shimazu saw a way to protect and even amplify the powers of defiled dragon nests through the judicious application of geomantic principles. In the other, he saw a chance to both make children happy, and to satisfy a sweet tooth that had endured even through the torments of Yomi.

Shimazu established his first and only candy factory on a large Devil-Tiger holy site outside Utsunomiya in 1907.

The factory was at first a scarlet screen, staffed mostly by local residents in search of part-time work. However, as Shimazu's success grew, he began to employ bakemono and Ban Ren Guei. By the Second World War, the factory was a huge complex that extended into the Yang Mirrorlands in some places, and which was staffed not just by Goblins and Devil-Men, but by actual Bane-spirits as well. The dragon nest inside grew with the factory. By the time the US began bombing, the site's black joss was easily powerful enough to protect it from the eyes of bombardiers and mission planners. The flow of chocolate and other treats was curtailed by the wartime shortages, but what candy did emerge was as delightful as ever.

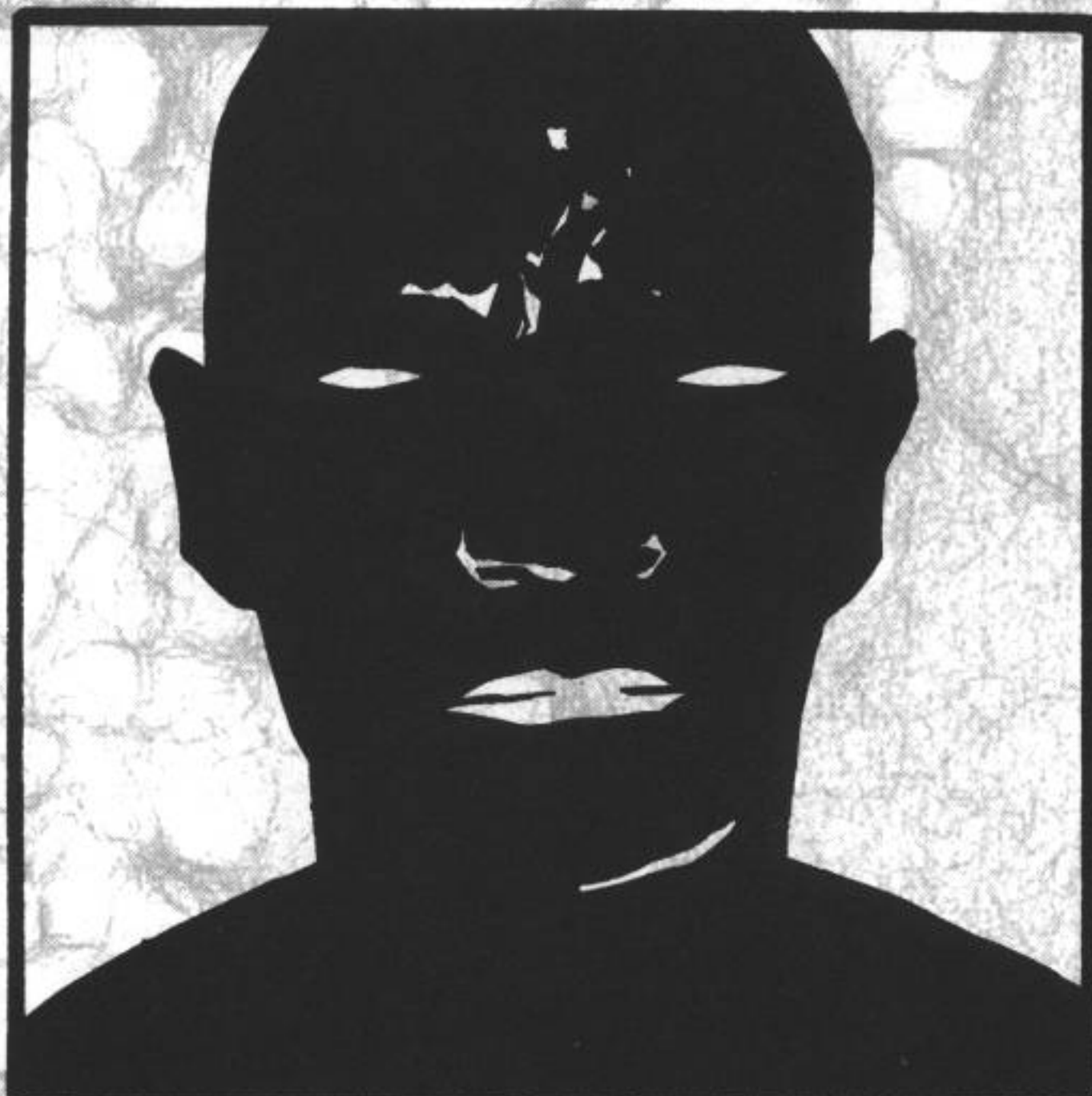


Today, the structure stands as an almost closed system, its great green glass roof shining in the sun. Quietly exempted from regulation or overlooked by health and safety inspectors, the factory and its staff of devils and goblins continue to grind out millions of tasty treats for the children of Japan. The factory also serves as the meeting place for the Five Threes, a powerful Righteousness Society, and it serves as the high holy ground for a large segment of Japan's Devil-Tigers. The Snow Maiden Festival held there every midwinter rivals the Great Hokkaido Devil Festival in size, even attracting visitors from outside Japan to participate.

Other than *shen*, no visitors have penetrated past the outer wall of the factory in decades.

EIGHT THUNDERS SAGE

Eight Thunders Sage was one of the eldest of the Devil-Tiger bodhisattvas not yet to have entered *dāh*. A virtual arhat, the Sage was a survivor of the Burning of the Books and one of the most respected of the August Devils. He was also the most vocal advocate of maintaining the Mao Dynasty until the coming of the Age of Sorrow.



This summer, shortly after the sighting of the red star (which is known as the Eye of the Demon Emperor and which only *shen* may see), many Devil-Tigers dreamt nightly of the 10-headed Yama King Ravana. In their dreams, Ravana split the mountain that imprisoned him and sent evil dreams to chase his children. He then battled a Crane, a Dragon and a Tiger until the sun rose and ended the dream. Scholars interpreted the dream as representing a great evil awakening in the world, perhaps not Ravana himself but rather a precursor to the Sixth Age schooled in the Yama King's arts of deceit and illusion.

Shortly after the dreams began, Eight Thunders Sage left his mountain fastness and traveled to the Infinite Thunders Court on unstated business. It is believed by many enlightened Devil-Tigers that the Eight Thunders Sage was in fact the tiger who battled the dark prince, and who died in so doing. Certainly, the dreams have ended, and the August Body has indicated that it is considering potential replacements for the now-missing Sage. On the other hand, this turn of events has caused many Devil-Tigers to redouble their efforts to prepare for the coming Sixth Age.

With the destruction of the Eight Thunders Sage, the Mao Dynasty has lost one of its greatest advocates, and the Yama Kings one of their greatest foes. These signs of the turning of the Age are greeted by the Righteousness Societies all across the Middle Kingdom with redoubled efforts to prepare for the Age of Sorrow, which surely is nigh.

NO-SHADOW RAVEN

No-Shadow Raven is one of the two or three *active* Devil-Tiger bodhisattvas. While there are over a dozen such beings who spend their time in various states of repose and meditation, No-Shadow Raven refuses to let the dignity of her station interfere with the way she carries out her duty. Said to have been a successful courtesan and woman of influence during her life (at least up until her torture and execution) she continued to expand her range of interests after her return from Yomi.

No-Shadow Raven is the sole party responsible for the theft of 600 tons of chemical warfare agent known as "Yellow Rain" from a Vietnamese ammunition dump in Cambodia. She is also the leading financial consultant for the Electric Money Wickedness Club, helping direct both their economic warfare against the Yama Kings and the money-laundering operations that feed that war. As such, she is regularly involved with Devil-Tigers far below her station, much to the disapproval of the mandarins.

While No-Shadow Raven is not a member of the August Body, she became a Perfected August Devil some time ago. However, she has let her degree lapse into honorary status over the last 50 years, as things have been far too busy to study. As a result, Raven has some holes in her knowledge base about things like modern scientific advances and technology, and she uses assistants to compensate for these shortcomings.



DEVIL-TIGERS IN THE WEST

Kindred of the East comes part and parcel with Vampire, and that means that crossovers are inevitable. While interaction of Kin-jin and Kuei-jin through conflict was covered extensively in *Kindred of the East* and the *Kindred of the East Companion*, there's more to do with the games than just pitch combat. Active and inquisitive, Devil-Tigers have been going here and there among the Sunset People for centuries, and they are natural choices for such a game. But how does one go about making up a Devil-Tiger suitable for play in the West? The following are some guidelines on how to cross Devil-Tigers into a Kin-jin game.

LEAVE "KILL WHITEY" TO THE RESPLENDENT CRANES

Individual Devil-Tigers, particularly the Quincunx jina and young mandarins who took the Second Breath during the West's partitioning of China, bear the Sunset People and Western *shen* some serious grudges. These are personal grudges, however. Quincunx Devil-Tigers, particularly those younger or older than the Opium War veterans, tend to have neutral feelings on the matter. Those outside China are even more prone to indifference. The Crimson Tigers are *devils*, after all. Had the shoe been on the other foot, they would have stuck it to the Westerners just as hard and twice as vigorously.

For older Kuei-jin, the coming of barbarian *shen* is just another invasion in China's long history of invasion. For younger vampires, the West is the land of Nikes and Big Macs, not opium and colonial domination. Devil-Tigers aren't here to whack Kin-jin and spout Confucian rhetoric, they're here to make money, torture sinners and advance whatever plans the vampire happens to support. Play your character like a person with real motivations, not a walking political slogan.

DON'T PREACH TO THE BARBARIANS

Whatever your feelings toward the barbarian vampires, telling someone how much they suck is a poor negotiating strategy. Kin-jin are not Gui Ren, they aren't walking the Road Back, and they've never been to Yomi. The Sunset People aren't going to learn anything from you explaining your Dharma except maybe a way to stick it to you. Don't drag the game toward *Kindred of the East*. You're on the Kin-jins' turf, so they're probably going to be the focus point.

Playing in this setting may mean that your character doesn't explore her Dharma a great deal. As a crossover character, you are naturally coming into a situation in which you are peripherally involved. If your role is to provide an inhuman foil against which the Cainites struggle for their Humanity, so be it. It's better for the game if you accept that a neat character often has a secondary role than for you to get in a tug-of-war with the Storyteller and/or the other players about which topics the chronicle will focus on. If you really *must* play *Kindred*

of the East, then go play *Kindred of the East*, and let the clans of the Kindred have their own fun.

MINIMIZE SPIRIT TRAVEL

Kuei-jin spirit travel. Kin-jin don't. This difference is a big, big deal, because jina and mandarin Kuei-jin tend to do it a lot. The degree to which you force this facet of Cathayan existence to the foreground is the degree to which the Storyteller must run two games: you in the spirit realms and everyone else in the material world.

Also, crossing the Wall is a Kuei-jin's big ace in the hole, and he almost certainly knows it. Through Imbuing the Jade, the Kuei-jin can survive without a Haven by fading into the spirit worlds during the day, and he can gain access to areas that are otherwise inaccessible. This ability is almost certainly poorly understood by the Kin-jin, and there's no reason for the Easterners to clarify things.

To whatever degree possible, try to abstract away travel in the spirit worlds. Don't gobble up entire sessions with spirit quests, and don't totally disempower the group by habitually using spirit travel to spy on them or by always be the first one in a place. If you do so, the Storyteller will be forced to either shortchange the other players to keep things moving or put obstacles in your path, which diverts attention to you and away from the game's center of focus.

MAKE SURE YOU CAN PLAY

Kuei-jin have an astonishing assortment of ways to do aggravated damage. Don't necessarily feel compelled to get as many of them as possible during character creation. If your character has a dot of Demon Shintai and two dots of Black Wind, the typical Vampire coterie is going to prop you up in a corner until the time comes for fighting. If at all possible, start the game with things that give you at least some chance to move socially among Kin-jin. Yang Prana's Yang Mantle, Obligation's Evaluate and Soul Bridge and Cultivation's Scrutinize are all good ways to give yourself a little social power. Kin-jin are social animals, and if you can't keep up, they will plow you under.

Likewise, Kin-jin are sneaky bastards. Having some stealth capabilities of your own isn't a bad idea. Bone Shintai's White Tiger Corpse is highly effective, and it also grants Corpse Skin, the Kuei-jin's premier defense. Yin Prana is less effective, but also less expensive. Again, the idea is to give yourself a way to participate in the session without causing the game to veer wildly off into "mandatory crossover character time." If the only thing your character can do is kill things, the Storyteller is either going to let you sit there like a lump on a log, or the game is going to gain a huge combat element — much to the chagrin of players who don't have combat-oriented characters. Remember that your character is part of the game, not the game's focus. If you accept that, you're doing yourself and your fellow players a favor. Fail to see that and sooner or later you're either going to wreck the game or find yourself evicted from it.



Hear the Howl of the Devil-Tiger

We bear the mandate of Heaven to punish sinners and turn the Wheel of Ages. We are atrocity incarnate, burning bright to cauterize the corruption of the world. We are Heaven's Devils, who have clawed their way back from Hell to show the world what evil truly is, and to light a fire that will burn away the Ages. And you are one of us. Prepare yourself.

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