



CORPSE

THE EYES



BULL PRESS
CONVERSATIONAL GAMES



Corpse Thieves

Bull Press MMXXIII

CORPSE THIEVES
B u l l P r e s s

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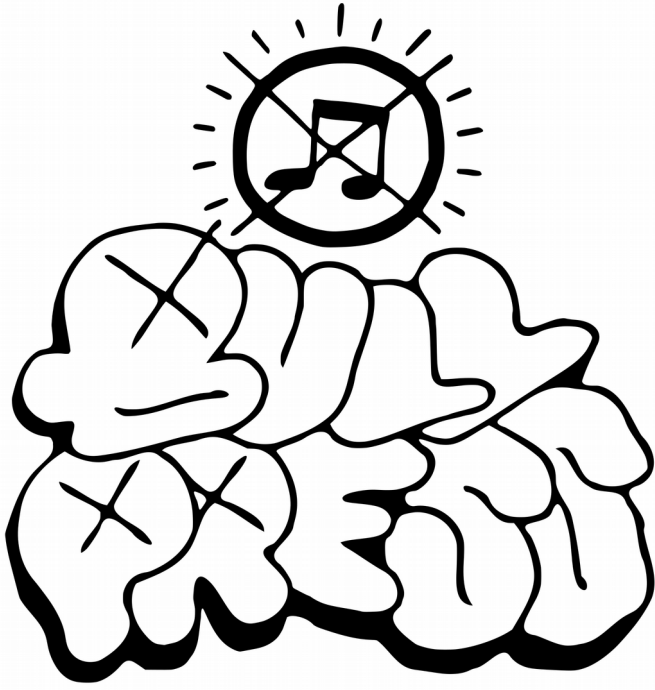


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EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW . . .

- ◆ Gameplay is conversational & cooperative
- ◆ 4 players is ideal, but 3 to 6 is fine too
- ◆ One player is the Key Narrator: they run the game for the other players
- ◆ Everybody else creates a main character & controls them in the game

HOW DO I DO THINGS?

You say it. For example, “I look into the alley, what do I see?” If it’s believable, you do it.

If it’s challenging (“I jump the huge gap”), the Key Narrator will tell you to **SPIN FOR IT** and you’ll flick the s6 spinner on the back of your book:

- | | |
|-------------|---------------|
| 6. Finessed | 3. Not really |
| 5. Success | 2. Failure |
| 4. Barely | 1. Faceplant |

If equipment, experience, distractions, general difficulty etc skew your chances . . .

EASY: the Key Narrator will have you spin s6 twice, taking the highest result.

DIFFICULT: spin s6 twice, take the *lowest*.

SPINNING

The back of the book is a spinner. Create an arm by looping one end of a paperclip or guitar string trimming. Fasten the loop over the spinner’s center-dot.

“s6” means a random number from 1 to 6. Flick the spinner arm; wherever it lands in the s6 ring is the result. “s10” is a random number from 1 to 10, “s4” means 1 to 4, etc.

MAIN CHARACTERS

The stars of the show. Everybody who isn’t the Key Narrator creates a main character, and the Key runs interesting scenarios for them. Any main character concept goes as long as it fits the setting, and starts humble (no superbeings or millionaires etc).

SPECIALS: powers and unique abilities for your main character.

SP: “Special Points”, what you buy and upgrade Specials with.

→ Character creation quick guide on page 54.

KEY NARRATOR

You run scenes for the main characters – interesting side characters for them to talk to, fights, problem-solving scenarios etc. The “arc” starting on the next page is a series of ready-to-run scenes leading to a narrative goal.

CLOSING CEREMONIES: at the end of each session, the Key awards SP for best performances etc (page 40 for all categories).

THE AMBITION

This is the common goal that keeps the main characters all pushing the plot in the same direction. The Ambition is set at the beginning of a game, and always has a large reward attached to it.

*All this is known as **DOMEFIECETV**, a conversational games system that can run any setting and any genre.*



CORPSE THIEVES

A Conversational Game in Five Parts

Bull Press M M X X I I I

Summary: a golden age Kung Fu & Wuxia arc set in mythology-heavy Qing-era China.

How to Run This: the Key Narrator just reads ahead a few pages and gets familiar with the approaching scenes (page 9 is plenty far to start). The other players (“actors”) don’t need to read anything: they just show up and the Key runs the game for them. Doesn’t hurt to keep a sheet of general notes to mark your place in the arc. Page 108 for example gameplay.

Length: sessions usually last 1 to 3 hours *but you can end it whenever you want*. Fill out sessions that went too fast with insertable bump scenes (page 39, go dogear quick).

Closing Ceremonies: run these at the end of each session, awarding SP for best performances etc. All categories on page 40.

Soundtrack: each scene has a single track you can throw on loop. If playing on the outside, or loading up a mp3 player for somebody inside, **all tracks are on bullpress.org**

***First Time Key Narrators:** fuck nerves. The friends are getting together to riff and bullshit with each other. They’re going to have a good time no matter what.

If your first session feels stiff, don’t sweat it, it’s not because you dropped the ball, *it’s because things are still developing* – the main characters don’t really have personalities yet, a crew dynamic is still brewing, and the setting doesn’t feel lived-in yet. The pilot session is still a good time, but where the hobby goes from good to great is two or three sessions in when the setting and characters start feeling familiar, start coming to life a little, and start relating to each other in interesting ways. There’s a reason it takes a couple episodes to get hooked on a TV show, you know?

Besides that, Keying is easy: just give the main characters engaging shit to do, see what gets people stoked, and find interesting ways to give your actors what they want.

Arc Summary

The main characters are kung fu students of the Wo Ping, a mountaintop monastery, and are sent to investigate some graverobbing in the nearby town of Potbelly Hill . . .

SHAPE OF STORY

I. Infractions: main Characters introduced. Master Lung sends them on a mission to Potbelly Hill (the town at the bottom of the mountain) to put a stop to a series of graverobbing. Gravekeeper Wu should have all the details.

II. Empty Graves: the only real lead is Gravekeeper Wu saying the newly arrived physician is suspected of performing experiments on dead bodies at the apothecary.

- Apothecary: the physician is definitely not stealing bodies (gravekeeper just superstitious about doctors). A distraction goes sideways and a break-in is heard at the back of the apothecary. A fresh corpse set for autopsy (poisoning suspicion) is gone from the surgical area and the back door is busted in, two thieves carting the body away in the back alley.
- A fight jumps off. At least one corpse thief is killed, leaving several clues. One is crucial: callouses on tips of one hand's fingers indicate the thief was a musician. It's known musicians are well-paid at the Purple Mountain Theater and the Floating Garden.

III. Hitting the Bricks: up to five leads can be followed, all giving useful information about the corpse thieves. At the Purple Mountain Theater, the director says the musician corpse thief mentioned he was staying with Merchant Go-Chen.

IV. The Grinning Tiger Clan: main characters confront several of the corpse thieves at Merchant Go-Chen's mansion, sparking a fight. As the fight ends, locals flood the mansion (either attracted by the noise or roused by Go-Chen's servants). It looks bad for the main characters, but they establish the truth by recounting their investigation and eventually confirm everything with Go-Chen's journal:

- Merchant Go-Chen and his guests are members of the Grinning Tiger Clan, a secretive martial brotherhood. They came here seeking "The Fist of the Celestial Destroyer", six scrolls of lost kung fu instruction buried under a shrine in the nearby Lantern Forest. The forest's yaksha, who has developed a taste for human bones, demanded payment of one human corpse per scroll. The rest of the Grinning Tiger members just left with six bodies, planning to meet the Yaksha tomorrow when he tends to appear around high sun.

V. Fist of the Celestial Destroyer: next morning, the main characters track the cart into Lantern Forest, but only find a foul shapeshifting fox. He tells them he smelled humans around the camphor tree grove. The yaksha appears within the grove, and says he ate the bones of the men they seek, then tries to eat them. After killing the Yaksha, the main characters effortlessly find the woodland shrine and unearth the priceless scrolls. All corpse thieves accounted for, the Crew Ambition is complete.

Chunks: the arc is divided into five (theoretically) equal-sized chapters for easy timing . . .

- I:** main character creation / intros / plot exposition / down the mountain
- II:** graveyard / physician / fight / chase / unwinding clues
- III:** up to five leads to follow up on (can be done in any order)
- IV:** mansion / fight / shaking out the truth / parting down at the guesthouse
- V:** woods / Bùxùn Húlí / grove / boss fight / scrolls / outros *or* planning next season

Arc Intro

Soundtrack: Wu-Tang Clan - Wu-Tang Clan Ain't Nuthing Ta Fuck Wit Instrumental

→ **Read italicized blocks of text out loud, starting with:**

This is a show about that Kung Fu shit, that Wuxia shit. The setting is a mythology-heavy South China of a few centuries back, in an era of style feuds and midnight duels, where stumbling into secret demon wars and mythic sub-glacial fortresses isn't outside the realm of possibility.

Our province is Guangfeng, the uncut gem of China's southern coast. For most people, the region's name evokes images of wandering blademasters and haunted Yuan ruins, of unknowable entities stalking bamboo forests and clan rivalries spilling onto city streets. For you, it evokes the warm feelings of home.

The main characters are students of the Wo Ping, a secular monastery where martial scholars from every corner of the world study their chosen styles under the disciples of Grandmaster Yen-Hai, a living legend renowned for her victory in 111 duels and probably the illest living practitioner of Crane Style.

Now, this is important: each of you creates and plays one of these main characters in the show. Whatever your character's concept, work together to come up with a cast you'd wanna watch an actual show about . . .

Setting: Guangfeng Province

Mythology-heavy Qing-era China, vaguely 1600s.

Languages: main characters fluent in Chinese.

- Korean, Mongolian, Tibetan are common.
- The language of the ruling elite is Manchu.
- The various Chinese dialects (Mandarin, Cantonese, Hakka, Min, Taiwanese etc) can all count as just “Chinese”, speakers usually understanding each other with a little discernment.

Money: wen. Main characters start with zero wen (the Wo Ping provides everything they need). Average day's pay for laborers is about 10 wen. If you ever need specifics, use the prices from page 107.

Make it Yours: this show can lean more towards the low-budget dubs of the kung fu golden age or the high-art wuxia of the new school, or whatever. Alter scenes and side characters to taste.

* * *

Side Character Names: every side character has a title – Woodcutter Cai, Gravekeeper Wu etc. It's normal for people to call each other by their title instead of their name (“good afternoon, Woodcutter”). Let your actors know this so they don't beat themselves up for not remembering the dozen names you throw at them throughout the arc.

Main Character Creation

Soundtrack: Q No Rap Name - Character Creation

Give each of the other players (called actors) a main character sheet from page 123. Don't create a main character since you, the Key Narrator, will be running the game.

Quicklist

(This list also on page 54: send everybody there if they have their own book)

1. Snatch a main character sheet from page 123
2. Concept: name, appearance, background etc
3. Pick 10 SP's worth of Specials (pages 57 to 67)
4. Start with merk 10
5. Start with 0 defense (top number is just all lower numbers added together)
6. Start with a move score of 5
7. If non-Chinese, put 2 bars in your native tongue (automatically fluent in Chinese)
8. Spend a bar in any major skill *or* additional language (1 bar for broken, 2 for fluent)
9. Put one point in any primary
10. Check page 55 for the bonus that primary gives you, write it down

The Key Narrator has veto power over corny shit, but don't be a tyrant.

Start humble: main characters start at level 1, which is just the average nobody with a few SP. No grandmaster swordsmen or legendary generals.

The Glue: tell the actors their main characters get along and trust each other *as a rule*. If a main character's about to fuck over another main character, just say "Nah you don't do that," since it goes against the Glue.

Key, help develop main character concepts by asking questions . . .

- **What's their kung fu style?** Feel free to make something up like bloody leopard, drunken scorpion, ghost crane etc. Is it more aggressive, evasive, counter-punching, kick-centric, throw-heavy, high-volume, sniping? A scholarly style emphasizing pressure point knowledge? A knuckledragger style focused on brute power?
- **What's their name?** Page 114 for regional names. **Optional:** if your memory is shit, you can make everybody take a more memorable monastery nickname (Moss, One-eye etc).
- **How do they spend their free time?** Ideas: calligraphy, studying herbs and medicine, gambling, cooking, getting wasted in town, drawing, woodcarving, meditating, putting in work to join one of the procurement squads etc
- **Where are they from?** The bustling capital, a seaside fishing village, a walled fortress-city, the tranquil woodlands, sunny farmlands, harsh mountains, maybe from the nomadic tribes in the steppes, or the islander seafaring cultures
- **Are any of them already cliqued up?** Do any of the main characters know each other from being into the same shit, from the same place, or studying the same style?

→ **Set a time limit:** don't let one indecisive motherfucker hold everybody up. An hour is more than enough time to make main characters.

Chapter One: Infractions

A short chapter since character creation usually takes a minute

Main Character Intros

Soundtrack: Conway - Air Holez Instrumental

(Remember to always read italicized blocks of text out loud;)

Long fingers of sunlight lance out of the pink clouds at dawn, backlighting a low, solitary mountain of black granite and emerald woodlands. At its crown is a scenic monastery, its stately towers and terraced stonework worn by centuries of mountain wind and summer storms. A massive bell resounds through the early-morning silence, and we see a distant figure jogging through a small, tree-hemmed courtyard and into a squat pagoda.

Inside is a small study with a few low shelves of scrolls. A tapestry of arrow-pierced Warlord Song-Mu decapitating the demon prince hangs above a penjing plant. A few bleary-eyed figures, our main characters, sit around an ornate floor-table across from Master Lung, today's disciplinarian. "Just in time," he says, gesturing for the final arrival to join them.

Master Lung, with graying temples and a black mustache, is known for his Eagle Claw style, Eight Gates Flying Knee, and being an incredible fuck-up when he was a student. Good-humored and sympathetic, those of you often in trouble know him to be easy with the punishments.

We're gonna go around quick and have each one of you describe your main character, and what got you in enough trouble yesterday to be in Master Lung's study this morning – it's a real low bar: cracking jokes, gambling, pranks, forgetting to bow, taking the fall for somebody else etc are more than enough. Who's tryna go first?

Let everybody A.) introduce their main character, and B.) develop them a little by telling what got them in trouble. As always, ask questions about anything interesting they mention. Once intros feel done . . .

Master Lung finishes reading his morning dispatches and says "Alright, over the past few nights somebody's been pillaging graves down in Potbelly Hill. Grandmaster wants it seen to, which falls to this morning's batch of rulebreakers. It's probably just some asshole teenagers looking for burial coins, so you should be able to expose them in a day or two, hand them over to the locals, and be back in time for the summer tournament. This part should go without saying, but remember you represent the monastery while you're in town, so don't fuck anything up, and don't act like a bunch of pricks. Any questions?"

- Master Lung doesn't know much more than graves are being robbed. His only useful answer is to **talk to Gravekeeper Wu; he'll have more details.**
- Establish Guo Lao's presence by having him ask if they can stop by the armory before leaving. Master Lung answers yes, the armory is expecting them.

Once all questions answered:

Casually checking outside his study, Master Lung continues, "Now, I know sleeping outside is part of the punishment, but . . ." he takes a pouch off his belt and throws it to you "Just between us, that should cover a room and some hot meals. Stop by the armory on your way out – if you hurry, you can probably catch a lift to town on the provisions wagon."

→ If nobody says anything, Master Lung gives them a why-are-you-still-here type look and says "Go go go," clapping his hands impatiently.

(Everybody can add 15 wen under the cash section of their main character sheet.)

Tagalong Side Character: Log Style / Guo Lao

(rhymes with “bro cow”)

Guo Lao is real short, shaved head. So lazy everybody calls him Log Style. Talented Mantis Style student but zero work ethic keeps him average. Well known for gambling and poorly planned corner-cutting, Guo Lao is probably the most chronically in-trouble student at the Wo Ping, once famously having to guard a duck for a week as punishment for trying to bribe an instructor with hallucinogenic mushrooms (joke’s on them though, Log Style fucking loves ducks).

Voice: slightly congested. You can use whatever voice you want though – just make sure it’s distinct enough that you can start talking and everybody will immediately know who it is.

How to play: *keep him in the background.* He is 100% *not* a main character for the Key Narrator, just a safety net for when the actors are stumped. If the main characters are getting bulldozed in a fight, have the enemies beat up on Log Style (*he should never be the last one standing*).

STATS

Offense s8 (chain whip, range 2) // Defense 2 // Merk 20 // Move 5

Specials

- Tsunami Kick: target knocked back 1 stride. If target collides with another enemy, they both take s6 offense (once per fight)
- Long Fist Mantis Style: when unarmed, Guo Lao gets two s4 attacks per turn
- Five Phoenix Iron Shirt: +2 defense (permanent)

Offense Taken

* * *

Voice Acting is Optional: if you aren’t good at voices or just think the concept is corny, don’t sweat it, you can just say “Guo Lao says he knows a spot like that in town” and it gets the point across.

That said, voice acting side characters in the first person is powerfully immersive, makes them feel more present, and lets you just start talking in their voice without ever having to say who’s speaking. You don’t have to overdo it: a minor accent or change in tone is enough.

Setting Out

Soundtrack: Madlib - Definition of Ill Remix Instrumental

→ Crew Ambition Established: Bag the Graverobbers

Have your actors write “Bag the Graverobbers” in the Crew Ambition slot of their main character sheet (front side, center). Its value is 1 level.

Armory

Describe the main characters crossing terraced courtyards where early students warm up and lightly spar before morning classes.

Deep in the guts of the Wo Ping, heavy studded double doors open to a library of weapon racks and practice equipment. The student on duty asks who they’re here from, then says they’re each cleared to borrow either . . .

a two-handed weapon OR a pair of one-handed weapons

Everything on page 104 except “launchers” is fair game. (Freely tell the actors any stats they ask about, or just refer them to page 104 if they have their own books). No armor or shields available. The main characters each find a basic version of whatever weapon they’re looking for. Guo Lao takes a qijbian, a sectioned metal chain-whip with a blade at the end (already in his side character box), giving the air a few test slashes.

Down the Mountain

The empty provisions wagon, a huge oxcart, is just pulling out the front gate when the main characters arrive.

You wind your way down the easy cant of the mountain, zagging through grassy slopes and towering forests, boughs of golden larch and cathaya stirred by the sun-warmed breeze.

We cut to a shot of the main characters lazing in the back of the empty provisions cart, eating apples Guo Lao stole from the kitchen last night and bullshitting about life in the Wo Ping. The conversation’s turned to favorite spots around the monastery – where does everybody tend to hang out? A high tower, the library, the dueling chambers, maybe somewhere out in the woods, or a secret spot you discovered – you’re completely free to make shit up . . .

Go around the circle and get an answer from everybody. Guo Lao sparks it (gives everybody else time to think) by saying he prefers the gardens since that’s the gambling spot right now, plus his favorite duck (Lord Pintail) lives there. When he’s hungover he hangs out in the library – since he can’t read nobody ever looks for him there.

Ask questions about anything interesting your actors bring up, helping build main characters and giving body to the setting. (Either way, we need to create a brief sense of passing time before arriving at Potbelly Hill.)

Chapter Two: Empty Graves

We begin unfolding the mystery & scrapping with unknown forces

Town of Potbelly Hill

Soundtrack: Third Sight - Rhymes Lika Scientist Instrumental

The last threads of morning mist lace the rice fields outside Potbelly Hill, a scenic town spilling down a low slope. A stonework canal traces the foot of the hill, dividing the large settlement in two – Hightown and Lowtown. Fare from its busy lockways have enriched Potbelly Hill in recent years, fine cobble streets now radiating into prosperous neighborhoods thick with the distinctive architecture of a dozen different peoples.

As the Wo-Ping's provision cart turns down the low road, you spot the distant headstones of the graveyard, pale dots up on the grassy crest of the hill. What do you do?

Graveyard

A few pairs of townspeople with improvised weapons idly patrol around the graveyard. Any of them can point to Gravekeeper Wu, currently pruning a flowering mountain-ash at the edge of the cemetery.

Gravekeeper Wu is an old man, real short, high voice. He thanks the main characters for the Wo Ping's help, and is happy to answer their questions . . .

- **Five graves were robbed** (two and three nights ago)
- **No incidents last night** (volunteers now patrol the streets at night, and the graveyard around the clock)
- **Plunder:** Half the graves had burial coins left in the coffin
- **Tracks:** Hunter Shen identified the plunderers' tracks as 4 or 5 adult men with a small handcart (probably necessary for graveyard's narrow entrances)
- **Bodies:** no discernible pattern – recent, long-buried, male, female, old, young, rich, poor etc. No unifying feature except being dead
- **The civil guard:** completely useless – they only answer to the comically corrupt regent sent by the Imperium, who is also useless

→ **Gravekeeper Wu (and others) suspect the newly arrived local physician, Sun Tai.** He's from the city, where experimenting on the dead is not only accepted, but a central practice of their craft. **Physician Sun Tai is usually at his apothecary** down in Lowtown, a street away from the market square – any local can point to it (next page).

Ambush: if the main characters decide to clear out the patrols to set up an ambush for that night, Gravekeeper Wu thinks it's a great idea and agrees to help. *Emphasize the main characters now have an entire day to chase leads.*

* * *

Civil Guard Headquarters: if the main characters actually go here they find a dozen civil guards getting shitfaced and gambling, fully uninterested in the rest of the town. They say they're "backed up on cases right now" but if somebody brings them the culprit they'll make sure he's punished. It's obvious to the main characters it's a bad idea to test these assholes.

Apothecary

A physician's apprentice sweeps out from the brickwork apothecary, politely opening the door for you as you approach. Inside are garlands of dried herbs and neatly sorted shelves of bottled tinctures. At the front counter, a rail-thin man with glasses weighs out spiny purple leaves on a scale, distractedly greeting you as he finishes writing out a note, "Good morning. Just one ... moment ... please ah, how may I be of assistance to you?"

Physician Sun Tai: thin, glasses, mild. Voice: sophisticated, uses ten-dollar words.

Sun Tai is sharp enough to see through most gaffling (this isn't even the first time today he's been accused of the robberies). He patiently explains more old-fashioned types like Gravekeeper Wu regard the sciences, and thus physicians, with undue suspicion. While Sun Tai does perform something called "autopsies", they're only ever on commission. He has one scheduled for today on an oxdriver who died under odd circumstances.

While they're talking, **a local kid runs in and snatches a tincture bottle**, then tries to run out, but isn't hard to grab (standard spin // easy spin if a character has fast 1+). Before he can be questioned, **there's a slam at the back of the apothecary**.

Passing through a large storage room of drying herbs and bubbling distillations, they enter Sun Tai's surgical space, where **the body of the oxdriver is gone** and the door's latch is busted.

Back Door Entry: if the main characters tried to sneak in back, they run into the masked thieves carrying out the corpse (below paragraph), who immediately attack.

The Thieves: down the alleyway behind the apothecary, two men in baggy laborer's clothes pull a handcart loaded with bundles of kindling (oxdriver's body hidden beneath). When called after or chased, they try to run away with the handcart, making them easy to catch. They turn to reveal they're both wearing paper festival masks, draw daggers backhanded, and one slashes the closest main character for s4 (next page) ...

Apothecary Goods: prices listed are a substantial discount offered by Physician Sun Tai after the body is recovered. Stock limited to 2 for each main character. All items single-dose, move action to administer.

- **Go Leaf:** astringent that numbs and stops bleeding when rubbed on wounds
10 wen // heals 10
- **Lai Lai Root Tincture:** antivenin that countervails most poisons and venoms
5 wen // neutralizes harmful substances
- **Hornpitcher Powder:** put under your tongue to immediately counteract chi disruption from pressure point strikes (may cause explosive vomiting)
3 wen // eliminates paralysis or weakness from Specials

Following at a Distance: if the main characters only follow, the thieves snake through some backstreets, discreetly looking for tails at the turnaround, eventually ambushing the main characters as they turn a corner. Alternatively, the thief with the birthmark peels off and follows at an even further distance on the rooftops, attacking the main characters from behind while the cart-pulling thief is lost in the market crowd.

Fight Scene: Masked Thieves

Soundtrack: Westside Gunn - John Starks Instrumental

Corpse thieves in paper festival masks, wielding daggers back-handed and fighting from a low, aggressive stance. The taller thief sets off the fight by leaping over the cart and slashing a main character for s4.

*How Fight Scenes Work

1. Every combatant gets a turn
2. Whoever swings first goes first
3. Turn order goes around the circle (Key decides which way)
4. Enemies and side characters go on the Key Narrator's turn
5. A turn consists of A.) a move action, and B.) a main action
6. Move action: moves your main character. Can be done before or after your main action
7. Main action: attack with a weapon, use a Special, or take another move action
8. Once offense taken is higher than your merk, you're out of the scene (can't act)
9. The fight ends when one side is merked or gives up

Attacking: costs your main action. Every weapon has an offense spin (like s4 for a dagger or s10 for a spear) . . .

Weapon Spin + Primary Score* = Attack's Offense

*(fast for ranged and light weapons // strong for hand-to-hand and thrown)

Defense: reduce all incoming offense by this number.

The back of the book is a spinner. To use it, hold the looped end of a paperclip or guitar string trimming on the center-dot with a pen, and flick the other end. The result is wherever the arm lands in the s-ring (s6, s12, s20 etc) you're spinning for.

Balance: remember this joint was designed for 3 actors. If running it for a different number, adjust difficulty by dialing enemy merk and offense up or down.

Masked Thieves: offense s4 (dagger) // defense 2 // merk 20

SPECIALS

- **Chi Bolt:** s6 offense, range 6. A beam of powerful heat distortions blasts from the palm. (unless otherwise stated, a Special can only be used once a day, and costs a main action to use)

Offense Taken:

Masked Thief (taller)	Masked Thief (shorter)

Merked: for these two, *merked means dead*. If left alive they'll give up information that skips half the arc, so if somehow caught they bleed out from an unnoticed arterial wound before they can be healed.

→ **Once one thief merked, the other runs.** A chase jumps off . . .

Chase Scene

Pursuing masked thief #2 (he almost definitely gets away), after the first thief killed. If caught, he fights to the death but leaves an additional clue.

1.) Market: the thief sprints from the end of the alley into a crowded market square. The main characters are gaining on him when he slashes a tie-down rope on a large cart full of rice bags, causing them to collapse onto the main characters.

→ **Mechanic:** each actor spins s6 twice, taking the higher result. 4 or higher passes.

Pass: dodge or obliterate the falling bags of rice, showering rice everywhere as they power through and continue the chase.

Fail: owned by heavy sacks of rice and out of the chase.

2.) Bridge: a wide wooden bridge over the town's stonework canal, currently thick with slow-moving carts and wagons headed to market. The masked thief jumps off a fruit cart onto the back of an ox, and onto the bridge's guardrail.

→ **Mechanic:** each actor spins s6. 4 or higher passes.

Pass: keep up no problem, running the length of the rail and gaining on the thief.

Fail: lose balance and fall into the canal. Out of the chase.

3.) Rooftop: the masked thief sprints across the wide avenue along the canal towards the nearest building, using his qing-gong (supernatural lightness) to run up its wall and onto the roof.

→ **Mechanic:** main character has to use a movement Special like ill jumper, qing-gong, body elasticity etc to get onto the high roof. Anything slower (climbing up on somebody's shoulders etc) takes long enough for the thief to be out of sight.

Pass: chase him across a few rooftops, quickly closing on him where he fights to the death (falls and blasts his neck if somebody tries to take him alive).

Fail: the second thief gets away.

Possible Chase Developments

- **Caught:** if anybody catches up with the masked thief via movement Specials etc, they get a free attack, *but trying to restrain him leads to his death* (below point).
- **Restrained:** if tripped / tackled / paralyzed by a Special etc he falls onto his dagger, piercing a vital organ and dying immediately (flick your spinner though so it gives the illusion of randomness).
- **Ranged Shit:** thief can be killed with any thrown weapons (default thrown offense is s4 + strong or fast) and ranged Specials. Clear shot at any stage of the chase, but taking it means you'll fall behind.

→ Fully healed: after the chase, Physician Sun Tai applies an herbal poultice to the main characters' wounds, healing any offense taken

Sun Tai's Gift: if a main character has Medicine 1 or higher, Sun Tai notices their experienced hand and chats them up, gifting them a tiny bottle of Yao Grass oil. This type ("a highly stimulating variety from Hēi Láng Mountain, dabbed on the seventh pressure point of the liver") gives the subject an extra main action every turn for an entire fight. Move action to apply.

Masked Thief Clues

Soundtrack: Del - Miles to Go Instrumental

A small crowd of onlookers has gathered, speculating who the dead thief could be. Stolen corpse is in the cart, hidden under bundles of kindling. Log Style suggests the thieves must've changed their tactics since so many volunteers are both guarding the cemetery and patrolling the streets at night. **Make sure they catch the callouses clue (first thief):**

*First Thief . . .

- Dark purple birthmark on neck behind ear. ◦ Pockets: 12 Wen.
- Paper mask: common. 90% of the town wore them during the recent Qingming festival.
- Forearm tattoo: triangle containing a teardrop shape. (The smartest main character knows of a scholar in town named Pei Pei who might recognize this symbol.)
- **The Crucial Clue:** obvious callouses on tips of his fingers. Interestingly, they appear only on the left-hand fingers, but not the thumb.

→ **Let the actors figure out that he played a stringed instrument.**

Anybody in town can tell them traveling musicians usually moonlight at both the Floating Garden (a courtesan house) and the Purple Mountain Theater.

*Handcart . . .

- Kindling: unless the thieves gathered all this themselves, it only could have come from Woodcutter Cai (lives in Deerpath Forest).

*Second Thief (*only if caught*) . . .

- Beard, broken nose. Spider veins on cheeks indicate alcoholism.
- Same tattoo on forearm (simple triangle with a teardrop shape inside).
- Pocket: small, imperial-stamped rectangles of silver worth 100 Wen each wrapped in common cloth (there's one for each main character plus one for Log Style).
- Pocket: a single dried red bean. Log style, a notorious gambler, pinches it between two fingers and says "Ahhh, we have a gambling man. The Boar uses red beans in their tānxì games." Explain tānxì [*tans-shi*] is a game where you bet on a hidden number of beads, beans, or buttons. It's not uncommon for big winners to take a lucky bit as a memento.

*Kid That Ran Into the Apothecary . . .

- Sun Tai's teenage apprentice made sure he didn't run off. The kid says a man in a paper mask found him alone by the canal and paid him 10 wen to "pull a joke on the physician" by making him run all around the Lowtown Square.

Reasonable Questions

Q: Does anybody from Potbelly Hill recognize the masked thief(s)?

A: Nobody recognizes them except the leads in the next chapter.

Q: Who all knew the body was at the apothecary?

A: Half the town. The deceased (Oxdriver Kuo-Chung) was well-liked, and died very suddenly in a public space.

Q: Was the deceased murdered to create another body?

A: Sun Tai was about to perform a post-mortem investigation to answer that very question. (The autopsy that evening finds Oxdriver Kuo-Chung free of any poison, venom, or harmful substance. His heart, however, is amazingly clogged – it's incredible he lived as long as he did.)

Chapter Three: Hitting the Bricks

Important: *start this chapter by clearly summarizing the clues found on the thieves.* The below leads can be followed in any order.

→ The only *crucial* lead is the Purple Mountain Theater
(but all of them turn up useful information)

LEADS

Pei Pei the Scholar's House, Scribe's Row, far end of Hightown page 16

- Connection: can probably identify thieves' tattoo
- Info gained: thieves belonged to Grinning Tiger Clan

Woodcutter Cai's House, just inside Deerpath Forest (northeast) page 17

- Connection: sold kindling found in thieves' cart
- Info gained: corpse thieves from Bu Ling City, very interested in Potbelly Hill's history

The Floating Garden, Silk Quarter (north end of canal) page 18

- Connection: corpse thief (musician callouses) probably played his instrument here
- Info gained: thief served masters, arrived a week ago with a few other martial artists

Purple Mountain Theater, Lowtown Square page 19

- Connection: corpse thief (musician callouses) probably played his instrument here
- Info gained: thief was staying at Merchant Go-Chen's mansion

Only if second masked thief caught:

The Boar, Locks District (south end of canal) page 20

- Connection: tānxì games here use dried red beans, as found on masked thief #2
- Info gained: came from Bu Ling City with his brothers to visit a fellow martial scholar here in town, arriving about a week ago

Checking the Guesthouses: once it's known the thieves were out-of-towners, the main characters might check out any of the three local inns. Page 21.

Bump Fights

If your actors like fight scenes more than social gameplay, you can drop a bump fight (page 39) on them to inject some action. Go dogear that page quick just in case.

Pei Pei the Scholar's House

Soundtrack: Peanut Butter Wolf - Chain Gang Instrumental

Scribe's Row, a narrow street in Hightown where the inkmixers and papermakers of Potbelly Hill ply their trade. You're pointed to its far end, where the shops give way to white adobe residences, to a small rowhouse with a shoji-paper door flanked by two small foo dog statues. What do you do?

A small old woman answers the sliding door, sighing and saying something like "Let me guess, you're all illiterate and need me to read you some letters of credit you saw 'fall off the back of a wagon' . . ."

Pei Pei roasts anybody in earshot. She insists the main characters come in for tea, unless they're in a hurry to get back to making out with a hole in the ground or whatever.

Interior: *you take a seat on the layers of Tibetan carpets, shelves of books and scrolls rising to the low ceiling above you. An embroidered tapestry of a spider being hunted by a mantis being hunted by a sparrow hangs on the wall. Open codexes and an old-fashioned scholar's rock crowd a low desk, and a gold-colored parrot preens itself on top of a nearby perch. Pei Pei returns with a tray of steaming cups of black tea – handing one to each of you, she asks "Now what is it you mouthbreathers wanted?"*

Shit-Talking Parrot: while Pei Pei searches her small library, her asshole parrot tees off on the main characters. Casually remarks shit like "I'm so tired. I'm so tired from plowing your mom" / "I didn't plow your mom; the line was too long" / "You're dressed like you lost a bet" / etc

Symbol: after running through a few books Pei Pei says the shape isn't a teardrop, but a fang. The tattoo is the symbol of the Grinning Tiger Clan, a secret society (men only, all fighters). Her text is a few decades old, but loosely estimates membership at 400 with chapters in every southern province. Their rituals, codes, and central goals are yet to be documented.

Woodcutter Cai's House

Soundtrack: Capital STEEZ - 135 Instrumental

On the near edge of Deerpath Forest, just northeast of town.
Follow the sounds of woodworking.

It's a short walk along the low road into Deerpath Forest. Following a grassy trail and the crack of a splitting-maul reverberating through the ancient oaks, you enter a verdant clearing along the bend of a wide stream. A squat house with a smoking chimney is surrounded by sheds packed with cords of seasoning firewood, and the smell of freshly cut spruce, walnut, and applewood hang heavy on the air. A big man with a long beard plants his maul as he sees you coming, a slender black opium pipe hanging from the corner of his grin.

Woodcutter Cai (voice: gruff) cheerfully greets the main characters and offers them some plum wine, pouring himself a generous portion on a nearby stump. He's an engaging conversationalist, asking where they're from and what it is they do up on the mountain all day.

When asked about customer/s matching thief's description:

Cai thinks for a minute before remembering a similar man with two companions this morning – bought a whole cartload of kindling. He had a purple birthmark on his neck (description matches), the other had a beard and busted nose, and the third wore a real long braid. Woodcutter Cai invited them to join him in his first drink of the morning and they chatted for some time about women, wine, and gambling. Also:

- They mentioned they were visiting from the capital, Bu Ling City
- They had a lot of questions about the history of Potbelly Hill and the surrounding area (which Cai couldn't help them with).

If nobody picks up on it, Log Style suggests the third dude (real long braid) must have been lookout earlier today. Who knows how much he saw . . .

The Floating Garden

Soundtrack: Benny the Butcher - Change Instrumental

Asking around (or having a knowledgeable main character in the crew) reveals this is a courtesan house, like a fancy brothel with banquets, music, poetry recitals etc. These spots are known for being pricey, and brutally pay to play.

The jewelers and tailors of the Silk Quarter line a wide avenue along the canal, heavy with foot traffic and shaded by flowering dove trees. It's here we find the Floating Garden, its exterior dripping with every trapping of wealth.

Passing a hulking doorman who makes obvious note of your weaponry, you enter a large sitting room over-wrought with palace-like luxury. Among the striking art and fine floor furniture, courtesans laugh and fawn over big spenders, one playing a guzheng in front of a massive landscape painting of surging waves breaking on coastal cliffs. You barely have time to scan this opulent interior before you're greeted by a middle-aged woman wearing a dress that probably costs more than a house.

Madame Pear Flower introduces herself to the main characters, and asks if they're here for this evening's poetry reading. Whatever the answer, she says they're always delighted by new guests, and only ask "a demonstration of fine manners" (10 wen minimum).

Asking about the masked thief: Madame Pear Flower drops hints until the main characters increase the cash in her hand to 20 wen. She then remembers a gentleman with a port-wine birthmark down his neck, just behind the ear. A talented player of the pipa (like a short-necked guitar), he . . .

- Was still dusty from the road when he first visited exactly a week ago
- Played exceptionally, and almost always gave his pay over to Sunlight (she gestures to a courtesan in a yellow dress)

Madame Pear Flower informs them it's 10 wen for a stick (refers to the time it takes for a stick of incense to burn, usually in reference to the duration of private audiences).

Appearances: if anybody implies the Floating Garden is a brothel, Madame Pear Flower corrects them sternly with something like "This is not a nail shed [an actual brothel] where you can bend over some sun-withered peasant woman for a crumb of hash, this is a house of culture, of *refined courtship*."

Security: five big dudes (merk 10, defense 1) in black are at the brothel's order, eager to throw anybody out into the canal. There's a mellow chime in each room: sounded once and they casually show their presence, sounded twice and they all show up with weapons.

SUNLIGHT

After buying a stick of incense (10 wen), the main characters are granted a private audience with Sunlight, a beautiful woman in a fine yellow dress (bored and aloof unless tipped). She freely answers any questions about the masked thief:

- Talked big about being a fighter, said his masters would soon make him rich
- Said he had just arrived with a few of his brothers on business here in town
- Asked a lot about the history of Potbelly Hill and the surrounding area

The incense stick is shitty as they come, burning quickly and keeping the audience short.

Purple Mountain Theater

Soundtrack: Lord Finesse - Down For The Underground Instrumental

The theater is closed until sunset: gives main characters a chance to check all leads.

Only if after sunset: *the vendors of the Lowtown Square have all left for the day. As the sun sinks behind the horizon, tradespeople close shop and chat along the stonework avenues, neighbors light lanterns and hang them above doorways, a dozen of the regent's concubines glide along their evening walk, an escort of civil guards clearing their way.*

Before you is the largest building on the square, its grand Minnan architecture arrayed in a riot of color: Masterfully carved mythical beasts hold either end of a placard reading "Purple Mountain Theater" above huge doors now thrown open to early arrivals. Inside, a massive set of a golden palace nears completion on the theater's stage, and the auditorium buzzes with stagehands and apprentices making final preparations. What do you do?

Anybody can point to Director Pu-Ehr, a dandy in an embroidered red coat, presently micromanaging a stagehand's painting method:

Director Pu-Ehr

Fancy man with delusions of grandeur and Don Juan aspirations. Extremely annoying to any females in the vicinity. Voice: dainty.

Masked thief brought up: the director immediately knows who they're talking about, identifying his purple birthmark and talent at the pipa (like a short-necked guitar). Director Pu-Ehr informs them this man they seek will be playing songs between acts tonight; the show starts just after dusk.

If told his star musician was one of the corpse thieves, Pu-Ehr is shocked, saying shit like "But why ever for? He clearly didn't want for money, nor manners. You're absolutely sure it was him?" etc.

→ Apparently the masked thief drank with the cast after a play one night. He mentioned **he came to Potbelly Hill to visit his close friend, Merchant Go-Chen**, and was staying at his mansion up in the Talon District.

* * *

Asking around about Merchant Go-Chen reveals he made his fortune trading in glass, and is usually out of town on business. He has salt and pepper hair, and the build of a hard laborer despite a life of leisure. A notorious womanizer, he's still a bachelor at middle age, alone in his mansion up in the Talon District (wealthy part of town) with only some elderly servants.

The Boar

Soundtrack: Statik Selektah - White Silk Instrumental

The Locks District, south end of the canal. The air is laced with the smell of tar and the noise of industry. Gulls sit tranquilly along the canal's fine stonework embankment, crystalline water lapping at its causeway. Before you is a dilapidated shack of a building with a painted placard of a stylized boar's head.

The interior of the Boar is a total hole, barely illuminated but brought to life by rice liquor and raucous games of chance: runs of tānxi, madio, and kanhoo pop off in animated circles of tanned laborers, many baring arms and chests of heavy tattooing. Before your eyes fully adjust to the dim interior, you're greeted by a big man with a tattoo of a decapitated head on the back of his hand.

Big Po: tall and fat. Not menacing, but has an energy of violence to him. Owns the Boar. Voice: booming.

Big Po welcomes the main characters, greeting Guo Lao by name (“*Guo Lao you bugfucker, I didn't know you had any friends*”), and asking if they're here for some action, a drink to soothe the day's worries, or both.

Collector: the main characters notice a lot of flowers unexpectedly adorn the Boar – potted orchids, vases of chrysanthemum and lily etc.

Skill gate: anybody with Bushcraft 1+ or Worldliness 1+ recognizes a pressed kadapul framed on the wall – a bizarre white flower that only blooms in the tiger-haunted rainforests of India at exactly midnight and dies by morning. If they bring it up Big Po is their new best friend, telling the story of how he killed two tigers for that kadapul, and doesn't ask for a bribe (below paragraph) to tell everything he knows.

Asking about the masked thief: Big Po bluntly asks them how much this information is worth to them (40 wen minimum). After being paid he says a dude with a beard and poorly reset nose was here just yesterday. Fucker went on a hot streak and nearly cleaned him out. He got shitfaced celebrating and did a lot of talking, mentioning . . .

- His bones were still rattling from the bastard horses him and his brothers had ridden here from Bu Ling (region's capital) a week ago
- He was staying with a martial artist here in town, a brother
- He was a martial artist himself

Of course when the other punters found out they just made him show off his kung fu for the rest of the night: breaking bricks thrown in the air, running up walls, slicing flies in half – pretty great night actually.

Tānxi: Guo Lao hops on a game before they leave. If anybody shows interest, tānxi is played by guessing a hidden number of dried red beans . . .

- The dealer takes two handfuls of beans and puts them under a bowl
- Players place their bets on either 1, 2, 3, 4, odd, or even
- The dealer then removes the bowl, and counts out the dried red beans in series of 4 with a curved stick. The remaining number of beans is either 1, 2, 3, or 4
- Simulate random draw by spinning s4. Odd / even bets pay out 1 to 1 (so bet 10 wen, win 10 wen plus keep your original 10). Single number bets pay out 3 to 1 (so bet 10 wen, win 30 plus keep your original 10)

Checking the Guesthouses

Soundtrack: J Dilla - Bars & Twists

Once it's known the masked thieves were out-of-towners, the main character might want to check out the local inns. Potbelly Hill has three . . .

The Tranquil Flume: the proprietor is an almost spherically fat man (Lü) with a high voice and generous pour. He's been hosting a troupe of actors from the Eastern Peninsula for the past ten days: they've been double-featuring at the theater every night since their arrival (rock-solid alibi).

Toad Style: guesthouse above, restaurant below; has the actual for real best food the main characters ever tasted. Run by a very old couple (Wei & Mei) who pretend to be senile to mess with the main characters. They're currently hosting a few canal laborers who just got off a boat last night, and a solitary goldleaf artist here on a long-term project (no alibis, but also no tattoo).

“The Blue Guesthouse”: page 29. Locals weirdly avoidant about its actual name. Located on Lowtown Square, definitely the most luxurious guesthouse in town.

Chapter Four: The Grinning Tiger Clan

Infiltration, battling it out, & exposing the thieves where they lay their head at

Dusk falls on the way to the Talon District: *the last of the evening light has given way to a clear night sky, a huge waxing moon lazying on the horizon. Golden specks of luminous windows now dot the scenic town spilling down the side of Potbelly Hill, where our main characters ascend a wide avenue and pass beneath a huge ornamental gate. The houses along the winding cobble streets grow larger and more beautiful, then larger still. Strolling servants carry fine paper lanterns, and well-liveried bodyguards patrol in watchful pairs. As a richly dressed local is borne past you in a priceless lacquered palanquin, you know with certainty you are now in the heart of the luxurious Talon District. What do you do?*

Neighborhood: up in Hightown, the wealthiest neighborhood of Potbelly Hill is called the Talon District for the long, ornate fingernail-guards the wives and concubines of the district wear as a status symbol, to show they are above manual labor (servant's work), or even lifting a finger. Anybody can point to Merchant Go-Chen's house on the winding incline of Bowervine Street . . .

Mansion of Merchant Go-Chen

Soundtrack: The Underachievers - Chrysalis Instrumental

Exterior: *one of the largest houses in town looms before you – three stories, rich architecture, double-eave roofs with statuettes at their peaked corners. The outer wall is topped with ornate iron spikes, and its facade set with a pair of large, iron-studded red doors. What do you do?*

(These doors remain closed and locked all hours of the day – unusual for any region.)

Getting In

- **Knocking:** an elderly male servant answers the huge front doors and politely says Master Go-Chen isn't receiving guests right now, but he would be happy to convey any message. The servant is sharp enough to see through any low-effort gaffling. If after dusk, the servant appears with a lantern at the front door's viewing port (size of a small window, common to wealthier houses).
- **Over the wall:** the roof of the outer wall has wide tracks of small metal spines (passing over without protection causes s4 offense). Vaulting over the spines with a polearm etc puts you well past the edge of the roof, causing s4 offense from falling. Getting over the wall lands you in the front courtyard.
- **Windows:** no windows in outer wall. That would make it a pretty shitty wall.
- **Side entrance:** a small servant's door, iron bound with an internal lock. Anybody with Metalworking 1 notices how to remove the groove-locked hinge pins, and can discreetly pass into a storage chamber full of dried foodstocks at the far side of the front courtyard.
- **(Special) Invocation of Passage:** if a main character has this Special, they can unlock the front or back entrance with no trouble.
- **(Special) Primordial Dialectz:** can talk with the cat loafing around outer wall (extremely arrogant) who tells of side entrance (above), five men (one a robed monk) entering front gate early this afternoon, and a covered horsecart leaving before sundown.

FIRST FLOOR

Front Courtyard: *at the center of the entry courtyard looms a huge fountain of a guardian chinthe, clawed hand raised in warning and its mossy jaws exuding an endless stream of water. There are entryways to the west, north, and east . . .*

Dining Hall (WEST): *you enter a massive dining hall where elegant paneled lanterns of exquisitely painted paper hang above a long table. A huge painting of a Tang-era battle adorns the wall, a tattered purple banner hung beneath it.*

- **Banner:** this purple battleflag is embroidered with a white crescent moon and crossed red laurels – its likeness can be seen at the spearhead of the battle depicted in the painting.

- **Door:** sounds of somebody working in a kitchen emit from the room's only other doorway . . .

Kitchen: an elderly Mongolian cook is working in here, and can be taken by surprise with a successful stealth spin (easy spin if they have at least a bar in stealth). His Chinese is shitty but he's cooperative. If asked, he says: A. he's been prepping enough food this past week to feed ten men but only enough for about five for dinner tonight, and B. the only other servant here today is the majordomo (antiquated term for a butler). Doesn't know much else. Log Style apologizes, gags him, and ties him up with an entire spool of kitchen twine (normally used for roasts).

Reflecting Pool (NORTH): *you enter a long chamber containing a narrow pool of water, fine mosaic patterning at the pool's floor and faint geometries of reflected light playing on the walls and ceiling. Through a yawning set of double doors at the chamber's far end is a grassy courtyard with racks of both wooden practice weapons and live metal weaponry.*

Sitting Room (EAST): *you step into an opulent sitting room ornamented with Ming-era paintings, shelves of scrolls, and masterfully crafted furniture. An unfinished game of xiangqi [Chinese chess] rests in the flickering light of a blazing fireplace, black's pieces over-extending into red's domain. A grand staircase ascends at the room's far end, and in the gloom of a near corner, a small old man dusts the glass case of a taxidermied hawk.*

- **The majordomo** can be taken by surprise with a successful stealth spin (easy spin if stealth 1+). He doesn't make trouble, and answers any questions . . .

- **Time:** Master Go-Chen's guests arrived a week ago, no talk of departure.

- **Activity:** the master and his guests have been going out at all hours, but are otherwise mostly in the practice yard, or third floor where servants aren't allowed.

- **Number:** half the guests left this afternoon with a traveling horsecart and enough provisions for a two-day journey, leaving just four or five non-servants in the house, all currently on the third floor.

- The only other servant here today is the cook.

Log Style apologizes, gags him, and ties him up with two nearby tablecloths.

- **Grand staircase** leads up to the second story . . .

Stealth Failure: if either of the servants *aren't* taken by surprise, they immediately raise the alarm (but are easy to restrain). As a consequence, have some of Merchant Go-Chen's neighbors come by; they aren't thorough in their investigation, and stay just long enough to make the main characters sweat.

SECOND FLOOR

Landing: grand staircase leads here. Can go north, south, or west . . .

Personal Museum (NORTH): *you enter an ornate chamber displaying a collection of ancient and exotic weapons, small placards giving the name and estimated era of each. The collection's centerpiece is a visually stunning but half-destroyed set of bronze armor from the truly ancient Xia Dynasty (or maybe whatever came before that), its helmet depicting a sneering demon.*

- Armor unusable (old as fuck).
- Room contains all classical weapon types except launchers (page 104), and each has an inherent +1 offense. Weapons are all unsecured (free to take). Catch: the actor must describe the weapon/s they find in detail.

Master Bedroom (SOUTH): *you step into a massive, richly decorated master bedroom. A huge canopied bed can be seen between folding screens painted with dream-like landscapes. Fragrant ribbons of smoke rise from incense sticks below the portrait of an armored ancestor bearing a streaming battleflag. In a squat bookshelf beneath are dozens of volumes all bound in red (Merchant Go-Chen's journals).*

- **Journals:** chronologically arranged, meticulously detailed. Lots of travel, business talk, debauchery, a few mentions of brothers he makes trade deals with in other cities. Recent mention of being up for promotion within "the Clan" (nothing fully incriminating). The last few months are notably missing.
- **Portrait:** an old-fashioned painting. The ancestor has a long black beard, cruel face, and aristocratic armor. His spear bears a purple banner with a white crescent and crossed red laurels. A short poem descends the portrait: "he who slaked far soil / with oceans of enemy lifeblood / your house lives on to conquer"

Tea Room (WEST): *you enter a large, stately tea room whose walls are lined with half a dozen doors, some left open to reveal modest guest bedrooms. Floor furniture surrounds a low table set with a lacquered antique tea set. Tall windows and double doors lead to a balcony overlooking the entry courtyard, and a wide staircase ascends at the far end of the room.*

- **Guest Bedrooms:** these radiate off the tea room. All clearly in recent use, some with additional mattresses on the floor. Rooms contain men's clothing, combs, a couple wineskins, a purse with 31 wen, and a pipa.
- **Staircase** leads up to the third floor . . .

THIRD FLOOR

Landing: *you ascend the wide stairs to a lavishly decorated but clearly neglected landing: cobwebs waft in the corners of the ceiling and its banister is capped with a thick sheet of dust. The far wall is set with an iron-braced, featureless door. A clock in the far western style chimes the hour – what do you do?*

- **Featureless Door:** the only door. Large, iron-bound, and no knob. On a pedestal next to it is a peacock figurine (below). Investigating reveals the door is extremely heavy, unmovable, and no sound can be heard through it (wall is ominously sound-proofed; who knows what depraved shit happens on the other side).

Golden Peacock

On a waist-high pedestal next to the door is a large golden figurine of a peacock displaying a fan of different colored feathers.

Closer Inspections: figurine fixed to pedestal. Fan of plumage is actually the top half of a wheel that can be turned in either direction. Each feather is a different color: aquamarine, blue, green, pale green, purple, indigo, pink, red, orange, amber, yellow, white, pale gray, dark gray, black.

When turned right, a faint click is heard once white is at the top of the wheel.

Continuing to turn rightward just makes the wheel re-click at white. Turning left a full rotation or more resets the wheel so it re-clicks when rightward turned to white again.

*Misc

Metalworking 1 or higher: the resistances of this wheel clearly point to a sequential tumbler: you spin it right, then left, then right again to align three or more tumblers inside (thus selecting a sequence of colors).

The servants: they have no idea about the golden peacock (not allowed on third floor) or any of Merchant Go-Chen's favorite colors or whatever.

***Solution:** white, purple, red (the colors of the tattered banner in the dining hall and the master bedroom's ancestral portrait).

Win State: the main characters hear a clack. The massive door rasps as it's pulled aside by some internal mechanism. Everybody gets 3 SP if they cracked the sequence without a hint.

Library (through featureless door): *you step into a high-ceilinged library, haphazard stacks of books and scrolls sprawling over fine wooden furniture. The summer air stirs long gossamer curtains around an open window at the room's far end. Four big dudes [five if masked thief #2 escaped] sitting around a big table loaded with star charts, wine decanters, and a brass-ringed armillary sphere stare at you in a moment of stunned silence.*

- **The Goons** all stand and Merchant Go-Chen (baritone voice, silver earrings, black and gray hair) says "Kindly *fucking* explain yourselves." **A fight jumps off . . .**

* * *

Missing journal: if anybody scans for it, the red-bound journal (the missing volume from master bedroom, contains most recent months) is on a desk at the library's far end.

Fight Scene: Crew vs Crew

Soundtrack: Styles of Beyond - Bleach Instrumental

Stats: Offense s4+1 // Defense 0 // Merk 15 // Specials usable once per fight

LONG BRAID

- **Special:** Northern Scorpion Fist - causes 1 undefendable offense (internal bleeding) at the beginning of target's every turn until fight ends
- **Offense Taken:**

WHITE TUNIC

- **Special:** Lion Eye - strike to pressure point in shoulder that causes partial paralysis (-5 offense on next turn)
- **Offense Taken:**

BIG MAN

- **Special:** Scalding Palm - s8 fire offense and knocked prone, golden elemental flame trailing strike
- **Offense Taken:**

MERCHANT GO-CHEN

- **Special:** Earth Diagram Eagle Claw - automatic s4 offense to any enemy who moves into an adjacent square (always active)
- **Offense Taken:**

BEARD / BUSTED NOSE (only if escaped from chase scene)

- **Special:** Wheel Kick - s4 offense to all surrounding targets
- **Offense Taken:**

Tactics: they don't run, and fight to the last. Don't just blow all their Specials right away.

Optional: (increases difficulty) one of the enemy kicks a main character a few strides out a window, where they shatter a dozen tiles on the second story roof, and fall into the practice yard below (s6 offense). The enemy follows, gripping a weapon off the racks.

Merked: be clear the Clan members are just KO'd / injured. Any of them getting killed would make the next scene real difficult for the main characters.

Fail State: this is a real dangerous fight (especially if you let the enemy crew go first); a standard crew of three main characters has a decent chance of losing. If they do, all good – locals flood the mansion once the last of them is about to get merked.

Shaking Out the Truth

Soundtrack: Xavier Wulf - Psycho Pass Instrumental

One of Go-Chen's servants hears the sound of fighting (if restrained, they escape using a kitchen knife or piece of broken mirror) and rushes to get the neighbors. **As the fight ends, two-dozen townspeople flood Merchant Go-Chen's mansion** with lanterns and weapons. Interested locals continue to gather throughout the scene.

→ Merchant Go-Chen accuses the main characters of breaking and entering, and his neighbors believe him.

Captain Feng becomes arbiter: a retired captain of the imperial navy (gray sideburns / stern / gravelly voice) named Feng lives nearby. Still in his bed-robe and shadowed by his one-eyed bodyguard, he shouts down the ruckus and brings order to the small mob. Captain Feng gives each side fair time to speak, and questions their stories.

The locals start out against the main characters: they've roughed up a community member in his own home, so it looks bad. It looks even worse if they're holding any of Merchant Go-Chen's belongings. The actors' job in this scene is to explain their line of clues and evidence, prompted by questions from Captain Feng (and antagonized by Go-Chen).

The facts line up sooner or later. Physician Sun Tai is fetched to corroborate the stolen body story, their tattoos, and any other evidence. Other witnesses can be fetched. Go-Chen only has the weakest of alibis. Once it starts to look real bad for Merchant Go-Chen and his cutty guests, the journal is finally examined. (If the main characters didn't already bring it up, a local comes over and hands the red-bound volume to Captain Feng, muttering something in his ear.) **The journal is the final nail in the coffin** – an outraged Captain Feng reads sections out loud, piecing together the full story (just summarize the below for your actors quick) . . .

Merchant Go-Chen's Journal

Small, red-bound book on a desk at far end of library. The journal reveals:

- Go-Chen is a middle-ranking member of the Grinning Tiger Clan, a far-flung secret brotherhood of martial artists
- The Clan discovered a 300-year-old scholar's letter describing how he hid a precious text from invading hoards by burying it beneath a shrine in Lantern Forest, just south of Potbelly Hill. This text is six volumes of lost kung fu instruction known as *The Fist of the Celestial Destroyer*. The Clan's masters ordered Go-Chen to host nine of his brothers from Bu Ling City, and to retrieve these buried scrolls for the Grinning Tiger Clan
- The forest's yaksha appeared to the clan members while they searched for the shrine. Of truly ancient age and decaying sanity, he had acquired a taste for human bones, and offered access to his forest in exchange for one human body per scroll
- The other four Clan members returned to the mansion with a wandering monk, who they poisoned. Having been those last seen with the monk, these same four left that afternoon with a horsecart and the six corpses. They plan to lay low somewhere overnight then meet the yaksha tomorrow when he appears around high sun

Map & Letter: on the library's large central table are the 300-year-old scholar's letter, and a shitty map of Lantern Forest, probable location of the shrine sketched in.

Win State: the locals agree to lock Merchant Go-Chen and his guests in a cellar; the families of the stolen bodies can agree on their punishments in the morning.

Everybody gathered toasts the main characters – there’s a lot of backslapping and well-dones. The wife of a horse merchant says something like “Bless your hands for turning out these cockroaches,” and takes off her bracelet, pressing it into the palm of the nearest main character (next paragraph).

LOOT

- Bracelet: dope silverwork set with a ruby (360 wen at any jeweler)
- Weapons: it’s a cultural expectation in this setting to take an enemy’s weapons after defeating them. Each main character can take one two-handed weapon, or two one-handers from Merchant Go-Chen’s personal collection (second floor)
- Captain Feng discreetly gives the scholar’s letter and the Lantern Forest map to the main characters, saying everybody in Potbelly Hill would be happier with these in the hands of the Wo Ping instead of those dickless grave-desecrators

The Last of the Grinning Tiger Clan: if your actors aren’t already plotting, use Guo Lao to ask what the plan is, subtly reminding them their mission is to bring *all* the graverobbers to justice.

Asking around about Lantern Forest reveals it’s named for some crumbling stone lanterns found within. Asking a scholar or checking town archives show these lanterns predate the town, and disappearances of locals and travelers who went into the forest go back at least a century.

Inquiring about Yakshas might land an answer from a scholarly type: they’re primordial entities who usually declare a region or even just a concept their dominion. This is where the notion “guardian spirit” comes from, though both their behavior and sense of morality is completely alien and inexplicable to humans.

Rest Recommended: the main characters are free to do what they want, but there are good reasons to wait until morning . . .

- They’ll fully heal, and regain their once-a-day Specials
- No guarantee of where the thieves are since their plan was to specifically lay low overnight before meeting the yaksha tomorrow at high sun (when he tends to appear)
- Log Style straight up refuses to go until morning (getting a lot of female attention)

* * *

→ **To the Blue Guesthouse:** Physician Sun Tai congratulates the main characters and says their rooms are on him – he’ll happily pay for their dinner and the guesthouse’s finest suite, an entire floor of palace-like luxury . . .

The Blue Guesthouse

Soundtrack: Diamond D - This One Instrumental [*only if night time*]

Located on the Lowtown Square. Locals are weirdly avoidant when asked the name, just calling it “the blue guesthouse”.

An azure-blue, four story building of angular foreign architecture rises before you. The raucous sounds of good cheer escape tall windows open to the summer air. Above its entrance, an engraved silver sign unmistakably reads “The Puking, Shitting Dog Guesthouse”, complete with a drawing of a dog erupting at both ends.

Inside, guests from every corner of the world lounge in fine Punjabi furniture, variously chatting, drinking tea, and playing madio. Crossed war axes and a round, well-battered black shield hang above a crackling fireplace where long aromatic cuts of spice-rubbed jackfruit roast. A gray cat leaping after a moth skids across the rich tilework flooring in front of you, and a dark-skinned man with the bearing and neatness of a retired soldier waves you over to the bar where he pours small cups of tea.

(Madio is a trick-taking card game, real popular during the Qing Dynasty)

Host Mirza

Voice: baritone, slight Indian accent

Introduces himself, welcomes the main characters to his establishment with cups of jarringly spiced black tea. He’s from southwest of the empire, with a big black mustache and wide scar on his chin.

After hearing the main characters brought down the graverobbers that put such a dark cloud over the town, Host Mirza insists they eat / stay for free, and take the master suite on the highest floor. He then bangs a pot and declares drinks are on the house tonight.

The Name: a few years back Mirza lost a very public drinking contest to his rival, the silversmith – winner got to rename the other’s business. He’s the one who made the lavish silver placard out front. His day will soon come.

The Cat: named Maharaja. Usually lurks in the garden out back.

GUESTS

This block is more for the Hitting the Bricks chapter, but these side characters are all present at any given point in time . . .

- An instrumental quartet (Zhu, Shi Shi, Fen, Anjing) who arrived late last night, at least one currently practicing their instrument. All women from Bu Ling City, Director Pu-Ehr immediately tripled their asking fee and gave them an advance
- A pair of foreign cartographers (map-makers) with wide eyes and yellow hair who speak no Chinese but somehow slam at madio. Arrived two nights ago
- Physician Sun Tai
- A graying Manchu spice merchant (Barda) in a wildly expensive coat, his soft-spoken assistant (Ua), and his martial artist bodyguard (Mugiya) from the all-woman Changbai monastery. They arrived a week ago from the imperial capital (far north) to work out some local agreements. No alibis

Optional Bump Fight: Mugiya (above) can pull some “Hnh the kung fu of the Wo Ping is no match for Changbai Style” sparking a fight with pulled shots (count up offense until one side merked, but erase all offense taken once fight is over). If main characters win, they each cop 2 SP. Stats: offense s8 (two attacks per turn) // defense 2 // merk 30

End of First Night Prompt

After taking down Merchant Go-Chen and getting the master suite, the main characters are free to wrap anything up before turning in. If everybody is good to end the day, bash out the following prompt:

You're in the back garden of the guesthouse. Gold and purple fireflies laze around the flourishing greenery and guests loaf in the cool grass, trading jokes over plum wine and playing cards by the light of paper lanterns. Two of the recently arrived quartet practice their instruments among the blooms of champaca and rose, enlivening the evening air with wandering harmonies. After partying down and meeting a dozen requests for retellings of your day's events, the conversation's turned to life before the Wo Ping. Who were you before joining the monastery?

Go around the circle and get some backstory from each main character. Ask questions on anything interesting they bring up.

Guo Lao's Whole Deal: faded from rice liquor and goaded by a level of female attention he's not used to, Log Style says he was a gutter kid in the slums of Bu Ling. One time he pick-pocketed some nerd who had almost no trouble chasing him down – first time he ever got caught. Anyways, that was Master Hu Jinqun, Grandmaster's right hand man, and he apparently saw athletic promise in Guo Lao. His single mom was stoked to see literally any opportunity for him at all, and Guo Lao thought it would be dope to crush dudes twice his size like paper cranes, so now he's gutter trash at the Wo Ping instead of in the city.

Optional: for the most interesting backstories, tell everybody shortly before the session that they'll be flexing their backstory this episode, and whoever brings the most interesting one gets 3 SP.

Once that scene feels done, bring the night to a close, rain lightly plinking on the roof and windows as the main characters drift off in the guesthouse's illest suite.

Each main character gets +5 SP for their progress in the storyline.

Chapter Five: Fist of the Celestial Destroyer

Following the last of the corpse thieves into Lantern Forest & setting off the final fight

Morning

Soundtrack: SpaceGhostPurrp - Mac Named Purrp Instrumental

A night's rest fully heals the main characters . . .

Optional Scenes: this is a solid point for hangover micromissions, like an oblivious main character being told at breakfast they're not wearing any pants and learning they drunkenly gambled them away last night (Character Ambition: "Find Zhang's Pants", 1 SP), or needing to track down Sun-Tai for a hangover cure, tracing a chain of afterparties until they find him passed out in a fountain or something.

Sun shining and birds singing. Briefly prompt if anybody has any morning routines or shit to get done before heading downstairs. After a colossal breakfast of deep-fried wonton, lo mein, and lychee juice, the main characters are greeted by a hungover Physician Sun Tai. He sets a wooden box on the table: inside are tiny bottles of indigo sludge – his entire stock of moon vine, freshly percolated.

→ **Moon Balm: heals 20, costs a move action**
(two vials for each main character)

Into the Woods

According to Merchant Go-Chen's journal, the remain Grinning Tiger Clan members were planning to lay low somewhere overnight, then try to meet the yaksha in Lantern Forest around high sun, hoping to trade for the *Fist of the Celestial Destroyer* scrolls . . .

Lantern Forest

Soundtrack: Brockhampton - Gold Instrumental

(Visible from Potbelly Hill. Not more than 20 minutes down the southern road)

The southern road winds through sun-warmed meadows that slowly give way to lush woodlands. Among the mossy trunks and undergrowth the occasional crumbling stone lantern peaks out, and the lichened cobble of ancient stone pathways appear here and there in momentary traces. The road you follow starts to dissipate, turning to dark woodland soil and tufty grasses. What do you do?

Tracks: as the rain-smoothed southern road fades away, hoofprints flanked by the deep wheel tracks of a loaded cart become noticeable in the forest's soft grassy soil.

Split: after a half-mile of fairly easy tracking into the woods, the tracks turn at a sharp angle to the left. This sharp turn was made on remnants of stone road. Adjacent patches of dirt show a few footprints. Once the cart tracks turn left, *there are no hoofprints or footprints at all.*

Bushcraft 1+ can spin to notice:

- The footprints at the turn are of at least three different large men – from the uneven impressions you can infer they were physically exerting themselves in some way (but not running). Made after last night's rain.
- The cartwheel tracks that bank left are recent, made 2 to 4 hours ago. The cart was significantly less heavy.

>> **Following the footprints:** they enter denser woods a cart couldn't pass through, hoofprints following in their stead. They eventually veer onto remnants of ancient stone road and become untrackable (passing a stream and several stony bluffs they could've stepped into).

>> **Following the cartwheel tracks:** these bank to the left and go down a gentle slope, still no sign of foot or hoofprints. Within a few hundred strides the tracks lead to a small clearing . . .

Primordial Dialectz: if a main character has this Special they can talk with any of the birds, deer, frogs etc they see. They'll freely tell that main character they saw some (maybe four) humans sleep under a nearby walnut tree, then lead a horse struggling under bulky cargo southwards shortly after dawn. A loud and kind of fucked up fox named Bùxùn Húlí ("boo-shin hoo-lee") took the cart to his clearing a few hours ago (opposite page).

Clearing

You enter a scenic clearing at the bottom of a small cliff. A tranquil waterfall feeds a pristine pool hemmed by dank stony soil. The passenger cart is shoved into a cluster of blueberry bushes nearby, its tongue and wheels completely shattered. What do you do?

Cart Interior: luxurious inside of a passenger cart you'd expect of a caked up merchant. No corpses, but dozens of red chrysanthemums are spread along the seats. The main characters outside the cart hear a voice from the top of the small waterfall:

“Can I fucking *help* you bro?” A fish appears at the top of the waterfall, swimming over the edge and awkwardly flopping into the pool. The fish turns into a fox, walking out of the water and shaking his coat dry, angrily asking the main characters why they're peeping on his house.

Bùxùn Húli

As in most settings, foxes are suspected of having powers (mostly shapeshifting) and are usually smarter than humans. Bùxùn (“boo-shin”) is not particularly smart, and completely fucking foul. As he talks to the main characters, Bùxùn walks around on his back legs like a human, gathering the shattered cartwheel pieces into neatly stacked piles of firewood along his new house / the corpse thieves' cart.

If asked certain questions, Bùxùn answers with something similar to the below (*don't* just read these off, put it in your own words) . . .

- **The cart:** “I found it first dude hop off my sack! Nobody was in there, no horse, nothing. Finders keepsers you know what I mean? Smelled like absolute dogshit though so I had to freshen it up with some [chrysanthe]mums. You didn't steal any of my fucking mums did you?”
- **When he found it:** “I don't know, like, when the sun was there,” he points to the sky indicating maybe three hours ago
- **How he got it here without a horse:** “You serious? I'm *fucking magic* bro check me out,” and shoots little fireworks out his fingers.
- **If he saw any humans:** “Nah dude humans suck ass, no offense – I smell humans, I slide. The stream by the camphor tree grove fucking reeks of humans right now so I'm giving that a wide berth for a minute. Actually that reminds me, you holding any of that human style food?”
- **The camphor grove:** “Uhhhh that way, not far,” he waves southish unhelpfully “They're the biggest fuckers in the forest so just climb a tree or whatever and you'll see em.”
- **The yaksha:** “What you think I'm scared of that dork? I'm not scared bro watch this shit,” and he turns into a rock, “Boom what's he gonna do with this?”
- **The shrine:** “There's kinda like old buildings and shit in some spots but they're all fucked up and sunk in the ground. I couldn't tell you where any are at.”
- **Why he was a fish just now:** “Listen, these fish bitches can't get enough of me. Once I figure out how to turn into a rabbit it's over for these hos.”

Bùxùn isn't helpful, and doesn't acknowledge the main characters leaving with much more than “Alright don't trip over your dicks out there – and hey lemme grip some of that human food sometime, bring some plum wine.” If the main characters bother him (doesn't take much) he turns into an elephant and starts throwing them into the water with his trunk.

Camphor Grove

As they approach the grove, anybody with Bushcraft 1 or higher can spin to notice that all signs of wildlife slowly disappear – no stir of undergrowth from foraging beasts, birds stop singing, toads stop croaking etc.

You emerge into a grove of massive camphor trees, their wide trunks cleaved with dark ivy and their verdant tops cresting a hundred feet above you. Sunlight glimmers on a shallow stream winding along mossy stones and banks of dark earth. What do you do?

A few metal items glint in the cool water of the stream:

- Large ring of three keys
- Dagger with owl inlaid on the hilt
- Coins (60 wen, some burial coins mixed in)
- Decayed flint with steel striker

Owl Dagger: offense s4, block 1. Worth 600 wen

- Light weapon (can add strong *or* fast score to offense spin)
- If spin lands a 1, automatically attack again for free (unlimited)
- Engraved with characters reading: “Fortune & Disaster / Entwine like strands of rope”
[Worldliness 1+ knows source is the classic “Rhyme-Prose on the Owl” by Chia Yi, c.180 BC]

→ **The Yaksha Appears:** at some point, without sound or motion, a yaksha is simply there. He can appear as the main characters are walking to the grove, as they leave, or maybe appear squatting next to them as they check out the metal shit in the stream. Either way, pick a moment that would be really jarring to them.

Side Character: Ah’Gang (“*ah-gong*”) the Yaksha Voice: otherworldly
Humanoid in shape, but seven feet tall and covered in blue scales. Eyes like glowing coals, limbs of stone, tusk-like canines.

Can be fine-mannered and oddly friendly for somebody that eats humans, bizarre and unpredictable to emphasize his otherworldliness, or eerie – unsettlingly gazing through whoever he’s talking to. Go with whatever vibe you think is most interesting.

Ah’Gang asks the main characters who they are. He politely introduces himself and asks what they’re doing in his forest. Anybody that hasn’t yet now notices all signs of wildlife have disappeared – even the wind is gone, leaving the main characters in an unnerving stillness (pause soundtrack).

If asked about . . .

The four Grinning Tiger members: Ah’Gang casually says he ate their bones. He also ate the bones of the corpses they brought.

The Fist of the Celestial Destroyer: the yaksha says he never heard of the scrolls, that he just played along with the Grinning Tiger members to get access to more human bones.

The metal items in the stream: Ah’Gang makes a disgusted noise and says something like “Yes, quite inflaming to the gut.”

→ If the main characters turn to go, Ah’Gang immediately appears before them.
He stares hungrily at them, slowly approaching before trying to grab at one.

Fight Scene: the Yaksha of Lantern Forest

Soundtrack: DJ Smokey - Choppin Out Da Lost Woods

Ah'Gang takes the defensive stance of a clearly ancient form,
heat distortions of chi emanating off his hands . . .

Ah'Gang the Yaksha: Offense s6 twice per turn (unarmed) // Def 3 // Merk 50
("ah-gong")

SPECIALS

(each once per fight, no action cost)

- **Sweep:** when attacker's offense lower than 3, immediate s6 offense and knocked down
- **Ghost Step:** when attack incoming, immediately teleport five strides
- **Taijitu Throw:** target launched 4 strides, knocked prone, and takes s8 offense
- **Overgrowth:** roots burst from ground and entangle target (move 0 strides next turn)

OFFENSE TAKEN

Tactics: attacks each of the main characters equally (keeps him from immediately merking anybody). Can't be moved (Specials like Tsunami Kick ineffective).

Fail State: if the main characters are getting paddled, let the last one standing merk Ah'Gang (even if he's not close to merked). As a fair trade, **inflict loss:** after the victory, tell them the first main character merked lost an eye and had their jaw broken (can't speak for a month). The second main character merked had their ankle shattered (permanent -2 to move score).

Merked: *Ah'Gang stumbles as he begins to slowly turn to ash. He looks at his hands in horror as a swiftly lifting wind strong enough to bend trees blasts away the Yaksha's disintegrating form, shrieking in your ears like a typhoon before fading as quickly as it came . . .*

*Crew Ambition Completed

Each main character gains a level for bringing all involved
in the Potbelly Hill graverobbings to justice.

Finding the Shrine

Soundtrack: ODB - Shimmy Shimmy Ya Instrumental

Over the next minute birdsong and other signs of wildlife reemerge, the wind now a warm, pleasant breeze.

The Shrine: the map the Grinning Tiger Clan sketched up is pretty shitty, but the shrine can be found in a ravine about ten minutes south without too much trouble.

You reach a sun-soaked clearing beneath boughs of ginkgo and elm. Ancient stone pathways nearly swallowed by the earth converge on a tiny, moss-covered stone structure – the ruins of a small shrine. What do you do?

The Big Payoff

Buried a foot beneath the floor of the shrine is a bundle of burlap cloth. It contains . . .

- A.) 24,000 wen (send actors to page 107 to spend their share)
- B.) A small bell: ornately wrought, unknown metal, no clapper. Anybody with *Fluent in the Esoteric* knows it's supernatural but requires a clapper made from a thunderbird hallux bone. (This is a “blank”, an indeterminate item that can seed future plots)
- C.) Elegantly lacquered tubes containing the scrolls . . .

Fist of the Celestial Destroyer

Six volumes filled with graceful calligraphy of antiquated language, stance and footwork illustrations, diagrams of chi application etc. They seem to teach six lost techniques. Each main character can take one for free:

- **Sublime Diagram:** +4 unarmed offense (permanent)
- **Stone Lion Style:** +2 defense (permanent)
- **Seven Point Ethereal Lotus Strike:** target has 5% chance of immediately dying; if they don't they take s4 (+strong or fast) offense. Once per fight, costs a move action
- **Bleeding Tiger Style:** +5 offense when your offense taken is more than half your merk
- **Yichū Focus:** whenever your attack fails to put offense on a target, gain +2 stacking offense that lasts the rest of the fight scene
- **Tolling Palm:** no offense dealt but target loses next turn *and* has 0 defense until the end of your next turn. Once per fight, costs a move action

The SP value of these Specials is “??”, they can't be upgraded, or mirrored by *Mimic Special*. The main characters are free to do what they feel with the scrolls (next page).

Arc Outro

Soundtrack: Large Professor - Ijuswannachill Instrumental

If the show feels done: go around the circle, each actor montaging out their main character. As always, ask questions about anything interesting to get the full outro out of them.

- O R -

If you wanna keep it rolling: agree on the next Key Narrator and crew's direction . . .

• S E A S O N T W O I D E A S •

Agents of the Wo Ping: if the main characters bring the scrolls to the monastery, they're promoted to a procurement squad and regularly sent on missions . . .

- Clans of scaled sea-dwelling peoples (Direns) invade one of the southern islands where a main character has family. The Wo Ping lets the crew borrow insane artifacts from its library.
- A stranger shows up at the monastery: he was a lieutenant of security for some aristocrats in Birdsong City, charged with procuring vagrants and "other undesirables" to sate their vampiric appetites. After his aristocratic masters demanded younger victims for their more exquisite blood, he realized his mistake and is seeking redemption by asking for outside help.
- Find and retrieve missing Wo Ping agents who were infiltrating a thieves' guild in the capital.
- A hunter discovers the ruins of a palace in the mountains, and reports it to the Wo Ping instead of his local authorities because they all fucking suck. The truly ancient palace is haunted by dozens of shades, inky black ultraviolet ghosts of its inhabitants, some with sorcerous power. One uncorrupted ghost holds keys to inner sanctum: a pantao grove, where immortality-bestowing peaches grow over centuries on otherworldly trees (several are ripe).
- A Wo Ping spy confirms rumors that the monks of the North Wind Temple have turned to human sacrifice for secret knowledge. Ice the monks, ice whatever they're sacrificing to, take their shit, torch the temple. Can ride out on pixiu (giant winged lions) imprisoned in temple.
- Beat imperial agents to the once-mythical Dawa Shrine to wreck its pre-ancient superweapon.
- The Catacombs of Warlord Yodwicha: hidden on a remote island permanently shrouded in a heavy storm. Filled with pishacha (corpse-eating ghouls), traps, and cryptograms you must decipher to pass to the next chamber. Its lowest burial vault contains the Black Astrolabe, a Zhou Dynasty (1056 – 256 BC) artifact able to fully control weather in a one-mile radius.
- Missions to other dimensions using the mirror from this game's prequel, *Malice at the Palace*.

Going Independent: for crews who wanna cut ties with the Wo Ping . . .

- A powerful martial artist of fire spirit ancestry with a legendary magmatic sword leads a separatist rebellion in a small province. Can side with rebellion or join Imperial infiltrators.
- Qilin Bell (opposite page): anything goes. Rival clans or imperial agents might try to steal it, the main characters could grip the clapper by moving on a thunderbird (fairly common, prey on humans) or a tyrant sorcerer known to have a gallery of mythic skeletons. The bell itself could open a dimensional portal, summon a djinn, be an heirloom that makes bearer the ruler of a small kingdom, endow powers or shapeshifting, summon an underwater castle etc.
- A tribe of giants is at war with the ogre clans in the far north and it's starting to spill over into human settlements. The Imperium is circulating bounties on key figures to end the conflict.
- Use the scrolls to found a clan (name? where's their training hall at?), proving legitimacy by seeking out duels or entering the Midsummer Tournament in Min Min City.
- Move on the Grinning Tiger Clan, or any of the other secret societies lacing the empire.
- Cash out by selling the scrolls in Bu Ling City (120,000 wen), but watch out for thieves.

Shorts: low-commitment single-session arcs for new Key Narrators . . .

- Min Min City Tournament: alternating a series of tactical fights (tournament winnable) with a secret prank war against a rival kung fu school (sanctioned by masters, bounties posted).
- Bulldoze a ring of triad trying to set up a brothel and force local girls into prostitution.
- Triad (or whoever) had a map to a tomb complex they were planning on pillaging. Guarded by living statues, haunted by asshole ghosts of invader warlords buried there, colossal loot.
- If the main characters burn the records of some debt collector goons for the silversmith, he will reverse his infamous bet with Mirza (main characters can rename his business; Host Mirza suggests "The Pervert Menagerie" or maybe "The Shuttering Asscheeks").

→ Don't forget to run closing ceremonies & level up main characters

Creating a New Show

If everybody wants to keep meeting for sessions, but instead run a different setting or genre, just bang out the below steps.

1. Agree on a show concept . . .

Something with a lot of narrative potential like uncovering supernatural secrets in the thriving cities of the Bronze Age, or exploring a small planet of destroyed civilizations now infested with strange lifeforms.

2. First Key Narrator steps up . . .

Since they'll be running the show, they now have creative control over the setting. Key, it's your job to come to that first session with an episode that introduces the main characters and sets the Crew Ambition in motion. If you're a first-timer, check out page 111 for a crash course.

3. Agree on a Crew Ambition that will drive the show's plot forward . . .

Can be something immediate like repelling the raiders boarding the ship you're all passengers on ("Merk the Raiders"). Can be something open-ended like a crew of longtime friends starting a private detective agency and waiting for their first case to walk in the door ("First Case"). Can be something longform like finding a map and pillaging the tomb of the tyrant Kashif Sultan ("Into the Crypt").

4. Actors create a crew of main characters . . .

A cast you'd wanna watch an actual show about – interesting group dynamics, believable for the setting, and all driven to move the show's plot forward.

5. Lock in a time for your first session . . .

Seriously, do this step now. If you kick that can down the road everybody's schedule is gonna fill up and your show probably won't happen.

Bump Scenes

Self-contained scenes you can drop into the middle of any session. Use them to change up gameplay or fill out sessions that ran short . . .

** Social Bump Scene: Inexorable Pupil

A silver bullet for engaging an actor who isn't quite buying in yet, or spotlighting one who's good at social gameplay. Shortly after a public fight, the main characters exit a building to see a young person bowing toward them (local orphan named Scissors; missing pinky and ring finger). Scissors calls one of the main characters master, insists on learning their moves, offers to do busywork to earn their tutelage, and won't take no for an answer.

** Bump Fight I

Soundtrack: GZA - Liquid Swords Instrumental

A stocky man wearing all black comes bolting round a corner and sprints past the main characters. Eight dudes with improvised weapons (chains, mallets, axehandles etc) chase after him, but stop in front of the armed main characters. When asked why they're chasing him, they answer something like "Feh! He's not a man: he's taken a vow of non-violence. We are helping him restore his manhood by making him fight."

You don't gotta crack into the dialogue or philosophy of this scene if you don't feel like it: the posse can just say something like "Feh! We'll restore your manhood as well for questioning us!" and immediately run at them.

Local Assholes x8

Offense s4 / Defense 0 / Merk 3

Tactics: *let the main characters go first* – this is actually a pretty dangerous fight if you don't (fair warning).

Merked: if a main character spins high, just describe them pulling their shot or turning their blade at the last second to avoid icing somebody over petty shit

Reward: 2 SP to each main character

The dude in black doesn't interfere, but dryly says there's really no reason to fight since he outruns these dorks all the time. Has indeed taken the vow of Ahimsa (no harm to any being). His name is Boatwright Lau Kar-Leung; he invites the main characters to visit his workshop in the Locks District where he and his brothers build / repair boats if there's ever anything he can help them out with.

** Bump Fight II

Soundtrack: GZA - Liquid Swords Instrumental

Two travel-worn men with wooden staffs and heavy Hakka accents notice the main characters' weaponry and ask if they're from the monastery on the mountain. They barely speak Chinese, but say they've been wandering since their master was killed, challenging the fighters of one kung fu school after another, looking for a new master skilled enough to train under. They speak politely, but insist on a fight, testing the crew until it jumps off, then spinning their staffs and taking a defensive monkey style stance.

Monkey Style Fighters x2

Offense s4+3 (staff) / Defense 3 / Merk 10

Special: Iron Pendulum - Immediate free attack on anybody who attacks you *but* fails to put offense on you. Unlimited uses but not more than once per turn

Merked: the fighters apologize, and give the main characters a mollusk shell of arnica balm (enough to fully heal any offense they took), then ask the name of their monastery and the best road to it

Reward: 2 SP to each main character

Fail State: if entire crew merked in either of these fights, they're just roughed up with minor injuries / KO'd. Their offense taken stays at a point below merked until they find a way to heal themselves.

***On Last Week's Episode**

Soundtrack: Lewis Parker - Incognito Instrumental

Start each new session by **A.** covering any new Specials bought since last time, and **B.** going over the events of last session, finishing by setting the scene where you left off at.

***Closing Ceremonies**

Soundtrack: Little Brother - Beautiful Morning Instrumental

End every session by running through three categories . . .

- 1. Tha Golden Domez:** go around the circle and award each player 2 SP. As it's awarded the group gets to decide what it's for ("I present to you tha Golden Dome award for Worst Plan Humanly Possible" etc)
- 2. Key's Choice Award:** favorite performance of the session (2 more SP to that actor)
- 3. Completed Ambitions:** give SP for any Ambitions wrapped up

[Key Narrator Notes]

翠峯倚構方江干
看江上山氣號楚陀吟未穩
不知身在畫圖間 何挂

亦有名賢遠市朝蕭然
環堵臨山拱虛亭未三
空清氣凌石臨流興自饒
昇揚瞻

蘇石休兮羨欲空
方不師日即夕
張青山夕霽生烟

蘇石休兮羨欲空
方不師日即夕
張青山夕霽生烟

蘇石休兮羨欲空
方不師日即夕
張青山夕霽生烟

翠峯倚構方江干
看江上山氣號楚陀吟未穩
不知身在畫圖間 何挂

怡善

蘇石休兮羨欲空
方不師日即夕
張青山夕霽生烟



Fan Kuan - Sitting Alone by a Stream



Fan Kuan - *Snow Scenery & Cold Forest*

[Key Narrator Notes]

[Key Narrator Notes]



Qu Ding - *Summer Mountains* (Excerpt I)



Qu Ding - Summer Mountains (Excerpt II)

[Key Narrator Notes]

[Key Narrator Notes]



Zhang Zeduan - *Along the River During the Qingming Festival* (Excerpt I)



Zhang Zeduan - *Along the River During the Qingming Festival* (Excerpt III)



Zhang Zeduan - *Along the River During the Qingming Festival* (Excerpt II)



Zhang Zeduan - *Along the River During the Qingming Festival* (Excerpt IV)

[Key Narrator Notes]

[Key Narrator Notes]

Main Character Creation

Each actor creates and controls a main character in the game. As long as they fit the show's concept and start at level 1, anything goes.

*Quicklist . . .

1. Snatch a main character sheet from page 123
2. Concept: name, appearance, background etc
3. Pick Specials: page 57 - 67, start with 10 SP's worth (you can start here if you're still thinking on a concept)
4. Start with merk 10
5. Start with 0 defense (top number is just all lower numbers added together)
6. Start with a move score of 5
7. If non-Chinese, put 2 bars in your native tongue (automatically fluent in Chinese)
8. Spend a bar in any major skill *or* additional language (1 bar for broken, 2 is fluent)
9. Put one point in any primary
10. Check opposite page for the bonus that primary gives you, write it down

→ Ready to play

Start undeveloped: you'll mostly figure out who your main character is as you play them, riffing with the other main characters and interacting with the setting. Leave mad room to grow.

Start humble: remember you're starting at level 1. You're basically the average person with a little SP so forget about any master swordsman shit.

Meet your Key at least halfway: they put together a game for you to enjoy so don't make a main character named Fred Shitbreath or whatever. The show is only as good as everybody's level of buy-in.

Build your cast cooperatively. Crew chemistry is what really makes a show jump. Try to think of yourselves not as a group of individuals, but as a crew, a cast of main characters you'd wanna watch an actual show about. You wanna be able to have a slamming pair-off scene with any two main characters.

"Two of us play in the same jazz combo" is good, but to really juice a cast, fuck around with dynamics and archetypes – Seinfeld with four Jerrys never would have worked, you know?

Background: defines your main character, sure, but also use it to seed your future storylines and tie yourself to the setting. Some prompt ideas . . .

- * Where and how you grew up
- * A group you belong to
- * A comrade or contact
- * Your art / creative expertise
- * Your trade / vocational expertise
- * A rival
- * Culture / subculture / ethnicity
- * A nickname / title and how you got it
- * Two rumors the other main characters have heard about you
(don't specify if true, false, or exaggerated till it comes up in-game)

Don't bother writing beyond the background box: no amount of backstory will make your main character feel like a living person (that only happens as you play them).

* * *

Levels

Levels represent a main character's power. After overcoming a significant challenge in the show, all main characters gain a level. Leveling up about once every 3 sessions is normal.

Start at level 1 with merk 10, 1 Primary Point, 10 Special Points, 1 Knowledge Bar
Level 2 1 Primary Point, 10 Special Points
Level 3 1 Primary Point, 10 Special Points, 1 Knowledge Bar
Level 4 1 Primary Point, 10 Special Points
Level 5 +1 to all Primaries, 10 Special Points, 1 Knowledge Bar
Level 6 1 Primary Point, 10 Special Points
Level 7 1 Primary Point, 10 Special Points, 1 Knowledge Bar
Level 8 1 Primary Point, 10 Special Points
Level 9 1 Primary Point, 10 Special Points, 1 Knowledge Bar
Level 10 +1 to all Primaries, 10 Special Points
Level 11 1 Primary Point, 10 Special Points, 1 Knowledge Bar
Level 12 1 Primary Point, 10 Special Points
Level 13 1 Primary Point, 10 Special Points, 1 Knowledge Bar
Level 14 1 Primary Point, 10 Special Points
Level 15 +1 to all Primaries, 10 Special Points, 1 Knowledge Bar

And so on ...

Primaries

The core stats of a character. Each primary amps up secondary features, like so . . .

STRONG

- Every **1** point: +1 offense on all hand-to-hand attacks and throwing attacks
- Every **2** points: +1 defense (put under parry) ▫ Every **3** points: +1 move score

FAST

- Every **1** point: +1 offense on all ranged attacks and light weapon attacks
- Every **2** points: +1 defense (put under dodge) ▫ Every **3** points: +1 move score

HARD

- Every **1** point: +10 merk ▫ Every **2** points: +1 defense (put under grit)
- Every **3** points: heal 1 point of offense taken each turn

SMART

- Every **1** point: +5 Special points (SP) ▫ Every **2** points: +1 knowledge bar

Your main character starts at level 1 with a point in any primary (zero in the rest). Stat-wise this represents the average person. Narratively, primaries are open to interpretation: smart can mean wise or witty or booksmart, strength can be fast-twitch or slow-twitch etc.

Major Skills

A narrative touchpoint for what your main character can easily do. Examples listed below are still subject to your Key Narrator's judgment of the situation, so don't be like "I do this immediately and effortlessly and the book said I can so suck it."

Automotive

Examples: **1 bar** to hotwire an outdated model of car or cut brakelines, **2** to outride a pursuing police cruiser or restore a small engine, **3** to hotwire recent models of car, **4** to be able to deduce how to operate a tank, **5** to outride full-scale police pursuit with aerial support

Bushcraft

Examples: **1 bar** to build a fire with no tools or forage enough food for one person, **2** to forage for a group or extract and braid fiber, **3** to track a survivalist trying to evade you or safely weaponize venoms (s4 undefendable offense per turn with Duration: Combat, single use), **4** to knap and bind flint or obsidian weapons from scratch (-2 offense since made of stone, but can create any type of hand-to-hand weapon or bow), **5** to create a comfortable settlement with low-maintenance permaculture

Chemistry

Examples: **1 bar** to fully destroy fingerprints, **2** to trace origin of a street drug by extracting additives, **3** to discreetly synthesize batches of mid-grade recreational drugs (\$400 worth per week), **4** to extract poison (s6 undefendable offense per turn with Duration: Combat, single use) from [redacted household product], **5** to make a frag grenade with an hour's labor and \$20 worth of [redacted industrial products]

Electronics

Examples: **1 bar** to disable a security camera or cheap alarm, **2** to safely disarm a homemade explosive or defeat a mid-grade alarm system, **3** to project pirate radio in a 1-mile radius or to a specific nearby target, **4** to make a pulse-switching EMP device (temporarily disables nearby electronics) out of garbage with three days' labor, **5** to knock out a city's powergrid with access to a transmission line, or a specific neighborhood with access to a substation

Gunsmithing

Examples: **1 bar** to clear a jam or assemble your own ammo (50% discount), **2** to sabotage a firearm with spiked ammo so it explodes when next used (firearm destroyed, causes firearm's offense to user), **3** to safely make your own gunpowder (even in the wilderness), **4** to make advanced ammunition (automatically respin 1s), **5** to machine a firearm from metal stock (week of labor)

Medicine

Examples: **1 bar** for CPR or to stop arterial bleeding, **2** to identify a common poison / venom / toxin or reset and splint a compound fracture, **3** to be able to deduce a corpse's cause of death or seal a sucking chest wound, **4** to reattach a severed hand or identify a rare poison / venom / toxin, **5** to safely graft cybernetic prostheses

Metalworking

Examples: **1 bar** to make a dagger out of scrap or defeat a cheap lock, **2** to weld bulletproof armoring onto a vehicle, **3** to make any hand-to-hand weapon out of scrap, **4** to defeat the door of a bank vault, **5** to make a hand-to-hand weapon with a permanent +1 offense (week of labor)

Nanotech

Each bar is a 10% cash discount on nanite-based tech (represents being able to just create your own)

Stealth

Examples: **1 bar** to creep past a security guard scrolling through his phone, **2** to pickpocket the average person, **3** to creep up behind a sentinel and remove the magazine from their rifle, **4** to defeat art museum motion sensors, **5** to evade a team of mercenaries trained and equipped for pursuit

Worldliness

Examples: **1 bar** to know who pulls the strings in your local criminal underworld, **2** to know the date of most major historical events of the setting, **3** to have a friendly contact in every major city, **4** to know so many people in bands and labels that you can get on the list of any show on the planet, **5** to know the names and addresses of the people who actually killed JFK

Specials

Powers and unique abilities. Feel free to change their appearance to fit your main character. Here's how they work . . .

***Special's Name** [total SP cost]

Aesthetic: How it looks

Summary: What it does

Effect: The base mechanic [SP cost]

Modifiers: Optional upgrades to range / area / duration etc [SP cost behind each]

Premade Specials

Even if you know how to create your own Specials already, stick to these until the arc in this book is completed.

M O V E M E N T

Premade Specials That Move & Alter How You Move

***Radiant Palm [10 SP]**

Aesthetic: A pulse of chi blasts outward from your palm, throwing your opponent back.

Summary: Target is thrown back one stride. If they collide with another character, they both take s12 offense. No action cost (but must be used on your turn).

Effect: *Push* (collision s12) [8 SP]

Modifiers: Speed: Move-Equivalent [+1/4 effect cost]

***Frog Pop [1 SP]**

Aesthetic: You launch yourself up from a prone position.

Summary: When knocked down, no action cost to stand back up on your turn. Unlimited uses.

Effect: *Kip-Up* [1 SP]

Modifiers: X

***Qing-Gong [15 SP]**

Aesthetic: Supernatural lightness from years of training kung fu.

Summary: You can jump up to the full distance of your move score, glide, and generally move around like you're in low-gravity. Unlimited uses.

Effect: *Qing-Gong* [15 SP]

Modifiers: X

***Shadow Doorz [10 SP]**

Aesthetic: You sink into a shadow and immediately reemerge from any other shadow in sight.

Summary: Teleport between two shadows within sight. Shadow must be wide enough to fit your body, and can't be your own. Only costs a move action.

Effect: *Teleport Between Shadows* [10 SP]

Modifiers: X

***Kite [8 SP]**

Aesthetic: You slickly fade away from a lunging enemy.

Summary: Immediately move one stride in any direction (no action cost) when an enemy moves to a square adjacent to you. Can be used once per fight.

Effect: *Slide* (adjacent move) [4 SP]

Modifiers: Use: Once per Fight [x2]

***Pao Qiang [5 SP]**

Aesthetic: Augmented qing-gong allows you to walk on walls and ceilings.

Summary: Walk and function on any surfaces as if they were the ground for one turncycle.

Effect: *Allsurface* [5 SP]

Modifiers: X

How many times can I use each Special? The default number is *once per day*. For upgrades, check out page 69.

Some Specials automatically have unlimited uses, like Qing-Gong. Others have had their use number upgraded, like Kite, but most of these premades are still at their default of once per day.

S T A T S

Some Real Basic Premade Stat Specials

*Iron Shirt [7 SP]

Aesthetic: Lesser martial artists have broken their hands on your highly conditioned ribs.

Summary: +1 hard (permanent).

Effect: *Primary Up* (hard) [7 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Yintang Meridian [5 SP]

Aesthetic: Strike to a cranial pressure point makes your opponent wobbled and confused.

Summary: Anybody that puts offense on the target in the next turncycle gets a +4 bonus.

Effect: *Defense Down 4* [4 SP] (Instead of lowering defense, all attackers just add offense)

Modifiers: Speed: Move-Equivalent [+1/4 effect cost]

*Northern Wind Diagram [5 SP]

Aesthetic: Advanced footwork lets you move around fights like a phantom.

Summary: Get a free and immediate move action. The bonus move action must be used on your turn, and must be used to actually move (no substituting Speed: Move-Equivalent Specials). No action cost.

Effect: *Extra Move Action* [5 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Golden Mantis Style [7 SP]

Aesthetic: You're fluent in a kung fu discipline prizing speed.

Summary: +1 fast (permanent).

Effect: *Primary Up* (fast) [7 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Nomad [3 SP]

Aesthetic: You grew up nomadic – hunting, tracking, and herb gathering a daily routine.

Summary: You know the basics of plant identification, can forage enough food and clean water to sustain one person, can build a fire with no tools etc.

Effect: *Knowledge Bar* (bushcraft) [3 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Lotus of Sublime Obliteration [13 SP]

Aesthetic: Heat distortions of chi blaze off your body as you power up.

Summary: +4 offense to every attack and offensive Special you make for the rest of the fight scene. Remember this Special costs a move action to manifest, and can only be used once per day.

Effect: *Offense Up 4* [4 SP]

Modifiers: Duration: Combat [effect x3] //

Speed: Move-Equivalent [+1/4 effect cost]

S E N S E

Premade Sensory-Based Specials

*Exalted Eye [2 SP]

Aesthetic: Momentarily glimpse the brilliant chi-flow of all surrounding life.

Summary: Clearly see all nearby biological life despite any obstructions or illusions. Lasts a turncycle.

Effect: *Detect Lifeforms* [2 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Part the Veil [3 SP]

Aesthetic: You've elevated your sensory perception to supernatural levels through years of meditation.

Summary: Selectively see through matter for one turncycle.

Effect: *X-Ray Vision* [3 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Out of Body [3 SP]

Aesthetic: You enter a trance state, your vision slowly rising above your physical body.

Summary: Move your visual vantage point to anywhere your actual biological eyes can see. No action cost. Lasts a fight scene or about five minutes outside of combat.

Effect: *Remote Viewing* [3 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Unclouded Mind [4 SP]

Aesthetic: A carefully cultivated memory gives you flawless recall.

Summary: You can remember any sight or image you've witnessed with perfect clarity. This Special is always active (never have to specify "I use Unclouded Mind").

Effect: *Photographic Memory* [4 SP]

Modifiers: X

S O C I A L Premade Identity & Interaction Specials

*Echoes of Malice [3 SP]

Aesthetic: You momentarily attune to the intentions of surrounding beings.

Summary: Know with certainty if anybody in the surrounding area means you harm, and know the relative location of anybody who does

Effect: *Detect Malevolence* [3 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Primordial Dialectz [2 SP]

Aesthetic: Through some strange folktale-like event in your past you've learned the secret tongue of beasts and birds.

Summary: Speak fluently with any non-human animal. Special lasts as long as the conversation.

Effect: *Talk With Non-Human Animal* [2 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Jingshen Resonance [3 SP]

Aesthetic: An elevated state receptive to the emanations of others' thoughts.

Summary: Momentarily observe the target's stream of consciousness / surface thoughts.

Effect: *Read Mind* [3 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Half a Face [-3 SP]

Aesthetic: You either freak people out with your appearance or somehow cover it up. Either way most people don't want to talk to you.

Summary: Gain 3 SP *but* everybody except the most kindhearted or enlightened are reluctant to speak with you. The narrative origins of this disfigurement is up to the actor.

Effect: *Ugly* [-3 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Seed of Volition [4 SP]

Aesthetic: Nudge a character's thought patterns.

Summary: You give the target a vague inclination or desire.

Effect: *Notion* [5 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Discernment [4 SP]

Aesthetic: You're practiced in spotting liars.

Summary: Immediately know if a statement made within earshot was meant to deceive.

Effect: *Detect Lie* [4 SP]

Modifiers: X

I L L U S I O N Premade Specials That Twist up Perception

→ Illusions last about 5 minutes each before starting to glitch out. Illusions that don't specifically target the user start with a range of 5 strides; any range modifier upgrades still cost the same but add up from there.

*Jingzi Gui [6 SP]

Aesthetic: You appear to triple.

Summary: Two identical copies of your visage emerge on either side of you, imitating your every move and staying adjacent to you. When first used, you can switch with one of these copies for free. When a copy struck for even 1 offense, it disappears in a flash of ruptured chi.

Effect: *Gotchacopies* x2 [6 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Forest Dweller [2 SP]

Aesthetic: The woodlands recognize you as one of their own and mask your movements from outsiders.

Summary: When among trees, tall grass, or other foliage, get 2 additional bars in stealth.

Effect: *Cloak of Verdancy* +2 [2 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Phantasmagoria [10 SP]

Aesthetic: You create a sound, image, scent etc that isn't really there.

Summary: Create a basic single-sensory illusion that feels real to any observer: a calling voice, the aroma of cooking, an altered sign etc. Unlimited uses (but must be used on your turn).

Effect: *Minor Illusion* [10 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Veil of Menglong [7 SP]

Aesthetic: You make an alchemical sign and turn your palms against each other, your skin rippling through colors and patterns.

Summary: Alter appearance of skin at will. +3 stealth whenever active (unlimited uses, no action cost).

Effect: *Chameleon Skin* [7 SP]

Modifiers: X

A L T E R A T I O N

Premade Specials That Change up Form & Function

***Torrid Bloom** [9 SP]

Aesthetic: You impart an intense locus of chi through two fingers, the object you touch immediately heating to a dangerous temperature.

Summary: Heat an object. If a character is holding the object they take s6 offense per turncycle (starting at the beginning of your next turn). Weapons and implements can be dropped freely but armor takes a full turn to remove. Can also target a single square of ground.

Effect: *Heat s6* [3 SP]

Modifiers: Duration: Combat [effect x3]

***Invocation of Passage** [4 SP]

Aesthetic: You mutter a few secret words that persuade locks to open for you.

Summary: Immediately and silently open most locks (middle grade or lower). Will also defeat a *seal* Special of lower SP value.

Effect: *Unseal* (heavy) [4 SP]

Modifiers: X

***Daojiao Fundamentals** [6 SP]

Aesthetic: Your basic grasp of alchemy allows you to transfigure inanimate objects.

Summary: Transform an object, but it must keep same materials and volume. Target object can't be supernatural or larger than user.

Effect: *Object Into Object* [6 SP]

Modifiers: X

***Cosmic Vitality** [4 SP]

Aesthetic: Enlightened understanding of your body frees you from the vulgar forms of nourishment.

Summary: Don't need food or water.

Effect: *Eliminate Biological Need* (food, water) [4 SP]

Modifiers: X

***Yanshen** [14 SP]

Aesthetic: As you slap your palm onto an object it quivers then explodes in length.

Summary: Target object (no thicker than 6") can extend to as long as 50 strides or contract to as short as a millimeter. One use of both lengthening and shortening per day.

Effect: *Length / Shorten* [14 SP]

Modifiers: X

***Ensorcelled of Body** [15 SP]

Aesthetic: When you were young your parents sought the medical attention of a great alchemist, but while she was administering treatment you wandered into her laboratory and drank half the shit in there.

Summary: Your body is unnaturally stretchy and contortable. Your limbs can reach an extra stride (even while attacking).

Effect: *Body Elasticity* (can attack) [15 SP]

Modifiers: X

G E N E R A T I O N

Premade Specials That Conjure & Create Shit

***Zhu Que** [5 SP]

Aesthetic: A small bird of elemental fire flutters from your hand.

Summary: Range of 3 strides, lasts as long as you have a free hand to direct it. Max offense 1.

Effect: *Call Fire* [3 SP]

Modifiers: Range 3 [2 SP]

***Backpiece: Vicious Triumphantor** [3 SP]

Aesthetic: A full back tattoo of dog-headed Guo-Tuo standing on a mountain of demon corpses, blood dripping from his great hammer.

Summary: Imbued tattoo (SP discount for aesthetic quality). Bearer gets +1 offense for each enemy merked during a fight scene; bonus lasts for duration of fight.

Effect: *Imbue Tattoo: Death Dealer* [5 SP]

Modifiers: X

***Domecrusher** [15 SP]

Aesthetic: An outward blast of chi distorts the air when this long, spiked iron cudgel strikes.

Summary: Materialize this weapon at will (s14 + strong, block 1, two-handed). Inhabited by a spirit named Domecrusher who has ultra-keen hearing, some knowledge of the ancient world, and can freely communicate with the wielder.

Effect: *Supernatural Weapon: Two-Handed Haftarm* [7 SP] with *Endow Sentience* [4 SP] and *Acute Hearing* [4 SP]

Modifiers: X

***Leopard** [10 SP]

Aesthetic: A violently loyal companion leopard you rescued as an orphaned cub.

Summary: Merk 10, move 5, offense s2.

Effect: *Companion* (can attack) [10 SP]

Modifiers: X

M E T A Premade Specials That Deal with Specials

*Celestial Mirror [15 SP]

Aesthetic: You flawlessly replicate the chi patterns of an observed technique.

Summary: Copy another character's Special that costs equal to or less than the SP spent on this Special (can mimic every Special in this arc and premade section). You then have the mimicked Special until you use this Special to copy a different one. Must observe use of Special to mimic. No action cost.

Effect: *Mimic Special* [15 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Fluent in the Esoteric [3 SP]

Aesthetic: Years of poring through great libraries of distant monasteries has made you familiar with the rudiments of every expression of chi.

Summary: Immediately know if something within eyesight is a Special, and get at least some functional or mechanical idea of how it works.

Effect: *Identify Special* [3 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Supernatural Attunement [3 SP]

Aesthetic: Whenever somebody uses a supernatural technique nearby you feel like a struck tuning fork.

Summary: Know when somebody uses a Special around you and the exact location it was manifested. Won't detect ongoing effects or identify properties of a Special. Always active.

Effect: *Feel Manifestation* [3 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Sever Chi-Flow [6 SP]

Aesthetic: You completely fuck up the intricate patterns of chi maintaining a supernatural technique.

Summary: Stop any occurring / ongoing Special. The Key Narrator will judge difficulty, and give you an equal number of cards off a shuffled deck; as soon as you sort the cards in numeric order by suit, the targeted Special stops. Number of cards determined by the power level of the character whose Special you're undoing. No action cost and can be used during others' turns.

Effect: *Rupture* [3 SP]

Modifiers: Speed: Interrupt [x2]

U S A G E Premade Specials That Alter Modifiers & SP Costs

*Yin Neijing [1 SP]

Aesthetic: You excel in the destructive disciplines.

Summary: Sacrifice an unspent Special for the day: convert its SP value into points of offense added to the Special you use this turn. Unlimited uses. No action cost, and can be used on others' turns.

Effect: *Burn Special I* [1 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Yang Neijing [1 SP]

Aesthetic: You excel in the restorative arts.

Summary: Sacrifice an unspent Special for the day: convert its SP value into points of healing added to the Special you use this turn. Unlimited uses. No action cost, and can be used on others' turns.

Effect: *Burn Special II* [1 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Interflow [2 SP]

Aesthetic: An internal conversion of chi for a fully different manifestation.

Summary: Sacrifice an unspent Special for the day and put its SP value towards another use of an already-spent Special. Unlimited uses. No action cost, but must be used on your turn.

Effect: *Sub* [2 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Supreme Interflow [3 SP]

Aesthetic: A highly esoteric chi augmentation that's unbelievably dangerous in the right hands.

Summary: Sacrifice an unspent Special for the day and use its SP value to enhance the modifiers of another Special. Unlimited uses. No action cost, but must be used on your turn.

Effect: *Flying Mod* [3 SP]

Modifiers: X

O F F E N S E

Premade Specials to Fuck up Enemies

*Mystagogue [5 SP]

Aesthetic: A scholarly approach to the destructive arts has made you uniquely dangerous.

Summary: Any time you deal offense from a (non-attack) Special, add your smart score to the total offense.

Effect: *Engine of Ruin* [5 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Bao Lei Emanation [14 SP]

Aesthetic: You take the mountain fortress stance, emitting a pulse of chi powerful enough to throw enemies to the ground.

Summary: All enemies within 2 strides take s6 offense and are knocked prone (takes a move action to stand back up). No action cost, but must be used on your turn.

Effect: *Knockdown* [1 SP]

Modifiers: Offense s6 [3 SP] // Area: Radius 2 [effect and offense x3] // Speed: Immediate [+1/2 effect and offense cost]

*Void Bolt [7 SP]

Aesthetic: A bolt of blackest anti-light lances from the tips of your fingers.

Summary: Ranged s8 offense that only costs a move action.

Effect: *Straight Offense* s8 [4 SP]

Modifiers: Range: 3 [2 SP] // Speed: Move-Equivalent [+1/4 offense cost]

*Comet Kick [10 SP]

Aesthetic: A powerful turning kick sends your opponent's weapon flying.

Summary: Target's weapon flies up to 5 strides directly back. If a hand-to-hand weapon, its offense is dealt to the first character in its path. Only costs a move action.

Effect: *Disarm* (launch) [8 SP]

Modifiers: Speed: Move-Equivalent [2 SP]

*Deadly Venoms [10 SP]

Aesthetic: Inky black chi fumes from where you stung em, what, what, what.

Summary: Target takes s6 offense, and automatically takes s6 more at the beginning of all your turns for the rest of the fight. Only costs a move action.

Effect: *Straight Offense* s6 [3 SP]

Modifiers: Duration: Combat [effect x3] // Speed: Move-Equivalent [+1/4 effect cost]

*Phoenix Eye [15 SP]

Aesthetic: You disrupt a chi meridian in your opponent's neck, freezing them in place.

Summary: Target takes s8 offense and is completely immobile (no actions, no defense) until the end of their next turn. Only costs a move action.

Effect: *Superlock* [8 SP]

Modifiers: Offense s8 [4 SP] // Speed: Move-Equivalent [+1/4 effect and offense cost]

*Searing Aura [6 SP]

Aesthetic: You're protected by a scorching radiance.

Summary: Whenever an enemy puts offense on you, they automatically take s6 offense.

Effect: *Reactive Offense* s6 [6 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Lesser Sigil of Fire [13 SP]

Aesthetic: You make the secret symbol of elemental fire, a pillar of golden flame flaring into existence and immolating the target.

Summary: Target takes an immediate s8 offense, and s8 more offense at the start of your next two turns. Range of 6. Only costs a move action.

Effect: *Stagger Offense* (3 turns) [-1/3 offense cost]

Modifiers: Offense 3s8 [12 SP] // Range 6 [3 SP] // Speed: Move-Equivalent [+1/4 offense cost]

Advanced Shit: some of these Specials have the effect "*Straight Offense*". This can instead be moved to modifiers (since straight offense can be an effect or a modifier) with the price remaining the same.

The back of the book is a spinner. “s6” means a spinner from 1 to 6, “s12” means a spinner from 1 to 12 etc. To use it, hold the looped end of a paper clip or guitar string trimming on the center dot with a pen. Flick the other end. Wherever it lands in the ring you’re spinning for is the result.

*Trigram Blast [15 SP]

Aesthetic: A beam of annihilative energy blasts from your palms.

Summary: s16 offense to all targets in a 6-stride line.

Effect: *Straight Offense* s16 [8 SP]

Modifier: Range 6 [3 SP] // Area: Ray [+1/2 offense cost]

*Blizzard Nexus [14 SP]

Aesthetic: Your reaching hand radiates elemental cold, flecks of ice swirling in its wake.

Summary: s8 offense to an adjacent target. If an 8 landed, anybody attacking the target before the end of your next turn gets a +8 to offense. No action cost, but must be used on your turn. Can be used once per fight.

Effect: *Straight Offense* s8 [4 SP]

Modifiers: Speed: Immediate [+1/2 offense cost] // Chance: 1 in 8 chance of -8 defense [1 SP] // Use: Once per Fight [total x2]

*Luminous Tone [15 SP]

Aesthetic: A ripple of searing golden light flashes outward at the sound of an otherworldly chime.

Summary: Immediately after merking an enemy, cause s6 offense to all enemies within a 3-stride radius. No action cost, and can be used in the middle of others’ turns (so if you merk somebody with a counterattack etc).

Effect: *Bloodlust* [3 SP]

Modifier: Offense s6 [3 SP] // Radius 3 [offense x4]

*Void Cascade [8 SP]

Aesthetic: Desolating blacker-than-black energy pours from your hands.

Summary: Adjacent target takes s12 offense. If prone, they instead take 2s12 offense.

Effect: *Mop Up* [2 SP]

Modifiers: Offense s12 [6 SP]

*Frenzied Dragon Style [2 SP]

Aesthetic: The most reckless of the southern styles.

Summary: Lower your defense but raise your offense by the same. Max 3 defense/offense per level. Lasts a turncycle. Remember a negative defense score causes that much extra offense to you. No action cost to use.

Effect: *Trade Defense for Offense* [2 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Three Point Supreme

Decimation Method [15 SP]

Aesthetic: Chi emanations trail your hands as you disrupt an opponent’s vital meridians with blinding speed.

Summary: s8 offense to an adjacent target. Only costs a move action. Unlimited uses (but not more than once per turn).

Effect: *Straight Offense* s8 [4 SP]

Modifiers: Speed: Move-Equivalent [+1/4 offense cost] // Use: Unlimited [total x3]

*Threads of the Heavens [15 SP]

Aesthetic: A flash of electricity arcs from your hand to a nearby opponent.

Summary: s4 offense with range 3. No action cost (but must be used on your turn) and unlimited uses (but not more than once per turn).

Effect: *Straight Offense* s4 [2 SP]

Modifiers: Speed: Immediate [+1/2 effect cost] // Range 3 [2 SP] // Use: Unlimited [total x3]

*Zhenzhu Sequence [15 SP]

Aesthetic: White fire lances through a string of opponents.

Summary: s6 offense to 4 targets with not more than 1 stride between them. If no additional targets, final target takes remaining offense. Maximum range from user to first target is 3 strides.

Effect: *Straight Offense* s6 [3 SP]

Modifiers: Range 3 [2 SP] // Area: Chain w 3 Targets [offense x4] can jump 1 stride [1 SP]

A T T A C K S

Premade Specials That Modify or Evoke Attacks

Q: What's the difference between Attack Specials and Offensive Specials?

A: Attacking is what you do with a weapon: swinging a sword or shooting a gun.

- Attack Specials modify or trigger attacks.
- Offensive Specials (previous section) are any *other* way you damage an enemy, like psionic lightning or energy beams.

*Baguazhang [3 SP]

Aesthetic: Foundational barehanded fighting system.

Summary: If attacking unarmed, attack twice.

Effect: *Unarmed Fighting* [3 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Iron Monkey Style [6 SP]

Aesthetic: You can fluently strike unarmed, even when wielding a one-handed weapon.

Summary: If attacking unarmed, you can make two attacks. If wielding a one-handed weapon, you can make an attack with the weapon *and* an unarmed attack.

Effect: *Unarmed Fighting* (hybrid style) [6 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Eagle Claw [10 SP]

Aesthetic: Finger pushups all day every day.

Summary: The offense of all your unarmed attacks is s6 + strong or fast (default unarmed offense is s2 + strong or fast).

Effect: *Unarmed Offense Up* s6 [2 SP]

Modifiers: Duration: Permanent [x5]

*Drunken Fist [4 SP]

Aesthetic: An elusive and unpredictable style makes you hard to hit.

Summary: Whenever unarmed, you have a +1 bonus to defense.

Effect: *Unarmed Defense Up* [4 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Harmonic Mauling [3 SP]

Aesthetic: A perfectly timed strike to a surrounded enemy.

Summary: For one attack, get +3 offense for each comrade adjacent to the target.

Effect: *Hem In* +3 [3 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Wheel Strike [8 SP]

Aesthetic: An acrobatic flare attacking all adjacent enemies.

Summary: Instead of a normal attack, make an attack on all adjacent enemies. If dual-wielding: make an attack with both weapons on all adjacent enemies (but remember they get to apply their defense to both attacks).

Effect: *Spinning Attack* [8 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Cruel Tutelage [4 SP]

Aesthetic: You effortlessly dodge and brutally counter in the same motion.

Summary: When an enemy makes an attack on you and their offense is lower than your defense, immediately make a free attack on them.

Effect: *Punish* [4 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Reaping Juggernaut [7 SP]

Aesthetic: You're lighting up another enemy before the last one even hits the ground.

Summary: After merking an enemy with an attack, immediately make another attack on an enemy in range.

Effect: *Encore* [7 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Whipcrack Throw [6 SP]

Aesthetic: You throw knives hard enough to shatter bricks.

Summary: Thrown offense upgraded to s8 + strong or fast. Unlimited uses, but not more than once per turn (this is upgradeable however).

Effect: *Thrown Offense Up* s8 [2 SP]

Modifiers: Use: Unlimited [x3]

*Linking Fist [5 SP]

Aesthetic: A style that builds sequences of anticipative strikes.

Summary: Each turn you attack an enemy in a row, gain an accumulating +1 to attack offense against them. If attacking multiple enemies each turn this bonus applies to all of them. This Special is always active.

Effect: *Overwhelm* [5 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Southern Owl Style [7 SP]

Aesthetic: You're expertly trained in attacking the unguardable back of an opponent.

Summary: When attacking an enemy from the square directly behind them, attack a second time for free. If ranged, must be attacking from the 1-square-wide line directly behind the target.

Effect: *Back Attack II* [7 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Eight Diagram Pole Fighter [8 SP]

Aesthetic: You're one of seven sons taught a secret spear and staff style from the north.

Summary: +2 offense to all attacks made with a polearm (spear, staff, monk's spade etc).

Effect: *Weapon Specialist* (polearms +2) [8 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Wuxin Rapture [10 SP]

Aesthetic: Your body trails luminous patterns of energy as you become a vessel of decimation.

Summary: When you land an 8 attacking with a two-handed flex weapon, gain a +5 bonus to offense and move for the rest of fight.

Effect: *Critical Hit* (two-handed flex weapon 8): *Move Score Up 5* and *Offense Up 5* with Duration: Combat [10 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Voracious Blade [6 SP]

Aesthetic: Your blade seems to drink heat distortions of chi from the wounds it inflicts.

Summary: Whenever you land a 4 attacking with a light sword, also lifejack s8 from the target (so they take +s8 offense, and you heal the same amount).

Effect: *Critical Hit* (light sword 4): *Lifejack s8* [6 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Moth Glides by Flame [4 SP]

Aesthetic: A turning strike on a passing enemy.

Summary: Free and immediate hand-to-hand attack on an enemy that passes through an adjacent square (passes through, not moves to). No action cost.

Effect: *Intercept* [4 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Beads on a String [5 SP]

Aesthetic: A real technical strike that wounds two opponents with a single attack.

Summary: When wielding a reach weapon you can attack two enemies in the range of a single thrust. Can use any number of times per turn / fight.

Effect: *Reach Weapon Twofer* [1 SP]

Modifiers: Duration: Permanent [x5]

*Death Wields a Sword [4 SP]

Aesthetic: You're an ambitious sword scholar.

Summary: +1 offense to all attacks made with a sword (whether light, one-handed, or two-handed).

Effect: *Weapon Specialist* (swords +1) [4 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Fire Tiger Style [10 SP]

Aesthetic: "As a rule, when two tigers meet in the forest, one is maimed and the other is killed"

Summary: When you land a 4 attacking with a staff, target also thrown up to two strides back. If they collide with another enemy, they both take s10 offense.

Effect: *Critical Hit* (staff 4): *Push* (two strides, collision s10) [10 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Immaculate Cut [10 SP]

Aesthetic: A single flawlessly executed swordstroke. Enough to send a cold wind of fear through the most esteemed blademaker.

Summary: When you attack with a two-handed sword and land a 12, you deal an extra 3s20 offense.

Effect: *Critical Hit* (two-handed sword 12): 3s20 offense [10 SP]

Modifiers: X

The *only* modifiers Attack Specials are allowed to have are Use and Duration.

- Use: Once per Fight is total SP x2
- Use: Unlimited is total SP x3
- Duration: Combat is total SP x3 (can use any number of times in one fight)
- Duration: Permanent is total SP x5 (unlimited uses *and* any number of uses per turn)

D E F E N S E

Premade Protective Specials

*Vanishing Crane Style [5 SP]

Aesthetic: Motherfuckers couldn't hit you with a handful of rice on sparring day.

Summary: Permanent +1 to defense.

Effect: *Defense Up 1* [1 SP]

Modifiers: Duration: Permanent [x5]

*Pierce Ego [3 SP]

Aesthetic: You roast an opponent so viciously they have no choice but to face you.

Summary: Actor must actually roast enemy. An enemy within sight has -6 offense until they attack you. No action cost (but must be used on your turn).

Effect: *Fuckwithme I* (offense -6) [3 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Phoenix Affinity [5 SP]

Aesthetic: Born under a rare concurrence of signs, you have the unique property of loving heat levels lethal to normal humans.

Summary: You're immune to the effect *Heat*, take half offense from heat and fire-based Specials (round down), and aren't bothered by anything less than about 200 degrees fahrenheit.

Effect: *Thermophilic* [5 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Silk Door [2 SP]

Aesthetic: You slip a charging enemy so deftly they strike the enemy behind you.

Summary: Redirect an enemy's incoming attack to an enemy on the other side of you (directly opposite).

Effect: *Slip I* [2 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Jin Xiu Reversal [10 SP]

Aesthetic: A chi-fuming strike that turns a supernatural technique back on its user.

Summary: Reflect first 7 offense of Special back at the enemy targeting you (take any remaining offense as normal). Effect not reflected. No action cost and can be used in the middle of others' turns.

Effect: *Reflect Special 7* [10 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Golden Bell [9 SP]

Aesthetic: Esoteric chi exertions convert external impacts to internal mending.

Summary: You don't take the first 2 offense of any blunt trauma (punches, maces, hammers etc), but instead turn it to healing. Always active.

Effect: *Resistant to Offense Type* (blunt 2; healing) [9 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Ghost Diagram [3 SP]

Aesthetic: A technique of perfect evasion.

Summary: Give up your entire next turn to avoid an incoming attack or Special.

Effect: *Bail Artist* [3 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Dragon Crashes Bridge [2 SP]

Aesthetic: You redirect your opponent's arm, throwing their attack into another target.

Summary: Redirect an enemy's incoming attack to an enemy adjacent to the attacker.

Effect: *Slip II* [2 SP]

Modifiers: X

Aesthetics: you're free to change the name and aesthetic of any of these Specials to fit your main character. For example, if you wanted to be descended from a fire spirit, just take Phoenix Affinity (above left) and change the name to Igneous Blood or whatever.

H E A L I N G

Premade Specials to Reduce Offense Taken

*Rejuvenation [9 SP]

Aesthetic: Restorative chi blazes off your hand as you hold it over a closing wound.

Summary: Heal adjacent target (or self) s8. Only costs a move action. Unlimited uses, but not more than once per turn.

Effect: *Straight Heal* s8 [2 SP]

Modifiers: Speed: Move-Equivalent [1] // Use: Unlimited [total x3]

*Huichun Surge [8 SP]

Aesthetic: A nearby comrade glows with waves of supernatural vitality.

Summary: Target healed for s8 (no action cost), then s8 again at the start of your next two turns (also no action cost). Range of 3.

Effect: *Stagger Healing* (3 turncycles) [-33%]

Modifiers: Healing 3s8 [6 SP] // Speed: Immediate [+1/2 total healing] // Range 3 [2 SP]

*Tonify Meridian [10 SP]

Aesthetic: Mend a chi-flow meridian ruptured by an injury.

Summary: Heal adjacent target s10. If a 10 landed, target has +7 defense for the rest of the fight scene. Can be used once per fight.

Effect: *Straight Heal* s10 [3 SP]

Modifiers: Chance: 10% chance of +7 defense with Duration: Combat [2 SP] // Use: Once per Fight [total cost x2]

*Neidan Scholar [3 SP]

Aesthetic: You have robust knowledge of the medicinal Three Jewels and the internal alchemy of Neidan.

Summary: Whenever you use a healing Special, always add your smart score to the total amount healed.

Effect: *Engine of Mending* [3 SP]

Modifiers: X

*Chain of Light [9 SP]

Aesthetic: A sequence of allies are clad in upward-streaming light.

Summary: s4 healing in a series of 3 targets (can't be more than 2 strides away from each other). If no additional targets, final target takes remaining healing. Maximum range to first target is 2 strides. No action cost, and can be used in the middle of others' turns.

Effect: *Straight Heal* s4 [1 SP]

Modifiers: Area: Chain w 3 Targets [healing x3] can jump 2 strides [2 SP] // Range 2 [1] // Speed: Interrupt [x2 total healing]

*Avulsive Gate [9 SP]

Aesthetic: Your eyes smolder brighter and brighter as you drain chi from a grabbed enemy.

Summary: s8 offense to adjacent enemy, and you heal the same amount. No action cost.

Effect: *Lifejack* s8 [6 SP]

Modifiers: Speed: Immediate [+1/2 effect cost]

Advanced Shit: some of these Specials have the effect "*Straight Heal*". This can instead be moved to modifiers (since straight healing can be an effect *or* a modifier) with the price remaining the same.

Building Your Own Specials

Pick out an effect (pages 70 to 101), and give it a name / aesthetic. That's it.

Upgrading Specials

Just add modifiers (opposite page) to give your Special longer range, more uses, bigger offense etc.

Modifiers

These upgrade Specials.

*USE

Once per Day default

Once per Fight total Special cost **x2**

Unlimited[†] total Special cost **x3**

[†](but not more than once per turn)

*RANGE

1 stride: default // 2 strides: +1 SP // 3 strides: +2 SP
6 strides: +3 SP // 12 strides: +4 SP // 20 strides: +5 SP

*SPEED

Main (costs your main action) default

Move (costs your move action) effect, healing and offense cost **x1.25**

Immediate (no action cost) “ **x1.5**

Interrupt (no action cost & usable on others' turns) “ **x2**

***OFFENSE:** 1 SP per +1 offense

Spinner: 1 SP per half the spinner's max. (Example: s8 of offense would cost 4 SP.)

***HEALING:** 1 SP per +2 healing

Spinner: 1 SP per quarter the spinner's max. (Example: s8 of healing would cost 2 SP.)

*AREA

Radius 1 stride effect, healing, and offense **x2**

Radius 2 strides “ **x3**

Radius 3 strides “ **x4**

All enemies or comrades in fight scene “ **x5**

Ray (all enemies in Special's path affected) effect, healing, and offense **x1.5**

Chain (effect jumps through multiple targets): effect, healing, and offense x maximum number of targets + 1 SP per stride between. If no additional targets, final target takes all

*DURATION

Turncycle default

Combat (or about 5 minutes outside of combat) effect, healing, offense, and area **x3**

Permanent “ **x5**

***SELECTIVITY:** Reduce Special price by condition. Only at night (half the time) would cost 50%. Only on the undead (about 10% of your enemies) would cost 10% etc.

*DEFENDABILITY

Undefendable (surpasses all defense) offense **x1.5**

+10% offense cost per each of the below defense factors ignored:

Armor // Shield // Block // Dodge // Parry // Grit // Specials

***CHANCE:** add something good, like an extra 20 offense when you land a 10 on an s10 spin, which would only cost 2 SP (10% chance means 10% cost: 10% of 20 SP is 2 SP). You can also use this modifier to reduce the Special's price by the chance of failure.

Effects

What a Special does. Newjacks, don't even look at this section. Go on, git.

Attack Effects

Can't have modifiers added except Use and Duration (end of section). What's the difference between attack effects and offensive effects? Attacking is what you do with a weapon (swinging a sword, firing a pistol). Attack effects modify or trigger an attack. Offensive effects (next section) are any other way you cause offense, like psionic lightning or energy beams.

Spinning Attack: make a hand-to-hand attack on all adjacent enemies in place of your normal attack this turn. Attack path can't pass through comrades (without attacking them). If dual-wielding: you can make an attack with each weapon on all adjacent enemies (but remember they get to apply their defense to both attacks). **8 SP.**

- Step: you can move one stride, attacking all enemies adjacent to your two-stride path. +10 SP
- Bound: you can move two strides, attacking all enemies adjacent to your three-stride path. +10 SP (and must have previous upgrade)

Followthrough: when you put offense on an enemy with a hand-to-hand attack, you can make an immediate bonus attack (same weapon) on a different enemy adjacent to you. Followthrough path can't pass through comrades (without attacking them). No attacking the same enemy more than once. Automatically Duration: Permanent. **10 SP.**

- Step: you can take a free one-stride step to followthrough on an enemy. +15 SP
- Reach: you can followthrough with reach weapons, *but* must maintain range (so if initial target 2 strides away, any subsequent targets must also be 2 strides away). Can instead followthrough to a second target directly behind an initial adjacent target, but then end there. Can't step (above upgrade) when using this upgrade. +10 SP

Shooter Persecutor: make a free second hand-to-hand attack on an enemy that only has a bayonetless firearm or launcher weapon (like bows, slings, crossbows) equipped. If the target pulls a hand-to-hand weapon this effect can't be used (both dropping and pulling a weapon has no action cost, and can be done at Speed: Interrupt). **5 SP.**

Lunge: increase hand-to-hand weapon range by 1 stride for one attack. You can lunge through occupied space, unless your Key says otherwise. Can be used in conjunction with any other attack Special, but only allows one target per use of *lunge*. **2 SP.**

Reach Weapon Twofer: when wielding a reach weapon, you can attack two targets in the range of a single thrust for one attack. **1 SP.**

Chasing Attack: free hand-to-hand attack on an enemy that's moving out of an adjacent square. Automatically Speed: Interrupt. **4 SP.**

Intercept: free hand-to-hand attack on an enemy that's moving through an adjacent square (must pass through, not move to). Automatically Speed: Interrupt. **4 SP.**

- Stop target if your offense is higher than their defense: +3 SP

Punish: when an enemy makes an attack on you and their offense is lower than your defense, make one free and immediate attack on them (if in range of currently equipped weapon). **4 SP.**

Bust Back: one free and immediate attack on an enemy that manages to hurt you with an attack (if in range of currently equipped weapon). **6 SP.**

Riposte: one free and immediate attack on an enemy that just attacked you, regardless of success (only if in range of currently equipped weapon). **8 SP.**

“Square” just means square stride. Think of the combat map as a chessboard of square strides. This makes measuring out range and movement way easier.

Unarmed Offense Up: increase unarmed offense for one turn (default unarmed offense is s2).

• s4 is 1 SP

• s6 is 2 SP

• s8 is 3 SP

Unarmed Defense Up: you have a defense bonus when unarmed. 4 SP per point of defense.

Unarmed Fighting: when attacking unarmed you can now make two attacks per turn. You can attack two different targets, or the same target twice (remember they get to apply their defense to both your strikes). When upgrading unarmed offense (*unarmed offense up*, *weapon specialist*, etc), it applies to both unarmed attacks. Your primary bonus (you can add strong or fast) also gets added to both attacks. Automatically Duration: Permanent. 3 SP

- Hybrid Style: if attacking with a one-handed weapon and your other hand is empty, you can also make an unarmed attack with that hand (Automatically Duration: Permanent): +3 SP

Shield Bash Offense: increase offense when attacking with a shield for one turn (default shield bash offense is s4). Remember that shield's defense unusable until turn after shield bash.

s6 is 1 SP

• s8 is 2 SP

• s10 is 3 SP

Shield Push: for one attack, shield bashing pushes the target back 1 stride. 2 SP.

- 2 strides: +2 SP
- Knockdown (takes a move action to stand): +2 SP
- Collision: if pushed enemy collides with another enemy, both take offense. 1 SP per point

Thrown Offense Up: increase thrown weapon offense for one turn (default is s4).

• s6 is 1 SP

• s8 is 2 SP

• s10 is 3 SP

• s12 is 4 SP

Thrown Range Up: increase thrown weapon range for one turn (default thrown weapon range is 3 strides). 1 SP per +1 range.

Barrage: sacrifice move action to make a second (non-firearm) ranged attack at half offense (round down). 5 SP.

Distance Shot: increase firearm or launcher range for one attack. 1 SP per +3 range.

Beat Cover: this ranged attack surpasses any cover the enemy has taken (this includes being behind other characters). To be clear, their defense score still applies. 6 SP.

Cautious Shot: your ranged attack (includes thrown) this turn can safely pass through space occupied by comrades. 3 SP.

Disarming Shot: instead of spinning offense for an attack, you can disarm a target in range of your currently held ranged weapon (launcher, firearm, or thrown). Key decides where unhanding weapon lands. 1 SP.

- Trade next main action for a Speed: Interrupt disarming shot (includes shooting down a thrown weapon already mid-air): +1 SP
- Trade next *move* action for a disarming shot: +2 SP
- Trade next *move* action for a Speed: Interrupt disarming shot (includes shooting down a mid-air throwing weapon): +3 SP

Piercethrough: if you successfully put offense on a target with a ranged attack, spin a free bonus attack on a target behind them (make sure to maintain line of fire). Must be a piercing projectile (arrow, javelin, bolt, bullet etc). 2 SP.

• Third target in a line: +2 SP

- Overshot: don't have to actually wound a target to make a bonus attack on another target behind them: +2 SP

Snipe: target must be unaware of you, and within range of your currently equipped firearm or launcher weapon. For every consecutive turn you spend observing them, you multiply the total offense of the next shot you take on them. If they take cover or become unobservable in some way, the multiplier resets. For example: if you spend one turn observing them, the shot you take on your second turn will have double offense; if you spend three turns observing them, the shot you take on your fourth turn will have quadruple offense. Limit of x5 offense. 5 SP.

Weapon Specialist: bonus to offense when attacking with a specific type of weapon: sword, haftarm, polearm, flex weapon, unarmed, launcher, shortarm (pistols / SMGs), rifle, shotgun, thrown, shield, burst instrument, instrument. If dual-wielding your chosen weapon type, you add the offense bonus from this effect to both attacks. Automatically Duration: Permanent. 4 SP per 1 offense.

Knockdown Attack: make an attack as normal; it also knocks down the target (it takes an entire move action to stand back up). **3 SP.**

Rock: make an attack as normal; it also causes the target to lose their next main action. **6 SP.**

Stop-Hit: sacrifice your main action next turn to immediately make an attack on someone (in range of your currently equipped weapon) that is about to attack: if your offense is higher than their defense, they do not attack. Automatically Speed: Interrupt. **3 SP.**

- Only sacrifice move action: +4 SP

Beat Back: instead of making a hand-to-hand attack, push the target back 1 stride. **1 SP.**

- Make hand-to-hand attack *and* push target back: +4 SP

Hound: each time you attack a particular enemy in a row without attacking another enemy, you gain +1 attack offense on them. Like this, attack 2: +1, attack 3: +2, attack 4: +3, etc. Special attacks like *barrage*, *stop-hit*, *punish*, *bust back*, *riposte*, etc all count towards this effect. Automatically Duration: Permanent. **3 SP.**

Overwhelm: each *turn* you attack a particular enemy in a row, you get a +1 bonus to attack offense on them. Like this, turn 2: +1, turn 3: +2, turn 4: +3 etc. You can target other enemies with attacks and Specials, just as long as you make at least one attack on the overwhelmed target per turn. Does not stack with *hound*. Can overwhelm multiple targets simultaneously. Automatically Duration: Permanent. **5 SP.**

Hem In: for one attack, get a bonus to offense for each (combat-capable) comrade adjacent to the target. **1 SP** per +1 offense.

Surprise Attack Bonus: bonus offense when attacking an enemy unaware of your presence. Offense doubled if attack is hand-to-hand: **1 SP** per +1 ranged offense / +2 hand-to-hand offense.

Load Up: skip main action this turn to double your offense when you attack next turn. **5 SP.**

Blitz: bonus to hand-to-hand attack's offense, but you must move in a straight line for your entire move score. **1 SP** per +1 offense.

Encore: after merking an enemy with an attack (includes counterattacks and other attack Specials), make an immediate free attack on an enemy in range. Unlimited uses. **7 SP.**

Back Attack I: bonus offense to one attack made to an enemy's back. If hand-to-hand: must be occupying the square directly behind the target. If ranged: must be occupying the 1-square-wide line directly behind the target. **1 SP** per 1 offense.

Back Attack II: for one turn, attack a second time for free when attacking an enemy's back. If hand-to-hand: must be occupying the square directly behind the target. If ranged: must be occupying the 1-square-wide line directly behind the target. If you also use *back attack I* the offense bonus only applies to one of the attacks. **7 SP.**

Shadow Attack: for one attack, attacking someone's shadow is the same as attacking their actual body. **2 SP.**

Critical Hit: you have the chance to deal extra offense with a specific type of weapon (automatically Duration: Permanent). Pick a number on your chosen weapon's spinner; whenever you land that number, you **dish out extra offense**. Here's the math:

$$[\text{bonus offense}] \times [\% \text{ chance of it happening}] \times 4 = \text{total SP cost}$$

So if your chosen weapon is a spear (polearm, s10) and you want it to do an extra 20 offense (20 SP) whenever you land a 3 (10% chance), you're just taking 10% of 20 (2 SP), and multiplying it by 4: total SP cost is 8. Easy shit. No increasing your critical range past one-quarter of the spinner's total numbers. **Instead of offense, you can spark an effect** when you land a critical:

$$[\text{SP cost of effect}] \times [\% \text{ chance of it happening}] \times 4 = \text{total SP cost}$$

Critical hits are one of the best hollers for your dollar: you're paying almost nothing in SP to give *every* attack spin the chance of a massive bonus.

Charging Bonus: +1 offense when charging. Automatically Duration: Permanent. **1 SP** per point of offense.

Charge Counter: +1 offense when spinning *against* charging enemies. Automatically Duration: Permanent. **1 SP** per point of offense.

Ranged Charge Counter: if you're wielding a ranged weapon and spin higher than the enemy charging you, they stop a number of strides short of you equal to the offense you beat them by. This includes thrown weapons. Automatically Duration: Permanent. **4 SP.**

Shoot Charger: when wielding a ranged weapon, pop a charging enemy (who's charging someone else) that passes through your range. Automatically Speed: Interrupt. **4 SP.**

Charge Knockdown: when you spin a higher offense than an enemy during a charge they're knocked down (it takes a move action to stand back up). Unlimited uses. **3 SP.**

Grappling Bonus: +1 to grapple spins. Automatically Duration: Permanent. **2 SP** per point.

Cerebral Grappling: add your smart score (instead of your strong or fast) to your grapple spins. Automatically Duration: Permanent. **3 SP.**

Grappling Throw: when you win a grapple (doesn't matter if you initiated it), you can throw that enemy a square in any direction (from the square you currently occupy). Target also knocked prone. If you did initiate the grapple and choose to throw, you can't also hold the target in place. Unlimited uses. **3 SP.**

- Two squares: +3 SP

- Collision: if thrown enemy collides with another enemy, both take offense. 2 SP per point

Grappling Offense: whenever grappling (win or lose, doesn't matter if you initiated it) you exert a clinch, choke, lock, or slam that puts offense on the enemy you're grappling with. Chosen grappling primary is added to total offense. Unlimited uses. **3 SP** per point of offense.

The only modifiers Attack Specials are allowed to have are Use and Duration:

Use: Once per Fight	total SP x2
Use: Unlimited (but not more than once per turn)	total SP x3
Duration: Combat (can use any number of times in one fight)	total SP x3
Duration: Permanent (unlimited uses <i>and</i> any number of uses per turn)	total SP x5

Offensive Effects

Straight Offense: 1 SP per 1 offense. Spinner option: 1 SP per half of spinner's maximum (so 3 SP for s6 offense, 4 SP for s8 offense etc). This effect can also be made into a modifier at any time.

Mop Up: if target is laid out when this effect is used on them, double your offense. 2 SP.

Offense if Still: enemy takes offense if they don't move at least one stride their next turn. Target will be aware of the effect. 1 SP per 2 offense.

Offense if Mobile: enemy takes offense if they move even a single stride before the end of their next turn. Target will be aware of the effect. 1 SP per 2 offense

Back Attack III: double offense when targeting an enemy from behind. For example, if you spend 5 SP giving this Special 5 offense, it deals 10 offense when attacking an enemy's back, but 5 offense from any other angle. If adjacent: must be occupying the square directly behind the target. If ranged: must be occupying the 1-square-wide line directly behind the target. Base effect cost is 1 SP (adding offense is usual price of 1 SP per 1 offense).

Deluge: this effect gives you a bonus for every attack or offensive Special used on your target since the end of your last turn. 1 SP per offense. (Example: if you spent 4 SP on this effect and 3 of your comrades attacked the target since your last turn, you would then deal 12 offense to the target.)

Stagger Offense: split offense of Special so that it happens equally over multiple turncycles. Occurs at the beginning of your turn. 2 turncycles: SP cost of offense is 25% less.

- 3 turncycles: 33.3% less

No Cover: this Special surpasses any cover the enemy has taken (includes being behind other characters). To be clear, their defense score still applies. 2 SP.

Power Up: the more action cost you pay, the more powerful this Special gets:

A.) Speed: Interrupt = 1/4 this Special's default offense, B.) spend only move action = 1/2 offense, C.) spend main action = normal offense, D.) spend both main action and move action = x2 offense, E.) spend this main action and your next main action = x3 offense, F.) spend your main action and move action this turn *and* your next turn = x4 offense (releases on second turn). Always round up offense. 2 SP per 1 default offense.

Chambered: user can divide up this Special's total offense however you want. Using a remaining portion of offense has no action cost, and can be done in the middle of others' turns. For example, after you pay the action cost of a *chambered* Special with 10 offense, you can nail a target with 5 offense right away (no action cost), then blast a different target for 2 offense (no action cost), then use that remaining 3 offense on another target (still no action cost), or wait until after your turn and interrupt an enemy with that remaining 3 offense. To reiterate: A.) you only pay the action cost of this Special once, B.) using any amount of remaining offense has Speed: Interrupt, and C.) you can use as little or as much of the Special's offense each time, until you've expended the entirety of the Special's total offense. A *chambered* Special lasts until the end of the fight scene, or about five minutes outside of combat. 1.5 SP per 1 offense.

- Fixed divisions: chambered offense divided into predetermined amounts (For example, 9 offense manifested as 3 blasts of 3 every time, or 8 offense divided into 4 jolts of s4 every time, etc): -25% offense cost

The back of the book is a spinner. "s6" means a spinner from 1 to 6, "s12" means a spinner from 1 to 12 etc. To use it, hold the looped end of a paper clip or guitar string trimming on the center dot with a pen. Flick the other end. Wherever it lands in the ring you're spinning for is the result.

Bloodlust: this offensive Special can be used at no action cost immediately after merking an enemy. **3 SP.**

Death Dealer: each time you merk an enemy, you get a stacking +1 bonus to all offense. This bonus lasts the rest of the fight scene. Automatically Duration: Permanent. **5 SP.**

Lifejack: you heal the same amount of offense you put on an enemy with this effect. **3 SP** per 2 offense.

- Siphon healing to self *or* any comrade in range: **+3 SP**

Recoil: also deals offense to user (surpasses defense). Subtract Special's offense cost by the offense caused to the user.

Mine: once you pay this Special's action cost, it's locked onto a location or object within range. You can detonate it at will, or assign it to trigger when there's movement within a certain proximity. You can detonate the mine from any distance. A placed mine lasts about a day. **2 SP.**

- Mine undetectable to enemies: **+2 SP**
- Mine doesn't expire: **+2 SP**

Trade Defense for Offense: lower your defense score, and increase your offense by the same number. Must be in actual combat: target shooting or kicking down a door won't be affected. Capped at 3 defense/offense per level. Offense bonus applies to all offense for exactly one turncycle (so both strikes if dual-wielding, counterattacks, all offensive Specials etc). Remember a negative defense score does that much extra offense to you. No action cost. **2 SP.**

Kinetic Charge: give an everyday item the offense of a classical weapon. Reach weapons must actually have reach (like a broom) and two-handed weapons must actually be functionally two-handed (like a guitar). Kinetic charge lasts for a fight scene (or about five minutes outside of combat). *Weapon specialist* doesn't apply to kinetically charged weapons, but effects like *thrown offense up* and *reach weapon twofer* do. No action cost to kinetically charge an object. **5 SP.**

Knockdown: knock down an enemy (it takes an entire move action to stand back up). **1 SP.**

Lock: target moves zero strides next turn. Target can still reface, move the rest of their body normally, and use their move action for something else (like a Special with Speed: Move-Equivalent). **1 SP.**

- Can't reface: **+3 SP**
- Superlock: target is completely immobile until the end of their next turn (no defense, no actions): **+7 SP**

Deny X Action: target loses their next *move* action: **1 SP.**

- Target loses their next *main* action: **2 SP**
- Target loses *all* action: unable to act until the end of their next turn (no main action, move action, or Specials with no action cost): **4 SP**

Porcupine: whenever an enemy moves into a square adjacent to you, they instantly take offense. Automatically Duration: Permanent. **2 SP** per 1 offense.

Reactive Offense: whenever an enemy puts offense on you, you instantly deal this effect's offense to them. Automatically Duration: Permanent. **2 SP** per 1 offense.

- An enemy within 2 strides (maximum upgradeable range): **+2 SP**

Defense Down: decrease defense in target for 1 turncycle. Default is Speed: Move-Equivalent, and all speed modifiers cost 25% less than their usual price. **1 SP** per 1 defense. (You can instead have this effect give an offense bonus of the same number to anyone attacking or using offensive Specials on the target, since the result is the same either way. Choice must be locked in before Special finalized.)

Offense Down: decrease offense in target for 1 turncycle. Default is Speed: Move-Equivalent, and all speed modifiers cost 25% less than their usual price. **1 SP** per 1 offense.

Move Score Down: decrease target's move score. Default is Speed: Move-Equivalent, and all speed modifiers cost 25% less than their usual price. Automatically Duration: Combat. **1 SP** per stride.

Disarm: currently held weapon/s (includes instruments) of target are dropped. **3 SP.**

- Weapon stripped (and immediately wieldable): +2 SP
- Launch: target's weapon goes flying 5 strides directly back. If a hand-to-hand weapon, its offense is caused to the first character in its path: +5 SP

Deshield: currently held shield of target is dropped. **2 SP.**

Disarm Punish: when an enemy makes a hand-to-hand attack on you and their offense is lower than your defense, disarm them of whatever they attack with (Key decides where weapon lands). Automatically Speed: Interrupt. **2 SP.**

- Can strip then immediately wield target's weapon: +1 SP
- Target's weapon goes flying 5 strides directly back. If a hand-to-hand weapon, its offense is caused to anyone in its trajectory: +3 SP

Sick Move: for one attack or offensive Special, gain an offense bonus of +2 per level, but you must specifically narrate how you gain it – clever use of the environment, weakness you clocked in target, just a cinematic surge of power etc. Automatically once per fight (can't have number of uses upgraded, or buy multiples of this effect). **5 SP.**

Burn Special I: sacrifice an unspent Special/s for the day. For every SP you sacrifice, add a point of offense to the offensive Special you use this turn. No action cost Unlimited uses. **1 SP.**

Swap Offense Type: pick an offense type (fire, cold, electricity, acid, psionic, explosive, blunt, sharp, void etc). You can now change the offense type of any other Special you have to this offense type. Each time you buy this effect it's for a different offense type. Unlimited number of swaps, no action cost. **2 SP** per offense type.

Engine of Ruin: whenever you use a Special that causes offense, add your smart score to the offense caused. Doesn't apply to Specials that use attack effects. For effects that cause recurring offense (*chambered*, *stagger offense*, offensive Specials with Duration: Combat, etc) add your smart score every time offense is dealt. Automatically Duration: Permanent. **5 SP.**

Defense still applies to Specials.

* * *

Special's offense - target's defense = offense put on target

Defensive Effects

Slip I: if user attacked by an enemy flanking them directly opposite another enemy, immediately using this Special will redirect the attack from the user to the enemy flanking opposite. **2 SP.**

Slip II: if user attacked hand-to-hand by an enemy adjacent to another enemy, immediately using this Special will redirect the attack to the enemy adjacent to the attacker. Automatically Speed: Interrupt. **2 SP.**

Projectile Shell: make one square invulnerable to all incoming projectiles, physical or supernatural. Can uncomfortably squeeze two average-sized characters in this shell (possible actions probably restricted). **3 SP.**

Perfect Shell: target is surrounded by a forcefield that prevents any force or matter from entering or exiting. Target can be a fixed area. If target is instead an object or character, the shell will move with the target. If used with Duration: Combat during a fight, the absolute shell instead lasts about five minutes (less if the user wants). Can uncomfortably squeeze two average-sized characters in this shell (possible actions probably restricted). **3 SP.**

Bulwark: conjure an unmoving force / shield about one square stride (big enough for cover, but too small to fully obstruct most doorways). The bulwark has 10 merk for every **1 SP** spent on it. Size can be increased at higher SP prices, and merk is spread evenly (example: if you put 4 SP into this effect, you could conjure A. a wall that's 1 square with 40 merk, B. a wall that's 4 squares with 10 merk each, or C. a wall that's 2 squares with 20 merk each). Bulwark must be placed on the ground (can't be knocked over). Speed: Interrupt cost is x5 instead of usual x2.

- Bulwark can be suspended in the air: +4 SP
- All offense from the attack or Special that merks the bulwark is completely absorbed (remaining offense does not pass to any target behind): +2 SP

Fallproof: you aren't hurt by falling anything less than 3 stories. Automatically Duration: Permanent. **1 SP.**

- Unhurt by a fall of any distance: +3 SP

Immovable: target can't be moved against their will for 1 turncycle. No action cost. **2 SP.**

Move Freely: target's movement / position not affected by Specials (unless they want it to be) for 1 turncycle. No action cost. **3 SP.** Any SP spent on *immovable* can be respent on this effect.

Juggernaut: target can't have their move action or their main action taken from them for 1 turncycle. No action cost. **1 SP.**

Knockdown Immunity: you are permanently unable to be knocked prone. **4 SP.**

Kip-Up: when knocked down, no action cost to return to standing on your turn. Automatically Duration: Permanent. **1 SP.**

Always Ready: during surprise attacks, use your full defense. **3 SP.**

Immune to Disarm: you can't be disarmed. Automatically permanent. **2 SP.**

Immune to Deshield: you can't be deshielded. Automatically permanent. **1 SP.**

Immune to Stat Alteration: you can't have your stats altered by anything except *your own* Specials, or leveling up. Automatically permanent. **4 SP.**

Immune to Mental Intrusion: social effects from the manipulation block (*insanity* to *plant memory*) don't work on you. Automatically Duration: Permanent. **4 SP.**

- Know when someone tries to use one of these effects on you, and who it was: +2 SP

Detect Mental Intrusion: user knows with certainty if a social effect from the manipulation block (*insanity* to *plant memory*) has been used on the target. **2 SP**

- Know identity of mental intruder: +2 SP

Rupture Shapechanging: target stays in their original form for one turncycle (also protects from shrinking and enlarging). If this effect used on a target whose form has been changed by someone lower level than the user, they immediately revert to their natural form. Default is Speed: Move-Equivalent, and all speed modifiers cost 25% less than their usual price. **2 SP.**

Rupture Stat Alteration: within the target area, all stat alterations that are less than Duration: Permanent are negated. **2 SP.**

Intercept Arrow: target breaks or snatches one arrow, bolt, or similar ammunition they're the target of, or that passes through their occupied square. Automatically Speed: Interrupt. **2 SP.**

- Current square *or* adjacent square: +2 SP

Divert Arrow: target redirects the trajectory of one arrow, bolt, or similar ammunition they're the target of, or that passes through their occupied square. The line of fire can be moved one stride to its left or right, and maintains its normal offense. Automatically Speed: Interrupt. **4 SP.**

- Current square *or* adjacent square: +2 SP

Intercept Bullet: target stops one bullet, photonic bolt or similar ammunition they're the target of, or that passes through their occupied square. Automatically Speed: Interrupt. **7 SP.**

- Current square *or* adjacent square: +2 SP

Divert Bullet: target redirects the trajectory of one bullet, photonic bolt, or similar ammunition they're the target of, or that passes through their occupied square – the trajectory can be redirected one stride to its left or right, and maintains its normal offense. Automatically Speed: Interrupt. **10 SP.**

- Current square *or* adjacent square: +2 SP

Divert Special: target redirects the trajectory of one Special they're the target of, or that passes through their occupied square, up to a certain offense amount – the line of fire can be moved one stride to its left or right. Automatically Speed: Interrupt. **1 SP** per 1 offense redirected.

- Current square *or* adjacent square: +2 SP

Reflect Special: target reflects offense from a Special they were the target of back to the character that targeted them, up to the offense cap of this effect; the remaining offense is taken as normal. Effect not reflected. Automatically Speed: Interrupt. Base cost: **3 SP**, +1 SP per offense reflected instead of taken.

- Mirror a Special targeting current square *or* adjacent square: +2 SP
- Mirror to another enemy in Special's listed range: +3 SP
- Store mirrored offense until a later turn, targeting any enemy within the Special's listed range (sputters out by end of fight): +4 SP
- Will mirror back any effect/s as well as the Special's offense: +5 SP

Absorb Offensive Special: when targeted by a Special that deals offense (including attack Specials), that offense instead heals you up to the limit of this effect (the remaining offense is taken as normal. Automatically Speed: Interrupt. **1 SP** per 1 offense healed.

- Current square *or* adjacent square: +3 SP

Bail Artist: give up next turn to completely dodge an attack. Must decide to use this Special *before* enemy offense is spun. Automatically Speed: Interrupt. **2 SP**

- Dodge attack *or* Special: +1 SP

Dive for Cover: trade your entire next move action to immediately (Speed: Interrupt) throw yourself prone. **2 SP**

- Also move one stride: +2 SP

Fuckwithme I: an enemy within sight takes a penalty that lasts until they attack you. No action cost. **1 SP** per -2 defense / **1 SP** per -2 offense.

Fuckwithme II: all enemies in the fight scene face a penalty until they attack you. No action cost. **1 SP** per -2 defense / **1 SP** per -2 offense.

Take One for Ya: user takes the offense that was directed towards a comrade. Automatically Speed: Interrupt. Adjacent comrades: **2 SP.**

- Any comrade in sight: +3 SP

Delay Wounds: use this effect immediately after the target takes offense to delay that offense one turncycle. Automatically Speed: Interrupt. **3 SP.**

- Two turns: +4 SP

Blood Buddies: two consenting targets split all offense taken equally between them. Automatically Duration: Combat. **2 SP.**

- Every additional blood buddy: +2 SP

Cryophilic: you handle the cold well. You A. aren't affected by the effect *freeze*, B. take half offense from any cold-based Specials (round down), C. aren't affected by cold weather, cold water, or anything less than about -80 degrees Fahrenheit, and D. can't take *thermophilic*. Automatically permanent. **5 SP.**

Thermophilic: you dig the heat. You A. aren't affected by the effect *heat*, B. take half offense from any heat-based Specials (round down), C. aren't affected by hot weather, scalding water, or anything less than about 200 degrees Fahrenheit, and D. can't take *cryophilic*. Automatically permanent. **5 SP.**

Immune to Offense Type: for one turncycle the target (and their gear) are immune to a predetermined offense type. Since every setting is different in offense type commonness, Key approval is required. Default is Speed: Move-Equivalent, and all speed modifiers cost 25% less than their usual price. Priced by commonness of offense type.

- Dominant (nearly all enemies in the setting use it): **5 SP**
- Common (about half of all enemies use it): **3 SP**
- Uncommon (a minority of all enemies use it): **2 SP**
- Rare (see it in maybe 1 out of 10 fights): **1 SP**

Resistant to Offense Type: you have a permanent resistance to a predetermined offense type. Since every setting is different in offense type commonness, Key approval is required. Every point spent on resistance to an offense type can be put towards purchasing immunity to it (above effect). Prices by commonness of offense type (examples are if our world was the setting).

- Dominant (like bullets): **3 SP** per 1 defense
- Common (like sharp trauma: knives / arrows / machetes etc): **2 SP** per 1 defense
- Rare (like electricity): **1 SP** per 1 defense
- Offense you resist with this effect is turned to healing, 1 to 1: x1.5 total SP

Defense Up: increase defense in target for 1 turncycle. Default is Speed: Move-Equivalent, and all speed modifiers cost 25% less than their usual price. **1 SP** per 1 defense.

Trade Offense for Defense: for every point you lower your offense, you increase your defense by a point. Must be in combat. Capped at 3 offense/defense per level or maximum offense you can deal in a single action (whichever lower). Lasts one turncycle exactly (so if used at the start of your turn, it lasts until the start of your next turn; if used at the end of your turn, lasts until the end of your next turn.) No action cost. **1 SP.**

Offense Up: increase offense in target for 1 turncycle. Default is Speed: Move-Equivalent, and all speed modifiers cost 25% less than their usual price. **1 SP** per 1 offense.

Move Score Up: increase target's move score. Default is Speed: Move-Equivalent, and all speed modifiers cost 25% less than their usual price. Automatically Duration: Combat. **1 SP** per stride.

- Permanently increase move score: **3 SP** per stride

Extra Move Action: give an extra move action (target can only use it on their turn). Must be used to move – no substituting Speed: Move-equivalent Specials. Automatically Speed: Interrupt. **5 SP.**

Healing Effects

Straight Heal: 1 SP per 2 points healed. Spinner option: 1 SP per quarter of spinner's maximum (so 2 SP for s8 of healing, 3 SP for s12 of healing etc). This effect can also be made into a modifier at any time.

Stagger Healing: split Special's healing so it happens equally over multiple turncycles (starts immediately). 2 turncycles: SP cost of healing is 25% less.

- 3 turncycles: 33.3% less

Transfer Wounds: user takes on any amount of the target's offense taken. 3 SP.

Lifejack: you heal the same amount of offense you put on an enemy with this effect. 3 SP per 2 offense.

- Siphon healing to self *or* any comrade in range: +3 SP

Regeneration: you automatically heal at the start of your every turn (no action cost). Automatically Duration: Permanent. 5 SP per 1 healing.

Fount: divide up this Special's total healing however you want. Using a remaining portion of healing has no action cost, and can be used in the middle of others' turns. For example, after you pay the action cost of a *fount* Special with 10 healing, you can heal a target for 5 right away (no action cost), then heal a different target for 2 (no action cost), then use that remaining 3 healing on another target (still no action cost), or even wait until after your turn and heal yourself right before an incoming attack, etc. To reiterate: A.) you only pay the action cost once, B.) using any remaining healing has Speed: Interrupt, and C.) you can use as little or as much of the Special's healing each time, until you've expended the entirety of the Special's total healing. A *fount* Special lasts until the end of the fight scene, or about five minutes outside of combat – if unused at the end of the duration, the remaining healing just goes towards the user. 1 SP per 1 point of healing.

- Healing divided into predetermined amounts (For example, 9 healing manifested as 3 blasts of 3 every time, or 8 healing divided into 4 jolts of s4 every time, etc): -25% healing cost

Cure Contagion: you fully lift any non-supernatural sickness from the target. 1 SP.

Neutralize Bioactive Substance: a poison, toxin, venom, hallucinogen, intoxicant, medicine, etc is rendered inert, even if already ingested (user can choose a specific substance if they want). Doesn't reverse the substance's past effects (like offense taken or healed etc). 3 SP.

Bring Back From Death: fully restore someone to their pre-death condition. The details of the effect – whether a ritual, conversation with Death, or venturing into an afterlife – are up to the Key. One-time use. 10 SP.

Burn Special II: sacrifice an unspent Special/s for the day. For every SP you sacrifice, add a point of healing to the healing Special you use this turn. No action cost. Unlimited uses. 1 SP.

Engine of Mending: whenever you use a Special with healing, add your smart score to how much it heals. For effects that cause recurring healing (*fount*, *stagger healing*, healing Specials with Duration: Combat, etc – but not *regeneration*) add your smart score every time healing occurs. Automatically Duration: Permanent. 3 SP.

Stat Effects

Primary Up: permanently increase a primary by 1 point. (If increasing smart, *don't* collect on the 5 bonus SP.) **7 SP.**

Merk Up: permanently increase merk. **1 SP** per +1 merk.

Knowledge Bar: permanently purchase a knowledge bar. **3 SP** each.

Offense Up: increase offense in target for 1 turncycle. Default is Speed: Move-Equivalent, and all speed modifiers cost 25% less than their usual price. **1 SP** per 1 offense.

- Permanent increase: **5 SP** per point of offense

Offense Down: decrease offense in target for 1 turncycle. Default is Speed: Move-Equivalent, and all speed modifiers cost 25% less than their usual price. **1 SP** per 1 offense.

Defense Up: increase defense in target for 1 turncycle. Default is Speed: Move-Equivalent, and all speed modifiers cost 25% less than their usual price. **1 SP** per 1 defense.

- Permanent increase: **5 SP** per point of defense

Defense Down: decrease defense in target for 1 turncycle. Default is Speed: Move-Equivalent, and all speed modifiers cost 25% less than their usual price. **1 SP** per 1 defense. (You can instead have this effect give an offense bonus of the same number to anyone attacking or using offensive Specials on the target, since the result is the same either way. Choice must be locked in before Special finalized.)

Trade Offense for Defense: for every point you lower your offense, you increase your defense by a point. Must be in combat. Capped at 3 offense/defense per level or maximum offense you can deal in a single action (whichever lower). Lasts one turncycle exactly (so if used at the start of your turn, it lasts until the start of your next turn; if used at the end of your turn, lasts until the end of your next turn.) No action cost. **1 SP.**

Trade Defense for Offense: lower your defense score, and increase your offense by the same number. Must be in actual combat: target shooting or kicking down a door won't be affected. Capped at 3 defense/offense per level. Offense bonus applies to all offense for exactly one turncycle (so both strikes if dual-wielding, counterattacks, all offensive Specials etc). Remember a negative defense score does that much extra offense to you. No action cost. **2 SP.**

Move Score Up: increase target's move score. Default is Speed: Move-Equivalent, and all speed modifiers cost 25% less than their usual price. Automatically Duration: Combat. **1 SP** per stride.

- Permanent increase: **3 SP** per stride

Move Score Down: decrease target's move score. Default is Speed: Move-Equivalent, and all speed modifiers cost 25% less than their usual price. Automatically Duration: Combat. **1 SP** per stride.

Rupture Stat Alteration: within the target area, all stat alterations that are less than Duration: Permanent are negated. **2 SP.**

Randomization: how much a stat is altered doesn't have to be a fixed number. To randomize, the SP cost is just half the spinner's highest number. Example: to increase your offense by s12 for a turncycle, the cost is 6 SP. To permanently increase your merk by s10, pay 5 SP, etc.

Movement Effects

Extra Move Action: give an extra move action (target can only use it on their turn). Must be used to move – no substituting Speed: Move-equivalent Specials. Automatically Speed: Interrupt. **5 SP.**

Move Score Up: increase target's move score. Default is Speed: Move-Equivalent, and all speed modifiers cost 25% less than their usual price. Automatically Duration: Combat. **1 SP** per stride.

- Permanently increase move score: **3 SP** per stride

Split Move: for one turn you can move, use a main action, then move again, not exceeding your total move score. No action cost. **2 SP.**

Push: target moves one stride directly away from user. **2 SP.**

- Target pushed an extra stride: +3 SP
- Push moves target in any direction (not just away from user): +2 SP
- Collision: if target is pushed into another character, they both take offense (Key decides where second enemy moves). 1 SP per point of offense
- Target also knocked prone (takes a move action to get back up) +2 SP

Switch: switch places with a comrade (remember default range is 1 stride). Automatically Speed: Interrupt. **4 SP.**

- Can target non-comrades: +4 SP
- Switch two characters: +4 SP

Convolve: you and a target move to the two centermost squares between youse (can fail in rare instances of extraheavy or secured targets). **2 SP.**

- Can choose which of the two centermost squares you land on: +2 SP

Slide: you move (slide / step / pivot / flip) one stride after a certain trigger, not more than once per turncycle. Automatically Speed: Interrupt.

- After attacking (avoids counterattacks): **3 SP**
- After enemy moves into an adjacent square: **4 SP**

Dive for Cover: trade your entire next move action to immediately (Speed: Interrupt) throw yourself prone. **2 SP.**

- Also move one stride: +2 SP

Lock: target moves zero strides next turn. Target can still reface, move the rest of their body normally, and use their move action for something else (like a Special with Speed: Move-Equivalent). **1 SP.**

- Can't reface: +3 SP
- Superlock: target is completely immobile until the end of their next turn (no defense, no actions): +7 SP

Deny X Action: target loses their next *move* action: **1 SP.**

- Target loses their next *main* action: **2 SP**
- Target loses *all* action: unable to act until the end of their next turn (no main action, move action, or Specials with no action cost): **4 SP**

Fallproof: you aren't hurt by falling anything less than 3 stories. Automatically Duration: Permanent. **1 SP.**

- Unhurt by a fall of any distance: +3 SP

Immovable: target can't be moved against their will for 1 turncycle. No action cost. **2 SP.**

Move Freely: target's movement / position not affected by Specials (unless they want it to be; can pick and choose) for 1 turncycle. No action cost. **3 SP.** Any SP spent on *immovable* can be respent on this effect.

Knockdown Immunity: you are permanently unable to be knocked prone. **4 SP.**

Knockdown: knock down an enemy (it takes an entire move action to stand back up). **1 SP.**

Kip-Up: when knocked down, no action cost to return to standing on your turn. Automatically Duration: Permanent. **1 SP.**

Ill Jumper: jump up to the full distance of your move score for one turn. **3 SP.**

- Jump the entirety of how far you move in a turn (so also covers double-moving): +3 SP

Ill Climber: climb on any surface until the start of your next turn, moving up to your total move score. Can use one hand for non-climbing shit. **3 SP.**

Ill Swimmer: swim as fast as your move score (default is half your move speed for swimming). **3 SP.**

Allsurface: walk and function on any surface like it's the ground until the start of your next turn. **5 SP.**

Grapnel-Shot: launch a rope / line / tether and have it securely attach to a surface or object (without harming it). From there you can swing, hang, yank shit towards you, and detach the grabbing end at will. Line's length is fixed once grapnel secured (upgradeable). Line can hold just over your weight. Automatically Use: Unlimited. Base range: 5 strides. **5 SP.**

- Can shoot and hold two lines simultaneously: +3 SP
- Every additional 5 strides of length: +1 SP (if you have two lines, applies to both)
- Freely retract or extend the line, reeling yourself up or down it (or reeling in / out a grabbed object) with perfect control: +5 SP
- Line can hold twice your weight: +2 SP
- Line can hold 1000 lbs (only +3 if previous sub-effect already bought): +5 SP

Glide: glide at will. If this effect is active you can't be hurt by falling. Automatically Duration: Permanent. **10 SP.**

Qing-Gong: also called wire-fu. You can jump like you have *ill jumper* (above) and glide around like you're in low gravity. Can no longer be hurt by falling. Automatically Duration: Permanent. **15 SP.** (Any SP spent on *glide* can be respent buying this effect).

Flight: starts limited: you gotta begin and end every turn on solid ground. Default flight speed is your move score. Automatically Duration: Permanent. **15 SP.** (Any SP spent on *glide* or *qing-gong* can be respent on this effect and its sub-effects).

- Unlimited flight / levitation: +10 SP
- Can fly carrying another average-sized character or equal weight: +5
- Faster flight: +3 SP per stride (permanent)

Projection: enter a trance-like state to move and sense through an intangible phantom of yourself. Projection can speak, and appears as if the user is actually there. Projection has merk 1. Projection lasts until destroyed or user ends. Nothing suffered by projection passes to user. Physical body incapacitated and unperceiving for projection's duration. **8 SP.**

- Projection invisible when unmoving: +5 SP
- Projection can manifest anywhere you've been before: +8 SP
- Projection can very slightly affect the physical world (exert 2 lbs of force): +4 SP
- Projection can use a single Special before immediately vanishing: +5 SP
- Projection can have any appearance or identity (deceives identification Specials, but can be defeated with *unscramble* in the social effects section): +3 SP

Sense Projection: within your normal range of sight / hearing you can detect any projection with certainty. **1 SP.**

Banish Projection: projection destroyed, consciousness returned to projector's body. **1 SP.**

- Create a projection-banishing zone up to about the size of a chamber (endures until used on another area): +2 SP

Pass Through X: you (and your gear) are able to move through a solid substance. You're fully intangible to that substance, so it will also pass through you. Remember default duration is one turncycle.

- Metal: **15 SP**
- Earth (stone / soil / concrete): **10 SP**
- Wood (living or dead): **5 SP**
- Glass: **5 SP**
- Textile (natural cloth or synthetic fabrics): **2 SP**
- Ice: **1 SP**

Teleport: you (and your gear) are instantly transported anywhere you can see. Default is Speed: Move-Equivalent, and all speed modifiers cost 25% less than their usual price. If you add offense to this effect, it can happen from the point you teleport to or the point you teleport from; same with added healing. **14 SP.**

- Anywhere you've been before (no sight required): +7 SP
- Transdimensional: +5 SP
- Teleport other: +7 SP
- Bring an adjacent character: +4 SP
- Teleport small group (your crew plus two; must be adjacent): +12 SP (only +8 SP if you already have the previous sub-effect)

Teleport Between X's: you (and your gear) are instantly transported from an X to another X within sight. Default is Speed: Move-Equivalent, and all speed modifiers cost 25% less than their usual price.

- Trees (living and planted in the earth): **7 SP**
- Flowers (living and planted in the earth): **6 SP**
- Radio antennae: **8 SP**
- Shadows (wide enough to fit your body): **10 SP**
- Bodies of water at least as wide as your shoulders: **6 SP**
- Bodies of water at least the size of a teacup: **11 SP** (5 SP if you have the previous sub-effect)
- Corpses (larger than a house cat): **6 SP**
- Fire (at least torch-sized): **6 SP**
- Between any currently lit forges, fireplaces, or firepits you've seen before: **11 SP** (only 5 SP if you already have the previous sub-effect)
- Mirrors at least as wide as your body: **6 SP**
- A sigil that takes a turn to inscribe (no defense that turncycle though): **10 SP**
- A complex seal that takes 10 minutes to inscribe: **5 SP**

No-Teleport Zone: create a zone up to about the size of a chamber in which teleportation is impossible (endures until used on another area): **2 SP.**

- Create a zone up to about the size of a chamber in which teleportation and portal formation are impossible (endures until used on another area): +2 SP

Portal: two portals manifest anywhere within sight. Portals last until user decides to close them or create a new pair. Default is Speed: Move-Equivalent, and all speed modifiers cost 25% less than their usual price. Fist-sized: **10 SP.**

- Person-sized: +8 SP
- Portal can lead anywhere you've been before: +10 SP
- Transdimensional: +5 SP

Microkinesis: you have a permanent (but minor) telekinetic field around you, active only within arm's reach. You can levitate small objects, move them around nimbly, but not with enough force to damage anything. **3 SP.**

Telekinesis: you permanently have the ability to move small objects (within sight) around without touching them: **12 SP** (only 9 SP if you already have *microkinesis*)

- Megakinesis: human-sized items and human-sized characters (of a lower level). Can't cause more than 3 + your level's worth of offense per turn: +10 SP

Xkinesis: you permanently have the ability to move a specific substance without touching it. Can't cause more than 3 + your level's worth of offense per turn.

- Wood: **12 SP** • Gold: **5 SP** • Any metal: **30 SP** • Fire: **13 SP** • Glass: **5 SP** • Paper: **4 SP**

Impediment: a square within range takes two strides to pass through. Automatically Duration: Combat. **1 SP.**

Bulwark: conjure an unmoving force / shield about one square stride (big enough for cover, but too small to fully obstruct most doorways). The bulwark has 10 merk for every **1 SP** spent on it. Size can be increased at higher SP prices, and merk is spread evenly (example: if you put 4 SP into this effect, you could conjure A. a wall that's 1 square with 40 merk, B. a wall that's 4 squares with 10 merk each, or C. a wall that's 2 squares with 20 merk each). Bulwark must be planted on the ground (can't be knocked over). Speed: Interrupt cost is x5 instead of usual x2.

- Bulwark can be suspended in the air: +4 SP
- All offense from the attack or Special that merks the bulwark is completely absorbed (remaining offense does not pass to any target behind): +2 SP

Increase Gravity: up to triple gravity in one square. Moving through a square with doubled gravity takes the equivalent of 2 strides moved; through tripled, the equivalent of 3 strides. **2 SP** per stride.

Decrease Gravity: as low as quarter gravity in one square. **2 SP** per stride.

Call Wind: a large area surrounding the user is subject to a wind that blows in a fixed direction. Any character moving with the wind gets a one stride bonus to movement, and any against takes a one stride penalty. Firing launcher weapons any direction but with the wind causes half offense. The wind will also speed along flying and sailing vessels, power wind turbines, blow away gas, fog, clouds, swarms, real light objects etc. Automatically Duration: Combat. **5 SP.**

Solidify Air: you create an unmovable solid shape that defies gravity and can bear about 1000 lbs for every level the user has. This shape can take any form (a plate, ring, bar etc), and can only be destroyed by passing its weight limit, the user ending it, merking the user, or using *rupture*. The shape of the solidified air is visible, and can have any (predetermined) aesthetic. Default duration is about five minutes (Duration: Combat). Priced by size limit. Max size about average human hand: **5 SP.**

- Max size about an average human body: +7 SP
- Max size about a chamber: +8 SP

Ambiguously outlined effects (“the size of a chamber”, “Key’s call” etc) keep the game moving and gloss over uninteresting details. Remember that stopping gameflow to get into glasses-adjusting mmm-well-did-you-calculate-the-radius type discussion is not fucking fun.

Social Effects

Walkie-Talkie: create a 2-way telepathic link with any one consenting character. Lasts until you create a new one, or one of you ends it. Target must be in sight at use, but once link established it has no range limit. Unlimited uses. Automatically Speed: Interrupt. **5 SP.**

- Target doesn't have to be in sight (but you must know them personally): +2 SP
- Additional characters: +1 each
- Transcends language barriers: +10 SP

Missive: you send a short, spoken message to anyone you know. Automatically Speed: Interrupt. **1 SP.**

- Private telepathic message only the intended recipient will perceive: +1 SP
- Visual element addable: +1 SP
- Anyone at all: +2 SP

Trace missive: know location of sender (at time of missive being sent). **1 SP.**

- Know identity of sender: +1 SP

Imitate Voice: replicate any voice you've heard at least a dozen words from; doesn't include vocabulary, personality, or other non-sonic characteristics. No limit to use. **3 SP.**

Instantly Learn Language: you are immediately and permanently fluent (two bars) in a language of your choice. One-time use. **6 SP.**

Speak any Language: for about 2 minutes you can fluently speak any language. **5 SP.**

Talk With Non-Human Animal: effect lasts as long as the conversation. **2 SP.**

Talk With Corpse: target not guaranteed to be cooperative though. **3 SP.**

Talk With Ghost: chop it up with someone who's passed on, no body required. If long dead, a valued possession of the deceased or presence in a place they'd most likely haunt may be required. **5 SP** (only 2 SP if upgrading *talk with corpse*).

Talk With Statue: 1 SP.

Talk With Gemstone: 2 SP.

Talk With Building: 5 SP.

Talk With Tree: 3 SP.

Talk With Body of Water: 3 SP.

Talk With Cloud: 5 SP.

Unbreakable Oath: the oath taker will know that they'll be physically unable to break the oath they are about to make. One-time use, at least some ritual required. **1 SP.**

Detect Lie: know when a specific statement made within earshot was deliberately misleading. Can detect something said a few seconds in the past. Automatically Speed: Interrupt. **4 SP.**

Detect Malevolence: ping the nearby area for anyone that means you harm. **3 SP.**

- Know exact location of character/s that mean you harm: +2 SP

Tracking: plant an intangible tracker. Exists until ruptured or user creates another tracker. Tracker can only be sensed with *true viewing*, *detect Special*, and the next effect. **3 SP.**

Detect Tracking: ping the nearby area for the above effect. **1 SP.**

Move Tracker: discreetly relocate a supernatural tracker. **1 SP.**

Good-Looking: you probably get hit on a lot (for better or worse), and tend to get your way a little more than the average person. **3 SP.**

Ugly: not even close to traditionally good-looking, but somebody's thing no doubt. Good luck out there. **-3 SP** (that's 3 extra SP to spend on any other Special, since you actually had to work hard and develop a personality – good on you).

Phobia: you have an irrational and overwhelming aversion to something. Requires Key approval. **-1 SP to -5 SP** depending on commonness: a -1 would be something like doctors, a -3 something like dogs, and a -5 something like bodies of water.

Minor Celebrity: you're a big deal in a small community: the neighborhood you came up in, or maybe a small scene not a lot of people follow (like a world-famous powerviolence musician, a legendary graf artist, a national handball champion, a local folk hero or righteous gangster etc). **4 SP.**

Insanity: make a side character with a lower smart score temporarily insane. Key decides nature and duration of insanity. Smarter characters will still experience minor symptoms. **4 SP.**

Notion: you give a side character with a lower smart score a vague desire or inclination. **5 SP.**

Sympatico: make the target more friendly towards you than they currently are. The less intelligent the target the more they'll be influenced (this includes non-humans). Key decides duration (usually longer the less intelligent they are). **5 SP.**

No Sympatico: make the target less friendly towards another side character. The less intelligent the target, the more they'll be influenced (this includes non-humans). Key decides duration (usually longer the less intelligent they are). **5 SP.**

Wimp'd: seriously dial down the courage and mental fortitude of the target. Less intelligent targets almost always run in fear, but ultimate level of effect and duration is Key's call. **5 SP.**

No Filter: make the target obviously blunt, just saying whatever comes to mind. Key decides duration (the lower their smart score the longer it lasts). **3 SP.**

Read Mind: momentarily observe surface thoughts of target: **3 SP.**

- Ascertain specific memory or knowledge (target will be aware of this sub-effect being used on them): +12 SP

Plant Memory: create or alter one memory in a target with a lower smart score. **10 SP.**

Immune to Mental Intrusion: the previous 14 effects (*insanity to plant memory*) don't work on you. Automatically Duration: Permanent. **4 SP.**

- Know when someone tries to use one of these effects on you, and who it was: +2 SP

Detect Mental Intrusion: user knows with certainty if an effect from the previous block (*insanity to plant memory*) has been used on the target. **2 SP.**

- Know identity of mental intruder: +2 SP

Read Character: know if a character within sight is higher or lower level than you, and get a vague idea of their stats. No action cost. **1 SP.**

Identify Object: gain detailed knowledge of an item within eyesight: Key Narrator must describe the make-up, function, and *some* recent history of the object. **5 SP.**

Identify Character: gain some knowledge of a character within eyesight: Key Narrator must tell you their name and a short description of what their life is like. **5 SP.**

Scramble Identity: give target a bullshit identity that will be fed to anyone trying to identify the target through supernatural means. Unlimited uses. **1 SP.**

Unscramble: you are permanently able to detect scrambling. Key must offer you some type of puzzle to decode that represent the scramble (includes *projection* and *inhabit corpse* sub-effects). When puzzle defeated, Key must reveal the information hidden on the other side of the scrambling. **2 SP.**

Sense Effects

Photographic Memory: perfectly recall any image or sight you've witnessed. Automatically
Duration: Permanent. **4 SP.**

Phonographic Memory: perfectly recall any sound. Automatically Duration: Permanent. **3 SP.**

Distance Vision: see about as far as a falcon (automatically permanent). **3 SP.**

Heat Vision: see heat signatures for one turncycle. **3 SP.**

X-Ray Vision: selectively see through matter for one turncycle. **3 SP.**

Night Vision: automatically Duration: Permanent. **3 SP.**

Echolocation: Like a bat. You have an understanding of the surrounding area as if you had gone around feeling out and knocking on every inch of it. Always active **10 SP.**

Acute Hearing: your sense of hearing is (permanently) as keen as the average cat's. **4 SP.**

Scent: your sense of smell is (permanently) as powerful as the average dog's. **8 SP.**

Remote Viewing: move your visual vantage point anywhere your actual physical eyes can see. Target can be an area or character. Once vantage point is set, it can rotate but is otherwise locked onto target (to be clear, will follow mobile targets around). Can be sensed with *true viewing*, *detect Special*, etc. No action cost, default duration is about five minutes (Duration: Combat). **3 SP.**

- Anywhere you've been before: +5 SP

- Vantage not fixed; can move around at user's base move speed: +7

Remote Hearing: move your sonic vantage point anywhere you can currently see. Target can be an area or character. Vantage locked on once used (to be clear, will follow mobile targets around). Can be sensed with *true viewing*, *detect Special*, etc. No action cost, default duration is about five minutes (Duration: Combat). **2 SP.**

- Anywhere you've been before: +3 SP

- Vantage not fixed; can move around at user's base move speed: +2

CCTV: create a fixed vantage point (both visual and sonic) you can check at any time, and will remain until you create another one. Can be sensed with *true viewing*, *detect Special* etc. **3 SP.**

Unsurveillable: create a zone up to about the size of a chamber that nobody can remotely observe through the previous 3 effects. Endures until used on another area. **3 SP.**

Blind: take away a character's sight for a turncycle. If used during a fight scene, they either attack random squares, run off, or attack the source of any telling sound. **3 SP.**

Deafen: take away a character's hearing for a turncycle. **1 SP.**

True Viewing: for one turncycle you're immune to visual illusions, invisibility, blinding, and can see supernaturally concealed phenomena. **5 SP.**

True Hearing: for one turncycle you're immune to sonic illusions and deafening. **2 SP.**

Anti-Illusion Zone: create a zone up to about the size of a chamber where illusions don't work properly, ideally malfunctioning hilariously. Endures until used on another area. **10 SP.**

Detect Lifeforms: get an idea of all nearby biological life. **2 SP.**

Alarm: create an intangible tripwire that can range from the width of a single stride to the perimeter of a chamber-sized area. Alarm signal can be visual or sonic, ranging from a loud-ass cacophony to a soft chime private to the user's mind. If offense is added to this effect it will be triggered when the alarm is tripped, and only applies to the square that was breached. The alarm itself can be sensed with *true viewing*, *detect Special*, and the next effect. Lasts until tripped, user negates, or user creates a new alarm. **3 SP.**

Detect Alarm: automatically Duration: Permanent. **1 SP.**

Juke Alarm: discreetly relocate, pass by, or otherwise alter a supernatural alarm. **2 SP.**

Illusion Effects

→ Illusions last about 5 minutes, and start with a range of 5 strides (can be upgraded from there). Size / area are limited by complexity and the Key's good judgment.

Minor Illusion: versatile but weak. Create soft music, a spring breeze, a pleasant fragrance, hot garbage reek, a fake wound, a single minor facial feature alteration, confetti bursting around a banner that reads "this is a trap", etc. Unlimited uses, but only one illusion at a time. **10 SP.**

Create Sound: any iteration of a sound the user has heard. Can accurately recreate a voice, even holding an entire conversation (must have heard voice of original speaker). **5 SP.**

Create Visage: any sight the user can imagine. Does not generate sound or other sensory. The larger and more animated the visage the more difficult it is to pull off. For example, if the user tries to maintain an elaborate disguise while concentrating on a task, or project a whole brigade of charging cavalry, there may be glitchy inconsistencies viewers can spot. **8 SP.**

Major Illusion: combines various complex sensory input. You can create an illusory chest of silver that is heavy and clinks and shimmers and is cool to the touch, conjure a well-spoken customs officer that smells faintly of temple incense and has a firm handshake, project a sturdy-looking rope bridge over the perilous gorge etc. As always, the more complex the illusion the more difficult it is to maintain. **13 SP** (any SP already spent on *create sound* or *create visage* can be respent buying this effect).

Gotchacopies: a full illusion of the target appears next to them, indecipherable from the target. In the instant this Special is used, the target may choose to switch places with their gotchacopy for free. The gotchacopy simultaneously imitates whatever their original is doing, only slightly differently (sometimes bizarrely), and stays in an adjacent square. A gotchacopy will go up in smoke when struck, and won't stop (or even slow) projectiles or spinning attacks. To be clear, gotchacopies are intangible, have 0 offense, and can't affect the world. **3 SP** per gotchacopy.

Counterillusion: alter someone else's illusion in a small way. To be clear, this effect works on any other illusion effect. Automatically Speed: Interrupt. The character that initially conjured the illusion maintains ultimate control and is free to disappear your counterillusion as soon as they notice. **1 SP.**

Countercounterillusion: instant and undefendable offense towards any character trying to counterillusion any of your illusions. **1 SP** per 3 offense.

- Know location of counterillusionist +2 SP

Anti-Illusion Zone: create a zone up to about the size of a chamber where illusions don't work properly, ideally malfunctioning hilariously. Endures until used on another area. **10 SP.**

Invisibility: other characters can still hear the target, smell them, see how they affect the environment, see shit thrown on top of them etc. Slightly visible when moving. Target's equipment also invisible, but not anything they hold or equip *after* becoming invisible. **10 SP.**

- Invisible even when moving (+3 to offense and defense): +15 SP

Melt Into Shadows: you get a bonus to stealth whenever you're in shadow. Automatically Duration: Permanent. **1 SP** per +1 to stealth.

Cloak of Verdancy: you get a bonus to stealth whenever you're in a tree, a bush, tall grass, seaweed, or other foliage. Automatically Duration: Permanent. **1 SP** per +1 to stealth.

Cloak of Mist: you get a bonus to stealth whenever you're in the mist, fog, or clouds. Automatically Duration: Permanent. **1 SP** per +3 to stealth.

Cloak of Tides: you get a bonus to stealth whenever submerged (3/4 or more) in water. Automatically Duration: Permanent. **1 SP** per +3 to stealth.

Chameleon Skin: at will, your skin changes color to blend into your surroundings. You can also freely change it to whatever color / pattern you feel. Automatically Duration: Permanent. +3 to stealth when active. **7 SP.**

Silence: all noise in target area is completely suppressed. Area can be fixed on a character or location (remember the default area for a Special is 1 square). **3 SP.**

Death Effects

Animate Corpse: turn a dead character into the undead and put them immediately under your control. Animated corpses use their pre-death stats, minus Specials. Higher intelligence, memories, speech, and the coordination required to make ranged attacks are lost. Offense taken restored to zero. Once destroyed as undead, they can't be reanimated. Corpse must be reasonably whole: if immolated, disintegrated, vaporized, absolutely butchered etc, they are unanimatable. **15 SP.**

Blood Animate: for every 1 offense you put on yourself, animate 4 merk's worth of corpses. No matter how many corpses are animated, it's done all in the same action. Corpse must be reasonably whole (see *animate corpse* above). **3 SP.**

- Don't need to max out corpse's merk to animate it (but they start with offense taken): +5 SP

Make Corpse Un-Animatable: automatically Use: Unlimited. Won't un-animate any corpses that are already animated. **2 SP.**

Steal Control of Undead: **1 SP** per 5 merk's worth of jacked undead.

Blood Mending: if you have wounded undead under your control, transfer any amount of offense they've taken to yourself. **2 SP.**

Necrotic Energy Blast: heals the undead, wounds the living. **5 SP** per 4 healing / offense.

- Spin-based option: **5 SP** per s8 healing / offense

Necrotic Energy Well: any enemy you kill immediately begins to radiate necrotic energy (heals the undead, wounds the living) in a one-stride radius. Offense / healing occurs as soon as a character enters that radius, and again at the beginning of their every turn for as long as they remain. Automatically Duration: Combat. **1 SP** per 2 offense.

Rattle Undead: any undead in the Special's area that are below the user's level are now permanently afraid of the user (will run from them). **1 SP.**

- Larger radius: +1 SP per stride

Anti-Undead Zone: create an area that undead cannot enter. Maximum area is about 100 x 100 strides, lasts one day. **3 SP.**

- Larger area: +1 SP per additional 100 x 100 strides

Anti-Living Zone: create an area up to the size of a chamber that the living cannot enter. Default duration is about five minutes (Duration: Combat). **3SP.**

Bring Back From Death: fully restore someone to their pre-death condition. The details of the effect – whether a ritual, conversation with Death, or venturing into an afterlife – are up to the Key. One-time use. **10 SP.**

Death: you have a chance of instantly killing the target, regardless of level or power (below Special is sole exception). **1 SP** per 2%.

Stash Lifeorce: user permanently transfers their merk to an object. As this object takes offense the user is wounded. *The user can't otherwise take offense.* The user will still age and even rot as normal, even if they can't die. One-time use. Usage time automatically at least an hour. **30 SP.**

- Every additional object: +10 SP. (Can be done any time after the initial transposition, but both the original and new object must be present)

Halt Aging: can be resumed at user's will. If undead, prevents decay. One-time use. Usage time automatically at least half an hour. **5 SP.**

Prevent Decay: preserve a corpse, severed body part, dead plant etc. **1 SP.**

Instant Decay: bring a corpse, severed body part, dead plant etc to its final stage of putrefaction in a matter of seconds. **1 SP.**

Reverse Decay: instantly restore a corpse, severed body part, dead plant etc to pre-putrefaction. Must have majority of target (even if only dust or bones) **3 SP.**

Kill Plants: end the life of all plants in a square. **1 SP.**

Revive Plants: restore the life of all plants in a square. **1 SP.**

Talk With Corpse: target not guaranteed to be cooperative though. **3 SP.**

Talk With Ghost: chop it up with someone who's passed on, no body required. If long dead, a valued possession of the deceased or presence in a place they'd most likely haunt may be required. **5 SP** (only 2 SP if upgrading *talk with corpse*).

Know Mortality Status: detect if anyone you know (or have learned a lot about) is alive or dead, over any distance. **2 SP.**

Fake Death: appear dead to anyone that doesn't have medical expertise, or a Special with an effect like *true viewing* or *true hearing*. User has limited perception and can't act, but can also stop the effect at will. **1 SP** per knowledge bar of medicine you can deceive.

Inhabit Corpse: temporarily transpose your consciousness to a corpse, which you can act and perceive through. Corpse retains full mobility and all pre-death stats, minus Specials, higher intelligence, and the fine motor skills required to make ranged attacks. Consciousness will return to user once corpse is destroyed or user abandons it. Corpse must be larger than a songbird. No limits on corpse's range. **6 SP.**

- Use one Special through the corpse: any backlash, identification, or tracing of the Special will apply only to the inhabited corpse: +5 SP

→ Undead (or any other entity) under a character's control act immediately after that character's turn.

Alteration Effects

Repair: restore a simple object (a pipe, a guitar, a wheel, a hull etc) to functionality. **3 SP.**

- Or a complex object (a car, a house, a computer etc): +4 SP

Heat: cause inanimate matter to become too hot to touch safely. Can target a single item or a square of ground. A heated object causes offense to anyone touching it at the beginning of user's next turn. If Duration modifier is bought, that offense is taken again every turn cycle contact is maintained. Weapons and other implements can be dropped or thrown freely, but armor takes an entire turn to remove. **1 SP** per 1 heat offense.

- A target taking heat offense from this effect has that offense *repeated* for every heat and fire-based Special they're targeted with that turn cycle (does not include this effect): +3 SP

Freeze: cause inanimate matter to become too cold to touch safely. Can target a single item or a square of ground. A freezing object causes offense to anyone touching it at the beginning of user's next turn. If Duration modifier is bought, that offense is taken again every turn cycle contact is maintained. Weapons and other implements can be dropped or thrown freely, but armor takes an entire turn to remove. **1 SP** per 1 freezing offense.

- A target taking freezing offense from this effect has that offense *repeated* for every cold-based Special they're targeted with that turn cycle (does not include this effect): +3 SP

Slick: you make a surface slippery and difficult to grip. If flat, that surface can be an entire square: if not (especially if moving) that surface is smaller. **2 SP.**

Stick: you make a surface highly adhesive and gluey. If flat, that surface can be an entire square: if not (especially if moving) that surface is smaller. **2 SP.**

Bind: attach two non-living surfaces that are currently touching. Bond unbreakable as long as Special lasts, but bonded objects maintain their durability as normal. **2 SP.**

- Includes living surfaces: +4 SP

Increase or Decrease Item Weight: by as much as 1000%. **5 SP.**

Shrink Object: limit is 10% its original size. Whether weight or durability is maintained is subject to situational factors / the Key's call. No characters or animated objects. **5 SP.**

Enlarge Object: limit is 1000% its original size. Whether weight or durability is maintained is subject to situational factors / the Key's call. No characters or animated objects. **5 SP.**

Lengthen / Shorten: you cause an object no thicker than 6" to extend its length up to 50 strides, or shorten its length to 1 millimeter (slightly thinner than a dime). Only length can be modified, no other dimensions. Maintains relative strength and flexibility of original object. Some extended objects can be used as a staff (offense: s4 + strong or fast / block 2 / range 2 / 2-handed), brace, battering ram, pole vault, straight up elevator etc. Each use of this effect purchased allows both one lengthen *and* one shorten per day. **14 SP.**

Decontaminate: obliterate anything harmful in food or water. **1 SP.**

Seal: you lock a door, window, box, bottle, folder etc. Seal lasts until user negates, seal forced, or Special used again. Strength of seal based on SP spent . . .

- Simple seal (can be forced with a small tool or strong 2 etc): 2 SP
- Heavy seal (can be forced with a large tool or strong 4 etc): 3 SP
- Advanced seal (can be forced with demolition tools or strong 6 etc): 4 SP
- Conditional seal: seal will only open for certain people, for certain passphrases, with certain items present etc. Can also display messages or simple images. +2 SP
- Snitchseal: telepathically see person that fucks with your seal. No range limit. +1 SP

Unseal: unlocks doors, cars, lockers etc instantly and silently. Will defeat any *seal* effect that has a lower SP value. Unlocking power is based on SP spent . . .

- Defeat simple locks (that would otherwise take 2 strong or a small tool to defeat): 3 SP
- Defeat heavy locks (that would otherwise take 4 strong or a large tool to defeat): 4 SP
- Defeats advanced locks (that would otherwise take 6 strong or demolition tools): 5 SP

Shrink Character: shrink yourself as small as 10% your original size, but also have a correlating % of your merk and strong. Lasts until you negate. **4 SP.**

- Allied character (they choose when effect is negated): +2 SP
- Non-allied (lower level) character. +2 SP
- Shrink self or allied character as small as a mote of dust: +2 SP

Enlarge Character: enlarge yourself up to three times your original size. Your fast score is reduced to 0 and respend between your strong score and hard score however you feel. Default is Duration: Combat, or about five minutes outside of combat. **8 SP.**

- Unlimited uses per day (can only target self): +12 SP
- Every extra point of strong or hard (fixed): +3 SP
- Can target other characters (they choose how to respend their fast score): +6 SP

Breathe Underwater: breathe underwater for about 1 hour. **2 SP.**

- Permanent: +2 SP

Eliminate Biological Need: automatically Duration: Permanent. Your body functions as normal without any of the following (can have more than one in the same Special) . . .

- Food: **2 SP**
- Water: **2 SP**
- Sleep: **5 SP**
- Air: **6 SP**

Non-Living: you're a cyborg, undead, automata etc. You don't need to breathe, eat, drink or sleep, and are immune to disease. **15 SP.**

→ Trade-offs: these give you back some SP. (Can later be bought back for same SP value.)

- Powered by the sun (24 hours with no sun = merked until returned to sunlight): -4 SP
- Merked when submerged in water: -4 SP
- Minor offense from direct sunlight (1 undefendable offense per minute): -3 SP
- Major offense from direct sunlight (1 undefendable offense per turncycle): -5 SP
- Hated (hunted?) by particular groups: -5 SP
- Take massive offense from a rare material: -5 SP
- Struggle to understand the living, their emotions, incentives, etc: -3 SP
- Still need to sleep, recharge, trance or otherwise be unconscious for 8 hours a night: -5 SP

Immune to Disease: automatically Duration: Permanent. **2 SP.**

Halt Aging: can be resumed at user's will. If undead, prevents decay. One-time use. Usage time automatically at least half an hour. **5 SP.**

Prehensile Extension: a tail, tendril, floating hand, trunk, tentacle, mid-wing fingers like a bat's, a ridiculous tongue like an anteater's, or whatever. Can hold and manipulate light objects, but can't attack or wield shields. Automatically Duration: Permanent. **5 SP** per prehensile extension.

- Every additional stride you can stretch your extensions: +3 SP

Body Elasticity: your body is supernaturally stretchy. Your limbs reach an extra stride, but you can't effectively attack with weapons while stretching them (upgrade listed below). This effect doesn't add any inherent defense, offense, or otherwise alter any stats. Weight never altered by this effect. **7 SP.**

- Every additional stride you can stretch your limbs: +4 SP
- Can squeeze your body through a space the size of your skull: +4 SP
- Can attack with weapons while stretching (limited to one stride of reach): +8 SP

Transpose Consciousness: permanently transfer your mind from your current body to another vessel: undead, an animated suit of armor or statue or other automaton, another animal or a supernatural creature, some kind of Frankenstein's monster you put together etc. New form maintains user's level, but respends all primary points and SP. As always, benefits have to be paid for (no free defense bonus for starting as a statue). One-time use. Usage time automatically at least a day. **15 SP.**

The remaining alteration effects are automatically Duration: Combat unless the user cuts them short. If the effect turns a character into another form A. their equipment gets morphed along with them, and B. they can't get bigger than twice their normal size, or smaller than a tenth their normal size.

Morph: shift between your normal form and a secondary form. Half your SP and all your primary points are respent in your secondary form, but once spent they're locked in place. User can permanently transfer SP from their normal form to their secondary form. Neither form can access the other's Specials. Form benefits still gotta be paid for: your second form can have wings, but you still have to buy flight to actually fly; you can have rhino skin but you still have to buy the extra defense. Secondary form starts with merk 10, move 5, and an s2 unarmed attack (like any other character). Secondary form can't equip weapons, instruments, shields or armor (upgrade listed below). Unlimited uses, but can only morph once per turncycle. **10 SP.**

- Secondary form can equip weapons, instruments, shields and armor: +15 SP
- Morph at Speed: Move-Equivalent: +5
- Morph at Speed: Immediate: +10 SP

Omnimorph: you can take any form, but your stats are limited. You get 1 level's worth of SP and primary points to spend when you shift into a new form. Can't access normal form's Specials from omnimorphed forms. Unlimited uses, but can only omnimorph once per turncycle. **30 SP.**

- Additional levels of SP and primary points: +15 SP each
- Omnimorph at Speed: Move-Equivalent: +5 SP
- Omnimorph at Speed: Immediate: +10 SP

Shapeshift: turn into any entity you can imagine. Can respent all of your SP and primary points every time you shift. Can't access normal form's Specials when shapeshifted. Can't use weapons, instruments, shields or armor. Main action to shapeshift. Use: Unlimited. **80 SP** (any SP spent on *omnimorph* can be respent buying this effect).

- Shapeshift at Speed: Move-Equivalent: +15 SP

Turn Into Liquid: about the same volume of liquid as your body. Can't access any of your Specials while in this form, and can still take offense as normal. Speed is the same as your normal form. **7 SP.**

Turn Into Smoke: or similar semi-gaseous state (mist, fog, cloud etc). Can't access any of your Specials while in this form, and can still take energy offense (immune to physical offense). Flying speed is your normal move score. **18 SP.**

- Faster movement: +2 SP per stride

Body Permutation: alter your body – change bone shape or muscle size, change your hair color or facial structure etc. A body permutation can also cause one bonus or penalty to a stat: alter offense (up to 2 points), alter defense (up to 2 points), alter move score (up to 3 strides), cause offense or healing (up to 2 points per turncycle). Can only cause one permutation per use of this effect, but remember the default duration of all effects in this section is Duration: Combat. **15 SP.**

- Double any of the above stat ranges: +15
- Can target other characters: +10

Rupture Shapechanging: target stays in their normal form. If this effect used on a target whose form has already been changed (by someone lower level than the user), the target immediately reverts to their natural form. To be clear, this effect also ruptures shrinking, enlarging, and body permutations. Default is Speed: Move-Equivalent, and all speed modifiers cost 25% less than their usual price. **5 SP.**

Entity Into Entity: turn a living being into a predetermined form (flamingo, hyena, animated football with arms and legs, etc). If hostile, target must be lower level. Merk and strength decreased to size % of original form. Stats can't be increased by this effect. User can end at will. **10 SP.**

- Alternative forms: +3 SP each

Entity Into Object: turn into a single predetermined type of mundane object. Fully maintain perception. Zero defense and can't take actions. Merk unchanged despite substance of form. User can end at will. **4 SP.**

- Very limited movement (half move score): +2 SP
- Can target other characters (must be lower level if hostile): +6 SP
- Alternative mundane forms: +2

Object Into Entity: must maintain relative size. Can be any entity from existing setting. Target can't be larger than user. Key entirely controls (effects like *sympatico* can still be used). Can't use weapons, instruments, shields or armor. Each time this effect used, spin s4: if you land a 4 the transformation is permanent. **6 SP.**

Object Into Object: transform a non-supernatural object. Transformed object keeps same materials, and volume can't be increased. Can be used to replicate a model object with a similar object, but the model object must be present for user to observe. Can't form anything complex like electronics or machinery. Target can't be larger than user. User can choose to make transformation permanent at no extra cost. **6 SP.**

Animate Object: target object sprouts arms and legs (if it doesn't already have them) and starts moving around. Key controls and determines personality (effects like *sympatico* can still be used). Target can't be larger than user. Move score 5, offense can't be higher than user's level. Can't use weapons, instruments, shields or armor. **3 SP.**

Command Cordage: animate a length of rope, whip, or cable. It can't levitate, but can slither around, wrap itself securely around objects, swing, loop, go stiff as a wooden pole, coil up etc. The animated cordage can also act independently, lashing an enemy (s4 + user's smart per turn), or grappling an enemy (straight s10). Acts on user's turn. Range limited to user's sight. Max cordage length 3 strides: **15 SP.**

- Or chain (s8 + smart offense, also add user's smart to grapple spin): +15 SP
- Max length 10 strides (can grapple two enemies at a time): +10 SP

Recruit Statue: animate a statue from the surrounding scenery to fuck up your enemies or just do chores. Can help with general labor or engage in combat as directed. Default merk is 10 x user's level, default offense is s8 + user's smart per turn, but stats will vary by statue. **3 SP.**

Recruit Tree: animate a tree from the surrounding scenery. Large deciduous trees can attack enemies (s6 + user's smart per turn). Vines and willows can grapple enemies (s10 + user's smart). Default merk is 100 x user's level. **7 SP.**

Grabby Plants: plant life within the fight scene grabs at your enemies. Weak plants like shrubs and ivy will only halve movement (costs two strides to move through their square). Strong plants like vines and surface roots will grapple adjacent enemies (s10 + user's smart). **7 SP.**

Solidify Air: you create an unmovable solid shape that defies gravity and can bear about 1000 lbs for every level the user has. This shape can take any form (a plate, ring, bar etc), and can only be destroyed by passing its weight limit, the user ending it, merking the user, or using *rupture*. The shape of the solidified air is visible, and can have any (predetermined) aesthetic. Default duration is about five minutes (Duration: Combat). Priced by size limit. Max size about average human hand: **5 SP**

- Max size about an average human body: +7 SP
- Max size about a chamber: +8 SP

Generation Effects

Companion: an entity permanently becomes your loyal companion. Starts with move 5 and merk 10. You choose their narrative origin and aesthetic, but practical benefits gotta be paid for (they can have armored skin, but you have to buy any defense bonuses; they can have wings, but you have to buy *flight* etc). You can permanently give them SP from your own pool (1 SP to 1 SP), but they can't take any of the effects on this page. Can't use weapons, instruments, shields or armor (upgrade listed below though). Merked usually just means KO'd, but they're not unkillable like a main character. If a companion dies or is otherwise no longer played, their SP total beyond the base price is returned to the main character. Base companion price: **5 SP**.

- Can use a language or otherwise communicate complex ideas: +12 SP
- Can make an unarmed attack each turn (starts at s2): +5 SP
- Can use weapons, instruments, shields and armor.: +15 SP

Call Entity: summon a fixed, predetermined entity that obeys your commands. Can freely communicate in any one of user's known languages. Starts with move 5, merk 10, and an s2 unarmed attack. Can't use weapons, instruments, shields or armor. User decides aesthetic, but practical benefits gotta be paid for (they can have armored skin, but you have to buy any defense bonuses; they can have wings, but you have to buy *flight* etc). You can permanently give them SP from your own pool (1 SP to 1 SP), but they can't take any of the effects on this page. If merked, called entity disappears in a cinematic flash (will return as normal when next summoned). Default is Duration: Combat (or about five minutes outside of combat). **10 SP**.

- Can summon aesthetically similar entity, but with respent stats each summon: +15 SP
- Can summon and unsummon entity at will: x2 total SP

Ride: conjure a fixed, predetermined entity to give you a lift. Can carry cargo equal to a large human. Starts with twice the user's move score, half the user's merk, and can't attack. User decides aesthetic, but practical benefits gotta be paid for (they can have armored skin, but you have to buy any defense bonuses; they can have wings, but you have to buy the flight sub-effect below etc). You can permanently give them SP from your own pool (1 SP to 1 SP), but they can't take any of the effects on this page. If merked, summoned entity disappears in a cinematic flash (will return as normal when next summoned). Hangs around until unconjured, merked, purged, or moved more than a few strides from user. **5 SP**.

- Base move score four times user's: +5 SP
- Can climb any surface: +10 SP
- Can swim as fast as move score (default is half): +5 SP
- Jump distance of 5 strides: +3 SP
- Glide: +5 SP
- Unlimited flight: +20 SP
- Ride massive enough to carry whole squad plus two: +5 SP
- Ride can bring several similar rides (enough for the whole crew): +10

Helper: conjure a fixed, predetermined entity to help with menial shit. User instructs, Key controls. User decides aesthetic, but can be no bigger than a small human (like a stone golem you raise from the earth), or two small forms (like a pair of spider monkeys in Mets jerseys that reek of ditch weed), or a mess of real small forms (like a crew of tiny ghosts represented by a chief foreghost). Starts with half the user's merk, move 5, and can't attack. Practical benefits gotta be paid for (they can have armored skin, but you have to buy any defense bonuses; they can have wings, but you have to buy *flight* etc). You can permanently give them SP from your own pool (1 SP to 1 SP), but they can't take any of the effects on this page. If merked, helper just pops like a soap bubble (will return as normal when next summoned). If the aesthetic is multiple helpers they each have half the user's merk, but all disappear as soon as one is merked. Helper hangs around until unconjured, merked, purged, bored, or moved out of user's sight. **5 SP**.

Quick reminder: **the default number of uses for a Special is once per day.**
For upgrades, check out the modifiers page (right before this section).

Supernatural Weapon: at will, materialize a weapon from thin air. Can be a classical weapon, instrument, shield, or launcher (like bows and shit, not firearms). Weapon can have any aesthetic, even being formed of destructive energy (like a blade that's a captured lightning bolt). Can have its own Specials (critical hits etc). To be clear, the same weapon is summoned with each use of this effect. User can unconjure at will. Speed: Immediate, unlimited uses. **7 SP**.

- Can simultaneously conjure a second weapon to dual-wield: +3 SP
- Conjure supernatural weapon at Speed: Interrupt: +3 SP
- Unlimited ammo. Ammo simply appears when firing, and can have any appearance. If used on a throwing weapon, it returns to user's hand after each throw: +5 SP

Supernatural Covering: at will, materialize an item of clothing from thin air. The covering can have any appearance (a horned mask that changes color, a cloak of molten gold), but is locked in once the effect is bought. The covering can look like armor, but any actual defense bonus (or other effects) have to be bought like normal. Pairs of shoes / gloves / etc count as a single item of clothing. **2 SP**.

Bulwark: conjure an unmoving force / shield about one square stride (big enough for cover, but too small to fully obstruct most doorways). The bulwark has 10 merk for every **1 SP** spent on it. Size can be increased at higher SP prices, and merk is spread evenly (example: if you put 4 SP into this effect, you could conjure A. a wall that's 1 square with 40 merk, B. a wall that's 4 squares with 10 merk each, or C. a wall that's 2 squares with 20 merk each). Bulwark must be planted on the ground (can't be knocked over). Speed: Interrupt cost is x5 instead of usual x2.

- Bulwark can be suspended in the air: +4 SP
- All offense from the attack or Special that merks the bulwark is completely absorbed (remaining offense does not pass to any target behind): +2 SP

Create Dimension: generate a new dimension of your own design. Its form, physics, weather, flora, etc are locked in once this one-time effect is used. Size always upgradeable. Means of getting to the dimension (gateway, item, just appearing there etc) up to you, but you'll always return to the exact spot you left from. Usage time at least an hour. Pricing by size . . .

- Trunk: **4 SP** • Chamber: **7 SP** • Estate: **12 SP** • Island: **20 SP**
- Continent: **30 SP** • Small planet: **60 SP** • Large planet: **90 SP**
- Star system: **240** • Galaxy: **1,200** • Nebula: **10,000** • Universe: **100,000**

Temporary Dimension: enter a microdimension of your own design. Dimension only exists while user inside. Other characters are free to tag along, but anybody left inside when the user leaves is thrown into another dimension (Key's choice). Means of getting to the dimension (gateway, item, just appearing there etc) up to you, but you'll always return to the exact spot you left from. Can't (via *this* effect) add anything able to leave the dimension, alter stats, or provide sustenance. Pricing by size . . .

- Size of a small room: **3 SP** • Large room: **4 SP** • House: **5 SP** • Estate: **6 SP**

Imbue Tattoo: create a tattoo that gives its bearer a Special. Costs as much as buying a Special normally (**1 SP** to **1 SP**) BUT Key Narrators are required to give discounts for sick concepts. This is a mandatory rule, but remember the Key has final say on what they think is dope and how much of a discount it earns. One-time use.

Imbue Artifact: instill an existing item with a Special. That Special costs 75% its normal SP value. Remember the item you imbue into can always be bartered, stolen, destroyed, or even used against you. One-time use.

Endow Sentience: give an object or place consciousness. User determines personality, speech, intellect, principles etc. Key controls. Can freely communicate, whether through speech or telepathy. Price can be negotiated with Key given certain properties. For example: a needy weapon that starts making trouble when it hasn't killed recently should get a big discount, and an implement that can sprout arms and legs and move around on its own should probably be double price. One-time use. **4 SP**.

Script: supernaturally inscribe text or symbols on any surface. Can't be longer than a short paragraph. Aesthetic is up to the user – mundane, colored, flashing, invisible etc. Effects like *true viewing* and *detect Special* are able to see past invisibility. Text lasts until ruptured, negated by user, or effect used again elsewhere. Unlimited uses. **3 SP.**

- Can be fixed in the air, including the air around a target (moves with target): +2 SP

Call Light: can summon, unsummon, and dim a supernatural light at will (unlimited uses). Aesthetic up to user (held item becomes luminous, handful of flame, brilliance in your eyes etc). Priced by brightness: Dim: **2 SP.**

- Thoroughly light up a chamber: +1 SP
- Thoroughly light up a village: +2 SP

Call Darkness: create an inky blackness about the size of a chamber that overpowers every non-Special source of light. **3 SP.**

Call Textile: permanently conjure a textile or fibrous object of your specification. Aesthetic up to user (spun from nearby raw materials, woven from aether, just barfed through a one-way portal etc). **4 SP.**

- Complex clothing or shelter: +2 SP

Call Wood: permanently conjure a wooden object. **3 SP.**

- About a dozen (identical) wooden implements: +1 SP

Call Stone: permanently conjure a stone object. **3 SP.**

- About a dozen (identical) stone implements: +1 SP

Call Metal: permanently conjure a metal object. Must be a single piece of metal: no complex items like machinery, firearms, armor etc. **8 SP.**

- About a dozen (identical) metal implements: +4 SP

Call Fire: about a handful, can't deal more than 1 offense. User has full control of the conjured flame within the square they occupy. Flame endures as long as user has a free hand. Aesthetic up to user. **3 SP.**

Call Electricity: just a respectable jolt or minor continuous stream. Can't deal more than 1 (direct) offense per use of this effect. **2 SP.**

Call Water: conjure a small amount of water in any form: **1 SP.**

- A very large amount of water (can't deal more than 5 total offense): +4 SP

Call Liquid: conjure a small amount of any non-water liquid (sulfuric acid, bleach, cooking oil, lemon juice, soda etc). Can't cause more offense than user's level: **3 SP.**

Call Wind: a large area surrounding the user is subject to a wind that blows in a fixed direction. Any character moving with the wind gets a one stride bonus to movement, and any against takes a one stride penalty. Firing launcher weapons any direction but with the wind causes half offense. The wind will also speed along flying and sailing vessels, power wind turbines, blow away gas, fog, clouds, swarms, real light objects etc. Automatically Duration: Combat. **5 SP.**

Call Weather: rain, wind, sun, snow, moderate storms etc. Not enough to cause destruction of any kind. Lasts at least a scene. **2 SP.**

Call Plant: a plant of any variety erupts from the earth. Can be food, medicine that heals s6, poison that deals s6, roots or vines that prevent a target's next move action, or any plant common to the setting. **6 SP.**

Call Food: a stacked meal for one person, a few snacks, or a single mind-blowing dish. Aesthetic up to user, and must be described vividly with each use. **1 SP.**

- Enough for all main characters, plus a few joiners: +2 SP
- A maxed-out feast with no limit on ingredients or presentation: +2 SP
- Ethereal servants to serve and clear dishes: +2 SP

Call Item: make a single existing item permanently summonable. Form is fixed: item can be altered or destroyed once called, but will return in its usual form when effect is next used. Can't summon multiples of the same item: using this effect within the duration of a previous use simply resummons the callable item. This effect can never cause more total offense than its SP price (so a 3 SP effect could cause 3 offense once, or 1 offense three times). Works on consumables (food, drugs, holy oils etc), but they lose their practical effect (nourishment, intoxication, stat alteration etc). Default is Duration: Combat. Buying Duration: Permanent allows you to summon and unsummon the item at will. Priced by size . . .

- Pocket-sized: **1 SP**
- Desk-sized: **8 SP**
- Cat-sized: **3 SP**
- Car-sized: **12 SP**
- Average human-sized: **5 SP**
- RV-sized: **20 SP**
- Unpurgeable (can't be unsummoned by the below effects): +3 SP

Purge: immediately vanish anything summoned by an effect in the above section (from *script* to *call item*) or a summoned entity (*call entity, helper, ride*). Must match SP cost of purged effect in burned Specials, which can be sacrificed at no action cost (similar to *flying mod* in usage effects). **2 SP.**

Purging Zone: create an area up to the size of a chamber where it's impossible to summon an object (from *script* to *call item*) or being (*call entity, helper, ride*). If a called object or entity from the above effects enters a purging zone, they immediately vanish. **5 SP.**

Summoned items (*supernatural weapon, supernatural covering, call item* etc) can have effects added to them (*endow sentience, offense up* etc) without paying any additional SP for *fusion* (bottom of the next section).

Meta Effects

Feel Manifestation: know when someone initiates a Special nearby (won't detect ongoing effects). This doesn't give any knowledge of the Special itself, just a certainty of where it was manifested. Automatically Duration: Permanent. **3 SP.**

Detect Special: pinpoint active / ongoing Specials anywhere in user's sight. **2 SP.**

Identify Special: user knows the function and some mechanical details of one Special within sight. **3 SP.**

Trace User: know identity (short description of their life at present) of a character who used a Special. Can be deceived by *scramble identity*, *inhabit corpse*, and *projection*. **3 SP.**

Rupture: undo an ongoing Special. The Key must offer some type of puzzle to decode, however difficult, to represent the complexity of the Special. Time spent on the puzzle translates to real time in-game. Only the actor of this effect's user can work on the puzzle. Key: ideal puzzles are balls of knotted up string and stacks of cards sorted by suit and number – both make it easy to gauge and deliver different levels of difficulty. **3 SP.**

Mimic Special: temporarily copy another character's Special that costs equal to or less than the amount of SP spent on this effect. Must witness use of Special. No action cost. User maintains mimicked Special until this effect is used again.

Fusion: create a Special with more than one effect. Some effect combinations leave space for interpretation, so make the function clear on creation. Key approval is required. If you put two effects into the same Special that would work the same if you just bought them separately, you *don't* need to buy this effect. +25% the base SP cost of all effects.

Usage Effects

Burn Special I: sacrifice an unspent Special/s for the day. For every SP you sacrifice, add a point of offense to the offensive Special you use this turn. No action cost Unlimited uses. **1 SP.**

Burn Special II: sacrifice an unspent Special/s for the day. For every SP you sacrifice, add a point of healing to the healing Special you use this turn. No action cost. Unlimited uses. **1 SP.**

Sub: sacrifice an unspent Special/s for the day and put their SP value towards additional uses of a Special you already used up. For example: sacrifice a 4 SP Special and a 3 SP Special (making them completely unusable until tomorrow), and you can cop a second use of an already-spent 7 SP once-per-day Special. Leftover SP can't be saved for later turns. No limit on uses, but must be used on your turn. No action cost. **2 SP.**

Blood Sub: put offense on yourself for an additional use of a Special you've already used up, 1 offense per 1 SP's worth of Special. You control exact amount of offense. No limit on uses, but must be used on your turn. No action cost. **2 SP.**

Flying Mod: sacrifice an unspent Special/s for the day and then use their SP value to enhance the modifiers of another Special. Leftover SP can't be saved for later turns. No limit on uses, but must be used on your turn. No action cost.. **3 SP.**

Fight Scenes

Where gameplay is normally freeflowing and conversational, fight scenes are turn-based.

*How They Work . . .

1. Every combatant gets a turn
2. Whoever swings first goes first
3. Turn order goes around the circle (Key decides which way)
4. Enemies and side characters go on the Key's turn
5. A turn consists of A.) a move action and B.) a main action
6. Move action: moves your main character. Can be done before *or after* your main action
7. Main action: attack with a weapon, use a Special, or take another move action
8. Once offense taken is higher than merk, you're out of the scene (can't act)
9. Fight ends when one side is merked or gives up

Attacking

Costs your main action. Every weapon has an offense spin (like s8 for a handaxe) . . .

$$\text{Weapon Spin} + \text{Primary Score}^* = \text{Attack's Offense}$$

*(fast for ranged and light weapons // strong for hand-to-hand and thrown)

Defense

Reduce all incoming offense by this number. Defense, like all stats, is just an abstraction; if some nerd is like "Well technically armor can't really protect you from fall damage," the rules allow you to kill them in real life.

Merked

Once offense taken gets higher than your merk, you're KO'd (can't act for the rest of the scene, even if healed). Start next scene a point below merked, but able to act. Main characters can't actually die until their actor wants them to (but don't act like an unkillable asshole because you can still get your arms chopped off and shit).

The Back of the Book is a Spinner: to use it, hold the looped end of a paperclip or guitar string trimming on the center-dot with a pen, and flick the other end. The result is wherever the arm lands in the s-ring (s6, s12, s20 etc) that you're spinning for. You can also install a spinner arm permanently by holding it in place with a brass fastener: just make sure the fastener head isn't too low and pinching the looped end of the arm.

Distance & Moving

Measured in strides. Default move distance is 5 strides. Half move score (round down) for swimming and climbing. Entire move action to stand from prone. Can reface at the end of your turn. Normal-sized characters occupy one square stride (think of the combat map gridded up like a chessboard). Can move through a comrade's square but not an enemy's.

Gameplay Option: Map Style

When a fight scene jumps off, lay out a chessboard and use pieces to mark each combatant. Each square is one stride x one stride.

- **Pros:** distance easier to measure, visual representation satisfying, fight scenes more tactically interesting
- **Cons:** needs board and pieces, transitioning into fight scenes not as smooth because of set-up time

Misc Attack Rules

Dual-Wielding: any character can use two one-handed weapons simultaneously, making an attack with both each turn. (If attacking same character twice, remember they get to apply their defense to both attacks).

Light Weapons: hand-to-hand weapons that let you add your fast score *instead of* strong. Shit like unarmed strikes, daggers, rapiers, staves, chainblades, meteor hammers etc.

Ranged Weapons: each ranged weapon has its own listed range. Targeting beyond costs -50% offense per stride. Reloading has no action cost (unless stated otherwise).

Thrown Attacks: thrown weapon offense is $s4 + \text{fast}$ *or* strong. Range is 3 strides. Both these can be upgraded with ranged attack Specials. Hand-to-hand weapons and shields can be used as thrown weapons (but base offense still $s4$).

Surprise Attacks: if target had no perception of a threat, they have zero defense until their first turn.

Attacking Unarmed: default unarmed offense is $s2 + \text{strong}$ or fast (once per turn). Many upgrades in Attack Effects.

Charging: an optional full-turn action that lets you move twice and then hand-to-hand attack. Target gets to make opposing attack; subtract higher offense from lower and the loser takes the difference. Charges must move in a relatively straight line and cover more than the charger's move score.

Attacking With a Shield: see "shields" in equipment (next section).

Grappling: main action. You and the target spin $s10 + \text{strong}$ or fast. If you have the higher result you can either A. disarm or take something else from target, or B. hold target in place (they get no move or main action) until the start of your next turn. If the character initiating loses they aren't then grappled, but it still costs their main action. Respin ties.

Tell the Story of the Numbers: even a quick "I slash him for 5" is fucking miles better than "uhh I do 5 offense to this dude." But ideally go in: "I spin past his last attack and slash the side of his head for 5." Keep it cinematic, you know?

Newjacks, use the level of success as a jumping off point, like "I jump forward and run my sword through him for 14." Instead of "I attack this dude and fuck I landed a 1" try something like "I give him a testing jab for 1."

Key Narrator Notes

Keep it moving. Don't let actors wait until their turn to decide what they're gonna do and then uhh and umm for two minutes. Keep heads in the game with a tight pace and the frenetic feel of a fight.

Remember fights are just as much a part of the story as any other scene, so always narrate that shit and bring it to life. Bug your actors to narrate their attacks, and prompt them with "Tell me what that looks like" when they do something interesting.

How many fights per session? Start with one and experiment from there. Every crew of actors is different: some will want just one real meaningful fight every few episodes, others will want three squabs a session.

Check out page 116 for tools and theory on creating gas fight scenes.

* Weaponry

Offense (s4, s8, s12 etc) corresponds with the spinner on the back of the book. Example weapons are listed in italics beneath each weapon type, but actors are free to customize their weapons' aesthetic. All prices listed as 文 (wen), the setting's currency.

Swords

Light sword s4 + strong or fast / block 1 / 1h, Light / 文 30

*This would be like a **dagger**, **shortsword**, **barong** (oval-bladed dagger),
deerhorn blade (inversely-crossed crescent blades with claw-like points), etc*

Single-hand sword s6 + strong / block 1 / 文 65

***Dao** (curved sword), **jian** (straight sword), **talwar** (scimitar-like sword from sub-continent),
shuang gou (hook sword), **yatagan** (forward-curved, pointed sword from the near west)*

Two-hand sword s12 + strong / block 2 / 文 140

***Shuangshou jian** (two-hand straight sword), **changdao** (two-hand curved sword),
zhanma dao (long hilt and huge curved blade, lit. "horse-chopping sword")*

Haftarms

Single-hand haftarm s8 + strong / block 0 / 文 45

***Fu** (axe), **chui** (mace), **tie bian** (heavy rod), **qi** (full-circle axehead), **Lián** (sickle)*

Two-hand haftarm s14 + strong / block 1 / 文 110

***Shuangshou fu** (greataxe), **zaghnal** (like a scythe), **lang ya bang** (wolf tooth cudgel)*

Polearms

Staff s4 + strong or fast / block 2 / 2h, Reach, Light / 文 12

Or anything staff-like you can get your hands on

Polearm s10 + strong / block 1 / 2h, Reach / 文 55

***Qiang** (spear), **guandao** (heavy cleaving blade), **gekken** (upward crescent blade),
tiger fork (trident), **pudao** (huge sword with hilt so long it's effectively just a polearm),
yueya-chan ("monk's spade", shovel-like blade also used for funerary rites by traveling monks)*

Flex Weaponry

Single-hand flex weapon s4 + strong or fast / block 0 / Reach, Light / 文 130

***Jiu jie bian** (sectioned metal whip with a spike), **mei zha** (spiked chain)*

Two-hand flex weapon s8 + strong or fast / block 0 / Reach, Light / 文 200

***Meteor hammer**, **qi jie bian** (bladed chain whip), **long zha** ("dragon claw" aka flying claw)*

Block: the bonus to defense you get from wielding this weapon.

Light Weapons: hand-to-hand weapons that let you add your strong *or* fast to the attack spin. (Default is to add your strong score to hand-to-hand attacks.)

Reach Weapons: hand-to-hand weapons with an extra stride of range (like a spear).

1h / 2h: a weapon is either one-handed (1h) or two-handed (2h).

Launchers

Never have a block score. No need to track ammo.

Sling s2 + fast / Range 6 / 1h / 文 10

Shortbow s6 + fast / Range 10 / 2h / 文 200

Longbow s8 + fast / Range 20 / 2h / 文 300

Crossbow (takes a main action to reload) s12 + fast / Range 20 / 2h / 文 800

Range = effective range. Can target further at -50% offense per stride

*Instruments

Supernatural weapons that amplify the user's chi: staffs, rods, floating crystals, third eyes etc. Instruments are way more rare than other types of weapons, so main characters will have to go hunting for them.

Instrument s6 + smart offense / range 5 / 2h / 文 1,200

Burst instrument s8 + smart offense / range 2 / 2h / 文 1,050

Example Instruments

Staff of Devouring Void: s6 + smart offense, range 5, two-handed. 文 1,500 if sold. Ebony staff with a large silver ring at top; blasts jet-black anti-light at foes. Once per fight can cause s6 + smart offense to all targets in a 20-stride line (main action).

Plot Fuel: Key Narrator, **if an actor asks how they can get a hold of an instrument**, tell them it's common knowledge some "scholars of the green forest" (Qing-era euphemism for bandits) outside the nearby town of Southlock are led by an ex-Taoist priest called Cruel Lu-Shang who's known to wield a staff of supernatural power. This is the Staff of Devouring Void, and getting it is a 5 SP Character Ambition. As the main characters investigate the area around Southlock (about a day downriver), they find the dozen bandits have made their home in an abandoned emerald mine, now laced with traps and ferociously defended, but holding both the Staff of Devouring Void and a small fortune stolen from a recently massacred merchant caravan.

Anjing Rod: s8 + smart offense / range 2 / 2h / 文 2,000 if sold. Brass-studded rod that emits an outward eruption of chi. Once per fight can throw a target 5 strides directly back (s16 + smart offense, move-equivalent).

Phantom Jian: s6 + smart offense / range 5 / 2h / 文 1,200 if sold. A ceremonial sword that can project a ghostly blade mirroring the jian's slash, cutting a target within 5 strides. While their method of manufacture is lost, phantom jian were fairly common during the Han Dynasty: many more powerful iterations are still hidden away in tombs and lost cities, or held by prominent blademasters.

Songbird Lantern: s6 + smart offense / range 5 / 2h / 文 3,600 if sold. This exquisitely lacquered lantern emits birds of fire that attack whoever the user commands. Once per day can summon a pillar of fire that causes 3s10 + smart offense to one target.

***Armor**

Woven Rattan +2 defense / 文 900
This armor ranges from deep red to pale gold in hue, and is light enough to swim in.

Heavy Armor +3 defense / 文 1,300
Most common is dingjia brigandine with its characteristic riveted outer jacked, though scale, plate, various lamellar armors, and even far eastern gusoku are also common.

***Shields**

Nothing can be wielded with the same arm wielding a shield. Can wield two shields in either hand, if that's something you really wanna do.

Buckler concealable, +2 defense (or +s4 defense) / 文 30

Shield +3 defense (or +s6 defense) / 文 50

OPTIONAL SHIELD ACTIONS

- **Sacrifice shield:** after someone spins offense against you, you can sacrifice your shield to ignore that offense.
- **Spun defense:** instead of a fixed defense, you can spin for a shield's defense against any given attack: spinner's max is twice the shield's defense (listed above).
- **Attacking with a shield** (aka shield bashing) deals s4 + strong offense, but you lose that shield's defense until the start of your next turn. Can still attack with offhand.

Goods & Services

Remember this is a fictionalized setting: the prices in this section aren't historically accurate to Qing Dynasty China and they shouldn't be (the main characters would have close to zero purchasing power).

Headquarters & Institutions

Purchaser is free to draw up a map and work out any details with their Key.

Cottage: 文 1,100	Outpost: 文 7,200
House: 文 6,500	Tower or pagoda: 文 55,000
Mansion: 文 74,000	Castle: 文 240,000
Palace: 文 155,000	Library or museum: 文 6,000
Pub or inn: 文 8,000	Subterranean expansion: 文 10,000
Academy or monastery: 文 50,000	Fortifications: 文 5,000 to 文 50,000
Shrine: 文 800	Well: 文 1,000
Chapel: 文 1,700	Food garden (sustains 5): 文 500
Temple: 文 110,000	Paddy or orchard (sustains 50): 文 2,000
Transdimensional gate: 文 160,000	Price to build on a flying island: x2

Laboratory or workshop (medical, metalworking, chemical etc): 文 900
This gives +s6 to any skill spin (take the highest) done on premises

Daily Costs

Sedentary life, humble: 文 5
Sedentary life, comfortable: 文 35
Travel by boat: 文 9
Travel by contracted carriage: 文 7
Average guesthouse room: 文 10

Daily Wages

Menial laborer: 文 10
Artisan or expert: 文 30
Master of craft or trade: 文 100
Grandmaster of craft or trade: 文 300
Entry level security (level 1): 文 15
Skilled security (level 3): 文 50
Veteran security (level 5): 文 120
Elite security (level 10): 文 400

Animal Companions

Messenger falcon: 文 230
Watchdog (s4 bite): 文 160
Macaque monkey: 文 110
Hunting panther (s6 bite): 文 1,200
Trained riding horse: 文 800

General

Backpack: 文 5
Tent: 文 30
Flint and steel: 文 2
Bundle of 20 candles: 文 1
Lantern: 文 36
Rope, per 10 ft: 文 1
Telescope: 文 80
Bottle of rice liquor: 文 2
Humble outfit: 文 8
Sharp outfit: 文 15
Aristocratic outfit: 文 700
Carpentry toolchest: 文 70
Scribe's case: 文 60
Mountaineering pack: 文 90

Vehicles

Sailing skiff: 文 1,100
Junk (mid-sized sailboat): 文 2,700
Warship: 文 23,500
Hot-air balloon (they did indeed exist during the middle Qing, but remember they can't be steered): 文 3,300

Healing

Physician (fully heals entire crew's offense taken, but not every settlement has one): 文 25

Healing herb, oil, or tincture (move action to administer) . . .

- | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| ◦ Heals 10: 文 10 | ◦ Heals 20: 文 40 | ◦ Heals 30: 文 120 |
| ◦ Heals 50: 文 400 | ◦ Heals 80: 文 900 | ◦ Heals 100: 文 1,500 |

Foraging: for every skill bar in bushcraft or medicine, you can acquire one degree (heals 10, heals 20, heals 30, heals 50, etc) of healing herb per day spent in or near wilderness.

Example Gameplay

Every game is gonna look different, and there's no one right way to run it. Let's just drop into the middle of a session – actor A, actor B, actor C, and their Key Narrator are deep in a show about warring secret societies in the 2230s, currently in a city on Mimas, a small moon just outside the rings of Saturn.

Key: The lights of the skyscrapers and suspension towers glide by hypnotically as you ride the layered expressway. You peel off your exit, and pass into the lock before the Mainzer Biodome – you've been through enough times to know security will search your car at the gate. What do you do?

B: Alright, you know the drill – guns in the duffel

C: I pull my pistol and drop it in the bag

A: I slide my AK into the bag. Where are we gonna stash these?

C: We don't got a lot to work with. The lock's just a road, right?

Key: Right. It's a curved roadway leading to the biodome

C: Hmm. What's it look like? Any greenery? Trash cans?

Key: There's a sidewalk along the median with a few bins, but all the grass is trimmed low. There are elm trees throughout the lockway, the type spliced with bioluminescent genes so their leaves glow at night – common street lighting practice in this district. The low artificial sky is drizzling, still on its day cycle –

A: So wait, with the rain . . . are there any drains along the roadway?

Key: For sure. They're spaced out along the median, and look like the type you can pull out by hand

A: That's gotta be the play – the trees are too obvious, and if it's trash day we could end up running around unarmed until we get back to the safehouse

B: Right

C: . . . Would it be possible to, like, lift the grate, lower the bag, and then close the grate so it clamps down on the strap of the duffel bag?

B: Yooo

Key: That makes sense, yea

B: Alright, then once there aren't any cars coming I hoof out and try to clamp the duffel strap in one of the grates

Key: Works like a charm. It grips tight, and the tip of the strap is concealed under all the dead leaves around the drain

B: Sick . . .

C: Bet, we pull around to the gate

Key: You get to the gate and you're waved into a marked space like always. Blue sheets of light glide and spin over the car, and an armored guard spends a suspiciously long time . . . squinting at his console . . . before looking up and waving you through

B: You fucker

Key: A soft tone from your onboard signifies the toll was just deducted from your account

C: How much?

Key: Uhhh just ten credits

C: Alright lemme scratch ten off my sheet here

Key: So you pull into the colossal biodome and the first thing you see are the rings of Saturn above you, unimaginably huge, impossibly close, arcing through the infinite night sky of space. The dome's transparent panels refract the feeblest glare from the distant sun –

B: Fucking wild dude, I'll never get used to being offworld

Key: As you crest the entrance trail, you see the biodome below: four different ecosystems all built into the massive Mainzer Crater. What do you do?

C: Swiss Alps biome right? I head that way

Key: Alright, you ta –

A: Also I'm keeping an eye in the rearview, does anybody seem to be tailing us?

Key: Uhh no, there's nothing suspicious. Nobody's even behind you

A: Good, good

Key: You roll through a bamboo forest and cross a bridge into the Alps biome, quickly finding the spot. The camera slowly pans down through some oak boughs onto a real scenic clearing as you pull up. Jin's red SUV is already there, not far from a stream fed by a small waterfall. What do you do?

B: One of these days we're gonna be the first to fucking show up to something

A: I hop out and pop the trunk

Key: The red SUV's doors swing open, exhaling No-Sleep Jin, three massive goons, and faint classical music

C: Any I would recognize?

Key: You do actually. You're pretty sure you played it for a gala or maybe a wedding gig years back – it's [checks notes] a chamber opera called "Renard" by Igor Stravinsky

C: Hmmm, deep cut

Key: Quite so

A: I catch Jin's eye

Key: No-Sleep Jin says something in Korean to her crew and walks over to you. A breeze stirs the clearing, swaying the oak branches and ruffling the grass as she extends a hand in greeting. Are you bringing the case?

A: Does she have the cash?

Key: You see one of her guys hand a bag off to B

B: I'm counting that shit

A: Then I bring the case from the trunk and hand it over

Key: So one of her goons takes it, and you notice she waits until he's out of earshot before gesturing over to the waterfall, saying she has something to run by you

A: Alright

B: Do any of Jin's people follow them?

Key: Nah, one's inspecting the case. The other two are hovering near the SUV, pulling out packs of Lucky Strikes

C: How familiar do they look?

Key: Uhh, you seen them at the last few drops you did with Jin's people

C: Alright, I step over and light one of their cigarettes. "Sup cousin, you seen a skinny little guy like this around? Cybernetic eyes, buzzed head?" – and I show him that security footage we jacked

B: Think these mouthbreathers would know? They probably spend most of their time folding Jin's laundry

C: Can't hurt. What other leads do we have?

B: Fair point

Key: So you go up to the taller one and he watches the footage loop a few times, dragging on his cigarette, then says with a heavy accent "Actually ... I believe we have."

C: I told you son!

Key: Tall goon says something in Korean to the driver, beckoning him with a wave. As he walks over and clears the front of the car, you see he's carrying a naked machete –

B: What

Key: Tall goon says "Hands." You look down to see a trench knife has appeared in his offhand. What do you do?

C: Are you fucking serious?

Key: Do you say that?

C: Nah, I just – fuck . . . I guess I raise my fucking hands

A: Do I notice any of this?

Key: Nah mane, No-Sleep has you turned so you're facing the waterfall

A: Fuckin doin us greasy

B: I raise my hands a millimeter above my head, palms in, and then raise my middle fingers
Key: Short goon moves towards you B – he’s gripping a long-handled hatchet. With the other hand he pads around your pockets and pulls out your switchblade
B: When he’s rooting around I ask if his chick knows he’s into this type of thing
Key: Hahaha I’m sorry but he pops you with the butt of his hatchet for ... 2 offense, right on the forehead
B: What a rude man
C: So would anybody notice if I charge up my electroshock prosthetic?
A: Shit I forgot all about that thing
Key: Uhhh, I guess it would glow but it’s too bright out for anybody to notice
C: Alright I start amping up
B: How far away’s the car? The bat’s still in there right?
Key: Yea you remember it being in the trunk. The car is about four strides away – fair warning though, short goon’s definitely close enough to chop you
B: The trunk’s open though right?
Key: Uhh –
A: Yea from when I grabbed the case, I definitely would have left it open
Key: Alright fine, trunk’s open
B: Sick
C: Am I charged up?
Key: You’re charged up
B: Set it off C
C: An arc of electricity blasts out of my palm at tall goon
Key: Alright give me a number
C: [flicks spinner] 12 motherfucker let’s gooo!
Key: Dang ok, the bolt of electricity makes tall goon violently convulse and drop like a bag of rocks, definitely merked. B, you’re getting chopped by shortstack
B: Fuuck
Key: [flicks spinner] he swings the axe up into your ribs for 5. C, the driver brings his machete down on you for [flicks spinner] 2 offense
C: I dodge no problem, he only hits air
Key: Your turn B. A, you finally heard what’s going on so you’re on deck

...

How to Key

We run through the basics quick, plus a few moves for your toolbelt.

Writing an Arc

Lock in the Ambition first. The next step is thinking on the most interesting path to that Ambition – bring the main characters through fights, social scenarios, problem solving etc, all set in cinematic places and laced with intriguing side characters. If you're stumped, think on your favorite storylines from movies / TV and what made them favorites.

If you didn't run the arc in this book, scanning through it will give you a feel for the flow of an arc, and what's important for the Key to know. That said:

Only draw up one session at a time. You never know which way your actors are gonna go. Don't get attached to any particular outcome: you're just putting your crew in an interesting situation and playing to see how it shakes out.

Start small: plan on a humble two or three session joint for your first arc. Almost every newjack starts like a first-time prizefighter, putting on an incredible performance but completely emptying their gas tank the first round, noticeably slowing the second round, and by the third they're just surviving. Set a hard limit of three sessions for yourself.

Always introduce a scene with a brief description to immerse your actors in it. It helps to emphasize sensory (the aroma of temple incense, the ambient noise of morning birdsong, etc). This brief intro doesn't have to be pre-written; a couple off top lines will do just fine. Always end with a prompt (like "What do you do?") to maintain smooth gameflow.

Key Narrators don't get a main character. If you're starting a new show, don't make one until the next Key tags in. If you're tagging in for somebody else, find a good reason for your main character to see to some other shit until the end of the arc. You have an entire reality to simulate: trying to also play as an actor is a shitty distraction, and (more importantly) ruins the effect of you being the Key Narrator.

Write for your actors: this is not a one-person show – you're creating interesting situations for your actors to make a story out of. Include narrative prompts for them to develop their main characters, and points of interactivity that will actually engage them in the scene. *Leave the most interesting blanks for your actors to fill in.*

This is only a real loose guideline, but the average session has . . .

- An interesting problem to be solved
- A fight scene
- An interesting side character / social scenario

Adjust to taste for your specific actors and what gameplay gets them stoked.

Number of players: 3 is ideal, but up to 6 is solid if it's a crew of quieter actors – any more than that is a fucking mess. The number of actors also determines how fast you go through the arc: not only are more actors trying to veer in different directions, but just the volume of riffs and planning will make scenes last way longer. Expect a crew of two actors to tear through this arc in four sessions, and a huge crew of six actors to take closer to a dozen sessions.

Consistent narrative progress: every session should end with the feeling "We just got closer to the Ambition." Resist the temptation of irrelevant side-missions. You want a clear series of narrative steps to the Ambition so your actors never ask "Why are we here again?"

Prepping a Session

Session prep is just immersing yourself in a fictional location long enough that you can make it feel real to your actors. You steep in the reality of the session's setting, thinking on how side characters would act, how events would play out etc, and it's actually really fucking transportive – arguably the best part of conversational games.

Don't over-prepare: coming up with all types of optional shit just because it *could* happen is a huge waste of time. It's way easier to instead make a straight line of just a few scenes that you can really tighten up. Since the main characters are chasing an Ambition, you already know where they're driven to go, making that straight line completely believable.

Don't under-prepare: if you start your session with “Wait what happened last session?” and then just improvise some bullshit, nobody's showing up next time.

Punching up scenes: if you already have your interesting fight / social scenario / problem to be solved, you can make it more immersive by . . .

- Nesting it in a more interesting location (“the bar” into “the rooftop bar at the top of the Banpei Tower”), or ornamenting that location (“Ray's house” into “Ray's house, walls lined with illuminated tanks of rare tropical fish”)
- Sharpen up the scene's intro. Contrast the immersion of these two . . .

“You enter the chapel. Your contact is there. What do you do?”

vs.

“You enter the cool air of the chapel, stained glass depictions of saints glowing with the morning sun. A lone figure at prayer crosses himself, and stands to an alarming height of 6'4”. He asks in a Salvadoran accent ‘were you followed?’”

Interactivity is crucial. The most fascinating scene in the world is meaningless if it doesn't prompt your actors to engage with it (social gameplay, problem solving etc)

The objective of being Key is to create the conditions for the raddest time possible.

Arc ideas: if none spring to mind, just think on the arc you would most wanna act in. If you're just in a creative dead end, try working on the soundtrack first – you'd be surprised how much that musical headspace can clear up creative logjams.

Stay on the gank: freely take everything you like from movies, TV, books, comics, history. Once you put them in your setting, they'll be an entirely new thing, unrecognizable from their source. You've been unconsciously racking up a colossal library of trope and story ideas your entire life by just watching movies and shit, and the more you pull from it, the more effortless accessing it becomes. Just don't ruin it by telling your actors what the source was: *let it be its own brand new and unique thing.*

Advanced shit: spotlighting is writing a scene for a specific main character's strength or skillset. It's hard to braid into a session on top of your normal prep, but when you do, it always makes the sessions for the actor you spotlight.

Get the ship sailing itself: the show's intro is where the actors buy in and the validating feedback loops of interest start. Think on an interesting way to introduce their main characters, and interesting ways to get back-and-forths rolling between them.

End strong: there's a reason you always end an album with like the third or fourth best song – that's the impression you're leaving listeners with. Deliver the arc's promised narrative payoffs, and give some falling action and satisfying resolutions.

Fuck nerves: the friends are getting together to riff and bullshit with each other – they're gonna have a good time no matter what you put on.

Running the Game

The alpha rule is having a good time, setting up the best time for your actors. All other rules bend to this one.

Prompts: these are your most important tool, basically just questions that move the story forward. Here's the best one:

- What do you do?

Use prompts to build the story and visualize scenes . . .

- You unlock your safehouse for everybody; what do they see as the door slides open?
- A wide shot pans across the house party – what are each of you doing when Kana arrives?

Use them to focus attention . . .

- So what are you gonna do about those cameras?
- The courier seems eager to bounce – do you say anything to him?

Some prompts aren't questions, just something that urges response . . .

- Everybody hears glass shatter upstairs.
- You see from cover that the mercenary leaves his radio and sidearm on the desk as he steps into the bathroom.

But yea, prompts are usually just a question, and always passive, so it never feels like you're prodding in a specific direction.

Interludes: never skip over traveling or laying low – these are arguably *the most* fertile ground for main character development. Ask what the main characters get up to – training, some type of hobby or passion project or personal crusade, spending time with side characters, blowing their cash from the last arc etc.

Interludes slam for both the long-term (“A month has passed since the last job; everybody give me a montage of what your main character's been up to”), and short (“As you wait for No-Lobe to show up, late as usual, you all get in an argument – not a serious one, but over something fucking ridiculous. What is it?”)

The pair-off: rocket fuel for character development. First, pair up main characters for a scene or interlude, then *guide them into finding and exploring that thing they have in common*. This creates a new, unique dynamic between them, like how the bassist and drummer of a band are just a bassist and a drummer until they start calling themselves “the rhythm section”, reifying their bond as a concept. This is maybe the best move in the prestige TV playbook: a well-cultivated bond between every main character is narrative electricity.

Emphasize sensory: when introducing a new scene, bring it to life by describing not just how it looks, but at least one other sense – the ambient sounds, aromas, how the air feels on the skin, the emotional atmosphere etc. Take that immersion shit seriously: your job as Key is simulating a more interesting reality for your actors, so really bringing them there.

Mention shit that has nothing to do with the main characters or their objective: routine happenings, locals going about their day, the foghorn sounding out in the harbor etc. If you only mention shit related to the main characters the world feels small and uninteresting, like the camera following them around has tunnel-vision. Setting the scene like this not only creates a more living world type feel, but gives your crew options for narrative threads they might wanna pull on. Chekhov's Gun is wrong and bad.

The Key is the editor: when a scene feels done, don't uh and um out of it, but prompt where they're headed next, or just cut to the next scene of interest. Keep it moving.

Show, don't tell: classic film trick. Instead of saying “The party's host is known to be an unhinged psychopath,” just show him throwing a guest off a balcony for disagreeing with him on Aristotle or whatever. *Never give 4 if you can give 2 + 2.*

Side Characters

Don't script: you can have an idea of what they'll say and do, but you still want improvising them to come naturally. You wanna give the impression of interacting with a real person, you know?

There are two ways to run side characters:

1.) Voice acting: voice acting side characters in the first person is more immersive and makes them feel more present. Having a unique voice for each gives them more personality, makes them easier to act, and you'll never have to say who's talking. Don't get goofy with it (seriously), just give them a minor accent or speech pattern change.

2.) Not voice acting: some people don't like voice acting because they're shy, bad at voices, or think it's corny or whatever. If you're not into it, don't sweat it, you can just say "Knock brings up the brass casings you found earlier" and it conveys the same information.

Don't over-think minor side characters: they only need a single distinguishing feature (next page) just to make them memorable / easy to reference.

Major side characters: always give them a personality, and a voice if you prefer voice acting. A unique physical feature makes them memorable. Make them feel a little more real by giving them a life outside the main characters (like a goal or passion). Making them *of* the setting goes a long way – from an existing culture or faction, affected by major setting events etc. Just remember no amount of information dumping will make them feel real, that only happens as they're interacted with.

You can also start with a favorite character from movies / books / TV and think on what makes them a favorite (stay on the gank). Subverting stereotypes is always good, like a scarred-up goon with a love for classical poetry, or an insanely hot woman who's also insanely gross, eating old sandwiches out the trash etc.

Names: give nicknames to side characters. They're both A. easier to remember and B. more evocative, saying a lot about the side character in a single word. You can use them in conjunction with a given name like "Balogun the Saint", which lets heads just call him the Saint until his given name sticks. Two side characters with similar names is dogshit writing: if your show has a Samantha and a Sandra your actors want to kill you.

Guangfeng Names (feel free to change / rearrange)

Female: Jingyu, Zhen, Xiangning, Bingzhi, Keng, Shuqing, Weijun, Zongxue, Qunying, Pin, Qiu, Yongchun, Chin-feng, Yanyan, Taiqing, Zihua, Desheng, Shanbao, Jin, Nara, Lü, Nangxian

Male: Yuxiang, Peiyao, Ling-ko, Jingsheng, Duchu, Hongsen, Zhangfu, Bingxian, Tun-ban, Shaobin, Kang-hu, Zhongkai, Jishen, Shizeng, Qichao, Jiongming, Peiji, Yaotang, Ruoshui

Pronunciations: **Z** = ds as in rods, **C** = ts as in bats, **Zh** = g as in barrage, **R** = s as in Asia, **X** = "sh" but with tip of tongue touching back of bottom-front teeth, **Q** = "ch" but with tip of tongue touching back of bottom-front teeth

Nicknames: Birdeye, Drunken, Nine-Fingers, Gorillaback, Recluse, Geezer, Giant, Boneless, Rough Tongue, Fat, Dogsnap, Lucky, the Goat, Little, Cold Face, Nightowl, Chatterbox, Basher, Onion, Iron Finger, Frogmouth, Runaround, Cauldron Head, No-Peace, Quiet, Scar-Neck

Foreign Names

Korean female: Gwansun, In-Won, Yunjidang **Korean male:** San, Chaeho, Yongcheol, Jaipil

Nanyang female: Orapin, Melati, Sudarmin **Nanyang male:** Sjahrir, Koesno, Pridi, Kyar

Tibetan female: Yeshe, Tsogyal, Ayu **Tibetan male:** Lingpa, Dorje, Shenga, Getse

Mongolian female: Zaya, Narangerel, Terbish **Mongolian male:** Basang, Migmar, Dawa

Tianzhu female: Gauri, Rokeya, Irom, Priyasha **Tianzhu male:** Mangal, Amir, Puli, Bhagat

Side Character Generator

Bookmark this page to make a side character on the fly. To randomly generate a character, select two categories and spin once (the arm will intersect both rings). The two results should immediately generate a web of other details in your mind. Feel free to add categories for more depth, but remember most side characters are only momentary.

ODDS

- 1 Big gold earring
- 2 Wooden prayer beads
- 3 Pendant or talisman
(two scorpions fighting,
sneering chinthe face,
stylized lotus, meditating
woman, winged tiger,
radiant crescent moon, etc)
- 4 Scroll in belt (literate)
- 5 Ornate fingernail-guards
- 6 Neck rings
- 7 Long, thin pipe
- 8 Tattooed arms
- 9 Tattooed legs
- 10 Hands & throat tattooed
- 11 Criminal brand
(Theft, mayhem, forgery
sedition against Imperium)
- 12 Bodyguard / retainer
- 13 Sleeping baby in
canvas sling over back
- 14 Dagger in belt
- 15 Chain whip around waist
- 16 Sword over back
- 17 Staff
- 18 Hound
- 19 Pet songbird
- 20 Hunting leopard

DEMEANOR

- 1 Flippant
- 2 Stoked
- 3 Narcissist
- 4 Bored
- 5 Tough guy
- 6 Stoned
- 7 Drunk
- 8 Sickly
- 9 Cutty
- 10 Enlightened
- 11 Slimey
- 12 Refined

FEATURES

- 1 Spectacles
- 2 Facial scar
- 3 Busted nose
- 4 Sprig in corner of mouth
- 5 Beard
(long, short, forked, jade bead)
- 6 Mustache
- 7 Eyes two different colors
- 8 Leper's mask
- 9 White hair
- 10 Cauliflower ear
- 11 6 bum dots on forehead
(common to some monastic
and ascetic martial orders)
- 12 Dark skinned southerner
- 13 Light skinned northerner
- 14 Squarish tattoos of
southern islanders on limbs
- 15 Foreign hairstyle
- 16 Religious markings
(with ash or crushed herbs)

FORM

- 1 Fat
- 2 Skinny
- 3 Tall
- 4 Short
- 5 Jacked
- 6 Stocky

VOICE

- 1 Loudmouth
- 2 Baritone
- 3 Foreign accent
- 4 Slow talking
- 5 Educated
- 6 Old
- 7 Gruff
- 8 Reedy
- 9 Pensive
- 10 Mute or vow of silence

CLOTHING

- 1 Baggy laborer's clothes
- 2 Smith's apron
- 3 Scholar's robes
- 4 Fine dingjia armor
- 5 Armor with coat
(crest of civil guard unit or
aristocratic house served)
- 6 Cloak
- 7 Foreign cut & styling
- 8 Imperial tunic
(government employee)
- 9 Colored coat with rich
embroidered patterns
(phoenix, dragon, centipede
waves, birds, clouds etc)
- 10 Headband
- 11 Wide rice farmer's hat
- 12 Sikh turban (dastaar)
- 13 Tubeteika
(cap worn by Chinese Muslims)
- 14 Traveling priest's robes
- 15 Peasant's dress
- 16 Fashionable dress
- 17 Extravagant gown
(with attendants to hold
its long train off ground)
- 18 Functional clothes
worn by fighting nuns

SPIRIT ANCESTRY

- 1 Wings (air spirit)
- 2 Sharp teeth & gills
(salamander spirit)
- 3 White hair, pale or even
bluish skin (winter spirit)
- 4 Horns (takin spirit)
- 5 , , , Massive size &
rough skin (mountain spirit)
- 6 Scales (komodo spirit)
- 7 Glowing eyes
or stirring hair (storm spirit)
- 8 Shapeshifter (fox spirit)

* * *

Fight Scenes

Narrate the numbers. Don't say "2 offense doesn't actually hurt him," do say "He sidesteps your swing." If somebody asks "How bad is this dude hurt?" don't say "He's up to like half his merk," do say "He's bleeding pretty bad and starting to breathe heavy." Your actors get a lot of satisfaction from all the dope shit they get to do in a fight – make sure to narrate all the energy blasts and necks getting snapped, and to use the phrase "tell me what that looks like" when actors do something interesting.

Punching up fight scenes: first is enemies. They should be A. mechanically interesting, with stats or abilities for the main characters to out-think or take advantage of (try surfing through attack effects), and B. aesthetically interesting, so it doesn't feel like you're just battling a block of stats.

Second is where you fight: a cinematic location – elevated tracks, in a ruined mausoleum etc – is crucial. For extra credit, add features like hazards, levels, cover, or moving components to increase strategic depth.

Every fight should feel like there was something gained by it: even just a little new information to advance the plot or some interesting items.

Guillotine Style: a method for smoother fights. The turn marker is an eye-catching object placed in front of whoever's turn it is. They pass it on when their turn is complete. *If the next actor doesn't immediately act, they are skipped.* This keeps heads in the game without fail: nobody needs to be caught up on what happened, nobody waits until their turn and then takes a minute to decide what to do – the fight just flows. The Key is exempt from needing to act immediately since they have a whole fight scene to run. Obviously this optional rule shouldn't be put on newjacks.

Advanced shit: at those higher levels, the balance of the crew can get all over the place, and the main character that dumps all their SP into a single stat or Special might start walking through fights with less and less of a challenge. This is where the chess match starts: finding a way to still challenge them *without* them feeling cheated.

Offensive main characters are easy to handle: if they dumped everything into targeting a single enemy, throw multiple enemies at them. Death 100%? No problem – make sure you always have an interesting lieutenant that can step up, or multiple bosses for every boss fight.

Defensive main characters are where you have to use your head a little more – there's almost always one motherfucker who spends every single SP on their defense stat, but you have a dozen ways around that. Our favorite way is to just turn up the heat on the entire crew, and when the high-defense main character is consistently the last one standing, everybody else will start balancing in that direction. Also, once their enemies notice, why wouldn't they just show up with a stinger missile that does s20+100 offense next fight? Or start using armor-piercing nanofilament weaponry, or send out a mutant with undefendable fire powers? Maybe a mercenary psion with social Specials or powerful illusions. Maybe a plot like carbombing their motorcycle, instantly merking them then ambushing the rest of their crew. Maybe a napalm blast or chemical weapon that coats them in acid, putting s20 offense on them every turn for the rest of the fight.

Merk: offense counts up because addition is easier than subtraction. This also allows you to write offense taken out in the open or on enemy markers without giving away if they're close to death. If you like the intuitive concept (counting down) more than the functional ease (counting up), you're free to flip it around. We went with the phrasing of "merk" because it's ambiguous: enemies can be dead, KO'd, retreating, or whatever.

Dealing With Actors

If playing on the outside, feel free to lay down the rule “If anybody pulls out their phone, every other player gets to send a text on it.” Most people don’t need this rule, but we’ve seen a few sessions go downhill on fucking rollerskates when actors started scrolling through instagram whenever the Key Narrator wasn’t specifically talking to them – they needed constant updates on where they were and what was happening, had to be handed crucial clues etc. Didn’t even seem worth playing. To be clear drawing and shit is fine since you can still take in what’s happening, but phone use will destroy your game.

Key, fucking around and riffing is arguably the best part of the game, so go along with it. You can have an interesting storyline, meaningful scenes, *and* constant fucking around.

There’s a point where it clicks for new people and they realize they really can do anything in the game. They usually ask for something way over-powered for a level 1 character (“Can I get a flying island with a sick pagoda?”), and that’s good: *your actors wanting shit is the engine of the game*. Always say yes, and have them write it down as a Character Ambition so you can run it for them next season.

If you’re inviting somebody you know likes to get fucked up, think on telling them it’s a sober table – remember if they suddenly become the most annoying motherfucker on the planet you’re stuck with them for the whole session.

The most you should ever have to regulate is the phrase “be cool”. If a new actor is still out of pocket, just “start a new game” without them in it to avoid drama.

There aren’t really actor types. You just have to watch for what engages people, what interests people, and keep your show dialed to keep everybody happy. Sometimes you’re blessed with an agreeable crew, sometimes you land a pack of divas who all want different shit and act foul if they don’t get it. That’s life baby. Ride out the season and start again with a new crew.

Advanced shit: proactive vs passive crews. Figuring out which one your crew of actors leans towards will make prepping for them easier. Examples: if the Crew Ambition is to knock over a mid-level drug supplier and your actors stare blankly before asking “Uhh so what should we do?” that’s a real passive crew. If another crew immediately starts plotting “Alright, first we find a fiend and tell him his next vial’s on us if he takes us to his dealer – we bag the dealer and work our way up the foodchain until we find somebody laced with the plug,” that crew is real proactive.

Proactive crews need less prep: you just give them a goal and they move the plot forwards. The other edge of that sword is they need way more improvisation: they move quickly and unpredictably, love exploring, and create their own immersion by asking a lot of questions about your setting (“What are the current power dynamics and alliances in the criminal underworld?” “What’s the architecture like in Old Town?”) which is flattering but can sometimes feel like stress-testing.

Passive crews mostly just want an interesting storyline spoonfed to them: you have to make both clues and narrative paths forward obvious, and break their Ambition down into real clear sub-goals. Instead of immersing themselves by exploring and asking questions, passive actors trust you to immerse them in the most interesting parts of your setting. This definitely doesn’t mean they’re having any less of a good time, so don’t take offense. Since passive crews are highly predictable, they’re a blessing for Key Narrators who love writing and hate improvising.

Soundtrack

All Bull Press soundtracks are on bullpress.org.

When creating your own soundtracks with whatever you've gotten off trulincs, or anything a friend has loaded on a mp3 player for you, remember . . .

- A. have the soundtrack lined up beforehand so you don't waste time searching for songs
- B. don't use anything with actual vocals (they're more distracting than you'd think)

Spinner Alternatives

Double-cup: write a ring of numbers on the outside of the *inner* cup. Cut a little window on the *outside* cup. Next to the outside cup's window, write the ring's highest number with an "s" before it. To spin, just look away and turn the cup a few times: your result appears in the window. Remember you can fit every range your main character uses on a single cup.

Cards: easy to get a hold of, slow to use. Create a stack for each range your actors use (s2, s4, s6 etc). Write the range on the back, then write the individual numbers of that range on the face. Keep the stacks facedown in the middle of the table.

Verbal: when you have no materials on hand, wanna keep it low, or are playing in seg.

- Figure out the range of your spin from 1 to whatever (example: s12 is 1 to 12).
- The player spinning and the Key each pick a number in that range, and say that number simultaneously (example: 5 and 3).
- Add those numbers together for the result of the spin (example: 8).
- Now, if those numbers go over the top when added together (example: $10 + 6$), it rolls over and counts back up from 1 (example: the result is 4).

So, if the range is 1 to 8 and player A says 3, and player B says 4, the result is 7. If the range is 1 to 6 and player A says 4, and player B says 5, the result is 3. If the range is 1 to 20 and both players say 20, the result is 20. See how when it tops out the remainder is the result? Slick right?

Spinning for It

When somebody tries to do something uncertain, the Key has them spin s6 for the result:

- | | |
|-------------|---------------|
| 6. Finessed | 3. Not really |
| 5. Success | 2. Failure |
| 4. Barely | 1. Faceplant |

Easy: spin s6 twice, take the *highest* result (75% chance of success)

Default: spin s6 (50% chance of success)

Difficult: spin s6 twice, take the *lowest* result (25% chance of success)

Versus: if it's two characters against each other, they both spin and the one with the higher result wins. If one has a significant edge over the other (relative stat is higher etc) they spin twice and take the highest. Ties can be inconclusive or spark another versus spin – Key's choice.

Pros & Cons

This mechanic adds the lauded gambler's buzz to any scene, can add suspense, and can spark the creativity that only comes from having to improvise.

That said this mechanic is real easy to over-use: the above returns rapidly diminish, you can paint yourself into narrative corners, make the storyline less interesting (your spinner isn't always a good writer), and skip material that would have been more fun to actually play through . . .

Don't skip interesting gameplay: crucial shit. If the main characters need to create a trap for a jungle yaksha, and you just have them spin to see how good the trap is, *you fucking blew it*. It would have been way more interesting to find out from various jungle inhabitants the yaksha is intensely attracted to gemstones, then design an ingenious trap using that knowledge and the jungle environment. Remember creating success through gameplay and interaction with the setting is basically the whole point of the hobby.

Spinning is just gambling with narrative capital: it's an easy way to give your actors a quick neurochemical buzz, but A.) there have to be interesting stakes, and B.) using it too often ruins the effect.

Alternate Rule: The Narrative Spin

This adds a prompt which can enrich the scene and keep the present subnarrative moving forward, but takes a little longer since the Key has to spend time thinking on an interesting consequence or bonus.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 6. Yes and (success, plus a bonus) | 3. No but (failure, but a good thing happens) |
| 5. Yes | 2. No |
| 4. Yes but (success, but at some cost) | 1. No and (failure, plus another bad thing) |

For example: a main character tries to hotwire the crooked PI's car. They land a 4 ("yes but"), so can fire up the car and drive off, but fucked something up so the stereo is *blasting* Spice Girls on loop. Another example: a main character jumps off the roof onto an enemy below. They land a 1 ("no and"), so the enemy sees them coming, gets a free attack on them, and they still take fall offense.

Balls Out: on a challenge that's real real dicey, worth making memorable, or just fucking insane, the Key can add a Balls Out spin to the s6 narrative spin. This produces truly buckwild scenes, but only if used rarely:

- | | | | |
|----------------|--------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| 4. Two bonuses | 3. One bonus | 2. One consequence | 1. Two consequences |
|----------------|--------------|--------------------|---------------------|

Conversational Games & Narrata

Narrata is the creation of fiction through structured conversation. We at Bull Press consider it the most powerful form of escapism possible since it's not limited by the physical constraints of media: it goes exactly as far as your creative ability.

What really makes narrata immersive is having other people to run it with, and structure (rules) that get people interacting with the simulated setting and characters.

That's really all you need to know to start creating your own conversational games, but it helps to run a few existing ones to really figure out what gameplay you like and how to create more of it with specific rules.

Narrata is at least 60 years old, though it's arguable some centuries-old party games and umpired wargames fit the definition. Either way the artform is finally spreading its wings as we see a proliferation of new genres and gameplay concepts, new writers and luminaries, and games that can only be called works of fine art ranging from the size of a single page to dozens of volumes. Best of all, even though shit's popping right now, it can be said with certainty the John Coltranes and Dave Brubecks of the craft are yet to design their first game.

Game Design

Rule #1: the function of a game is its players having a good time.

Straight off the bat, here's some newjack shit to look out for and be brutally honest with yourself about:

- When you like the idea of a rule, but not the result of it
- When you're straight up reinventing the wheel just to be different
- When you're stubbornly holding onto a mechanic your friends / playtesters hate

Have clear design goals. Outline first or that shit's gonna balloon all over the place.

Start small: everything takes about a hundred more hours than you think, so start with a pamphlet-sized game (seriously). Bigger projects will always feel 90% done; be harsh in deciding when they're *done enough*, since there is a definite point of diminishing returns on your creative energy.

Playtest: there will always be shit that manifests different than you expected, so playtest more than even seems necessary. If possible, playtest across demographics (unless you're only designing a game for your friends). Most playtesters won't give you the brutal honesty you need: it's on you to keep an eye what actually engages them, what bores them, what rules they struggle to grasp etc.

Explicability: have an answer to questions like "what's it about?" and "how do you win?" You want your basic game concept to be a sentence, and the rules to be explainable in less than a minute. Anything more and motherfuckers' eyes start glazing over.

Watch for overdesign: a game isn't a live reading of the ten-page setting you wrote up, it's a concise ruleset that allows the actors to have a good time flexing *their* creativity. Leave the most interesting blanks for your actors to fill in.

Watch for underdesign: you need clear structure and goals. Too open-ended and players will feel directionless. Give specific prompts to induce a flow state.

Challenge: every game requires it. Too hard and heads check out from frustration. Too easy and heads check out from boredom. Ideally make it a curve so learning the ropes is *just* engaging enough for new people. Making difficulty scaleable adds massive replay value for more experienced players: do this by adding mechanical and strategic depth to reward their advanced knowledge of the game.

Risk: it's built into traditional games (where everybody plays against each other) since there can only be one winner and losing sucks. However, even if it's a cooperative game (where all the players compete against a situation or automated system instead of each other), there has to be a chance they could lose or face some major setback, otherwise there's no thrill. It's the same reason gambling's fun.

Frustration triage: losing and setbacks fucking suck, so having something to immediately distract from eating shit is A+ design. Example: for this game you could create a rule called "Hardened" – every time you're merked in a fight, you get a permanent +3 to your merk.

Incentives: never punish an action when you can instead reward not doing that action. Positive incentives are not only more reliable for shaping behavior, but also contribute to the overall sense of enjoyability of your game (nobody likes punishment).

Realism is a terrible goal. First of all, reality mostly sucks. Second, trying to reproduce it mechanically just creates a clunky labyrinth of conditional rules and other unfun shit. Instead, you wanna *hit the right notes of reality*, both in designing rulesets and settings.

Game mechanics are best when they're stripped down and abstracted representations of concepts that interest us (shit like fighting and powers). Settings are best when they're novel and outlandish, but still contour the relatable and interesting parts of our reality.

Realism is tax codes and spinning for how hungry you are or whatever; hitting the right notes of reality is unreal shit like dope spaceship fights and psychic powers BUT coherent setting logic and resonant side characters.

Randomizing outcomes: you can make the result of an uncertain thing up to chance with a randomization mechanic, sometimes called a resolution mechanic (similar to "Spinning for It", page 149). This does a couple good things: it 1.) creates a gambler's buzz, and 2.) gives the Key Narrator an improvisational prompt to interpret the result.

On the negative side, the neurochemical thrill of that gambler's buzz has swiftly diminishing returns: use it too often and it just becomes annoying. Even worse, a randomization mechanic skips over the gameplay that would normally create success.

Some games benefit from randomization mechanics (like Risk), but if you tried to force them into others (like chess) it would straight up ruin the game. Consider carefully if your game or mini-game would become more enjoyable by adding one.

When designing a randomization mechanic, consider range. Say you want to simulate troop reinforcements in your wargame, and each player spins at the top of their turn. s20 is way too swingy: if a player lands a 19 he can just dogwalk the player that landed a 4. You can always make the range smaller (like s8 or even s4), sure, but you could also make it more predictable: spinning 3s6 slightly reduces the range to 3-18, but more importantly it makes the results a bell curve since it's three different spins added together (so results at the extremes like 3, 4, 17, 18 are real real rare). You could also reduce randomness by making gameplay a factor: reinforcements are s6 + the number of fortresses you have, or you can spin an s6 for each warchest you turn in etc.

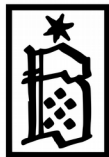
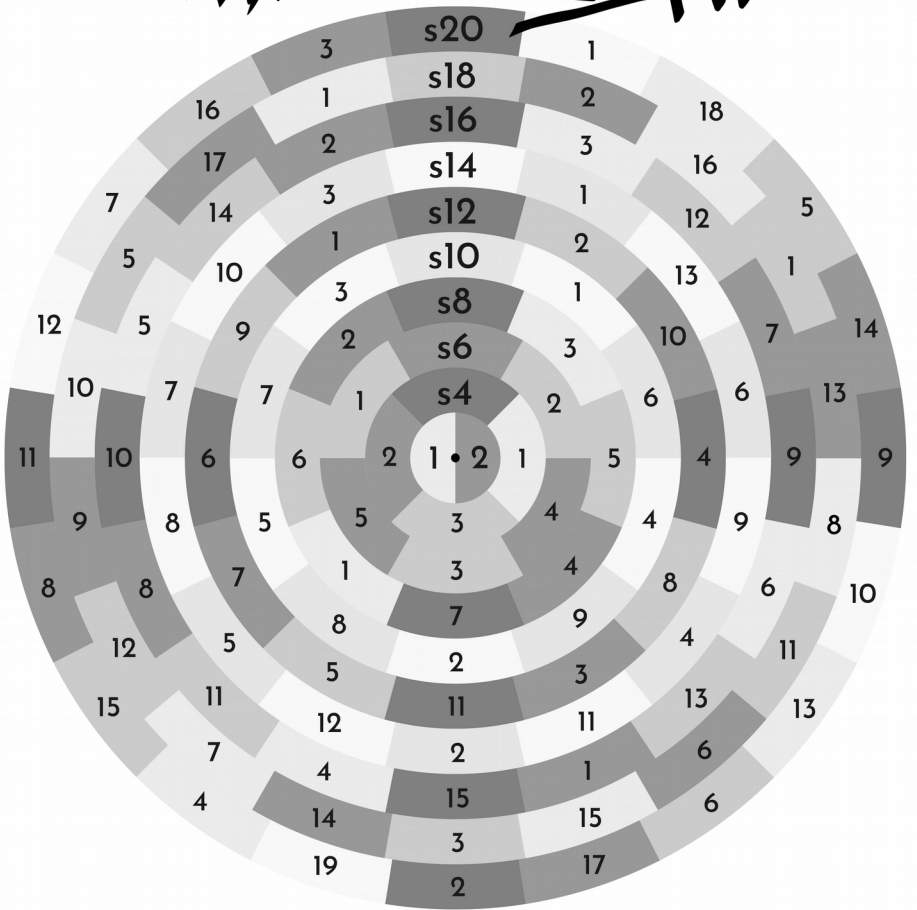
Don't get discouraged if your first game feels flat: *your early games are still worth playing*, you're just developing a more self-critical eye since you're now creating games. Sometimes rules and mechanics won't produce the result you thought they would and that's alright, that's how great rulesets are designed: small adjustments over time.

One of the more popular theories of learning is that we acquire and sharpen skills by first doing them wrong and then correcting: trial and error. It's annoying to hear for the hundredth time, but the best way to improve is by doing, failing, and learning from failures. Embracing that shit puts a person ahead of 95% of their competition.

Play more games: every innovation a person makes is a brick on top of a colossal pyramid of previous advancements in human knowledge made by other people. Explore that pyramid – designers put in thousands of hours creating a single game you can play in twenty minutes. Devour that knowledge to power your own innovations.

Presentation: sucks to say, but there's a reason presentation is 50% of your grade in culinary school. Consider it another good reason to start small; pamphlet-sized games don't need a \$10,000 layout and illustration budget to attract new players.

Handwritten graffiti text, possibly reading "HOMEROSTIV" or similar, rendered in a stylized, blocky font.



Closing Notes

Bull Press books are free to prisoners incarcerated in the US. While these book donations rely on funds we don't always have, if you write into your regional books to prisoners workspace, we know the good people volunteering there would be happy to send you similar conversational games and tabletop material.

To get a copy: have your people email your info to requests@bullpress.org. Even if your phone time is limited, this method should enable us to get a copy in your hands faster than mail-in requests.

People on the outside: if you'd like us to send a copy to an incarcerated friend, make sure to include their government name, ID number, and current facility in your email.

LIBRARY

(Every book contains main character sheets, spinners, and everything else needed to play.)

Corpse Thieves: a Kung Fu arc set in mythology-heavy Qing-era China. Unwind a bizarre series of graverobbings, scrap with supernatural wigsplitters, bust open esoteric conspiracies. Solid for newjacks (short and linear).

Illadelph: a game distilled from 90s hip hop, set in a parallel Philadelphia laced with powers, strange creatures, and superbeings. Solid for newjacks (short and linear), plus 75 optional missions across 13 cities for those trying to run longform games.

Stirring Giant: a grimy near-future arc tracking down a depraved patrician in a lawless megametropolis. Gene splicing, cybernetics, criminal underworld, political violence etc.

→ Digital copies of the entire Bull Press library are free at bullpress.org

Internal Font: Times New Roman

Style Guide: Ligma's Authoritative English

Language: the function of language is to convey meaning. Arbitrary rules grafted onto language (using "whom" for subject / "who" for object, or "less" for uncountable / "fewer" for countable, etc) *don't convey additional meaning and are thus linguistically valueless.*

This extends to groundless prohibitions on double comparatives (more faster, most oldest), verbiage (they is, she be), pleonasm (complete and total, where at) and so on. If meaning was successfully conveyed, the function of language was fulfilled – sweating about dangling participles and whatever is only a waste of time and effort.

Listen, language evolves. If you disagree, you can always talk in old-timey Shakespeare English.

System: this conversational game uses the DomepieceTV system. You have express permission from Bull Press to use it for your game or product as long as it's not for anything fucked up, and you shout us out.

Special Thanks to Q No Rap Name, a righteous individual and genius on the boards. qnorapname.bandcamp.com to hear a master at work

DUES

Respect and gratitude to the original Minneapolis scene: your hard work and innovation made our world far easier to live in.

All glory to The Most High