

MONKEY

THE STORYTELLING GAME OF THE JOURNEY TO THE WEST



By NEWT NEWPORT

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Monkey

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This book is dedicated to

Matthew "Ginger" Harrison.

*Without whose friendship this book, and a great deal of
other happiness in my life, would not exist.*

and of course my own little Monkeys

Evie and Henry.

Credits

Author: Newt Newport

Cover: Jon Hodgson

Editors: Paul Mitchener & Mark Galeotti

1st Proof reader: Sacha Ratcliffe

Final proof checking: Dominic Mooney

Character sheet designed by Gwen Mott

The Pilgrims

Berenice Baker, Dan Barker, Ciaran Begley, Stuart Blackburn, Mark Conwy, Andrew Davies, Andrew Edwards, Zane Gulliford, Roy Hughes, Alex Joss, Gwen Mott, Donald Oddy, Julia Yin, Alex Joss, Stuart Mousir-Harrison, Simon Munk, Stuart Nathan, John Ossoway, Joseph Pollard, Graham Raynes, Rob Rundle.

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Introduction

The story of the Stone Monkey

A new day dawns high upon an ancient mountain. From a stone egg, a fully-formed Stone Monkey is born. Immortal watchers report this auspicious event to the the Jade Emperor, ruler of the Western Heaven.

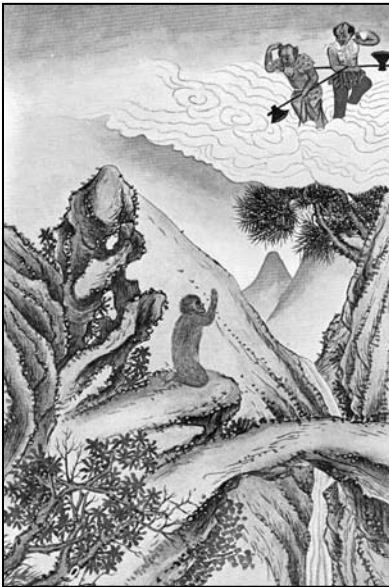
The Stone Monkey is bold and energetic and goes on to lead the other monkeys to the Land of Water Curtain Mountain. By being the first to leap the high waterfall and see what is at the top, he becomes their King.

Life in the Land of Water Curtain Mountain is idyllic, but after decades of bliss the Monkey King becomes restless.

“What is it, our Lord?” his old monkey advisers ask.

“I am ruler of all that I see, but one day I will be dead and forgotten,” the Monkey King anxiously replies.

“I have heard that in the lands of man, there are Taoist Sages who know the secret of Immortality,” says one of the old monkeys.



“Excellent! Then I shall find such a Sage, who will be sure to teach me. I will need not fear death and you will not need fear the loss of your beloved King, my little monkeys!” exclaims the Monkey King.

Greatly excited, the Stone Monkey prepares immediately for the journey and after saying goodbye leaves his subjects for the lands of men.

If, gentle reader, you wish to learn what became of the restless Monkey King, his quest for Immortality and the trouble into which it got it him, then please read on.

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The Journey to the West

This storytelling game draws its inspiration from the 16th century Chinese novel *Journey to the West* by Wu Ch'eng-en. It is more commonly known as *Monkey*, the name of its English translation by Arthur Waley (published by Penguin), in the West. The story is set in a colourful version of China, featuring Immortals and locations from popular Chinese mythology, weaving a tale that is at once fantastic, satirical, action-packed and spiritual in nature.

The novel tells the story of the exploits of the Immortal Monkey King. Born from a stone egg, he rises to become ruler of all the monkeys. Worried that he will not live forever, he leaves his little monkeys and searches the world in search of a Taoist Master who knows the secret of Immortality. Finally, he meets the Taoist Sage, the Patriarch, who takes him on as a student and he learns what he desires. Monkey's impatient nature soon lands him in trouble with his teacher, who dismisses him, warning him never to mention that he was his student. He returns to his Monkey Kingdom only to find the Little Monkeys enslaved by a Demon of Havoc. Immortal and now a master of Taoist magic, he makes short work of the demon. Then he sets his mind to attaining a place amongst the ranks of the Heavenly Immortals of the Western Taoist Heaven. On the advice of the wise Planet Venus, the Jade Emperor, ruler of the Western Heaven, makes Monkey the Heavenly Stable Boy, to keep him out of trouble. Monkey finally realises his lowly status in the ranks of Heaven. Feeling slighted, denied the honour his ego demands, he runs amok, causing all sorts of trouble. Meanwhile, Great Buddha in the Eastern Buddhist



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Heaven hears that there is trouble in the Western Heaven and pops over to see what is happening. Seeing the troublesome Monkey, he traps him under a mountain, saying that one day a passerby will release him and provide him with the means to re-enter Heaven.

The story continues as Monkey is released by the Buddhist Priest Tripitaka, charged by the Tang Emperor of China to recover sacred scrolls missing from the Chinese canon of Buddhist writings. In the priest's service, Monkey accompanies him from China to India to collect them. Two other fallen Immortals also seeking redemption join them, Sandy and Pigsy.

After many adventures, they regain the scrolls and Monkey, who has been judged to have redeemed himself, enters the Buddhist Heaven.

In this game, the players play Immortals who, like Monkey, Sandy and Pigsy, have fallen from favour with the Heavenly authorities and seek to regain their place in Heaven.



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Earth, Heaven's mirror

The game takes place in a mythological version of ancient China. Mortals swarm the great cities of the Tang dynasty (7th-10th century AD) and the earthly emperor is directly responsible to his Heavenly counterpart, the Jade Emperor, who sits in his court in the Western Heaven. The Jade Emperor is surrounded by a celestial bureaucracy of Immortals who are responsible for the smooth running of the cosmos. In the Eastern Heaven sits Great Buddha, who with the aid of the other Buddhas and Bodhisattvas offers the virtuous man release from the eternal cycle of rebirth for those prepared to follow the way.



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Restless and disobedient Immortals

Each player controls an 'Immortal'. This is their alter-ego in the story which the Narrator describes to them. In Chinese myth, Immortality is not only granted to the gods. They may be awakened intelligent Animal Spirits, whose bestial nature gets them into all sorts of mischief yet gives them abilities beyond that of any mortal. They may be Immortals who serve in the Celestial Bureaucracy. Or they may be Ascended masters, Kung fu experts and Taoist sages who have trained hard in the mystic arts and attained Immortality

as a result. They may even be demons seeking to change their evil nature. An Immortal has a number of numerical scores, known as **Ranks** which are attached to short descriptive words for quick reference. Each **Rank** measures how powerful or skilful an Immortal is in a particular area.

Each Immortal has **Skills** which represent areas of expertise. For example, Cat Kung Fu will cover not only the fighting methods of this martial art, but also associated skills of perception, stealth and balance. They fall into three broad categories: Mind, Body and Spirit.

Attitudes describe an Immortal's personality or physical traits. These are strong and noticeable to anyone meeting them. If skills tell you what an Immortal can do, attitudes tell you how they do it. Attitudes give a bonus when used to perform actions. They can be divided between the Yin (feminine, passive) and Yang (masculine, active), neither of which is more effective than the other.

All Immortals have **Magical Powers**. These may stem from mystic items that they have acquired, spells that they know, or abilities gained through Kung-fu practice.



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Virtue measures the standing of the Immortal in the eyes of Heaven. Evil demons have a Virtue of 0, while saintly Priests have a Virtue of 6. The players represent Immortals who have fallen out of favour with the Heavens, and thus have a starting Virtue of 1. Through right action, they seek to increase their Virtue to 6 and be readmitted into one of the Heavens. Players set the goals which will gain them Virtue and thereby steer their Immortal's story.

Fortune represents a pool of good luck upon which the Immortal can draw. It can create long-term effects, such as improving an Immortal's scores, or temporary effects, such as giving a bonus when performing Actions. Once spent, Fortune is lost. It can be gained through harmonious or virtuous behaviour and lost through disruptive or non-virtuous acts. Unlike Virtue, increases in Fortune are awarded by the Narrator.

What you need to play

A group of two to seven players.

One player takes on the role of Narrator, who describes the game's setting and plays all the supporting Immortals, while the other players play the Immortals who take centre stage in the story. While the game can work as a very intimate and intense 'one on one' game (one Immortal run by a player, with a Narrator) the game works best with a group of three to six Immortals.

Pencils/pens and paper

For writing out the player Immortals' details, drawing rough maps and making notes during the game.

A deck of cards

Each player and the Narrator has a deck of cards. Players and Narrators draw cards from the deck to resolve actions during the adventure, such as fights and lively debates.

An adventure

This can either be pre-written, such as the ones in the back of this book, or created by the Narrator. Guidance on how to create adventures is given in the Narrator's section of the book.

Some time

A game of Monkey typically takes between three and four hours.

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Imagination

Since the game does not have a physical board, all the action takes place in the imagination of the players and takes the form of a conversation between the players and the Narrator. The players describe their Immortals' actions and the Narrator describes the reaction of the non-player Immortals or environment.

The Narrator

One of the players needs to be the Narrator. The Narrator is responsible for describing the surroundings and the situations in which the player Immortals find themselves. The Narrator also describes the actions and plays the part of any other Immortals and mortals, called non-player characters (or NPCs), that the player Immortals encounter. They may range from an elderly woman who works the ferry that the Immortals are using to cross the mighty river that bars their way, or the angry Dragon King of the Western Sea whom they have just offended by their impolite behaviour.

Narrators need to know the rules and guidelines in the players' section, for they are the person that the players will look to in order to clear up any misunderstanding or disputes about the rules.

While the role of Narrator is pivotal, the Narrator's section provides a great deal of help and tips on how to run the game smoothly and effortlessly. It also gives an overview of the many interesting locations and Immortals that populate the world of Monkey.

The Game System

Most actions that the player Immortals attempt can be resolved using common sense; there isn't any need to use the rules in this book. Simply by talking it through between players, the action will be resolved. When the outcome of an Immortal's action is uncertain, the Narrator may ask for an Action. Each player has a deck of playing cards, which is used in this situation. Aces are high; Jokers count as twenty, a much higher score, that when drawn usually means an automatic and resounding success. The Narrator can call for one of two types of Action:

A **Simple Action** is called when a Narrator wishes quickly to resolve a conflict in the story, such as climbing a mountain or checking to see if they can hear the rustling of the ghostly breeze behind them. The player randomly draws a number of cards equal to the skill he is

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using. He gains an additional card for using an appropriate Attitude, such as drawing on his Very Determined in scaling the mountain. The opposing Immortal or force, in this case the Mountain, draws a number of cards equal to the skill or resistance they are using, with a bonus card for appropriate Attitudes or environmental conditions. For example, the Mountain pulls an extra card because of the weather: it has been raining heavily. The two players add the total of their cards, with victory going to the higher score.

A **Dramatic Action** is resolved in exactly the same way by pulling cards. However, Dramatic Actions are called when a Narrator wishes to focus the game session on an important and lengthy scene in the story, such as a long, tough fight against a River Dragon. The Action is not resolved in one draw of the cards. For each lost round, a participant gains a Strike and when they have three Strikes against them, they are knocked out of the action. The eventual winner(s) are the characters who have knocked all their opponents out of the Action

For more detail about the Action system, see Chapter 3.

Now that you have an introduction to this game, yet are anxious to start, please be patient, gentle reader and read the next chapter, where you will learn how to create your own Immortal.



Immortal creation

Monkey seeks Immortality

So Monkey travelled for ten years across the lands of men. He learnt their ways and wore their clothes, but instead of Immortality, he found that men were more interested in the fleeting ways of fame and fortune. Very disappointed, he eventually reached the coast of the Western Ocean.

“Surely there must be Immortals on the other side of that water,” he thought.

So he boarded a raft and traversed the Western Ocean and came to the Western Continent. There he found a great mountain and started climbing it. While climbing the forested eastern side, he heard someone singing this song:

“Happy and without woes of any kind.

With ax in hand along my simple way,

Singing through the marketplace,

I barter wood for three pints of rice.

Free of scheming and plotting and with Simplicity my life’s intention,

I meet Immortals everywhere I go

Expounding the Yellow Court.”

On hearing the song, Monkey thought that he had finally found an Immortal. He excitedly leapt out to confront the singer. He was startled to find what seemed only an ordinary woodsman, but nonetheless he bowed and cried out: “Oh wise Immortal, your disciple stands before you!” The woodsman, surprised by Monkey’s outburst, replied “I am not an Immortal, you are mistaken”.

“Then why do you sing of the Yellow Court, a secret only known to the Immortals?”

“My life is hard and full of pain, and one taught me the song to comfort me when I am afraid. I was worried just now, so broke into song.”

“Please tell me the name of this Immortal and where he lives,” asked Monkey.

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“He is called the Patriarch and lives in a cave three miles up this mountain,” replied the Woodsman.

So Monkey walked to the Cave of the Patriarch and became one of the Taoist Master’s disciples and took the religious name “Aware of Vacuity”. From the Patriarch he learnt the Taoist art of internal alchemy and eventually became an Immortal.

Monkey was a troublesome student, though, and after an incident where he showed off his new-found shape-changing abilities by turning into a pine tree in front of the other students, the Patriarch thought it best to send him on his way.

As he explained why Monkey must go, the Patriarch finished by saying:

“Oh, and if you get into trouble, and I have no doubt that you will, I strictly forbid you to mention that it was I who taught you!”

If you wish to learn what became of “Aware of Vacuity” when he returned home, please read on.

Immortal Generation

All the player characters are Immortals. Immortals are anyone knowing or possessing the secret of Immortality, whether created that way by the powers of the Universe or by learning it through hard work. Immortals make up the ranks of gods and goddesses who live in the Taoist Western Heaven, the Buddhas and Bodhisattva who inhabit the Buddhist Eastern Heaven, the Demons of the Ten Hells and the great transcended Taoist Sages.

Immortal creation can be seen as answering a series of questions to work out what the player’s alter ego in the game is like:

How is your character Immortal?

The first question that needs answering is how the character gained Immortality. Broadly speaking there are five types of Immortal:

- Animal Spirit
- Celestial Immortal
- Demon
- Local Deity
- Transcended Master

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Animal Spirit

The world is full of animals. Some of them are intelligent and can assume human-like form. Monkey himself is an example of an animal spirit who gains Immortality by learning the secrets from an Immortal Taoist Sage.

Typical Attitudes: Loud, Strong, Agile, Rash, Fast, Obnoxious.

Typical skills: Kung-Fu, Acrobat, Merchant, Rogue, Wu Shaman.



Celestial Immortal

These Immortals are native to the Western Heaven. The character was part of the Jade Emperor's celestial bureaucracy. Through misdeeds, determined by the player, they have fallen out of favour with the Heavenly authorities, though, and find themselves on Earth to atone for their crimes.

Typical Attitudes: Noble, Clever, Chaste, Quiet, Wise, Reflective.

Typical skills: Mandarin, Scholar, Poet, Kung-Fu, Soldier, Magistrate, Taoist Priest.

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Demon

Demons dwell in the dark hells of King Yama, punishing the wicked and sometimes emerging onto earth to create havoc. Occasionally, they are captured by the Heavenly authorities and made to mend their evil nature. Indeed, at times Celestial Immortals fallen out of favour with the Jade Emperor are punished by being turned into a Demon's fearsome form.

Both Sandy and Pigsy are examples of Celestial Immortals who have been turned into Demons as punishment. Sandy was a Marshal of Heaven who broke a jade bowl at a Heavenly feast and was cast down to earth in the form of a terrifying human-eating water demon. Pigsy, too, was a Marshal of Heaven, banished and turned into a man-eating pig demon lusting after and making inappropriate advances to one of the handmaidens of the Queen Mother of the Western Heaven.

Typical Attitudes: Stupid, Lazy, Obnoxious, Lusty, Strong.

Typical skills: Soldier, Mandarin*, Magistrate*, Rogue, Kung-Fu

* Despite their unruly nature, Demons who have served in King Yama's Hells are likely to have picked up these skills in during their service.



Local Deities

These Immortals are responsible for a physical feature such as a river or hill or the fertility of an area of land. They are responsible to the Jade Emperor, via the appropriate Ministry, for the smooth running of their area.

Typical Attitudes: Solid, Dependable, Wise.

Typical skills: Kung-Fu, Acrobat, Merchant, Rogue, Wu Shaman.

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Transcended Master

Through long study of Taoist Alchemy, an arduous regime of mental and physical practices, the Master has moved beyond physical death and into the realm of the Immortal. However, a fatal weakness bars them from entering Heaven and a long and arduous set of adventures must be embarked upon to overcome it.

Typical Attitudes: Wise, Reflective, Quiet, Clever, Focused.

Typical skills: Kung-Fu, Taoist Priest, Scholar, Mandarin, Magistrate.

Other types of characters

Mortals

These are the majority of humankind and intelligent animals. Monkey's tribe of Little Monkeys and the citizens of Tang China are both classic examples of mortals. In Monkey, they do not take centre stage, but the player characters must be careful not to injure them or place them in harm's way.

Mortals do things in a straightforward non-magical way as a rule. They rely simply upon their skills to get things done. Some mortals, such as Taoist Sages and Buddhist Priests do know magic rituals but they will use them sparingly so as not to offend the powers of Heaven.

Occasionally, a mortal will be a Supporting Character, perhaps the unwitting dupe of a Demon Villain. See the Action chapter for more details on Strikes, Extras and Supporting characters. However, most mortals are unnamed extras in Monkey, and require one Strike to take them out of an Action and the story. Mortals are able to die. After a single strike in a potentially deadly physical conflict, such as combat or resisting poison, they die and leave the mortal realm, passing on to the dark kingdom of Lord Yama, judge of the dead. (Although a very difficult magical practice, a mortal can perceive and transcend mortality and become Immortal.)

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Great Immortals

The Great Immortals include the Jade Emperor of the Western Heaven, Lord Buddha and King Yama, ruler of the Ten Hells.

Great Immortals are the fundamental and immovable powers of the universe. They are unaffected by time. They do not die, or age, or change personality. They cannot die or be dispelled. Their actions are always in accordance with the Harmony of the Universe. They do not act outside the remit of their powers - they have followers for that - but when they do act it is always with complete certainty.

Great Immortals always win any action they undertake. They do not need to draw any cards. A Joker drawn against them will temporarily halt them, but does not count as a defeat. All this does is drag out the action. However, a cunning player can use this as an opportunity to spin an entertaining story and thus gain Fortune for their character's actions. Monkey's famous run in with Lord Buddha is an example of Jokers being played.

If not allowed to take an action, they can instantly summon an appropriate follower. Great Immortals have literally hundreds of Lesser Immortals to do their bidding.

Great Immortals do not act against each other. Instead they work in harmony, often sending aid to each other. For example, when Monkey ran amok in the Western Heaven, Lord Buddha left the Eastern Heaven to go and help.



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Attitudes

Attitudes are strong personality or physical traits that the character possesses. Each attitude is part of a pairing of the Yin (passive) and Yang (active) and can be based on the Mind, Body or Spirit.

For example Yin/Yang pairings of attitudes could be Stupid/Clever, Dizzy/Focused, Weak/Strong or Chaste/Lusty.

A note on Yin/Yang

Chinese philosophy centres on the idea of a unified cosmos where two interacting forces hold the universe in delicate balance: Yin, the passive feminine element and Yang, its active masculine counterpart.



Whether something is Yin or whether it is Yang is measured by what you are relating the object to. It is may not a negative/positive or even a relationship of opposites.

It is a principal that underlies much Chinese philosophy, martial arts and belief systems, such as I Ching divination.

For example, the classic pairing is that Yin is Female while Yang is Male, and another is that the side of a hill in shadow is Yin, while its illuminated face is Yang. In martial arts, the leg on which the body's weight rests is said to be full, or Yang, and the 'empty' leg is Yin.

However one example that breaks this mould is comparing opposites is where you are comparing like with like. For example: I am shorter than you, so my height is Yin while yours is Yang.

Use in play

If an Attitude that the character possesses can be applied to a skill draw then the character gets a bonus card.

Important: When a player is using an attitude in play, they must give a quick description of how they are using it. If they cannot do this to the Narrator's satisfaction, they cannot play the extra card.

For example Pigsy, who has the Mind attitude of Stupid, attempts to use his utter inanity to annoy a farmer in such a way that the farmer

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feeds him, just to be rid of him. Blathering Pigsy berates the farmer for his lack of compassion, in not caring for his fellow man. He has walked 100 leagues today. Would not the farmer give him some honeyed bread? Pigsy already gets to draw 5 cards thanks to his Convince Skill of 5; he also gets a bonus card thanks to the creative use of his Attribute.

Stacking Attitude bonuses

A player may not gain additional bonuses from adding more than one Attitude to a Skill.

Attitude List

Here is a list of Attitudes, in Yin/Yang pairings, listed in three groups, Mind, Body and Spirit.

If you wish to pick your attitudes randomly then draw a card and consult this list. The first of each pairing is Yin, the other is Yang. Black cards give the Yin result and Red cards the Yang. Ignore results that give you either an attitude or a attitude of the same pair that your character already possesses.

Mind

2. Stupid/Clever

3. Lazy/Industrious

4. Obnoxious/Charming

5. Chaste/Lusty

6. Dizzy/Focused

7. Quiet/Loud

Body

8. Weak/Strong

9. Clumsy/Agile

10. Slow/Fast

Jack. Thin/Fat

Spirit

King. Wise/Rash

Queen. Reflective/
Reactive

Ace. Noble/Base

New Attitudes

Feel free to add new Attitudes to the list. If as a player you want to add one that isn't listed, discuss it with your Narrator. Between you, make sure it isn't really covered already and decide on its opposite.

Remember that the Yin/Yang pairing is not necessarily negative/positive or even representative of opposites.

Starting Attitudes

Each Immortal starts with five Attitudes, chosen or randomly picked from the Attitudes list.

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Dominant Attitudes (Animal Spirits only)

Animal Sprits rely on their natures more than their skills at the beginning of play. They have spent more time trusting their instincts and natural abilities than in the skills they have learnt. Therefore, while they start with fewer skill ranks than other Immortals (see below), they choose two attitudes, each from a different grouping (in other words, no more than one from each of Mind, Spirit and Body) to be dominant attitudes. When used in play these attitudes give a bonus of two cards instead of one. Put a star next to each of these dominant attitudes.

Skills

Skills are things that the character can do. They are either mundane or magical in origin or, in the case of Immortals, a mixture of both. They have a rank of 1-7:

Rank	Description	Meaning
1	Novice	Minimal training or natural talent.
2	Trained	A meaningful amount of training, but still learning.
3	Journeyman	Regularly performs this skill in a professional capacity.
4	Expert	Other people look to this person for training and advice.
5	Specialist	Very knowledgeable and spends a great deal of time practicing this skill.
6	Master	Very accomplished and skillful, looked up to as an acknowledged keeper of the tradition.
7	Grand Master	The best in the world at that skill.

Skills have a numerical Skill Rank, such as Acrobat 2. This is the number of cards that are drawn when the Skill is used (see Skill use below).

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Adding new skills to the list

This list is by no means exhaustive. If players want to add new Skills they can do so with the Narrator's permission and they can be modelled on existing ones. Likewise a player may alter a Skill's use to include abilities not written in the description, with the Narrator's permission.

Skills come in the format of a Name and a Description, which describes what the skill package covers and some of its uses.

Skill List

Skills are grouped in three areas: Mind, Body and Spirit. Each skill is actually a group of abilities named after the occupation with which it is associated. Rather than tightly define what each Skill does, suggestions and examples are given, but ultimately it is up to the players and the Narrator to agree between them what a Skill can do. This makes them a flexible tool during play for both players and Narrators to come up with exciting narrative.

Mind

These are Skills that involve rational thought and are the preserve of Scholars and logical thinkers.

Actor

This profession includes a rich assortment of artists from street performers to organised opera troupes.

This skill set includes acting, disguise, public speaking, mimicry and the ability to influence crowds.



Courtier

This professional class includes all the hangers-on at the Emperor's court. They are adept at surviving its daily intrigues whilst preserving and adding to their power base.

This skill set includes diplomacy, etiquette, dancing, a knowledge of the hierarchy of the court, singing and intrigue.

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Magistrate

These officials, normally known by the title of Judge, are responsible for investigating crimes, capturing criminals and passing out punishments.

This skill set includes investigative abilities, disguise, boxing, etiquette and knowledge of the Jade Emperor's laws.

Mandarin

This is the name of a class of administrators who keep both the mortal and immortal bureaucracies running smoothly. They are both literate and numerate and able to understand the complex social hierarchies that run both Heaven and Earth.

This skill set includes literacy, numeracy, persuading those of lower status, grovelling before rulers, understanding administrative edicts and bossing around subordinates.

Merchant

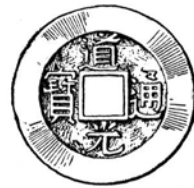
Although rich in wealth, merchants are scorned, considered amongst the lowest of the low because they handle money, something regarded as spiritually impure.

This skill set includes bargaining and evaluation skills, care of beasts of burden, literacy, sourcing goods and bribing criminals and corrupt officials.

Poet

A literate class who, as well as being cultural figures, have a command of language that often sees them employed by noble families to celebrate their achievements and bring culture to their households.

This skill set includes public speaking, literacy, the composition of verse and the ability to find gainful employment with a noble patron.



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Ruler

Emperors, kings, chiefs, abbots or anyone who has responsibility for leading a group of people falls into this category and has this skill set.

It includes issuing orders, commanding subordinates, listening to advisers, understanding problems, managing resources, determining taxes, and observing rituals.



Scholar

The Empire is full of men and women who make their living through thinking and the application of thought, such as teachers, librarians, lawyers and engineers. Many follow the teachings of Confucius whose numerous edicts give man a set of rules by which they can successfully live their lives.

This skill set includes literacy, a knowledge of languages outside the Empire, logical thinking, debating (or arguing as others call it), philosophy and calligraphy.

Body

These are physical skills, the speciality of warriors, acrobats and martial artists.

Acrobat

This skill covers all the balancing, tumbling and jumping skills that a professional acrobat would know.

Craftsman

Although mind and spirit play a part in the crafts, it is still by hard physical work that most crafters accomplish their works.

As well as the skills of the craft itself, this set includes trading, getting the right price for your goods, dealing with petty bureaucrats and avoiding criminals.

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Kung-Fu

This skill set is the preserve of martial artists. Each Kung-Fu style is based upon the moves of a particular animal. So, for example, there are Crane, Monkey and Mantis styles. As well as being a set of fighting techniques, each Kung-Fu teaches body conditioning and movement skills. Therefore a tall thin and sinewy Crane fighter fights using long jabbing techniques, is able to take 'flight', leaping long distances in single bounds, as well as walk safely through swampland. A style may also have weapons associated with it as well as the unarmed techniques. Kung-Fu also teaches spiritual discipline, so these skill packages also give the character the basics of Taoism and Buddhism. At Rank 5 and upwards, the spiritual teachings of the style become much more important.



Soldier

Most warriors in the Empire are soldiers, who live tough, disciplined lives. They include foot soldiers, archers (both bowman and crossbowmen) and the cavalry. Unlike Kung-Fu warriors, soldiers work best in large, ordered groups.

This skill set includes use of the appropriate weapons and armour, self-discipline, leadership, taking orders, tactics and the ability to find supplies.

Rogue

This skill set represents all those men and women who make a living through deceit and trickery. They are not necessarily heartless criminals, although there are many in the Empire who have fallen on hard times, and have to supplement their livelihoods by dishonest means.

This skill set includes the base skills of thievery (purse lifting, burglary, mugging) as well as avoiding the law, forgery, disguise and the evaluation and disposal of stolen goods.

Monkey

Spirit

The area of spirit covers mystical and the magical vocations of magicians, sages and priests.



Taoist

Taoism is a philosophy of living that has its roots in the shamanic practices of the early Chinese. Its main spokesperson is Lao Tzu (literally, 'Old Sage'), who wrote in the Tao Te Ching (The Book of the Way) the core philosophies of Taoism. It holds that all creation is part of a single whole, the Tao, which in itself is impossible to see except in fleeting moments. By practicing the Way, a Taoist seeks to be at one with the Tao, achieving wisdom

and Immortality. Taoists are especially interested in observing the unspoilt natural world, seeing it as being closer to the Tao than the cultured and confused civilisation which has arisen in China.

There are many schools of Taoism, each practicing its own set of mystical practices. All these are included in the skill. These include:

Taoist Alchemy comprises two branches. *External* concerns itself with the preparations of potions and pills in a quest for Immortality and *Internal* seeks to achieve the same working with inner energy, using physical exercises and meditation. As well as the supreme and very difficult goal of achieving Immortality, Alchemy also works on general health and well being.

I-Ching divination. After asking a question, the diviner throws a set of yarrow sticks onto the ground and consults the I-Ching (The Book of Changes) from which they receive a vague answer, itself open to interpretation.

Paper talismans. Using written Chinese symbols, the sage can create single-use Talismans that typically protect against demons or evil spirits, bring blessings to the family or carry out some similar magic.

Feng-Shui. Literally 'Water and Earth', this art of geomancy is used by its practitioners to ensure that buildings are built in accordance with the ways of Heaven, and that the energy flows around the building bring luck to those working or living there.

Monkey

Buddhist

Buddhism originally comes from India, where the Prince Siddhartha Gautama discovered the core teachings after a long period of meditation on the meaning of suffering in the world. Upon his enlightenment he realised that life was a wheel of pain and suffering in which a soul is reincarnated continuously. The body of each life is appropriate to the person's karma, literally the sum of their actions. So a man who is selfish in a former life may be reborn as a dog and a murderer as an insect. Demons are the reincarnations of the most foul of evildoers, but even they may gain good karma and be born into a better life.

What Great Buddha realised was that only by practicing the noble eightfold path of right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration can a person escape the wheel of reincarnation. In short, by performing good actions, avoiding evil actions and by training the mind through meditation, a person who successfully follows Great Buddha's teachings will himself achieve Buddhahood and the state of Nirvana, freeing them from the wheel of reincarnation.

As well as being literate, Buddhist priests can also ward off evil spirits and demons with chants and prayers.

Wu Shaman

These are China's nature- and spirit-worshiping shamans. In early China, each tribe would have a Wu to act as an intermediary between the spirits that inhabit the natural world and the dead ancestor spirits. They are responsible for restoring harmony and expelling bad spirits that have possessed human victims. Although replaced in civilised areas by Taoist priests, Wu still exist in the wilderness.

This skill group covers ecstatic dancing, speaking with the dead, communicating with nature spirits, the exorcism of bad spirits, herbalism and divination.



Monkey

Starting Skills

Each beginning character chooses three Skills. If you want a balanced Immortal that is proficient in all areas of expertise, choose one from each of the Skill Groups (Mind, Body, Spirit). Otherwise, feel free to pick from one or two of the Skill groups.

One Skill is the character's Primary Skill and has a starting rank of 5 (Specialist). One is the character's secondary skill and has a starting rank of 3 (Journeyman) and the final Skill has a rank of 1 (Novice).

Transcended Masters and Animal Spirits are the exception to this rule.

- Transcended Masters specialise in either a Kung-Fu or Taoist style, which is their Primary Skill and starts at rank 6 (Master). However they have had less time to spend on their secondary Skill, which starts at 2. Their final skill is at rank 1 (Novice)
- Animal spirits rely more on their animal natures than trained skills. Therefore they have their Primary Skill at a starting rank of 4 (Expert), their secondary skill at a rank of 2 (Trained) and their final skill at a rank of 1 (Novice).

Default skill rating

If you make an action that you don't have a Skill in, you simply draw one card and may not swap in any cards held in your Fortune Hand.



Monkey

Magical Powers

Magical powers in Monkey come from a variety of sources, from innate abilities to spells and blessings learnt through Religious or Sorcerous practice. Characters may have innate magical understanding or knowledge through one of their Skills; for example Buddhist Priest provides a variety of blessings against Evil and Taoism teaches I-Ching divination. Also, by virtue of their Immortality, many of the characters' actions are infused with magic. All these minor magics are covered by the Skill that they fall under.



Immortal Powers

Every action of an Immortal is an invocation of the energies that flow through the Immortal from the Universe. Their effectiveness is well beyond the apparent physical or mental capacities expected from their form.

All Immortals have the ability to **Fly through the Air** and **Shapechange**. Both these abilities start at a rank of 1. See the Magic section below for more details and other abilities your Immortal may possess.

In addition, Immortals cannot be killed. However, during life-threatening combat they lose 'Strikes' of which Player Immortals have three at the beginning of any session. When they lose all their Strikes they drop out of the story and may disappear back to their home kingdom, as Ghosts and Demons do, or simply be too exhausted to fight and can be easily bound and captured, as is the case with more physical Immortals such as animal spirits. They then regenerate until they can once more participate in the action. The method of their Immortality may limit how they can regenerate. For example, cutting up and scattering the body parts of the Spider

Monkey

Demon may stop him regenerating to terrorise the Western Heaven and Lord Buddha trapped even Monkey under a mountain. For more on Strikes see Chapter 3: Action.

Magic Powers are more unique and powerful techniques that the character knows or developed or has acquired from using a magical item.

For example

Monkey has the following Magical powers.

A magical cloud trapeze. *This spell is Monkey's version of Fly through the Air, which summons up a cloud that Monkey can use to travel to the four corners of the earth.*

The ability to change his shape, *most famously when he battled Prince Natha and transformed into a giant, three-headed, six-armed version of himself.*

Both these are common to all Immortals. The following are unique to Monkey.

A magical iron rod, *which is as heavy as the Milky Way and which can change size from the size of a needle (Monkey usually carries it tucked behind his ear), to a huge column many men thick, which is how Monkey uses it in his fight against the giant sized Prince Natha.*

'Little monkeys' *a spell which allows him to take a handful of his hairs and turn them into miniature versions of himself.*

*Monkey also has the skill **Taoist Sage**, and it is this that gives him his Immortality from the techniques of Internal Alchemy that he learnt from Patriarch. While important to note, magical powers derived from a Skill are much less dramatic than when Monkey uses his Magic Iron Staff or invokes his Little Monkeys.*

Each magic power has a rating 1-6. When the character gains the power it starts at 1, and must be developed over time. Each magic power also has a limitation, a specific condition where the power does not work.

Magic powers act exactly the same as Skills when used to perform actions. They can either be used on their own, drawing an action hand equal to the skill rank, or used in support of a mundane Skill, in which case the power's rank is added to that of the Skill.

Monkey

Some sample magic powers

The following short list gives some examples of magic powers from Chinese mythology. They take the form of a description of what the power does, followed by any limitations that may be imposed upon it. Players are encouraged to think up their own magic powers, which fit in with their concept of their character. Look at the six example Immortals at the back of the book for more ideas.

Fly through the air

All Immortals are able to Fly through the air, and gain this magical ability at a rank of 1.

Limitation: Immortals are unable to carry mortals while in flight, since mortals are as heavy as a mountain to an Immortal in flight.

Shape change

All Immortals are able to change their shape. Monkey does this many times within the length of the epic. When he first learns the magic from Patriarch Sudobi, he turns himself into a pine tree to the delight of his fellow students. Later, when attacked by Prince Natha, son of the Heavenly General, he matches the Prince's terrifying form of a three-headed, six-armed demon.

Limitation: The rating of this power gives a measure of how convincing the any disguise is if used. For example therefore when Monkey first learns how to change shape, he turns into a pretty unconvincing pine tree, which the Patriarch is immediately able to spot.

Float on water

Banished to earth, and turned into the form of an eternally hungry demon, Friar Sandy preyed upon the travellers who came past the cave in which he he lived. Amongst them were virtuous Buddhist pilgrims. All the other bones sank to the bottom of the pool by the cave, but the skulls of the Buddhists floated. When he became one of Tripitaka's pilgrims, the Priest ordered Sandy to collect the skulls and make a necklace.

This power allows the Immortal to float on the surface of water.

Limitation: While this power is being used it is impossible for the Immortal to sink, for whatever reason, beneath the surface of the water.

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Disassociate spirit from body

Li Tiequai, one of the Eight Taoist Immortals, wished to visit a sacred mountain. Leaving his body behind, he told his disciple to look after it, burning it if he did not return by the sixth day. Li Tiequai's visit to the mountain took longer than six days, forcing him to find a new body, that of a ugly beggar with a crippled leg. Thus his nickname 'Tiequai', which means 'with the iron crutch.'

This power allows the Immortal's spirit to leave his body. As well as being able to wander freely, the Immortal may attempt to possess another. To do so, perform a simple action, the rank of this power against an appropriate Spirit Skill of the character that is being possessed.

Limitation: While the spirit of the Immortal goes wandering, the body must be kept safe.

Magical Items

In Monkey all the pilgrims have magical items that aid them on the quest. Monkey has his tiger skin clothes, his Iron Staff and, rather less useful to him, the contracting iron head band which Kuan Yin puts on the unruly ape so that Tripitaka can, at the chant of a simple spell, punish him for wrongdoing. Pigsy has a magic rake, Sandy has his necklace of floating Buddhist priest skulls and Tripitaka has his horse, which is really the sons of one of the Dragon Kings turned into a never-tiring mount and a robe given to him by Kuan Yin, a gift from Great Buddha to help him on his journey.

A player may decide to put one or more of his Immortal's magic powers in an item, such as a sword. Since the item can be misplaced or stolen, as a benefit one of the powers in the item may have an additional rank of power.

Players may choose to add any of the powers they hold from the main powers list (see below) but here are some examples from traditional Chinese myth.

Sword

This is often seen as a symbol of the warrior's connection to the divine and an embodiment of his will, magical due to their use by a great hero or because they are gifts from the gods. Also, in Taoist and Wuist rituals the sword often has powers for exorcising Demons

Power: Hero's blade. This gives a bonus to the Immortal's fighting skill equal to the power rank of the weapon.

Monkey

Limitation: The weapon can only be used in combats that are virtuous. If used to be evil or oppressive, it gives no bonus.

Power: Exorcise Demons. Use sword's power rank against an appropriate magical skill of the demon to see if the Demon is cast out from a human host.

Limitation: Only works on demons that are possessing a human.

Drum

Massed ranks of drummers go into battle with the armies of the Tang Empire, summoning the thunder and fire of the weather gods with which this instrument is associated. Such instruments inspire both player and listeners.

Power: Inspire confidence in friends and self. Add cards equal to drum's power rank to listeners' action hand.

Limitation: Must be able to hear and only lasts as long as the drum is being played.

Bell

This instrument is traditionally used to summon the gods and spirits to a temple precinct. A bell may be associated with a player Immortal's patron (see Chapter 4: Developing the story) and be used to summon them for advice.

Power: Summon patron. This power allows the Immortal to summon his patron without spending a Fortune point (see Chapter 4 for more details).

Limitation: If the Immortal overuses the bell, the patron may become resistant to the bell's summons (add one resistance rank per session each time the Immortal uses the bell).

Fan

As well as obvious uses to move the air, the fan can waft current's of chi (life energy) towards a target This can be used to heal the wounded or exorcise demons (see Sword, above).

Power: Air blast. The wielder of the fan can send great gusts of air to knock opponents off their feet or blow airborne targets many leagues away.

Limitation: This power doesn't work where there is no air, such as underwater. Also, the recipient must be within the wielder's line of sight.

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Power: Chi-flow. The wielder of the fan can send a flow of chi towards a wounded target. In combat, the waft regenerates as many lost cards from the target's action hand as the power's rank.

Limitation: The recipient must be within the wielder's line of sight.

Mirrors

In Ancient China, magic mirrors are made of bronze and are convex in shape. One side is highly polished to form a reflective surface and the rounded shape elaborately decorated with carvings of animals from the Chinese zodiac. The Thunder God has two and is depicted projecting lightning. Other magic mirrors are used to show an Immortal's true form. A Feng-Shui mirror, an octagonal frame painted green or black with the eight trigrams (known as the Pa Kua) painted around a small central mirror is used to reflect destructive earth energies.

Power: Reveal true form. Pit the mirror's power rank against the Immortal's disguise power rank to see if the mirror reveals the Immortal's true form.

Limitation: There must be light to cast the reflection. In dim or poor light, reduce the mirror's power rank appropriately. Also the Immortal in question must cast a reflection – although this in itself is a warning.

Power: Project lightning. Bolts of lightning issue forth from the mirror of power equal to the rank of the mirror.

Limitations: Target must be in line of sight, lightning travels through air.

Power: Feng Shui Mirror Can be used to deflect or disperse incoming disruptive earth powers, such as an earthquake or mudslide.

Limitation: If used to protect a building, the mirror must be placed in the correct place by a practitioner of Feng Shui (part of the Taoist Priest Skill package).

Monkey

Creating new magical powers

As with Skills, a player may create a new magic powers and is encouraged to do so to make their Immortal a unique individual. However, both the player and Narrator must bear the following in mind.

- **A power must have a specific use.** For example, Shape changing allows the Immortal to change form, but not throw fireballs (even if the Immortal turns into a fire-breathing elemental). This use must be decided when the power is created.
- **A power must have a limitation.** This is a specific instance where the power simply does not work. For example Immortals using the Flight power cannot carry mortals. This need not be decided when the power is created, but if the player uses the power repeatedly without declaring the limitation, the Narrator should declare one.



Monkey

Virtue

This score measures the character's standing in the eyes of Heaven (either the Western Taoist Heaven or the Eastern Buddhist Heaven). It is gained through correct, usually good, behaviour. Gaining Virtue is the main motivation for the Player Immortals, since they are all out of favour and seeking to gain re-entry into Heaven.

The Buddhist Way is more about protecting the poor and innocent and alleviating suffering in the mortal world.

The Taoist Way concentrates on upholding the cosmic balance, by performing duties for the Jade Emperor. However, the nature of the tasks given often reflect the nature of the individual(s) being set them, so that they may balance their own internal world as well as the external world around them.

Virtue may be gained by following either Way.

Virtue Levels

Virtue is measured on a 0-6 scale.

0. *Demonic*. The character is evil in a most inhuman and vile way on a regular basis.
1. *Criminal*. The character has committed some crime against Heaven and is marked as a criminal.
2. *Selfish*. This character is out for number one and is constantly out of step with the rest of the universe.
3. *Misguided*. This is the majority of mankind. They do not act in harmony with Heaven and by doing so create minor wrongdoings, such as lying, causing indirect harm to their fellow man.
4. *Awakened*. The character is aware of the ways of Heaven, and making some attempt to bring good favour to her/his life.
5. *Noble*. This is the level of a good person striving through correct action to achieve harmony with the Way.
6. *Saintly*. Always behaves in accordance of the way of Heaven. The player Immortal is readmitted into the Ranks of Heaven and removed from play.

Monkey

Beginning Virtue

All starting player Immortals start with a virtue of 1. They have committed some crime against the Heavenly order and have been cast onto Earth. The nature of the crime is up to the player and should reflect the fundamental attitude of the character.

Your Immortal's Crime and Weakness

You may either invent your crime or draw a card from the fortune deck and consult the following table. As well as being banished from Heaven for this crime the character also gains the unfavourable Weakness in brackets.

An Immortal may know in his mind what he needs to do to pursue Virtue, but it is his Weakness that gets in the way and prevents him attaining it. See Chapter 4: Developing the Story for more details on how Weakness is used in play.

The Crimes

2. (Coward) You were part of Prince Natha's army, but when fighting against an army of demons attacking the Western Heaven, you ran away to the comfort of your house. After the battle was won, an angry Prince Natha dragged you from your bed and before the Jade Emperor, who exiled you from Heaven.

3. (Corrupt) You were a tax officer of the Western Heaven who collected Heaven's quota from the Dragon Kings. But you took bribes from the fish administrators in the form of beautiful pearls, allowing them to give fewer of their brothers for the Jade Emperor's banquets. When the Jade Emperor's table was found empty of fish and the shoals to be bigger than the ocean could support, you were stripped of your pearl necklaces and your position in Heaven.

4. (Miserly) As official of rice production you were in charge of how much rice was in the celestial granaries. Your officiousness got the better of you and instead of being sensibly generous, you gave out only enough for basic requirements. How proud you were of your full granaries! The making of rice wine was in your opinion a luxury. As the mirth of the celestial court decreased due to lack of good wine, the Jade Emperor asked why with full rice silos there should be a shortage. Your meanness was discovered and you were dismissed to Earth to learn the virtue of generosity.

5. (Violent) You liked a good fight. You would fight anyone who got in your way. You would resolve arguments with your neighbours in

Monkey

the Western Heavens using violence. Eventually, when everyone in your neighbourhood was too scared of you, you fought anyone who accepted your challenge. One day the Jade Emperor sent his General Mighty Menace to crush the impudent Immortal disrupting the peace of Heaven. Brought before the Jade Emperor, heavily bound in chains, you were banished to the mortal world to preserve life not take it.

6. (Lusty) You coveted one of the Empress of Heaven's handmaidens and made such trouble 'courting her' in a crass and inappropriate manner that the Empress formally complained to her husband. The Emperor banished you to earth, to learn restraint and about purity of love.

7. (Pride) You were the best in Heaven; they should have made you Emperor. You ruled your office of records efficiently. When a mistake was made, it was never your fault. One day a big mistake was made, involving a shipment of Heavenly wine. One of your clerks made the accounting error, but you failed to notice it. Worse still, you failed to admit your mistake when tried before the Jade Emperor. Stripped of your position and possessions, you were sent to Earth to learn the value of humility and modesty.

8. (Vain) You were the most beautiful in all of Heaven, in fact in the whole of the cosmos. So obsessed were you with your own beauty that you began to neglect your duties to spend time preening and showing off at the many parties in Heaven. When you had totally abandoned the responsibility of your position, the Jade Emperor banished you to Earth to learn the value of the ugly and the ordinary.

9. (Lazy) You were given a position in Heaven, as the gardener of the Delightful Garden. A pleasurable place. Indeed, you spent so much time enjoying it that you had no time to tend it and the garden soon fell into disrepair. Caught sleeping in the garden by the Jade Emperor's guards, you were thrown out of Heaven and sent to Earth to learn the value of hard work.

10. (Selfish) You were given the important job of collecting the Heavenly carp for the Jade Emperor's public fish garden. However, you were so bedazzled by the shining fish that you kept the best for yourself, in your own private garden. When you were eventually found out, by the Inspector of Gardens, the Jade Emperor was so outraged that you thought only of your own pleasure that he banished you to earth amongst the teeming hordes of people to learn the value of sharing.

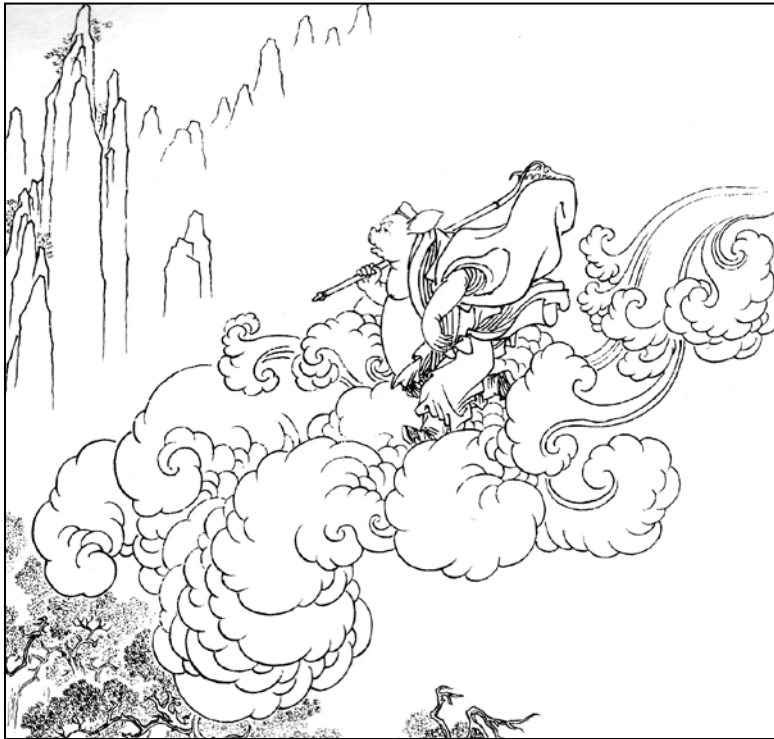
Monkey

Jack. (Thief) While Lao Tzu, the Old Sage, was out at an appointment with the Jade Emperor, you snuck into his house and stole one of the sage's famous pills of Immortality. You were caught and although now Immortal have been ejected from Heaven.

Queen. (Glutton) You were a glutton, living only for physical pleasures. Greedy, you broke into the Empress of the Western Heaven's garden and ate her sacred peaches. After a satisfied and long sleep you were awoken by the Jade Emperor's guards.

King. (Tyrant) Your character was the despicable tyrant of a city. You ignored the pleas of your hungry citizens and ran the city for your own profit. Worst of all, you ignored the religious rites of the temples. When you were finally overthrown by your angry people they turned you over to the Jade Emperor for punishment.

Joker. (Undisciplined) You were promoted to the ranks of the celestial Immortals, yet at every opportunity you were rude and unruly. Eventually, the Jade Emperor expelled you from the Western Heaven, and ordered you to learn humility and manners on Earth.



Monkey

Fortune

Fortune is the sum of a person's good luck. In game terms, it is a measure of experience gained through play and a way for the Narrator to reward right action and penalises bad action.

Fortune is represented by a hand of cards, that the player may use in actions or hold to increase Skills or Virtue at the end of the adventure. At the beginning of a session, each player draws cards equal to their Immortal's Fortune score, which they may look at but keep face down from the other players. At the end of the session, the player returns his Fortune cards to the Fortune deck.

Personal Fortune

For beginning Immortals Fortune starts at 1. This is a fixed value for all players to give them a point to let them play with.

See Chapter 4: Developing the Story for more details on how fortune works in the game.

Starting Equipment & Wealth

Immortals tend to travel light. Possessions mean very little to them, and represent the transitory nature of the mortal world. However, player Immortals can be expected to be dressed in clothes that represent their occupation and rank, and carry weapons that they can use.

Similarly, Immortals have no need for wealth, since they can always use their magic powers or call upon an appropriate Immortal ally to perform a task or gain an item. Besides, the handling of money is seen as spiritually impure.

So now you have created your own Immortal, or are at least possessed of the knowledge to do so. If you now want to see how Immortals 'play' the game, please read the next chapter.



Immortal creation checklist

1. Chose Immortal Type

Referring to the section on Immortals above, the player chooses the type of Immortal that the character will be. To pick randomly, shuffle a deck of cards and draw:

Diamonds: Celestial courtier; Hearts: Animal spirit or Local Deity; Spades: Transcended master; Clubs: Demon.

2. Pick Skills

Each beginning character can choose three Skills from the Skill List. One skill is the character's Primary Skill and has a starting rank of 5 (Specialist). One is the character's secondary Skill and has a starting rank of 3 (Journeyman) and the final Skill has a rank of 1 (Novice).

Transcended Masters and Animal Spirits are the exception to this rule. Transcended Masters specialise in either a Kung-Fu Style or Taoist which they start at a rank of 6 (Master). However they have had less time to spend on their secondary skill, which starts at 2 and a final skill which starts at 1 (Novice). Animals spirits have their Primary Skill at a starting rank of 4 (Expert), their secondary skill at 2 (Trained) and their final skill at a rank of 1 (Novice). However they do gain a bonus to two of their attitudes as explained above.

3. Pick attitudes

From the list in the Attitudes section, the player chooses five.

Animal spirits Choose two of these attitudes, one mental or spiritual and one physical, to be dominant attitudes. When used in play these attitudes give a bonus of two cards instead of one. Put a star next to each of these dominant attitudes.

4. Pick magical powers

All Immortals start with the magical abilities of Flight and Shape changing with a beginning rating of 1 each. They can then add up to three magical powers. Add 5 rating points between the characters' powers.

5. Starting Fortune

All characters start with a Fortune of 1.

6. Starting Virtue & Weakness

All characters start as criminals in the eyes of Heaven with a Virtue of 1. They also gain a Weakness as a result of their crime.

7. Starting equipment

As Immortals, their physical needs are few. They should have equipment that fits their story and any items from which their magical powers derive.

Monkey

Monkey

(also known as the Stone Monkey, King of the Monkeys, Aware of Vacuity).

This is Monkey just after he has returned from studying under the Patriarch and regained his kingdom of Water Cave Mountain from the Demon of Havoc who took over while he was away. This is what a beginning character Immortal would look like with the exception of his having Fortune 2.

Immortal type: Animal spirit.

Attitudes:

Yang: Mischievous*, Brave, Rash,

Yin: Agile*, Undisciplined

*Dominant Attitudes

Skills:

Monkey Kung-Fu 4 (Expert) This is Monkey's greatest talent, his natural agility and physical prowess. He is adept at leaping great heights (to the top of mountains!) and fighting off quarrelsome demons.

Taoist Sage 2 (Trained) Once he applied himself, he learnt much about the Taoist Alchemical arts from Patriarch. However this was purely for selfish reasons since he did not want to die. The Patriarch realised this and dismissed his student, telling him, "I am convinced that you will come to no good, so remember that when you get into trouble I absolutely forbid you to say you are my disciple."

Ruler of the Monkeys of Water Cave Mountain 1. (Novice) Monkey is ruler of the Monkeys by virtue of being the first amongst them to jump up the waterfall at Water Cave Mountain to see what was up there. However, while he cares for his subjects, he is very much a selfish creature, going off on quests of his own while leaving his subjects to fend for themselves. He is also very much learning as he goes along.

Magical Powers

Cloud Trapeze 4. This spell allows Monkey to summon a cloud and travel quickly to the four corners of the earth.

Shape Change 2. Monkey is able to change shape, notably into pine trees.

Little Monkeys 1. This spell allows him to take a handful of his hairs and turn them into miniature versions of himself.

Virtue 1 Although Monkey has yet to fall out with the powers of Heaven, he has already proved himself selfish and unprincipled.

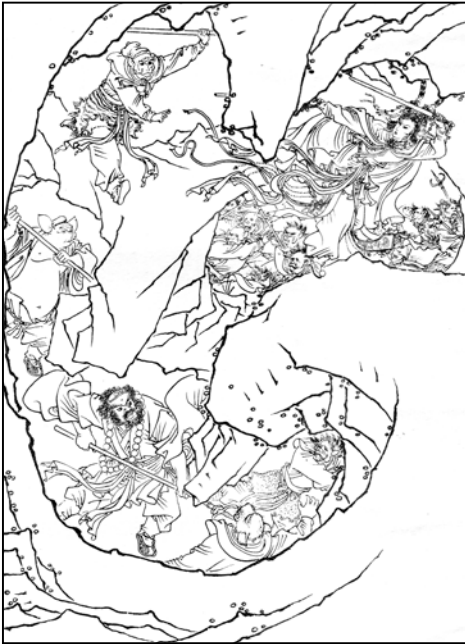
Fortune 2 Monkey has recently earned some good Fortune by rescuing his subjects from the Demon of Havoc.

Action

The Action system is used when the outcome of a challenge is uncertain, and when the story takes a dramatic turn. There are three types of Action that might be used, depending on the importance of a situation.

Quick. The action is resolved automatically at the standard dictated by the most appropriate skill's rank. No cards are drawn. For example if a character jumps across a river, his Acrobatics or appropriate Kung Fu skill rank determines whether or not he gets wet.

Simple. The player draws a number of cards equal to the rank of the skill their character is using, and the Narrator draws a number of cards equal to the opponent's skill rank or opposing force's resistance. The two totals are then compared, with victory going to the higher total.



Dramatic. This type of action builds on the rules for a Simple Action. The situation is resolved in a series of rounds. Each round, cards are drawn and compared as for a Simple Action, but the conflict is probably not over in a single round; simply beating the opposition in a single round is not enough for victory.

Before I go onto detail how these actions are resolved, let me explain a few simple basic rules.

Monkey

Basic rules

The Fortune Deck

Each player, including the narrator, has a deck of cards known as the fortune deck. When a player needs cards to perform a Simple or Dramatic action they draw their hand from the fortune deck.

Fortune deck basics:

- The cards numbered two through to ten have a value equal to the number shown. Picture cards have the following values: Jack is eleven, Queen is twelve, King is thirteen. Aces are high and have a value of fourteen.
- After a card has been played it goes into a discard pile face up next to the fortune deck.
- Jokers have a value of twenty. Since jokers represent the wild and unpredictable nature of the universe, when a joker is played, the player's discard pile is added to his fortune deck, and the cards are reshuffled. Cards in the player's Fortune Hand, remain unaffected.
- Red cards are Yang and Black cards are Yin.

The Action Hand

This is the hand of cards that the player draws from the fortune deck to resolve an action. Once the action is complete the remaining cards are immediately discarded.



Monkey

The Fortune Hand

This hand is a set of cards kept separate from the Action Hand, which a player may play into their Action Hand during an action.

At the beginning of the game session, a player's Fortune Hand is empty. It is filled in the following ways.

- When the immortal brings his Weakness into play, draw one card from the fortune deck (see Chapter 4 Developing the Story).
- A player can transfer cards from the Action Hand to the Fortune Hand. Any cards that the player does not want to use from his Action Hand to perform a task may be transferred into the Fortune Hand for later use (see Simple and Dramatic actions below for examples in play).
- As well as being used to give extra cards during actions, Fortune cards can be saved to increase Virtue and skills (see Chapter 4 Developing the Story for more details).

Narrator characters never have a Fortune Hand.

Quick Actions

Quick actions require no card drawing. They are actions which automatically succeed eventually by virtue of a character's immortal nature, but how well they succeed depends on the skill rank.

For example, suppose the player characters must cross a dangerously fast moving river, a difficulty 3 action. The task is easily accomplished by someone who is a journeyman. Characters with appropriate skills over 3 cross the river with no problem. Characters with appropriate skills under 3 cross the river, but in the course of the story fall in, get wet and have to be fished out by the more skilled characters.

Quick actions add colour to the story, in that they show that not all characters are equal and show the ups and downs of their quest, but are quickly noted and resolved.



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Simple Actions

If the outcome of an event which impacts the direction of the story is not clear cut, and needs to be quickly resolved before moving on, use a Simple action.

Example Simple actions:

Does the Scholar Turtle know all the names of the Mandarins of Heaven to pass a exam to join the Heavenly Civil Service? Can the reformed Demon Red Eyes convince the lynch mob of villagers that he has mended his evil ways?

Simple Action sequence

The sequence of events is as follows.

1. The player draws a number of cards equal to the rank of the skill being used for task.
2. Look at the colour of the cards. Red cards are Yang (active), and black cards are Yin (passive). Decide what type of action you are going to perform. Discard cards you are not going to play in the Action from your hand to the discard pile
3. If you have an Attitude that matches the type of action, draw a bonus card. This card, no matter what colour it is, is added to the hand of cards you are going to play.
4. You may add cards from your Fortune Hand that are the same colour as the cards you intend to play from your draw.
5. The Narrator repeats steps 1-4 for the opponent or opposing force.
6. The player describes their action, then plays the cards used face up on table.
7. The Narrator describes the opposition's action, then plays the cards used face up on table
8. Compare the totals of each hand. Highest hand wins! If it is a draw, the player may try again.

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Bonus card for good role-playing /humour (Narrator's discretion)

Even the fight scenes in Monkey are filled with witty banter and colourful description. To encourage this in the game add a bonus card if the player has given an entertaining description, role-played well, or just been plain funny at stage six. No matter what colour the card is, it is played with the rest of the hand.

Opposing forces and difficulty level

The Narrator assigns an opposing force or resistance, such as an obstacle that needs to be overcome or a heavy weight that needs to be lifted, a difficulty one to seven. The difficulty is equivalent to a skill rank; see the following table.

Difficulty level	Description	Equivalent skill rank
1	Easy	Novice
2	Average	Trained
3	Challenging	Journeyman
4	Hard	Expert
5	Difficult	Specialist
6	Almost impossible	Master
7	Impossible	Grand Master

Instead of Attitudes, resistances get 'Environmental' modifiers. For example, a cliff wall gets a bonus card if a character attempts to climb it in windy and rainy conditions.

Level of victory

How well did the winner win? If this is an issue consult the following table.

Difference between card totals	Level of win
Winner's total less than 1 1/2 the loser's	Barely won
Winner's total greater than 1 1/2 times loser's but less than x2 loser's	Impressive win
Winner's total greater than x2 loser's	Triumphant win

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Level of Failure

Conversely what happens if you fail? Look at how well your opponent won and consult this table.

Level of win	Effects
Barely won	You fail but you can try again immediately.
Impressive win	You fail and you can't try again immediately. You lick your wounds and pride, and can come back later to try again, after play has moved onto the next scene or a significant amount of time has passed (between a couple of hours and a full day at the Narrator's discretion).
Triumphant win	You fail spectacularly in such a way that you can't try again (unless you spend a fortune point).

An example of a Simple Action: Monkey leaps Water Cave Mountain



Monkey and the rest of the little monkeys are confronted by the awesome sight of the Water Cave Mountain. A huge mountain, down the side of which flows a waterfall and at the summit of which is a cave.

The little monkeys decide whoever can jump to the top of the mountain is worthy to rule them. Monkey arrogantly steps forward and proclaims that he will jump it in a single leap.

1. The player draws a number of cards equal to the rank of the skill being used for task.

Monkey has a Monkey Kung Fu skill of Rank 4. He draws four cards from the fortune deck, a three of spades, a king of diamonds, a jack of diamonds, and eight of diamonds.

2. Look at the colour of the cards. Red cards are Yang (active), and black cards are Yin (passive). Decide what type of action you are going to perform. Discard cards you are not going to play from your hand to the discard pile.

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The player has drawn three red cards and one black card, so it is going to be a Yang action. The black three of spades is discarded.

3. If you have an Attitude that matches the type of action draw a bonus card. This card, no matter what colour it is, is added to the hand of cards you are going to play.

Monkey has an Agile (Yang) attitude that he can use. He draws a bonus card from the Fortune deck, a six of clubs, and adds it to his Action Hand.

4. You may add cards from your Fortune Hand that are the same colour as the cards you intend to play from your draw.

Monkey has a Fortune of two and two cards in his Fortune Hand, a red jack of hearts and a red Ace of hearts, both yang cards. He decides to play the eight of hearts into his Action Hand, saving the jack for later.

At this stage Monkey's player has five cards in his Action Hand, a jack of diamonds, an eight of diamonds, an Ace of hearts, a King of diamonds and a six of clubs.

5. The Narrator repeats steps 1-4 for opponent/opposing force.

The Mountain is a formidable task to jump, which is only a near impossible task that master could perform easily (which gives an opposing difficulty of six).

The narrator draws six cards from the fortune deck, a six of hearts, a five of clubs, an ace of diamonds, a four of clubs, a ten of clubs and a eight of spades.



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The narrator decides there are no environmental or other applicable modifier so doesn't draw a bonus card.

Looking at the colours of the card, he sees that he has a high number and count of black, so the Mountain's opposition will be yin.

6. The player describes the action then plays the cards used face up on table.

Monkey's player describes how Monkey first addresses the other monkeys then makes a mighty leap.

"Do not worry little ones, I will leap this great obstacle in one mighty bound!" and with that Monkey makes a mighty leap at the mountain using all his monkey agility to aid him.

The narrator allows the player to draw another card from the fortune deck and add it to his Action Hand, because his little quip to the other monkeys at the start of the action is in perfect keeping with Monkey's character. The player draws an ace of spades and adds it to his Action Hand.

He then lays down the cards in his Action Hand face up on the table.

7. The Narrator describes the opposition's action, then plays the cards used face up on table.

As Monkey leaps upwards with all his might he feels a strong but gentle breeze, the down draft from the mountain, push against his upward momentum.

The narrator lays down his Action Hand face up on the table.

8. Compare the totals of each hand. Highest hand wins! If it is a draw, the player may try again.

Monkey's Action Hand comes to a total of 58.

The mountain's Action Hand comes to a total of 27.

Therefore Monkey triumphantly jumps the mountain.

Monkey triumphantly leaps to the top of Water Cave Mountain and is enthusiastically proclaimed King of the Monkeys by all the little monkeys who prepare a feast in his honour.

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Other outcomes

Suppose the cards had fallen differently!

For example:

Monkey's Action Hand comes to a total of 50.

The mountain's Action Hand comes to a total of 27.

Monkey impressively leaps to the top of Water Cave Mountain and there is much shouting and cheering as the little monkeys proclaim him king

Or Monkey's Action Hand comes to a total of 35.

The mountain's Action Hand comes to a total of 27.

Monkey barely leaps to the top of the Water Cave Mountain. The little monkeys proclaim him King, but there is grumbling at the back amongst the old apes that he only became King because he was the first to try it.

Or Monkey's Action Hand comes to a total of 30.

The mountain's Action Hand comes to a total of 27.

Monkey barely fails to leap to the top of the Water Cave Mountain. He is pushed down by the strong down draft of air down the cliff face. Dusting himself off he gets ready to try again.

Or Monkey's Action Hand comes to a total of 20.

The mountain's Action Hand comes to a total of 32.

Monkey impressively fails to leap to the top of Water Cave Mountain. A gust of wind knocks him off balance and he tumbles to the bottom. The little monkeys lead the battered and bruised Monkey away, as some of the larger apes line up to try.

Or Monkey's Action Hand comes to a total of 14.

The mountain's Action Hand comes to a total of 32.

Monkey triumphantly fails to leap to the top of Water Cave Mountain. The little monkeys all laugh at him and leave him in the dust where he falls. It is nightfall when he regains consciousness and a big Baboon has jumped to the top of the mountain and has been proclaimed king.

Dramatic Actions

This type of Action is used for big dramatic events in the story. Rather than being resolved in a single card draw, it takes several draws. In each draw there are winners and losers, and each time a character loses they gain a Strike. When a player has three Strikes against their Immortal, they are knocked out of the Action. Other types of characters take fewer Strikes to knock out. The Winner(s) is the character(s) who are still in the Action once their opponents have been knocked out.

Examples of Dramatic actions:

A long drawn out debate between Mandarins of the Celestial Bureaucracy to decide who is most useful, the Tiger or the Duck.

The General of Cats and the Snake King fighting the Dragon of the South Sea's warriors.

Dramatic Action sequence

The sequence of events is as follows:

The character who initiates the action, for example the Orator who starts the debate or the warrior who starts the fight, goes first. They are the 'attacker'.

Other characters that come next draw cards from the respective fortune decks and determine the order of initiative in that way. A group of Narrator-controlled minor characters may all act together to keep things simple.

1. The attacker decides which skill they are using and draws a number of cards equal to the rank of the skill being used for the task.
2. Look at the colour of the cards. Red cards are Yang (active), and Black cards are Yin (passive). Decide what type of action you are going to perform. Cards that you are not going to play from your hand may be kept for the next draw or discarded. This decision has to be made now.
3. If the attacker has an Attitude that matches the type of action, draw a bonus card. This card, no matter what colour it is, is added to the hand of cards you are going to play.
4. The attacker may add cards from their Fortune Hand which are the same colour as the cards they intend to play from your draw.

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5. The defender repeats steps 1-4.
6. The attacker describes their action, then plays the cards used face up on table.
7. The defender describes their action, then plays the cards used face up on table.
8. Compare the totals of each hand. Highest hand wins! If the attacker wins, the defender suffers a Strike against them. If the defender wins, the attacker suffers a Strike against them. If it was a draw, then nobody gains any Strikes.

If either the attacker or the defender gains enough Strikes to knock them out of the Action, then the Action ends. See the section below on “Strikes and Exclusions” for more detail.

If it is important to the story, the Narrator notes the level of Victory and Level of Failure (see above) to determine how badly the loser lost and how well the winner won if that is an issue.

This process then repeats itself in initiative order as long as there are active participants in the action.

Strikes and Exclusions

Strikes

Strikes are the number of hits a character takes before the character is knocked out of the Action.

The number of Strikes a character has depends on their importance in the story.

3 Strikes: Player Immortals and Major Opponents of the adventure (think the big boss of all the baddies) take three strikes and they are knocked out of the Action.

2 Strikes: Supporting characters, such as seconds in command of the enemies and the major player allies, have two strikes and they are knocked out of the Action.

1 Strike: Extras, such as the mass of the enemy soldiers, can only take one strike and they are knocked out of the action.

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Exclusion: What happens when a character is knocked out of the Action?

If an Action is life-threatening, for example a combat, an immortal who is knocked out is 'dispersed'- his life energy is depleted. He may be easily captured and bound, and must certainly rest and recuperate until he is able to enter the fray again. A mortal character knocked out of a life-threatening action will find himself travelling quickly to the Land of the Dead.

If the action was not life-threatening, such as a heated debate about the merits of taking one road over another, then the character is simply defeated. He may not try that type of action again in the immediate future as his energies in that area recuperate.

How long is a player Immortal excluded from the game?

This depends on the level of defeat that the Immortal suffered in the final exchange; see the Level of Defeat table in the Simple Action section above.

How many 'Exclusions' does it take to remove Narrator characters from the story?

The number of times a Narrator controlled character can lose to the players in actions all depends on their importance in the story.

- *Major characters, who are the main opposition of the story, take three defeats before they are finally removed from the Story. Each time they are defeated, they rapidly retreat immediately to a lair far away immediate reach of the player immortals.*
- *Supporting Character can take two defeats before being removed from the Story.*
- *Unfortunate Extras, however, take only one defeat before being removed from the Story.*

Note a character can only suffer one Exclusion per scene.

Note for Narrators: This may seem artificial and somewhat unfair to the players used to winning immediately when besting foes, but it's a common enough event in the novel to warrant it having a rule in the game. Besides, there is nothing that gets the players' blood rising than the sight of a major enemy escaping their justice once again. Be sure to be upfront and tell the players that the character they have just defeated and who has escaped their clutches is either a Major or Supporting character and that they only have to defeat

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them two or one more times respectively. This helps restore a sense of fairness and gives the players something to aim for.

An example of Exclusions in a game over four scenes

The Great Bull-Headed Demon, a Major Character, comes out of his lair beneath a mountain to capture Tripitaka and the rest of the pilgrims. He is accompanied by a small army of demons (Extras) who are led by his second in command, the Tiger General (a Supporting Character). However Monkey, Sandy and Pigsy soundly defeat him, and he immediately flees on a magic cloud back to his mountain, securely locking the big door behind him (exclusion 1). The Tiger General is also defeated in the fight and retreats back to the mountain lair (exclusion 1). Many of the Demon army are less fortunate, and their bodies litter the battlefield (since as Extras they can only take one exclusion then they are removed from the story).

In the next scene, the Bull-Headed demon sends out the Tiger General to challenge Monkey to one to one combat, rightly seeing him as the person getting in the way of him obtaining Tripitaka as a tasty snack. Unfortunately for him, Monkey defeats the Tiger General, and since this is his second exclusion this sees him removed from the story.

In Scene Three Monkey skins the dead Tiger General and sends it back to the Bull-Headed Demon, who, enraged, storms out of his lair to fight Monkey. Again the Pilgrims defeat him, (exclusion 2) and the Bull-Headed Demon once again flees back to his lair and locks the big heavy door behind him.

In the next scene Monkey finds a way to sneak in, by shape changing into a fly and flying through the keyhole of the door, and confronts the Bull-Headed Demon in his throne room, finally defeating him once and for all (exclusion 3).

Narrator-controlled characters

To make it easier for the Narrator to manage the numerous characters that he is responsible for, use the following guidelines.

- They do not have Fortune or a Fortune Hand. If the narrator wants to give them a helping hand, use Bad Fortune points (see Chapter Four for explanation) to draw extra cards. One point of Bad Fortune is spent for each extra card granted to the opposition to the player Immortals.

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Example Dramatic Contest: The General of Cats and the Snake King fight the Fish warriors

Geoff plays the crafty but somewhat lazy General of Cats, while Sue plays the sneaky but selfish Snake King. The dubious duo have made a detour into the kingdom of the Dragon King of the Southern Ocean hoping to steal some pearls to bribe a demon who is holding a friend of theirs captive. A duo of fish warriors, Haddock and Sprat, catch them red handed. Geoff decides to fight rather than try and talk their way out, showing off the martial prowess of the General of Cats.

General of Cats

Skills. Cat Kung fu 4, Leader 2, Actor 1

Attitudes. Yin: Crafty, Lazy. Yang: Agile

Magic powers. Flight 1, Shape change 1

Fortune 2 (six of diamonds and three of hearts)

Snake King

Skills. Snake Kung Fu 4, Ruler 3, Poet 1

Attitudes. Yin: Sneaky. Yang: Fast, Selfish.

Magic powers. Flight 1, Shape change 1

Fortune 2 (seven of hearts and five of clubs)

As player Immortals, both the General of Cats and the Snake King can take three strikes before they are out of the Action.

Fish Guards – Haddock and Sprat

These two non-player-characters are powerful warriors from the Dragon King's underwater realm. As supporting characters they can take two Strikes before being knocked out of the Action.

Skills. Warrior 3, Courtier 1

Attitudes. Yin :Obedient. Yang: Aggressive, Strong

Magic powers. Breathe underwater 6.

Fortune. As Non-Player Characters neither of the Fish Warriors have any Fortune. However, the General of Cats and the Snake King's less than noble actions in previous adventures have earned them 3 points of Bad Fortune.

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As it is the General of Cats that leaps to attack the Fish warriors, Geoff goes first. To determine initiative for the other combatants, Sue draws a five of clubs from her fortune deck, while the Narrator draws an Ace of Spades from his deck for the Fish warriors!

1. The attacker decides which skill they are using and draws a number of cards equal to the rank of the skill being used for the task.

Geoff decides to use the General's Cat Kung Fu of 4 to attack Haddock and draws four cards;

A four of hearts, a seven of spades, a nine of clubs and a three of diamonds.

2. Look at the colour of the cards. Red cards are Yang (active), and black cards are Yin (passive). Decide what type of action you are going to perform. Cards that you are not going to play from your hand may be kept for the next draw or discarded. This decision has to be made now.

Geoff decides to hold onto the red cards, making the General's action yang, and discard the two black cards.

3. If the attacker has an Attitude that matches the type of action, draw a bonus card. This card, no matter what colour, is added to the hand of cards you are going to play.

The General's attitude of agile is yang, so Geoff draws an additional card- a seven of diamonds.

4. The attacker may add cards from their Fortune Hand which are the same colour as the cards you intend to play from your draw.

Geoff could use either of his fortune cards, since both are red and therefore yang, but decides not to for the time being.

5. The defender repeats steps 1-4.

Haddock, who the General is attacking, decides to use his Warrior skill, and draws three cards;

A seven of clubs, a six of spades and a four of spades. All black- therefore a yin action. Since all the cards were of the same colour they can be used in the action. The narrator does not need to discard any unused cards.

The Narrator draws another card, a queen of hearts, for the Fish Warrior's obedient attitude, which is yin. The Narrator thinks this is a bit strange, but decides to come up with an appropriate description.

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6. The attacker describes their action then plays cards face up on table.

Geoff plays his cards, and describes the action;

“‘Mmmm, I like Fish’ says the General of Cats as he springs towards Haddock.”

The comment about liking fish raises a chuckle from the players and therefore the Narrator awards Geoff an extra card; a ten of diamonds.

7. The defender describes their action then plays cards face up on table

The Narrator puts his cards on the table and describes the Fish Warrior’s defence.

“The warrior, a fine haddock of splendid scales, bows down as if before his king withdrawing in the face of the General’s fierce forward attack.”

8. Compare the totals of each hand. Highest hand wins! If the attacker wins, the defender gains a Strike against them. If the defender wins, the attacker gains a Strike against them. If it was a draw then nobody gains any Strikes.

Geoff’s hand comes to 24. Haddock is 27. Haddock wins and the General of Cats takes a strike.

The Narrator describes the result.

“Haddock keeps low and as the General flies overhead jabs at his exposed belly with his spear, slightly winding him.”

All the cards that were played onto the table are placed in the discard pile.

The roles are now reversed as Haddock becomes the attacker, and the General of Cats becomes the defender.

1. The attacker decides which skill they are using and draws a number of cards equal to the rank of the skill being used for the task.

Once again Haddock uses his Warrior skill of three; an eight of diamonds, a two of spades and a jack of spades.

2. Look at the colour of the cards. Red cards are Yang (active), and black cards are Yin (passive). Decide what type of action you are going to perform. Cards that you are not going to play from your hand may be kept for the next draw or discarded. This decision has

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to be made now.

The Narrator decides to hold onto the two and the jack, making this a yin attack. Since this a minor character he discards the eight of diamonds.

3. If the attacker an Attitude that matches the type of action, draw a bonus card. This card, no matter what colour it is, is added to the hand of cards you are going to play.

Once again the Narrator decides to use the Fish Warrior's obedience attitude, and draws a jack of clubs.

4. The attacker may add cards from their Fortune Hand which are the same colour as the cards you intend to play from your draw.

Being a minor character, the Fish Warrior does not have a Fortune Hand. At this point the Narrator could decide to use one of the Bad Fortune points against the General, but feeling kind today, he decides not to.

5. The defender repeats steps 1-4.

Geoff decides to carry on using the General's Cat Kung Fu; A three of clubs, a five of diamonds and a four of diamonds. He elects for a yang defence.

Since the action is yang, he can use the General's Agile attitude again and draws a ten of clubs.

Not wanting the General to get beaten up by a fish, the player decides to use the six of hearts from his Fortune Hand.

6. The attacker describes their action, then plays cards face up on table.

The Narrator places his cards on the table and describes the Dragon Warrior's action.

"Haddock stays low, almost kowtowing, and tries to slide his spear gracefully past the General's of Cat's defence."

7. The defender describes their action, then plays cards face up on table

Geoff places his cards on the table and describes the General's defence.

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“The General darts back and forth, his paws flashing through the air trying to push the probing spear aside.”

This time round Geoff, doesn't come up with any witty banter so he doesn't get an extra card.

8. Compare the totals of each hand. Highest hand wins! If the attacker wins, the defender gains a Strike against them. If the defender wins, the attacker gains a Strike against them. If it was a draw then nobody gains any Strikes.

The Fish Warrior's attack comes to a total of 24, and the General of Cat's defence came to a total of 25. Geoff barely wins, and the Haddock loses a Strike.

The narrator describes the outcome:

“Haddock tries to slide his spear behind the whirling shield of claws and fur that the General has put up.

Unfortunately the General catches him, and sends him spinning across the floor.”

All the cards played go in the discard pile.

Next, Sue gets a go with the Snake King, who being a sneaky type attacks poor unfortunate Haddock.

1. The attacker decides which skill they are using and draws a number of cards equal to the rank of the skill being used for the task.

Sue decides to use the Snake King's Snake Kung Fu of 4 and draws four cards;

A six of hearts, a queen of clubs, an eight of hearts and a two of diamonds.

2. Look at the colour of the cards. Red cards are Yang (active), and black cards are Yin (passive). Decide what type of action you are going to perform. Cards that you are not going to play from your hand may be kept for the next draw or discarded. This decision has to be made now.

Sue decides to use the red cards, making the Snake King's action Yang.

However she decides to hold onto the Queen of Clubs for use in her next draw.

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3. If the attacker has an Attitude that matches the type of action, draw a bonus card. This card, no matter what colour it is, is added to the hand of cards you are going to play.

The Snake King has a yang attitude of fast, and draws an ace of diamonds.

4. The attacker may add cards from their Fortune Hand which are the same colour as the cards you intend to play from your draw.

Sue could use the seven of hearts in her Fortune Hand, but is confident the cards that she has drawn already will finish off poor Haddock, so she decides not to.

5. The defender repeats steps 1-4.

Haddock who defending decides to use his Warrior skill 3

A two of spades, a two of hearts and a nine of diamonds. The highest total is red- a yang action. The narrator does not need to discard the two of spades.

The Narrator draws another card, an eight of spades, for the Dragon warrior's Aggressive attitude, which is yang.

The narrator also spends a Bad Fortune point, since he doesn't think it's fair that the Snake King should have such an easy time of it and draws an extra card- a king of hearts.

6. The attacker describes their action, then plays cards face up on table.

Sue plays her cards, and describes the action;

“ ‘Mmmm I like Fish too’ says the Snake King as he slides past the General and launches a flying kick against Haddock”.

The comment about liking fish raises again raises a chuckle from the players and therefore the Narrator awards Sue an extra card- an Ace of hearts!

7. The defender describes their action then plays cards face up on table

The Narrator puts his cards on the table and describes the Haddock's defence.

“The warrior, fed up with the player immortals' insolence, suddenly explodes in fury. ‘Such insolent wretches, you like fish eh? Let me give you a taste of my spear’ he shouts, springing forward and aggressively

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wielding his spear in defence against the Snake King's kick."

8. Compare the totals of each hand. Highest hand wins! If the attacker wins, the defender gains a Strike against them. If the defender wins, the attacker gains a Strike against them. If it was a draw then nobody gains any Strikes.

Sue drew 44, and the Narrator drew 29. The Snake King impressively wins- he drew more than one and a half times the total but less than twice the total of the Haddock's cards, so the Haddock takes another Strike. Since Haddock is a Supporting Character, two Strikes knocks him out of the Action.

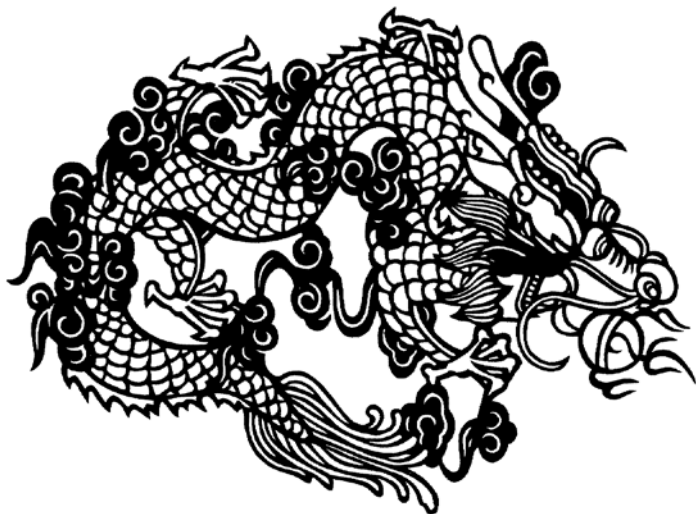
The Narrator describes the outcome.

"Despite his bravado, the Haddock crumples into the dust with the force of the Snake King's flying kick."

It is now time for the attacks of the other Fish Warrior, Sprat, who after seeing his comrade so roundly beaten decides that discretion is the better part of valour and runs away.

The action is over.

The dramatic action sequence also lends itself well to non-combat actions, such as big political debates. However such situations are quite often naturally dealt with by roleplaying them out. You should only use the Dramatic Action system if the Narrator and the Players want to and everyone feels that this is a fun way to resolve the Action.



Special Action rules

The following rules deal with special circumstances that occur outside of the standard situations covered by the Simple and Dramatic

Mob attacks: Player Immortals versus Extras

In Dramatic Actions, Extras such as the mass of demon foot soldiers that accompany the Bull-Headed Demon tend to behave as a horde of nameless characters that attempt to mob the Player Immortals with sheer weight of numbers and no thought of personal safety.

How do we deal with that?

Against mobs, the Player Immortal immediately defeats and knocks out a number of Extras equal to the Skill and Attitude they are using during their attack. The player need not draw cards from the deck to make this Action and may have a free choice of Attitude to use, but must properly narrate the action as normal. Magic powers may be combined with the skill as well.

If any of the Mob remains after the player's turn, they hold the Player Immortal back and must be dealt with next round. Further, on their attack they automatically score a Strike against the Player Immortal. Major characters often employ their lackeys this way to split up groups of Player Immortals, and have them hold back individuals so that they can concentrate on one Player Immortal (usually the weaker members of the group) at a time. Whilst held by the Mob, a player Immortal may not assist another character.

Example

While poking around the pearl field of the Dragon King, the General of Cats is attacked by a group of eight Jellyfish Warriors. Being extras they try to Mob him. Using his Cat Kung Fu of 4 and his Agile Attitude, he skilfully dodges five of the Jellyfish, who run into a nearby boulder, splattering themselves and getting knocked out of the action. This leaves three Jellyfish Warriors, who hold the General down and sting him with their stingers, so he takes a Strike. However, next round he can break free. Unknown to the crafty feline, the Jellyfish were merely an advance guard for the group of elite Dragon Warriors that are now bearing down on the good General, whose troubles are far from over.

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Assisting another immortal

What happens if one of our immortals who are not the main instigator of the action wants to help his comrade who is in the thick of it, rather than standing around?

After the attacking player has declared his action, the supporting player draws his cards as normal. He may then add any cards, subject to him narrating the action satisfactorily, that are of the same type (Yin/Yang) to the main player's hand. Supporting characters may get a bonus card for good/humorous narration but do not add any bonus cards for attitudes. They also lose their action for that round. If the Immortal they are assisting loses the Action, they do not suffer any consequences, such as gaining Strike.



Bickering Contests

Bickering is a special type of action.

During the Journey to the West, Monkey, Sandy and Pigsy continuously bicker with one another. They endlessly argue about who should carry the master's baggage, which way to go next, the best way to deal with the demon that blocks their way....

Because bickering is such a major part of the novel, here is a quick game mechanic that players may use to resolve such arguments between the player immortals in a way that brings a clear in-game advantage for the winner.

1. Each player involved in the bickering draws a card from their fortune deck after giving a quick line or two berating their opponent's ability.
2. The player with the highest card wins the exchange.
3. Play out three such exchanges.

The player who has won the most exchanges wins the argument. The other Immortals, even if they don't agree with the winner, must go along with the winner. The winner bolstered with success gains an extra card on his next action draw.

1. The person who wins the contest gets the other party to go along with their plan. They get to 'set the next scene' so to speak and gain one bonus card for their next action in that scene.
2. The losing party has to go to the next scene and take part in the first part of any Action that may occur there. What they do after this is up to them.

If the result of the three exchanges is a draw there is no winner, the Narrator quickly moves the action along to the next scene.

Note: Players may not transfer cards into or out of their Fortune Hands during a Bickering Contest.

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Here is an example from the novel.

Pigsy and Monkey are arguing about the best way to attack a dragon that blocks their way across a river (the dragon is actually the son of one of the Dragon Kings, and has been told to wait for Tripitaka by Kuan Yin. He ends up as Tripitaka's horse after he is subdued). The main thrust of the bickering is who leads the attack. Pigsy wins the contest and gets a bonus card for his first attack on the Dragon.



Monkey has to help with the attack for the first round (so he has to make an attacking action) but after the first round he has the option to run away or continue helping Pigsy. Monkey decides to carry on helping Pigsy.

Developing the story

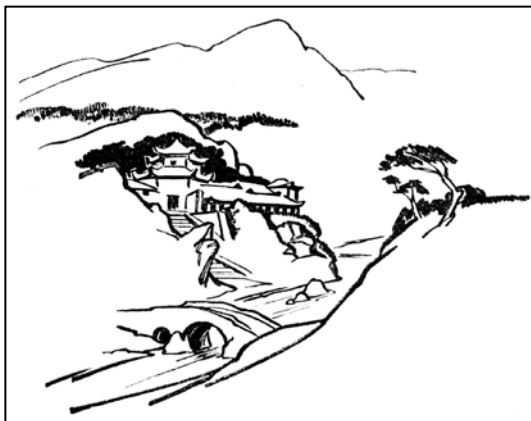
The previous chapter detailed the rules of how the characters perform actions and resolve contests by using Skills and Attitudes. This chapter details a set of rules that the players and the Narrator use to develop the overall story.

The pace of the game

The different lengths of the translated versions of the novel affect the pace at which the story unfolds; compare the full Anthony Wu (Chicago University Press) translation, which has all one hundred chapters, with the much more abridged David Kherdian version (Shambhala). Similarly, there are two ways of pacing the game.

Short - is where the story is told over one or perhaps two four hour game sessions. The game is explosively paced, and the player immortals make big Virtue gains and losses. At the end of the story, Heaven's judgement is swiftly made. In a short game, each character needs six points of Virtue to be readmitted into either the Western or Eastern Heaven.

Epic - is a longer story, which takes many game sessions to tell. While it certainly has moments of frenetic action, there is a lot more time to explore the depths of the characters and go into more detail about areas and relationships that a short story simply glosses over because of time limitations. Virtue is still awarded at the same rate, but sixty points are required to re-enter Heaven.



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Pushing the Story, Virtue and Fortune points

During play an Immortal gains and loses Virtue and Fortune points. These two scores drive the direction of play, as the players try to gain and avoid losing points.

Virtue is gained through achieving long term goals and is awarded at the end of the adventure. It is a means to an end. When a character reaches the total determined by the pace of game they are playing (see above) they have enough Virtue to re-enter Heaven

Fortune is gained and lost immediately as a result of an Immortal's actions. It is awarded on the spot by the Narrator. It is the maximum limit of the character's Fortune Hand, and a pool that can be spent to influence the story in the player's favour.

Virtue

Immortals gain Virtue by achieving self-set goals.

For example, Master Tiger comes across a widow in distress and he asks what is wrong. He finds out the widow's husband was wrongfully executed for murder. The player sees this as an opportunity to gain Virtue, and Master Tiger sets out to find the true killer and rescue the husband from Lord Yama's realm. If he succeeds in his quest then Master Tiger gains a Virtue point.

The amount of Virtue gained by achieving a goal depends on the level of challenge it offers and the effort required. Broadly speaking, a goal that takes an entire session to accomplish grants two points of Virtue, and goals that are achieved more quickly and easily grant one point. At the Narrator's discretion, an additional point of virtue may be awarded for entertaining roleplaying.

Immortals lose Virtue through failing to achieve self-set goals OR through bad behaviour.

Virtue goals should also come with a risk of failure. In the above example, there is a chance that Master Tiger will fail to find the killer, and even if he does there is no guarantee that he will rescue the husband from the Ten Hells.

If a character has tried to achieve the goal to the best of his ability, but through bad luck and/or poor planning fails to achieve it, they

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simply lose the time they put in trying to reach the goal.

If a character gives up on a goal because they are afraid they cannot do it, they lose a point of Fortune which reflects a loss of confidence in their abilities.

If a character maliciously gives up on a goal due to irritation or distraction, they lose a Virtue point.

For example Master Tiger would lose a point of Virtue were he to leave the spirit of the husband in hell because he became annoyed with the husband's constant moralising.

Character's can also lose also Virtue through consistent bad behaviour in a game session. For example Master Tiger unfortunately returns to his wild and unprincipled ways during subsequent adventures. The Narrator regretfully tells his player that he has dropped a Virtue level.

Fortune

Fortune is the sum of a person's good luck. In game terms it is a measure of experience gained though play. It is the way that the Narrator rewards right action and penalises bad action.

Fortune is represented by a hand of cards, known as the Fortune Hand, that the player may use in actions.

Starting Fortune

Fortune starts at 1. This is a fixed value for all players to give them some points to let them play with.

During the game Fortune is kept track of by writing the number of Fortune Points on the character sheet and/or with coloured glass beads.

The Fortune hand

At the beginning of play

The Fortune Hand is empty at the start of each gaming session.

During play

The players then transfer cards from their action hand during actions.

For example Joan draws five cards for part of an action; a king of hearts, an ace of spades, a seven of diamonds, a jack of hearts and five

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of hearts. She uses the red cards for her action, and moves the ace of spades into her fortune hand for later use.

Transferring cards in this way is a good way to save high cards for which you can't find a match of the same colour to make a winning hand, or simply want to save for a later action.

Players can play cards from their fortune hand in an action by swapping them into their action hand. The player may either place the swapped card in their fortune hand or discard it. The player may swap as many cards as they want to from their Fortune hand in one draw.

For example Joan draws three cards for an action. A two of clubs, a seven of spades and a two of hearts. She decides to swap the ace of spades that she holds in her fortune hand for the two of hearts in her action hand. She also decides to discard the two of hearts.

The Fortune hand may hold as many cards as the character has Fortune points.

At the end of play

While the character does not lose fortune between game sessions, the player disposes of his fortune hand at the end of the game session. He then starts with an empty fortune hand at the beginning of the next session.

Gaining Fortune through play

Characters gain Fortune points for right or good action during play. The narrator gives out Fortune immediately during play. Awards will usually be between one and three points, with the low end being for minor actions, which played a small part in the story, while three points is for achieving the major goal of the story.

However, the player does not immediately get an extra card for this increase in fortune. They must add an extra card by playing a weakness or by transferring a card from the action hand.

Spending Fortune for short-term effects

During the game Fortune is kept track of by writing the number of Fortune Points on the character sheet and/or with coloured glass beads. Players can then play cards from the Fortune hand into their Action Hand to help their characters while performing tasks. See Chapter 2 for more explanation.

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Spending Fortune for long-term effects

Fortune can be spent between stories to increase an Immortal's skills and magical powers or to gain new skills. The number of Fortune points needed to increase a skill or magical power by one level is equal to its new rank.

If a character has not used a skill or power in the previous story, an extra Fortune point must be spent to increase it. This represents gaining a story opportunity to improve the skill or magical power (see below). A character can also gain a new skill or magical power at rank 1 at a cost of 2 Fortune points. One point is the cost of the new rank, and the other point is the cost of the story opportunity to learn the skill.

When Fortune is spent to increase skills and magical powers, it disappears from the player's total.

Spending Fortune for story opportunities

For a flat cost of one point of Fortune, a player may bring an item, non-player character or event into the story.

For example, Monkey, wanting to become an Immortal, just happens to find a Taoist immortal who can teach him the skill.

Of course the player has to then overcome the tasks needed to gain the item/story object, but at least they have the opportunity to gain it.

This allows the players to progress the plot when it has slowed to a halt due to factors such as a lack of leads. It does not allow the characters to overcome a difficulty that needs a successful action to resolve.

When Fortune is spent in this way it disappears from the player's total.



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The following are examples that occur in the novel.

Stealing the Scene

Stealing the Scene is a special case of the above.

Normally the Narrator sets the scene, that is to say he describes where the characters are, the non-player characters present and any events occurring when the player Immortals arrive. Then the players describe what their characters do in response.

When a player steals the scene, they get to describe the scene. This is useful if the player wants to move between the mortal world and various otherworlds, which the immortals can easily do through their power of flight. This is a major feature of the stories as Monkey and company flit between Heaven, Earth and the Ten Hells.

For example the Immortals are currently travelling across the Tang Empire. The Narrator is guiding the story through a series of scenes as the characters pursue a demon wreaking havoc along the Silk Road. One of the players, Ian, feels that they are getting nowhere. Therefore he spends a Fortune Point, stealing the scene and taking the party to Heaven to try to get help from the Demon Hunters of the Jade Emperor.



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Invoking your Patron

Patrons are gods who sponsor the errant player Immortals' re-entry into Heaven. They help mainly by giving advice about the current dilemma the Immortals find themselves in and, because they are well known and connected, can introduce the player Immortals to other gods who help resolve the problem. They never get directly involved and they never use their considerable magical powers to fix the mess the players find themselves in.

For example, Kuan Yin, the Goddess of Compassion and Mercy is the patron for the Eastern Buddhist Heaven (see Chapter 5 for details). The Planet Venus, a kindly old sage-like character with long flowing silver beard, is the patron for the Western Taoist Heaven. Both play a crucial part in Monkey's story. The Planet Venus is responsible for sponsoring Monkey's entry into the Jade Emperor's court, advising the Jade Emperor that giving Monkey a lowly position in Heaven is better than letting him run amok on Earth. Once Monkey has openly revolted against Heaven for the second time and Great Buddha has imprisoned him under a Mountain, it is Kuan Yin who releases him and has him join Tripitaka's expedition to India. Kuan Yin continues to help the pilgrims for the rest of the Journey to the West.



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Weaknesses

An Immortal's weakness is what prevents him becoming enlightened and gaining Virtue. At a moment of peace and harmony, a character's Weakness will manifest itself and tempt the seeker from the way.

In game terms it is a quality that the player can use to both add colour to roleplaying, and to add cards to the Fortune Hand.

Invoking a weakness

The player may bring his character's Weakness into play at any appropriate point. He describes the character's action and draws a card into his Fortune Hand (discarding a card if this would take him over his allowed hand size). The Narrator puts a point into the Bad Fortune pool (see below).

Temptation

This is when the Narrator suggests to a player that the character's Weakness should come into play. The player can either go along with it, with the same results as above, or try to resist it. To resist, the player draws a card from their deck and adds their virtue to its value. The Narrator also draws a card. If the Narrator's card is higher than the player's they temporarily lose control of the character and the Narrator describes how the character succumbs to temptation. The Narrator also puts a point into the Bad Fortune pool. If the player's total is higher than the Narrator's then the character successfully resists the temptation.



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The Bad Fortune pool

Characters lose Fortune when they do bad things. The lost Fortune point is transferred over into the Bad Fortune pool. The Bad Fortune pool can be used by the Narrator against all the players. It is in the players' best interests to keep players/characters who accumulate Bad Fortune for the group in check.

This Fortune loss is applied immediately to a character who does a bad thing. One point of Fortune is lost (and Bad Fortune awarded) for minor wrong actions, such as selfishly lying. Actions such as premeditated murder will lose a character ten Fortune points, and put ten points into the Bad Fortune pool. Fortune can never go negative, it always stays at zero.

As mentioned above, Bad Fortune is also accumulated when a player invokes his Immortal's weakness.

In an epic game, the Bad Fortune pool is transferred between game sessions.

The Narrator can spend Bad Fortune on the opposition to the player Immortals during an action. One point of Bad Fortune from the pool lets the Narrator draw an extra card. This card comes from the Narrator's fortune deck; there is no separate Fortune Hand.



A Bag of Wind

The Jade Emperor wants you to escort one of the Queen Mother's handmaidens to a party on Ki Yin's Western Island.

The only problem is that someone has stolen the Windlord Fung Po's magic Bag of Wind, while Demons run amok and heavy rains flood the lands of the Tang Emperor.

As disgraced Immortals of the Western Heaven you see more than a few opportunities to make up for your previous mistakes and return home.

The purpose of this chapter

The rest of the book, from chapter 6 onwards, is dedicated detailed advice and background information for the Narrator. But the best way to learn the game is to play the game! So rather than require that the narrator read all following chapters, "A Bag of Wind" is presented here as a quick fun story that the narrator and players can run through and learn the basics of the game.

The situation

Kuan Yin is holding a tea party on her island in the western seas. She has invited Madame Dragonfly, a shy and timid handmaiden of the Queen of the Western Heaven. Kuan Yin needs somebody to escort her to her island, while she is busy preparing for her guests. Being the Goddess of Compassion and Mercy she contrives to have the player Immortals escort the fragile courtier across the mortal world to her island and to provide them with an opportunity to redeem themselves in the eyes of Heaven. Who knows-perhaps the dangerous journey will present Madame Dragonfly with opportunities to overcome her passive nature?

Meanwhile, the demon Snake Eyes has stolen the Wind Lord Fung Po's Bag of Wind. This magical item allows this great Immortal to generate winds according to his mood. When he is calm he gently waves the bag in the air creating gentle breezes. When his angry he quickly turns around creating hurricanes and great gales. While Fung Po fumes atop a mountain, Snake Eyes, disguised as a merchant, looks for a buyer for the bag while hiding out in a nearby city.

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More calamities arise because of Snake Eyes' wicked actions. Without winds, a young Dragon becomes becalmed in mid air over a rural area in the Tang Empire. Ascending Dragons cause rain and the land is flooded in a torrential downpour. Amidst the floods, Bandits take advantage of the stranded peasants. Minor Demons run amok in the city.

All this does not go unnoticed by Western Heaven, where the boy demon killer Prince Natha sneaks down to earth unsupervised to hunt down the demons obviously behind the watery woes. So what if demon catching waits until he's enjoyed Earth's delight. He made sure that he sneaked out of Heaven, so that his parent General Li-Jing has no idea that he is gone. By the time the General of Heaven's Hosts realises and comes down to drag his errant son back to Heaven, he'll have had his fun.

Epic or Short?

This adventure can be used as a short form adventure, where the players work hard to gain enough Virtue to re-enter Heaven. This is achievable, but the players will have to work hard at creating a fun and exciting game where they go after most of the Virtue Goals on offer. I have run it this way and it leads to a frantic, fast-paced game. If you are going for a longer, more epic campaign, this adventure offers a good introduction to the setting and system. After escorting Madame Dragonfly to Kuan Yin's island, the player Immortals will be well established with Kuan Yin as their patron (see below), an arrangement which will lead to further adventures.

Running the adventure

The structure of the adventure

This adventure is fairly linear in nature. The player Immortals start at the mountains when Kuan Yin, their Patron for this adventure, arrives with Madame Dragonfly and politely asks them to escort her to her Island to the west.

From here the Immortals should make their way across Tang China, encountering Feng Po, the flooded landscape, bandits, find the bag with Snake Eyes in the City and deal with Prince Natha before making a clear run to the Western Isle.

Although in the text the events are detailed one after another, this is not necessarily the sequence of events that they happen, because of

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the freedom of action that the players have. Avoid strict railroading if the players wander off in a direction that you had not planned for.

Going off the plot

What isn't linear is how the players interact with this sequence of events. Be aware that the players, being the inventive and imaginative people that they are, may play around with the sequence of events. For example when they reach the city they may choose to completely ignore the clues that lead them to Snake Eyes and the Bag of Wind. Instead they encounter Prince Natha and decide take up his offer to go partying. Only after his father arrives and reminds them of their duty to sort out demons do the players decide to go after Snake Eyes.

Stealing the Scene

Also remember the players can spend a Fortune point to 'Steal the scene'. They might decide to steal the scene and go to Heaven to look for more help, while you were preparing them to go confront Snake Eyes in the City. Of course being out of favour with the Jade Emperor's court they may not get far, but be prepared to improvise and with the player's input create a fun part of the story that you hadn't anticipated.

"What's to stop me just flying all the way to the Western Island?"

Being Immortal the player characters have strong magical powers that allow them to achieve the unimaginable. It's up to you as Narrator to throw challenges in their way to make the story interesting. Occasionally you'll get a player who is being difficult and wants to 'break' the story for their own entertainment. In this adventure the obvious one is to simply fly to Kuan Yin's Island, ignoring everything else they come across. As Narrator it's your job to tempt the players into action, by presenting the events in a fun entertaining manner. Give them hooks, give them reasons to get involved. Quite often players try to break a story because they are bored. Convince them that its more fun to get involved in the situations you present. Keep them on their toes and entertained.

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Character vs Character not Player vs Player

Occasionally the characters will be at odds with each other. Players may perform actions against each other to see who gets to be Marshall of Heaven for a day, who can fly fastest, who wins the affection of a pretty fox spirit, for example. The Bickering contests rules positively encourage this and the Weakness rules may lead a character down the road of being at odds with their fellow Immortals. It's an important point in the novel that the Monkey, Pigsy, Sandy and Tripitaka work best as a harmonious team, but most of the time are too busy falling out with each other which either increases the difficulty of the situation or at the very least requires them to pull together as a team.

So bickering, falling out and trying to outdo each other is firmly part of the game. What isn't part of the game is bringing personal disputes and grudges to the table or simply seeing the character as an extension of the player, whose success in game pumps up the self esteem of the player out of game. Make this clear to the players from the start and encourage them away from arguing and being contentious out of character and instead put that energy into driving the game.

Here's an example of handling character vs. character in game

Dan, player of the Silver Fox, a sly and cunning animal spirit, dreams up a plan to con the slow witted but strong General Ox, played by Sam, into forcing open the gates to Lao Tzu's house, with the aim of stealing some of the Great Sage's immortality pills. This is an action that has the potential to go horribly wrong for the players. Dan starts out lining to the Narrator how he is going to dupe General Ox, using Silver Fox's Actor skill paired with his Clever attitude.

Dan even has an amusing role-playing skit to tie in with his card draw. At this stage, Sam could decide to oppose Dan and come up with a counter action, using his Soldier skill to represent his sense of loyalty and honour coupled with a Trustworthy attitude. Whoever loses the simple (or dramatic if they really decide to act it out) action abides by the result gracefully and goes along with the story. Sam might even decide not to oppose Dan and instead rule that the simple-hearted General Ox wants to help his friend Silver, naively going along with the plan, hamming up the acting out of General Ox breaking the gate and gaining a Fortune point in the process for pushing the story on in an

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interesting way.

Either way, the trick is to avoid any player feeling that the actions of another character is robbing them of choice and power within the game.

Handing out Fortune Points

Fortune points act as the fuel that can be burnt by the players to drive the story forward.

They can be spent to “Steal the Scene” to create story opportunities, and their number determines the maximum number of cards a player can hold in his Fortune Hand. Players soon chase after Fortune Points when they learn this since holding high cards in the Fortune hand means that they can be transferred into their Action hand during important Actions that the player wants to win.

So make sure you award Fortune Points on the spot for any play that pushes the story forward in an interesting and exciting way. Don't reward mundane and dull play. This way, as the players push to gain more Fortune, they will come out with more and more interesting and entertaining ways of earning it.

As a guide, look to hand out no more than four to five fortune points per session per player.



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Things to remember while Narrating Monkey

- It's meant to be a light-hearted fun game, not an interactive thesis or psychological drama about Chinese philosophy and mythology.
- It's a player centred game. Don't let non-player Immortals dominate proceedings or take choice away from the players.
- It's an open game, everything happens in front of the players with their full involvement.
- If something is fun, let it happen and see where it goes.
- Be ready to improvise.
- Don't fudge or make arbitrary judgements.
- No note passing or 'secrets'. Imagine the game as being a big movie that even if a player's character is not on screen they are still watching. However players not on screen cannot make use of information that their characters would not know.
- If you are not sure about applying a rule, don't be afraid to consult the players.
- If something awkward happens in game that any of the players do not feel comfortable with, stop the game immediately. Discuss the situation with the players and look for ways to resolve the issue.
- Remember to compromise in the case of disputes, and not to play favourites.

These points will be more fully discussed in the in the Narrator's advice in chapter 6.



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Cast

Major characters

Kuan Yin. The Goddess of Mercy, the Player Immortals' patron.

Madame Dragonfly. The timid courtier that the player Immortals must take to Kuan Yin's Western Isle.

Snake Eyes. A Demon who is responsible for the theft of the Bag of Wind.

Supporting characters

Son of the Western Dragon King. A dragon trapped in the mid air without winds

Prince Natha. An errant boy demon hunter on Earth without Heaven's permission.

General Li-Jing. Prince Natha's dad, come to take his truant son back to Heaven.

Fung Po. The Wind Lord who has 'lost' his magical Bag of Wind.

Extras

Bandits. Mortals taking advantage of the floods.

Minor demons. Supposedly under the command of Snake Eyes, they are bored and causing havoc in the city.



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Set-up: Beneath Western Heaven

You stand at the base of the mountains that separate the Tang Empire of the mortals from the western lands. Above you in the clouds above is the Western Heaven, from which you have been recently ejected. Judged by the Jade Emperor for your crime, you have been expelled to earth. Feeling miserable with yourself you see two noble women drift down on a cloud from the beyond the mountaintops. Surely they must be Heavenly Immortals! As they come closer you see that one is the Bodhisattva Kuan Yin, the Goddess of Mercy, and hiding timidly behind her is one of the Queen of Heaven's handmaidens. The cloud comes to earth and the two women lightly step off it. The handmaiden looks scared and clings tighter to Kuan Yin's robes. Kuan Yin smiles generously at you.

After traditional pleasantries and introductions are exchanged, Kuan Yin explains the situation.

"I am in need of a favour. Young Madame Dragonfly here is in need of a group of trustworthy and noble protectors to escort her to my Isle in the Southern Ocean. Unfortunately I have business that I must attend to before this event.

She cannot travel alone for the land is awash with water and bandits and demons abound troubling the human Emperor. But I see that we have likely candidates here. Heaven would be most grateful."

She then waits expectantly for your answer...

At this point hand over to the players. Let them decide if they are going to take up the cause of escorting Madame Butterfly. If they hesitate, Kuan Yin will explain subtly that it would help them get back in favour with the Heavenly powers, since the gentle Madame Dragonfly is one of the handmaidens to the Queen of Heaven herself. Now is also a good point to discuss what Virtue rewards the players intend to pursue during the course of the adventure.

Here are some suggestions if the discussion needs some input from you.

Safely escort Madame Dragonfly. This is the obvious one, which will earn the players a basic 1 virtue point (2 if they are overly heroic/ go above and beyond the call of duty).

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Use the journey to help Madame Dragonfly become more worldly.

This is a more complex and less obvious virtue goal for the players to pick upon and the narrator to judge the success of. If the players do not come out with it is best suggested subtly through the player Immortals' conversation with Kuan Yin. For example "You must be careful when you look after Madame Dragonfly. She has had a sheltered life and sometimes I wonder if she would jump at the sight of her own shadow". Some form of conscious 'teaching' role on the part of the player Immortals must be taken to qualify for a 2-3 virtue reward.

Dealing with the bandits and demons. Again an obvious one to pick up from Kuan Yin's opening speech which will earn any players actively involved in policing actions 1-2 virtue points.

Come back to the subject of Virtue in later scenes and while, at first, you might have to suggest goals to obtain Virtue, you will soon find that the players are coming up with Virtue goals of their own.



The Western Heaven

The Western Heaven is the first of two Heavens (the second being the Buddhist Eastern Heaven), and the home of the Chinese Gods. Here various Immortals from Taoist Mythology live. Chief amongst them is the Jade Emperor, the current Heavenly Emperor who has ascended after four noble forebears and rules the cosmos from his palace. Earth mirrors the Heavenly workings, so there are ministries where Heavenly mandarins control the actions of the earth below, parks where noble Immortalladies walk surveying fantastic birds, fantastic mansions and mustering fields where the generals of the Heavenly Hosts drill their soldiers.

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Failure to meet Virtue goals

When the players set their virtue goals there should be a risk that they can fail. Not only because this is a game, but also because this gives the whole process a sense of risk and fun.

The consequences of failing to meet virtue goals are covered in Chapter 4: Developing the story, but a summary of specific consequences are covered here. This list is no means exhaustive and any Narrator worth his salt with a devilish sense of humour can easily come up with more. Remember the trick here is to keep the players involved in the game; make them work for their Virtue awards.

- **By malicious forethought.** Abandoning Madame Dragonfly because the players find it too annoying to escort her is a good example.
- **By oversight, intentional or accidental.** The players might resolve to get back Feng Po's Bag of Wind, but decide not to confront Snake Eyes in the city.
- **By simple failure.** Snake Eyes manages to give the player characters the slip.



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Kuan Yin, Bodhistrava Goddess of Mercy

Celestial Major Immortal/Bodhistrava.

Major Character

Attitudes:

Yin: Gentle, Merciful, Elegant.

Yang: Direct, Strong minded

Skills:

Buddhist 6. As a Bodhistrava Kuan Yin is well versed in all aspects of Buddhism to a masterful degree.

Courtier 4. She regularly travels between the two Heavens and is well versed in protocol and etiquette.

Magic Powers:

Mercy 6. Kuan Yin is the Goddess of Compassion and Mercy, and can use this power to show a person how to alleviate their suffering and engineer the situation where they can find redemption.

Limitation. The person who is given the opportunity must of course take it. The power does not automatically take away the person's sins.

Flight 5. Like all Immortals, Kuan Yin can fly through the Heavens and sky.

Limitation: She cannot carry mortals.

Shape change 1. Kuan Yin is able to change into whatever form that she needs to bring mercy and compassion.

Limitation: She does not shape change for other reasons.

Guardian Disciple 6. Kuan Yin is protected by General Li's second son, Prince Moksa, who is known as Huian the Novice, and is also her disciple.

Limitation: He protects his mistress from physical harm, using a heavy magical rod; he is unable to help with any other task.

Virtue: 6



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Madame Dragonfly

Celestial Minor Immortal.

Major Character

Attitudes:

Yin: Gentle, Graceful, Shy

Skills:

Taoist 2. As Heavenly courtier, Madame Dragonfly has a rough understanding of the Taoist rituals that are performed there.

Courtier 5. She is well trained in the etiquette and manners of the Court of the Queen Mother.

Dragon Fly Kung Fu 1. She has natural ability in avoiding flying things, mainly from dodging wild Earth Gods who will insist on running in the corridors of the courts!

Magic Powers:

Flight 5. Like all Immortals, Madame Dragonfly can fly through the Heavens and sky.

Limitation: She cannot carry mortals

Shape change 1. Just as other Immortals can, Madame Dragonfly can change shape when she needs to.

Limitation: It is easy for other Immortals to see through any disguises Madame Dragonfly comes up with using this power.

Virtue: 6



Across the countryside

The countryside of the Tang Empire is becoming one vast lake. The great rivers have burst their banks from the constant downpour from rain clouds which hang static in the windless sky.

Event: The Stolen Bag of Wind

The peaceful cloudscape the Immortals are flying across suddenly becomes dark and violent as lighting bolts flash down from Heaven to Earth. At the centre of all this is a high mountain, and on its grassy

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top is see an old man in yellow robes with a long beard standing. The thunder and lightning coincide with the angry gestures and stamping he makes.

This is Feng Po the Wind Lord and he is angry that his Bag of Wind has been stolen!

Feng Po: The Wind Lord

Feng Po 'The God of the Wind' stands on green grass on top of a mountain. A wise old man with a long flowing white beard, dressed in a yellow cloak, and a blue and red cap. He holds a large sack and directs the wind, which comes from its mouth in any direction he pleases. This wind can be as gentle as a morning breeze or as devastating as a tornado.

Feng Po is a Great Immortal, and as such he wins any contest he enters, while avoiding any he does not want to take part in; see chapter 7 for full rules on this. As well as being Lord of the Winds, he is an expert martial artist using a fast light system called 'Hand of the Wind'. Impertinent lesser Immortals who get on his wrong side may end up seeing a demonstration first hand.

Immortals who take the time to talk to Feng Po will learn that after guiding the yearly monsoons to China two days ago, a tiring and arduous task, he laid down atop his mountain to recover his energy. During his sleep somebody stole his Bag of Winds. This is a disaster! Without it he can not guide the monsoons away and all of China will drown under perpetual rain!

Event: Bandits!

As the player Immortals fly across the countryside, they see a flooded village where terrified peasants huddle on the straw roofs of their houses as the village is attacked by a large gang of bandits in boats.

This is a good opportunity to earn some Virtue by driving off the bandits. Or the players might decide that they are beneath their concern and escorting Madame Dragonfly is more important.

Twenty Bandits

Character type: Mortal criminals - Extras

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Event: Stuck Dragon

Red Flowers is the son of the Dragon of the West Sea. He has the important responsibility of bringing rain to this part of the world, which he achieves by simply ascending into the sky from the earth. However, the lack of wind has prevented his skyward motion, but not the attendant rain. He hovers halfway between Heaven and Earth, as the rains drown the land. Being a young and inexperienced dragon and proud and haughty he is too embarrassed to call for help. He certainly resists the efforts of such cast-outs as the player Immortals.

Red Flowers

Young Dragon

Supporting character

Attitudes:

Yin: Regal, Youthful

Yang: Proud, Monstrous

Skills:

Dragon 5. Claws, bite, social status in the Dragon Court for being the Dragon King's son.

Ruler 2. Red Flowers is trained in the etiquette and workings of his father's ocean court and kingdom.

Magic Powers:

Bring Rain 5. As dragons rise into the sky they bring rain to the land.

Limitation: If a dragon gets stuck in the sky, the rain does not cease.

Flight 5. Unsurprisingly, Red Flowers can fly. However...

Limitation: Red Flowers gets stuck in the sky when the air is not moving.

Virtue: 6 - although snooty to those who he considers social inferiors (such as the player Immortals) Red Flowers obeys the laws of Heaven.



The Dragon Kings

The world of Monkey is a large oblong of earth that is surrounded by four oceans. Each of these oceans is ruled by a Dragon King, who reports to the Jade Emperor, who has his own underwater court and attendant fish guards, courtiers and mandarins.

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The Tang Empire

The time of the Tang Dynasty (618 AD – 907 AD) is considered China's Golden Age. Despite occasional periods of instability, such as when the Empress Wu usurped the dynasty in 690AD, its territory was greater than that of previous dynasties and Chinese culture was at a high point, with both Taoism and Buddhism thriving with Imperial support. Tang China mirrors the Western Heaven, in that there is a mortal Emperor, who is served by an administrative class, the Mandarins. There is nobility, from previous periods, but they are a landed self-indulgent class, and it is the bureaucracy that runs the country. Any man, no matter what his birth, can rise to a major position in the bureaucracy by doing well in the public examinations.

The Emperor, who lives in a walled palace in the capital of Chang'an (present-day Xi'an), performs great annual rituals on behalf of the nation to ensure its good fortune. It is held that if the Emperor is bad and loses the 'mandate of Heaven' then calamity will befall the whole country.

Most of Tang China is rural, with cities acting as administrative centres of collection of taxes. The Empire's borders are protected by large armies. It was a General of one of these border armies who brought down the Dynasty by bringing his army into the heart of the empire and attacking Chang'an (which was eventually dismantled by its surviving inhabitants and shipped to the eastern capital).

Historically, Monkey takes place during the reign of Emperor Taizong, 626 AD to 649AD, who is considered the greatest ever Emperor of China.



The City of the Winds



Cities in Tang China act as administrative centres of rural districts. This is a typical city of a nameless rural district and as far as the Immortals are concerned would normally be unnoticeable except for the howling winds that swirl around it. This is a dead giveaway that the Bag of Winds is nearby.

The layout of the city follows a pattern that is typical of the Empire.

Governor's Palace

This large walled building stands in the centre of the city. Here the city's bureaucracy, the law courts and the tax offices are housed, and the Governor holds court.

Buddhist and Taoist Temples

These large wooden structures with coloured glass windows, are home to the Buddhist Monks and Nuns and the Taoist priests. The Buddhist temples are especially rich since its adherents regularly make donations to them as they attempt to purify themselves of material attachments.

The Great Market

This central market that serves the surrounding rural area. It is strictly organised into aisles, each selling a particular type of produce. The Great Market is bustling during the day, but is closed at night by curfew.

Wards

The city is divided into Wards, surrounded by brick walls that the inhabitants are obliged to maintain. When the bells are rung at dusk to announce the nightly curfew each Ward's gates are closed until dawn, effectively locking in the inhabitants of the ward. Fortunately, most wards have their own smaller markets for residents that have forgotten to go to the Great Market.

Most of the walled wards are residential, and are a mix of temples, one story houses with tiled roofs, craft shops, inns and other entertainment venues. Other wards are solely given over to one purpose. For example, the city's great temples form a single ward,

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as does the Governor's palace. There is also the decadent and lavish Entertainers' Ward where the nobles waste their time and money.

Canals

Canals come in through the city wall and bisect the wards, providing them with water.

The city wall

These mighty looking brick walls have square watchtowers at regular intervals. However, they provide only a limited defence against invaders such as nomad raiders- against siege engines, or a determined Immortal with earth blasting powers, they quickly crumble. A major function of the walls is in fact to keep residents in the city.

Event: Finding the lost Bag of Wind

The city streets are nearly deserted as the gales whip up and down them. Most of the city's inhabitants are cowering in their homes, and the Great Market is closed, although a few hardy souls go about their business. Persistent questioning in the right places, such as shady lower class bars, will inform the characters that a merchant going by the name of Snake Eyes arrived in the city just two days ago

Event: The Governor

As Immortals, the Governor is of little consequence to them, but the players may want to question him. Make sure their Immortals make the appropriate disguises, since Heaven frowns on Immortals appearing in front of mortals and scaring them (one Bad Fortune point is earned for such an act). The Governor is of little use, and the only clue he can give is that the winds started a couple of days ago, which coincides with the theft of the Bag of Wind



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Event: Demons run amok

This is one to play if the players are getting nowhere in their investigations, or are simply just spoiling for a fight!

These demons are part of a group of about sixty that escaped from hell with Snake Eyes. There are three demons per player Immortal. They are stupid but tough, and engage in combat until they start taking a beating. The demons appear as rough working class men, but once their straw hats are knocked off their bald horned heads reveal their true nature.

Demons

Character type: Demon, Extra



Event: The Merchant

Snake Eyes is a shifty evil demon who has escaped the Ten Hells and is intent on wreaking havoc on Earth. His theft of the Bag of Wind was an opportunistic one, but one he intends to make the most of. After stealing the Bag two days ago, he arrived in the city and he has made the Entertainers' Ward his home. A decadent state of constant drunken revelry has descended upon that part of the city since his arrival.

He prefers stealth and lies to direct confrontation, and will rely upon his demon followers to hold up the player Immortals, as he makes his escape on the Mechanical Palanquin.

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Snake Eyes

Demon – Major Character

Attitudes:

Yin: Sly, Slippery, Perceptive Yang: Fast

Skills:

Rogue 6

Snake Kung Fu 6

Magic Powers:

Lie 5. Deceit is one of Snake Eyes' strengths.

Limitation: does not work against those of pure and noble heart (ie. Virtue 6)

Mechanical Palanquin 5. The Palanquin can run very fast.

Limitation: Ground based movement only.

Shape change 6. Snake Eyes is a master of disguise.

Limitation: He cannot take on a form that is considered virtuous, such as that of a Buddhist Monk.

Hypnotic stare 5. This power can be used to put others into a trance where they are vulnerable to suggestions, or send them to sleep.

Limitation: Again, the truly virtuous (ie. Virtue 6) are unaffected by this power.

Virtue: 0. Evil



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Event: The Boy Demon Hunter

Heaven observes the events unfolding below on Earth. The Boy Prince Natha sees the havoc, and knowing it is the result of demons running amok, decides to slip down to Earth without his esteemed parent. Once there his boyish nature takes over. Sure there are demons to fight, but Natha wants some fun first.

The player Immortals will meet him on the streets of the city looking for someone to play with.

Prince Natha, Boy God of Demon Slaying, God of Gamblers, the Third Prince.

Prince Natha is the son of General Li-Jing, Commander of the Armies of the Western Heaven. Despite his six foot height, Natha is only a boy in both a physical and mental sense. In the novel, Prince Natha volunteered to go after Monkey after he deserted his post at the Jade Emperor's stables. He confronted the rebellious primate appearing as a terrifying three-headed and six-armed giant, with each arm holding a different monster-quelling weapon (sword, scimitar, rope, club, embroidered ball and a fire wheel).

Monkey was unimpressed by the Boy God's appearance, and to mock him used his shape changing powers to match the prince, becoming a giant with three heads with six arms which wielded three versions of his magic iron staff. After a long and mighty battle, where neither got the upper hand, Monkey defeated Natha by trickery, creating a duplicate of himself which sneaked up behind the Prince to beat him senseless.

After this event, the Jade Emperor, on the advice of the Planet Venus, gave Monkey the important sounding but ultimately empty title of Great Sage Equal of Heaven, which quietened the troublesome animal for a while.

Prince Natha was originally a hideous Immortal with three heads, eight arms and nine eyes. The Jade Emperor sent him down to earth to battle a horde of demons, and he was born to Emperor's Li Jing's wife as the Third Prince. A mischievous child at the age of six, and the equivalent height in feet, he caused trouble with the Dragon Kings by paddling in the eastern sea; an innocent act one thinks until you realise that Natha possessed pants of fire which set the sea ablaze.

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To make matters worse, he killed the son of the Eastern Sea Dragon King who was sent to investigate. The Dragon King kidnapped his parents in retaliation, a delicate situation which was only resolved by a sulky Natha committing suicide. However, the next morning a fleshy ball rolled up to the door of Li-Jing's Palace. Curious Li-Jing sliced open the ball and out jumped the reincarnated Prince Natha! Angry Li-Jing set about cutting the mischievous Prince Natha down to size literally. This battle almost ended in defeat for Li-Jing, but feeling responsible for it, the Jade Emperor intervened. After this fight, father and son were united and so their Demon slaying career began.

After Prince Natha ascended to Heaven, mortals began worshipping him as a God of Lotteries and Gambling. Because of his boyish nature, Natha is only allowed to visit the world of Mortals if accompanied by his father Li-Jing. If he somehow sneaks down to Earth unaccompanied, he must hide his presence from his elder or be forcibly returned to the Western Heaven by his angry father.

Major Celestial Immortal/ God

Supporting Character

Attitudes:

Yang: Mischievous, Brave, Fierce, Temper, Boyish mentality, Strong

Skills:

Monster Slaying Kung Fu 5. During his demon slaying days, Natha developed this style of Kung Fu in response to all the horns, hooves, lashing tails, claws and fangs that he faced.

Soldier 3. Despite his father's best efforts Natha remains an unruly soldier.

Prankster 3. A boy at heart, Natha loves jokes and mischief all kinds, usually at the expense of others.

Magic Powers:

Six weapons of Demon subdual 6. (1 rank for each weapon see below)

Natha carries a binding rope, scimitar of slashing, a sword of hacking, a bashing club, an embroidered ball and a flaming wheel.

Limitation: Natha can only wield all six of the weapons if he turns into his giant three-headed, six-armed form. If for any reason Natha

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is unable to use all six of his arms, he only gets a rank equal to the number of arms he can use.

Shape change 5. Natha is well experienced in the art of shape changing. His natural form is of a six foot tall boy, but as noted above he often takes the form of a three-headed six-armed giant.

Limitation: No matter what form he takes he is always recognisable as a young boy.

Flaming Pants 6. Natha has flaming underwear, which famously set the Eastern sea alight when he went paddling in his youth. This power is not used in his fight against Monkey, which occurred after his youth, so one assumes that he is able to switch off this power.

Limitation: Natha must be in physical contact with whatever he tries to set alight.

Virtue 6.

Natha is currently virtuous because of his successful demon slaying career. However his natural mischievousness may get him into trouble with the powers of Heaven, if tempted that way by some wayward person.

Event: His Dad

Eventually Prince Natha will be noticed for being missing from Heaven, and his dad General Li will angrily come down from Heaven intending to forcefully bring his son back. Without the wise intervention of the players, the two gods will fight it out causing much damage to the city.

General Li, the Pagoda-Throwing General

An Emperor in his lifetime, upon his death the Jade Emperor made him an Immortal General of Heaven's host. He is known as Pagoda-Throwing General due to his habit of picking up nearby buildings and hurling them against enemies.

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Major Celestial Immortal. Supporting character.

Attitudes:

Yang: Strict, Forceful

Skills:

Soldier 6

Magical Powers:

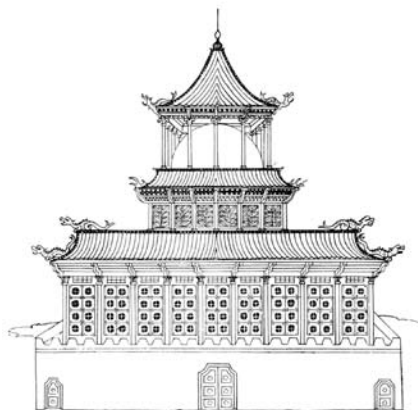
Heavenly demon slaying armour and weapons 5

These Weapons were a gift from the Jade Emperor himself.

Pick up and throw Building (usually Pagoda) 4

Limitation: This awesome feat of strength can only be used on buildings, not natural features such as rocks and trees.

Virtue: 6



Resolving the Adventure

The easiest way to close matters is when the player Immortals have finally overcome all their trials and successfully made their way to Kuan Yin's island in the Southern Ocean.

Here they will be invited to the party, a glorious glamorous affair full of good food, fine wine, splendid flowered garlands and gentle but stirring music. Here, before the crowd of fellow Immortals Kuan Yin will gently praise or admonish the player Immortals depending on their Virtue gain or loss during the adventure.

Narrator's Advice

This chapter attempts to give Narrators a firm grounding in how to run the game. While any student of Kung Fu will tell you that practice will teach you more than books, I'm hoping that this chapter will give you the first few moves to becoming a Master Narrator who is skilled, inventive, and calm when faced with fast-moving, excitable and happy players; players who are revelling in the enjoyable and memorable story you are all collectively telling using the game.

Fundamentals of running Monkey

There are two core principals to bear in mind at all times when running Monkey. If you do this, you can't go wrong.

"It's not the destination, it's the journey"

The above is an old saying that applies both to meditation and to this game. Although the game has a clear end point when the characters get to Virtue 6, or 60 in the Epic game, it's not about winning or losing. It's about having fun. If your players are having fun and enjoying the series of challenges that you are throwing in their path then everyone wins.

Players who don't "win" by reaching Virtue 6 or 60 will still have fun, and will happily reminisce about the game in the future if they enjoy themselves as a whole. Virtue is a destination for the players to strive for, but it is not the be all and end all. The Narrator's job and duty is to ensure that all assembled have a fun and enjoyable time, regardless of individual goals and agendas.

"Its about doing the right thing"

In this game, the players are not rewarded in any way for harming or intimidating non-player characters. The player Immortals are present to ease the pain of the world according the Buddhist Eastern Heavenly Authorities or at least make sure that everything runs in Harmony according to the Taoist Western Heaven.

This is contrary to what many people consider to be a key feature of many role-playing games; a feature rooted in the hobby's war-gaming past. Compare and contrast the above to the anti-social

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behaviour sometimes seen at a particular Dungeon Delving game that has a history going back to the mid 70s. This is not to say that this particular game, or indeed any related games, are wrong and not fun, just that Monkey has very different objectives when it comes to how the characters should act.

However don't go overboard in trying to recreate the fine detail of Taoist philosophy or Buddhist religion. If there is an underlying moral message in the novel, it transmits it in a fun and entertaining way. It doesn't get bogged down in religious moralising or dense philosophy, and neither should your game.

Things you'll notice when you run Monkey

It's a player-centred game

The player Immortals are not weak or even moderately powerful individuals. They are one step away from being full blown Gods; it is only the characters' weaknesses and inner failings that stand between them and godhood. The player Immortals are more than capable of doing anything the players can think up. Allow and encourage this. Don't be scared of letting the players do what they want.

Fortune, Virtue and Bad Fortune are all built in rules that guide and shape character behaviour. In the most extreme cases you always have the Great Immortals to act as cosmic policemen in game and as Narrator you can always stop the game if things get too far out of hand (see "Fix problems before they arise" below).

Although the player Immortals are very powerful, there are still more powerful and prestigious Immortals around. It's very important, both from a game point of view and a from player point of view, that these non-player Immortals don't steal the limelight.

While being the bad boy may be appropriate for a character, do not let this behaviour spill out into the player's interactions towards each other. Make a clear distinction between in game reality and out of game reality and be ready to be assertive to make sure in game grudges never ever become out of game problems. Make a very clear distinction between 'character vs. character' behaviour, where the Immortals bicker and oppose each other in game, and 'player vs. player' which is a game of one-upmanship played outside of the

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game. The former is acceptable, and at times even encouraged (see below), whereas the latter is never acceptable.

You'll notice how quickly the players get into character and start bickering. Let them run with it, knowing when to throw in an appropriate Bickering contest when it's dragging on or passions are beginning to run high and the players need something to quickly resolve who is right or wrong so the game can move on.

It's about creating an open cooperative game; no more screens!

D101 games will never ever publish for Monkey that traditional 'Games Master's Aid', the Games Master's screen. Everything in Monkey can and should be done in plain view of the players.

Get a big table, and clear it of clutter. When a Narrator-controlled character performs an Action, lay the cards down in front of the players. Let the players work together to build up a hand to beat your opposition.

Do not pass notes to players or otherwise keep 'secrets' from players not involved in a particular moment of play. Imagine the game is a big movie, so that even if a player's character is not on screen the player is still watching. However, players with Immortals who are off-screen cannot make use of information that their characters would not know.

No more fudging

Another traditional aspect of role-playing games that Monkey throws out with the garbage is that of 'Fudging', where the Narrator performs dice rolls in secret, often behind that previously mentioned 'Games Master's Aid' the screen, and then announces a result that is favourable to the players and shields them from character death and perhaps more commonly a personal sense of disappointment at the result.

You and your players will sometimes find failure more interesting than success. There will be situations that you and the players never would have anticipated arising from a failed draw. In this game, you don't need to protect your players from the random and needless death of their characters.

Also, fudging goes against the cooperative spirit of the game that you are trying to create.

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Fix problems before they arise

If the players feel uncomfortable with a ruling or the way the story is progressing, stop, discuss and adjust before continuing. If something awkward happens in game that any of the players do not feel comfortable with, stop the game immediately. Discuss the situation with the players and look for ways to resolve the issue.

Keep the tone light-hearted.

Monkey should be run as a light-hearted comedy action game. Despite its rather lofty theme of the player Immortals regaining their Virtue, it's meant to be a game of light-hearted fun, not an interactive thesis or psychological drama about Chinese philosophy and mythology.

Get everyone involved

This is a social storytelling game. So get everyone involved, drawing cards and narrating their actions. Don't let shy players hide in the background and loud and obnoxious players dominate the action. Get the quieter ones involved by giving everyone equal time under the spotlight.

Don't just give every player a chance to take a place under the spotlight; make sure every player has some time under the spotlight. This might bring some players out of their comfort zones, but they will have more fun in the long term. Monkey is not a game for passengers who like to sit back and watch what is going on. As my Kung Fu Master repeatedly said, 'Get to the front, you'll learn more'.

Don't tolerate cheats, EVER!

Unfortunately some players will feel the need to win at any cost, even at the expense of others' fun. They will shuffle cards into their Action Hand and swap cards into their Fortune Hand that they are not entitled to. As soon as you catch someone cheating be gently assertive and point out that there is no cheating in your game. Point out that the player characters are powerful Immortals, and there is plenty of opportunity to win and have fun doing so by playing by the rules. Failure is only a temporary setback and something a player shouldn't take personally.

Maintain a zero tolerance attitude towards cheats. A cheating player automatically fails the Action he is attempting. If a player cheats repeatedly, take them out of the group and ask them gently but firmly to stop, telling them that if they carry on they are spoiling everyone's fun and you will have to ask them to leave the game. If

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a player is thick-headed enough to ignore this advice, ask them to leave at the end of the session. You are playing this game for fun, so why play with someone that spoils the group's fun for themselves?

If this all sounds a bit heavy, don't worry, I've found that having a player Immortal automatically fail any action made when the player is caught cheating quickly stops any further such bad behaviour. These types of players don't want to lose after all.

This includes you. Set the standard. If you cheat or tamper with your cards, even if you think that you are doing to create a better game, your players will think it is okay to do so, or at least feel aggrieved. It also gives genuine cheats a retort if you challenge them later in the game.

Flow is everything, even if you have to stop

Flow is a strange thing to describe, but something you'll easily spot when it takes off in your game. The players will become animated, excitedly narrating their actions or sitting on the edge of their seats waiting for the opportunity to speak, but giving everyone else full attention and respect. Everyone will have big smiles on their faces. It's a magic moment indeed.

As Narrator, it's your job to encourage players to get into a state where the game really flows. Pretty much all the above points are methods to encourage this, but don't be disheartened when it doesn't happen, when players haven't got a word to say or when things get too excited and loud or the game gets derailed or side-tracked into an off-topic conversation. Just gently adjust the balance and get the game moving again.

Some additional points to help the game flow:

- Don't cling to your pre-written plan of the session.
- If something is fun, let it happen and see where it goes.
- Be ready to improvise, and let the players help you.
- If you are not sure about applying a rule, don't be afraid to consult the players rather than let the game stall.

Communication is key to a successful game.

Talk, talk and talk some more about the game and what is going on. Draw out descriptions. Discuss problems. Keep the talk and hence the game flowing.

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A wise man knows his limitations

Monkey doesn't do the following. It's better that you know this up front so you are not under any illusions.

Detailed blow by blow fighting

Even the Dramatic Action rules abstract certain things so beloved of role-playing games still rooted in the hobby's war-gaming past, such as weapon damage, armour and hit locations, to a ridiculous degree. Some time an Action Hand will represent a single killer strike and another time it will represent a flurry of complex combat moves. It all depends on the player's vivid narration of the action.

Detailed character generation

If your players are looking for a character sheet full of numbers indicating a character's attributes and history, they are going to be disappointed. Move past this disappointment and show the players how their Immortals are frameworks that can be used repeatedly to weave complex and entertaining narratives. The descriptors and numbers on the Immortal sheet are the most fundamental aspects of the character. If a player wants to deepen their character in play and bring into play previously unknown facts about the Immortal that are in keeping with what has already been established, use the Bonus card for Humorous play to reward this!

Character advancement by skill improvement

Although there is a mechanism for advancing characters using unspent Fortune Points, most Immortals are fully formed before play begins. The emphasis is on creating fun stories and obtaining Virtue, not on improving an Immortal's abilities.

Paint the world in more than broad brush strokes

In the novel, the world that the Pilgrims are passing through is there as scenery and very loosely described, for it is the Pilgrims themselves that are the focus. This game aims to continue this approach, so you'll not find expansive sections about Everyday Daily life in Ancient China or 101 Immortals. Instead you'll find pointers to help you create the stories that you and your players are interested in telling.

Practicalities of running Monkey

Above, I've talked about some of the ideals, things you should be striving for when running Monkey to ensure a fun and entertaining game. Here are some tips arising from our playtesting.

Have a clear table or playing area

When the game gets going, and everyone is pulling out cards, making up Action Hands and putting fortune cards on the table you are going to need space. A typical game of Monkey has four to six players, not including the Narrator. Keep your gaming table clear of clutter, and give the players room to see each other's Action Hands and the opposing Action Hand, so they can comfortably work together and build winning hands to beat you. Having more than enough space to comfortably play also discourages cheating (see above) by creating an open environment where it's harder for cheats to hide behind the mess and tamper with their Action or Fortune Hands.

Be assertive, and don't let pushy players play cards not allowed by the rules.

Remember the Golden rule of card playing

The player must narrate why they are playing the card. If they don't give a satisfactory reason why they are playing the card, you are within your rights to deny them that card.

Don't let lazy yet forceful players get away with cards that they haven't narrated properly. Don't let them play cards that don't fit in with what they have narrated or the type of action they have played.

Handing out Virtue rewards

You'll find at first that there's a certain amount of hand holding required when allocating Virtue rewards. For the first couple of times, the players will look to you to suggest Virtue rewards or even get so lost in exploring the setting and their characters that they will forget this aspect of the game. Gently point out and suggest opportunities.

Eventually a typical player will take to pursuing Virtue like a duck to water, especially when they realise that they are in control and it is the pathway to their character 'winning' the game.

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Awarding Fortune Points

You should give each player roughly four Fortune Points per session, or five if their play has been outstanding. Remember to give each player an ample chance to shine and earn Fortune Points.

Likewise, don't hesitate to apply the results of Bad Fortune and don't let players go back on their actions.

Players using Fortune Points to 'Steal the Scene'

On the one hand, you shouldn't be too precious about the players taking the story off in a direction that you hadn't originally planned. This is an inevitable result of Fortune Points being used, and you should be prepared for it.

On the other hand you shouldn't allow players to use Fortune Points to break the story by making unreasonable and petty scene changes. You have the final decision on whether or not a Scene Steal can occur.

How Fortune Points work with investigation scenes

Fortune Points mean that an investigation never need get stuck a through lack of leads. Therefore it's worth noting that even when stories feature an investigation, investigations are never be the focus of play, and they won't keep the players from getting to the action for long.

Don't let players overuse Weaknesses

When a Weakness comes into play, it should be a significant event which lands the Immortal in hot water and puts them at a disadvantage right there and then. The player should deal with the consequences of a character's weakness, and have to dig their way out of the fall-out caused by their actions, as well as picking up an extra card.

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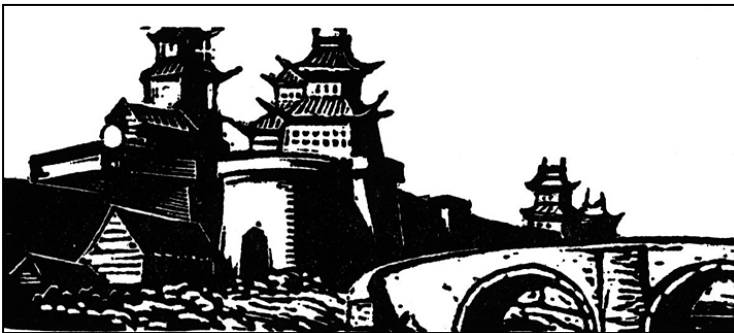
The 'Metagame'

While Monkey at the end of the day is a storytelling game, some players will enjoy the rules mechanics side of the game. Make sure that a fun balance is struck between the players building their Fortune Hands and the ongoing narrative. On one hand, allow the players time to sort out their cards, but on the other hand do not let that distract them from interacting with the story.

The fact that players can store cards in their Fortune Hands means that not only does the game avoid the disappointment of high cards being played for trivial actions, but that players will push the play in ways that means they an Action needs to be called for. Actions give the players a chance to transfer cards into their Fortune Hands for later use, particularly in the final resolution of the story.

Storing Jokers until the end of the story is a common tactic used by players, and it's something that you should allow with good grace as long as the player can narrate the card with great gusto! All this means that the game tends to start up small and build up, with big cards being stored, to a big ridiculous action packed finale with all these big cards coming out of the players' Fortune Hands. This is how it should be.

In the novel, each chapter, or group of chapters for the longer episodes, begins quietly and builds up to a big action packed finale, before everything calms down and the pilgrims quietly reflect on what happened before moving on to the next stage of their journey.



Creating Stories

Every Narrator is going to have his or her way of creating stories for their players. Before it presented to the players, a story is a unique expression of the Narrator's creativity, so for every Narrator it will be different. There is no wrong or right way to create stories, but this section details how I go about it. As well as giving beginning Navigators a starting point, the aim is to point out some of the features of the Monkey system that need to be highlighted, so your stories survive contact with the inquisitive and excited players, and are fun for everyone.

How much preparation?

Broadly speaking, the amount of work the Narrator puts into a story falls into two extremes.

Improvised. No preparation. The Narrator makes things up on the spot, usually in response to the player's actions.

Pre-planned. Everything is prepared in advance. The Narrator has a pre-written plot and cast list with statistics and a very clear idea in his head of what will happen.

Monkey is a mix of the two. The rules light nature of the game makes it easy to improvise, but it doesn't take much effort to write out a plot and quickly create a cast list. However, because Monkey is a cooperative storytelling game, how the players act during the game is going to determine how much quick thinking and improvisation on the Narrator's part is required.

In some cases, the players will be totally happy to go along with the Narrator's pre-planned story. In others the players will just use the plan as a starting point and then jump off all over the place, completely deviating from the original plan, using Fortune Points to take the story in places the Narrator never would have guessed. This is all good and part of how Monkey is set up to play. The rules systems support this. If the players want to be in the driving seat plot-wise, the rules emphasise that they have to take narrative control, and the rules light nature of the game means that the Narrator can easily keep up with them, by quickly improvising Non-Player Characters and falling back on the single unified system for resolving Actions.

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However some preparation is a good idea, even if it is a single page of scribbled notes that outline the following basic elements

- A Basic Premise. A quick summary of what the story is about.
- A Cast List. The non-player characters involved in the story. A bare minimum of their name, role in the Story and importance (Major, Minor or Extra).
- A Scene list. A list of locations and possible events that will happen in the story.

Basic Premise

This is the first thing that I always come up with, a one paragraph description of the story.

For example, for Bag of Wind:

“The player Immortals are asked by Kuan Yin to escort the courtesan Madame Dragonfly across a flooded and chaotic China to her Island in the Eastern Sea. On the way they bump into Feng Po the Windlord, who asks them to find his stolen Bag of Wind. The theft of the Bag is making the monsoon rains linger longer than usual and causing chaos in China.”

The premise should sum up quickly what the story is about if someone were to ask you for a quick description.

The Cast List

This is a list of all the characters, both Immortal and mortal, that could possibly appear in the story. I say ‘possibly’ since, because of the interactive nature of the game, some of your planned cast list may never be met by the players. It’s worth noting that even if they stay off-stage, Major and Supporting characters still have an impact on the story.

All the members of the cast (apart, perhaps, from Extras) should be credible and sympathetic characters, and should never be just bland cannon fodder for the player Immortals to beat up on their way to the main climax of the adventure. Thinking about the character’s place in their story, how they got there, and their back story is the first step in deciding which Skills and Attitudes you give them. Such details are more important in play than the actual numbers you assign.

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Each cast member should have:

- A name.
- A role.
- A clear reason why they are in the story.
- More depth than mere cannon fodder.

Characters fall into three roles; Major Characters, Supporting Characters and Extras.

Major Characters. While the Player Immortals should always be the ‘Stars’ of the story, Major Characters are cast members who are on a par with them. Most commonly encountered Major Characters are the chief opposition of the story or the powerful Immortals of Heaven that help the Player Immortals. Next to the players, these are the people that are driving the adventure.

In Bag of Wind, the demon Snake Eyes is a Major character, as is Madame Dragonfly and the Wind Lord Fung Po.

Supporting Characters. Supporting Characters are significant supporting roles in the story. Examples are a second in command to a Major Character villain, and a wise old elder who appears throughout the story giving advice and direction to the player Immortals, but who never takes part in the action.

In Bag of Wind, the Dragon Red Flowers, the Demon Hunter Prince Natha and his father General Li are all Supporting Characters.

The Skills and attitudes of Major and Supporting characters depend upon the Power of the Immortal.

Major Immortals : Three significant skills at say rank 4 to 6, with a few attitudes that show the immortal’s personality. As well as Flight and Shape Changing, Immortals also have one or two powers at a rank of 3 to 5. These powers are also often closely associated to the immortal’s personality.

Minor Immortals : Two or three significant skills at rank 3 to 5, along with a few attitudes. Minor Immortals also have one or two powers at a rank of 2 to 4, as well, probably, as Flight and Shape Changing.

Extras. Extras occupy bit parts, and rarely last more than one scene. The mass of Demonic henchmen, the crowds at the market, the City Watch and the Owner of the Inn the Player Immortals stay in overnight are all examples of Extras.

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In Bag of Wind, the bandits and Snake Eyes' demon henchmen are Extras.

Skills and attitudes: Extras do not have any skills or attitudes. However, a rough note should be made of what they do. Extras do not participate in actions outside their normal area of activity. For example, a group of Temple chefs will normally run away when confronted with violence (or perhaps not, if the Narrator thinks a Kung Fu fight involving improvised kitchen weapons and cauldrons of boiling water is in order).

There are more sample non-player characters in Chapter 7 The Worlds of Monkey.



Building Scenes

Scenes are the building blocks of your stories.

Each Scene has the following elements

- **A location where the scene takes place.** The location is a discrete place that can easily be described to the players and that they can easily mentally visualise.
- **A situation.** What is already happening when the player Immortals enter the scene, or what happens at the time they arrive?
- **A cast.** Who is present for the player Immortals to interact with?

When the players enter the scene, the Narrator describes their first impressions of the location, who they can see and what is happening. Play then follows from that point.

For example, in *Bag of Wind*, in the second scene of the story the players arrive at Feng Po's Mountain. The Narrator sets the scene by telling the players the following;

“The peaceful cloudscape you are flying over suddenly becomes dark and violent as lighting bolts flash down from Heaven to Earth. At the centre of all this is a high mountain, and on its grassy top you see an old man in yellow robes with a long beard. The thunder and lightning coincide with the angry gestures and stamping he makes.”

What happens next is up to the players, but you've successfully set a scene that the players will want to interact with.

The most important scene for getting the game up and going is the Introductory scene at the start of the story. Give your players a quick summary of the situation that their Immortals find themselves in and plenty of reasons to get on with the action as quickly as possible.

For example, at the beginning of Bag of Wind, the Player Immortals find themselves standing at the base of the mountains below the Western Heaven they have just been cast out of. Kuan Yin floats down and offers them the task of taking Madame Dragonfly across flooded China to her Island in the Southern Ocean. It's a scene that tells the players exactly where their Immortals stand in the scheme of things and gives them a way forward to better themselves or at least move away from the dreary nothingness of the Mountains.

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Keep things simple and direct. Don't dwell on revealing too much of the story's overall premise. Let that unfold in bite-sized chunks throughout the rest of the story. If the players want additional detail they will ask for it.

At the heart of each scene, there should be a central Dilemma that should provide a challenge to the Immortals. Although Monkey is filled with action scenes, there's also a very real sense that the action is fitting into a larger scheme of things with very definite consequences. Scenes in Monkey should never be straightforward random violence. There should always be some sort of meaningful choice, and potential dilemma, involved.

Some of the dilemmas in Bag of Wind:

The player Immortals encounter the bandits who are terrorizing the flooded Village. Should they continue at speed to deliver Madame Butterfly to Kuan Yin's island or stop and do the virtuous thing and help the villagers?

When the Player Immortals encounter Prince Natha the demon hunter in the city, should they convince him to help them clear the city of Demons or should they join his quest for fun?

Dilemmas also make good hooks to hang Virtue Goals on, since they almost often involve some sort of decision between right and wrong.

One way of keeping the players' entertained and on their toes is through the use of 'The Twist'. Avoid overuse of this plot device but one or two per story can really help keep the action moving on in new and unexpected directions.

In Bag of Wind the Twist comes almost at the beginning. The players will quite rightly think that their job is to take Madame Butterfly across China. Upon meeting Feng Po and learning of his missing Bag of Wind, their focus shifts to finding the Bag.

Some scenes should present opportunities for players to play on their characters Weaknesses. Such scenes give opportunities for the Players to draw cards into their Fortune Hand and also to give their Immortal time in the spotlight.

For example, the City in Bag of Wind provides all sorts of opportunities for theft, drunkenness, lusting and casual uncalled for violence.

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Another thing to think about, especially if you are playing the longer form of the game or know the Immortals involved, is scenes which play to the player Immortals' strengths. For instance, if you have an Immortal who is a Taoist Sage, have a scene that deals with the esoteric world of Taoist magic. Kung Fu Action scenes are the meat of Monkey's stories, but make sure you make time for other types of scenes that make use of the Player Immortals' abilities.

When players Steal the Scene by spending a Fortune Point, the set-up is the same as when a Narrator presents a scene but the player gets to describe the location, say who else is there and instead of a dilemma says what their Immortal is hoping to get out of the Scene. Play then resumes from there.

The final scene of any story is the 'Resolution Scene'. Here all the loose ends of the Story are tied up. If the opposition of the story has not been confronted and defeated this is where it happens. If it has, then this scene covers the events following the climax in which clarification of what happened in the story occurs.

In Bag of Wind the Resolution occurs when the Player Immortals finally arrive at Kuan Yin's island. Here there is opportunity for Kuan Yin to praise or condemn the Player Immortals' actions during the story.

One final type of special scene is the Victory scene that occurs when a player Immortal reaches a Virtue of 6, or 60 in the longer form of the game. This can either be played out as and when it happens in the story, with Buddha or the Jade Emperor arriving accompanied by a small army of Heavenly Attendants to praise and readmit the Immortal to the Heaven of their choice, or perhaps more appropriately at the end of the current story.

The resolution scene at Kuan Yin's island is also the perfect opportunity to play out any Victory Scenes that are needed at the end of Bag of Wind.



Types of Stories

Although Monkey is based upon the novel 'Journey of the West', the central premise of the game is easily adaptable to a number of different types of story, three of which are detailed below.

The Journey to the West

This is the novel itself, where the Monkey, Pigsy, Sandy and the Horse are charged by Kuan Yin to escort the Priest Tripitaka from China to India to collect the scrolls missing from China's Buddhist Canon. Along the way they are harassed by various Demons out to stop them, and have to overcome their own personal failings to regain the scrolls and return them to the Tang Emperor in China.

Historically, there were just under 2,000 Buddhist monks sent to India by the Chinese Emperor; it is easy enough for the player Immortals to be escorting one of these monks. The monk should have similar game attributes to a player immortal, with special care being taken over Attitudes. The monk is mortal, and as a result does not have any magic powers.

Kuan Yin or another Bodhisattva acts as the player Immortal's Patron, gently giving advice as they travel across a mountainous wilderness, and are attacked by wily and deceitful Demons. The player Immortals are often their own enemies as their past misdeeds come back to haunt them. For example, in one of the chapters of the novel, the Pilgrims come across a vast mountain which is permanently on fire. When Monkey asks the local Earth deity what caused it, he is told that it is a brick that fell from the forge of Lao Tzu in the Western Heaven when it was knocked over by Monkey as he was stealing the old sage's pills of Immortality. Further, there is the constant clash of egos as the Pilgrims try to outdo themselves.

The 'Journey to the West' very much relies on playing off the Immortals' egos and shortcomings, more than any other type of Monkey story, otherwise it risks falling into the trap of being 'Demon of the Week'. Even the demons themselves should be created with this in mind. The most obvious type of demon is big and savage, and tempts the player Immortals into acts of violence, but there is scope for other sorts of demon that prey on weaknesses such as lust, gluttony and greed.

This type of story is most suited to being played out as the long

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form of the game. The end goal of 'The Journey to the West' is the regaining of the scrolls for China and the admittance of any Player Immortal who has Virtue score of sixty into the Buddhist Eastern Heaven.



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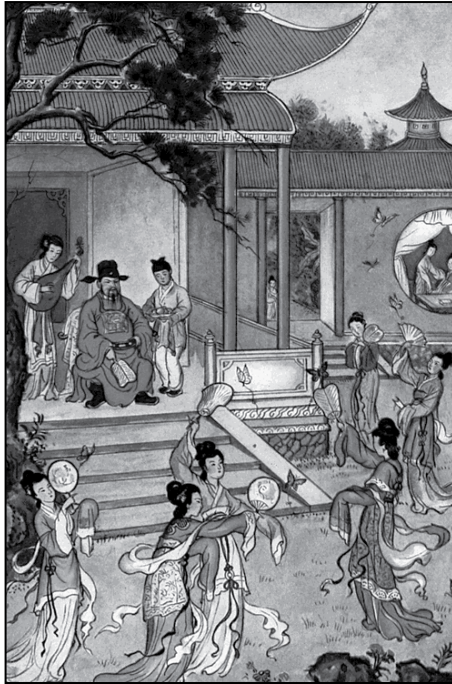
The Ministry of Thunder

The Ministry of Thunder is one of the Western Heaven's Ministries, and is led by Lei-Gong, the bat-winged and bat-headed God of Thunder. The Ministry of Thunder is charged with solving those crimes that mortal law can't or won't reach. Lei-Gong is aided by his deputies, Immortals who through service to the Ministry are atoning for their own crimes.

The Player Immortals are chasing down Demons that are running amok on Earth in the cities of Ancient China or solving other crimes and mysteries that are supernatural in origin. Its one part Judge Dee/ police procedural and two parts Jackie Chan.

Mandate of Heaven

To atone for their crimes, the Immortals are assigned to a city to assist a local City God in keeping the balance of Harmony. As well as dealing with demons and other supernatural problems, which may or may not be invisible to the earthy inhabitants of the city, this type of game allows the Narrator to bring in dilemmas that resolve around the everyday lives of the citizens of Tang China.



The Worlds of Monkey

The Earth is a large land mass with four oceans and four continents corresponding to the four cardinal directions: North, South, East and West. From the Western Heaven, suspended above the Western Mountains of the earthly Empire of Tang Dynasty China (or Tang China for short), the Jade Emperor rules the Celestial Bureaucracy of Immortals, a collection of Gods and Goddesses who oversee the running of the Universe. In the Eastern Heaven, which paradoxically is further to the west in India, rules Great Buddha and his court of Bodhisattvas and Lohans who seek to guide mankind to enlightenment. In each of the Four Oceans dwells a Dragon King and attendant court who is responsible for the smooth running of these watery realms. In the gloomy and despondent Ten Hells, King Yama oversees the punishment and rehabilitation of the sinners.

In the game, the player Immortals may travel between each of these Worlds as appropriate to the needs of the story, so this chapter gives the Narrator the nuts and bolts of each World so they can easily use them no matter how quickly the players move from one to another.

Each of the following worlds are described in the following format.

Common Name

This is the name that the world is commonly known as; any other names are given in brackets next to it.

Description

What form the world takes, what it looks like, the places you can visit and other main features of the world.

How you get there

How Immortals can travel there. Some of the worlds are attached to the Earth in specific places.

Who rules it?

The Great Immortal who is responsible for the harmonious running of the world.

Who are you likely to meet there?

This section lists the prominent Immortals who make the world their home, or who visit it on a regular basis.

The Western Heaven

Description

This is the seat of the ruler of the universe, the Jade Emperor. It is a vast city made out of jade, gold and other precious metals and stones. Various Immortals who are responsible for the smooth running of the cosmos dwell in the city. There are palaces, parks, gardens and ministry buildings as well as awe-inspiring fountains where pairs of phoenixes rise up amongst the columns of water. The sombre processes of managing the universe are not the only activities that take place in the Western Heaven; there are a constant parties, and various dignitaries hold celebrations at certain times of the year.



The Western Heaven is layered, with the Jade Emperor's palace at the top, and the palaces of the various Minsters of Heaven at the second level. Everyone else lives at lower levels depending on their status within the Celestial Hierarchy. In this way the mortal Emperor's realm on Earth mirrors his Heavenly counterpart.

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How you get there?

The Western Heavens hovers in the clouds above the Western Mountains on the edge of Tang China, and the usual method to get there is to physically fly.

Who rules it?

The Jade Emperor is the final authority in the Western Heaven and has a small army of Celestial Bureaucrats who work in various Ministries, and are responsible for various earthly and Heavenly matters.

Who are you likely to meet there?

Great Immortals

The Jade Emperor

The Jade Emperor is the ultimate ruler of Heaven, Hell and Earth. He sits serenely in his palace observing the flow of the universe.

He rarely directly engages in activities, but instead instantly summons an appropriate follower to perform a desired task.

The exception to this rule is an encounter with a demon of Great Immortal status; faced with such a being, the Jade Emperor will employ his total mastery of Taoist magical arts and Kung Fu with kindly benevolence to overcome the evil power.

Lao Tzu (literally 'Old Master')

Lao Tzu is a former Imperial scholar who tired of the stresses of city living, the Imperial court and civilisation in general, and set off on a water buffalo towards the western wilderness. Before he disappeared from China, Lao Tzu was stopped by a border guard. The guard was shocked that such a venerable and wise old man should be leaving China without passing on his wisdom, and asked Lao Tzu



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to write down all that he knew. Lao Tzu obligingly got off his water buffalo, pulled out pen, ink and paper and composed the Taoist Classic the 'Tao de Ching'- a book central to Chinese Religion, not just to Taoism but also to Chinese Buddhism.

After doing this, Lao Tzu was given a place in the Western Heaven by the Jade Emperor, where he uses his immense skill in Taoist alchemy to make pills of Immortality for worthy recipients.

Queen Mother of the West

The Queen Mother is the ultimate embodiment of Yin, and the original creator of the Western Heaven. She inspires poetry and communication, and is served by Handmaidens known as the Jade Maidens. The Queen Mother has a magical peach garden. Here, the peaches of Immortality ripen every three thousand years; the Queen Mother serves the peaches to deserving candidates at a special banquet.

Major Immortals/Supporting Characters

The Planet Venus

A wise old man with a flowing white beard, the Planet Venus is one of the Jade Emperor's chief advisors. He makes an excellent patron for the miscreant player Immortals, wisely guiding them to obey the Mandate of Heaven, and bring harmony into their responsibilities.

Attitudes: Yin: Wise, Old. Yang: Direct and to the point.

Skills: Diplomat 6, Courtier 6, Taoist 5

Magic Powers: Give Calming Advice 6, See to the Truth of the Matter 6

Travel Quickly in the Jade Emperor's Domain 5

Minister of the Celestial Bureaucracy

Officious to the letter, the hard-working Ministers of the Celestial Bureaucracy run the various Ministries that are responsible for the smooth running of the universe. Each Ministry is unique and specific to one area; examples include the Ministry of Water, which is run by the Dragon Kings and the Ministry of Thunder which is run by the bat-headed God of Thunder, Lei-Gong, and is responsible for tackling supernatural crimes on earth.

The Ministers are sometimes, as the above examples indicate, completely supernatural in origin. Others, however, were once mortal men- excellent hard-working Mandarins in life who were

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rewarded on death with Immortality and promotion to the Celestial Bureaucracy.

Attitudes: Yang: Hard-working, Attention to Detail

Skills: Mandarin 6

Other skills at a rank of 5 according to the individual (typically Scholar 5, Courtier 5 or even Kung Fu 5)

Magic Powers: Organise and Sort Paperwork 6, Instantly Know Fact (limited to the Ministry's area of interest) 6.

Other powers appropriate to the individual at a rank of 6.

Minor Immortals/Extras

Mandarins of the Ministries

Each ministry has a multitude of Mandarins who serve the Minister. The Minister often chooses Immortals of similar characteristics to serve under them, collating and collecting information about their Ministry's area of interest.

Attitudes: Yin: Obedient. Yang: Hard-working, Attention to Detail

Skills: Mandarin 4

Magic Powers: Collect Facts (limited to the Ministry's area of interest) 5.

Guards and Soldiers

The Western Heaven has large numbers of guards who protect the palaces and Ministries, as well as large standing armies that practice endlessly in preparation for war against hosts of demons.

Attitudes: Yin: Defensive. Yang: Obey and follow orders, Unimaginative, Aggressive.

Skills: Soldier 4

Visiting Immortals

There are constant parties and religious festivals in the Western Heaven. Earthly Immortals visit to report to their ministry or petition the Jade Emperor. Thus, there is a steady stream of visiting Immortals. In terms of telling a story this means that both the Narrator and Players (through the spending of Fortune points) can have any of the Immortals from the other worlds turn up in the Western Heaven.

The Eastern Heaven

The Great Buddha sits in the clouds above India in quiet contemplation. He is surrounded by other Buddhas who have also reached enlightenment and escaped the earthly cycle of reincarnation and pain. Great Buddha's Eastern Heaven is a peaceful and serene place.

Of all the Immortal realms, the Eastern Heaven is the most immaterial, and at first glance consists just of lots of fluffy clouds. There are occasional simple dwellings of the Buddhas and Bodhisattva but otherwise the Eastern Heaven is a vast, empty and peaceful place.

How you get there

Buddhist Immortals can simply fly to the Eastern Heaven. It can also be reached by travelling to India on foot, which was the ultimate goal of Tripitaka, Monkey, Sandy and Pigsy in the Journey to the West.

Who rules it?

Great Buddha is the ruler in the Eastern Heaven.

Who are you likely to meet there?

Great Immortals

Great Buddha

Great Buddha is the Immortal form of Siddhārtha Gautama, who in life was an Indian Prince who rejected his life of opulence and took up the life of a poor wanderer. He became enlightened and escaped the wheel of reincarnation. He is now the Buddha of our age, and brings the teachings of Buddhism to mankind.

Major Immortals

Buddha (or Lohan)

The Eastern Heaven is also inhabited by other Immortals that have reached Buddhahood and have withdrawn from the physical world. Such individuals are known as Lohans. By their very nature, Lohans will not interact with the player Immortals (and hence have no Attitudes, Skills or Powers), leaving that up to the Bodhisattvas.

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Bodhisattva

Bodhisattvas are enlightened individuals who delay reaching full Buddhahood to help their fellow men and women achieve enlightenment. They may have residences in the Eastern Heaven but they are quite often empty as they go about their mission amongst the mortals on Earth. Kuan Yin, the Goddess of Mercy (see Chapter 5) is a good example of a Bodhisattva. Bodhisattvas, by their very nature, make good patrons for the Player Immortals.

Attitudes: Yin: Calm, Serene. Other attitudes appropriate to the character that don't conflict with their Buddha nature.

Skills: Buddhist 6

Other skills that were important during mortal life.

Magic Powers: Bring Tranquillity and calm 6, One or two powers at rank 4 or 5.

The relationship between Western and Eastern Heaven

In the novel the relationship between the two Heavens is harmonious. Even though they represent two religious camps, the two Heavens have genuine respect for each other. There are no dividing differences apart from superficial appearances.

When Monkey runs amok in the Western Heaven and Great Buddha hears of it in the Eastern Heaven, he comes over to sort out the troublesome ape on the behalf of his friends.

On the Earth, Buddhism and Taoism are different religions with separate priesthoods, although the non-ordained citizen of the Empire will pay his respects at both temples. There are occasionally religious arguments, but the Tang Empire is a period in Chinese history when both religions are treated with equal respect.

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The Four Oceans

Each of the four oceans is ruled by one of the four Dragon Kings. The depths of these oceans are magical places filled with cities, palaces and their own aquatic kingdoms.

How you get there

You swim to the bottom of the ocean.

Who rules it?

The four Dragon Kings each individually rule one of the four oceans. Hence there is a Dragon King of the Eastern Ocean, a Dragon King of the Western Ocean, and so on.

What does it look like?

Each ocean is an underwater kingdom ruled by the Dragon King from his Palace. The Dragon Kings and their subjects commonly take human or human-like form. The palaces are similar to their Earthly counterparts, but are decorated with fine corals, pearls and other undersea treasures.

Who are you likely to meet there?

The court of the Dragon King of that ocean.

Major Immortals

Dragon King

The Dragon Kings are the five-clawed rulers of the Oceans. Each Dragon King has total control over his realm, and must answer only to the Jade Emperor. The Dragon Kings and their kin are also responsible for creating rain over Earth; the motion of a Dragon rising from the sea towards Heaven is what creates rainstorms.

Attitudes: Yin: Wise. Yang: Mighty, Terrifying

Skills: Ruler 6, Dragon Kung Fu 6

Magic Powers: Control the Sea 6, Create Rain 6



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Minor Immortals

Sons and Daughters of the Dragon King

A Dragon King will often delegate tasks to his offspring. Some sons and daughters of the Dragon King are content to loaf around the palace, avoiding any responsibility while living the high life. Others are too zealous when performing their tasks on dry land, causing too much rain and getting into pointless arguments with the local deities as a result.

Attitudes: Yin: Immature. Yang: Mighty, Terrifying, Rash or Foolish

Skills: Ruler 3-5, Dragon Kung Fu 3-5

Magic Powers: Control the Sea 3-5, Create Rain 3-5

Extras

The underwater kingdoms are inhabited by aquatic citizens; fish, crabs, dolphins and so on. Further, the Dragon King's court has its own Mandarins, Courtiers and Soldiers. See the Western Heaven for possible game statistics.



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Earth – the world of Mortals

Earth is the most diverse of all the worlds of Monkey and the place where most of the action of the novel occurs. While the other worlds are fixed and stable, Earth is dynamic and changing. Earth is known as the Mortal World, but a host of Immortals also live there. There are the Immortals responsible to the Western Heaven for the smooth and harmonious running of the Earth's rivers, its hills and its cities. Bodhisattvas roam the land in disguise, inspiring mortals to achieve Nirvana. Demons inhabit the wilder parts of the world, waiting for the unwary to fall into their clutches.

Earth is split into the four continents, surrounded by the four oceans (see above), and includes the Tang Empire of China, India and a host of self-contained cities and petty kingdoms. Although the civilisation of man is a dominant feature, there are still large areas of untamed wilderness, which provide a natural home to hermits seeking religious inspiration and to demons seeking prey.

How you get there

Earth is connected to all the other Worlds and it is easy to fly there.

Who rules it?

Local mortal rulers. Wherever the land is settled, depending on settlement size you can encounter chiefs, kings, governors and even emperors. Usually, such rulers are merely considered Extras, and not detailed in the same way as Immortals. This is because the Immortals who take centre stage in the story in Monkey.

Local Deities. These gods are responsible for the smooth and harmonious running of affairs on Earth, and report to the Jade Emperor via the appropriate Ministry. Such Gods range from the deity of a local small hill, to the Immortal responsible for an entire lake.

Demon Lords. In the wilderness, powerful and cruel Demon Lords arise and take command of small groups of demons. These Demon Lords control out of the way strongholds, usually taking the form of caves or some other secretive lair out of the direct sight of Heaven, and await passing travellers whom they ambush and devour.

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What does it look like?

The civilised areas are covered with farms and fields; the occasional city acts as an administrative centre (see Chapter 5 Bag of Wind for more details on such an area in Tang China).

The wilderness is full of impassable mountains, treacherous swamps, dark forests, impassable rivers and desolate deserts that a weary pilgrim must trudge through, risking attack by bands of desperate bandits and evil demons.

Who are you likely to meet there?

Even more so than Heaven, Earth is filled with all types of Immortals.

Major Immortals

The Earth God (also called Tu Di Gong)

Tu Di Gong is the god of the Earth and of Merit, and every village has a shrine to him. He is in charge of administering villages, and this close bond leads villagers to affectionately call him 'Grandpa'.

The Earth God is an elderly man with a long white beard. He wears a gold hat and yellow robes, which show that he is part of the Jade Emperor's Bureaucracy.

Attitudes: Yin: Wise, Earthly

Skills: Taoist 6

Magic Powers: Provide Wealth 3, Promote Well Being 3

The City God

Each city has its own God, usually the spirit of a former local Mandarin who has been promoted to the position upon their death.

City Gods provide the link between the Earthly Administration and the Heavenly Administration. The connection to the former takes the form of complex religious rituals performed at the City God's temple by local officials, and the connection to the latter is through regular reports to the Celestial Bureaucracy. City Gods are also responsible for dealing with the normally invisible Immortals who may visit or live in the city.

Attitudes: Yin: Clever. Yang: Industrious

Others according to the individual.

Skills: Mandarin 5

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One or two other skills at a rank of 3-5 according to the individual.

Magic Powers: Know what is going on in the City 6

Demon Lord

Demon Lords are terrifying and monstrous demons who have risen, through sheer strength and power, to lead small bands of demons. They hide from the eyes of Heaven in the remote wilderness, preying on passing travellers.

Attitudes: Yin: Cowardly, Hungry. Yang: Cruel, Fearsome

Skills: Kung Fu 5, Ruler 4

Magical Powers: Two or three demonic powers at rank 4 – 5.

For example: Terrifying visage, Breath fire, Stare of Fear, Enslave mind.

Minor Immortals

Demons

These beings are the henchmen of the Demon Lords. Demons usually travel around in groups of three to six looking for lone travellers, or slacking while patrolling the territory of their master.

Attitudes: Yang: Cruel Fearsome. Yin: Cowardly, Hungry.

Skills: Kung Fu 3

Magical Powers: None.



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Local Deity

Attitudes: Yin: Patient, Earthly

Others according to the individual.

Skills: Mandarin 2

One or two skills according to the deity's function at rank 3 to 4

Magic Powers: Shapechange 5

One or two other powers dependant on function at rank 3 to 4 according to the deity's function.

Animal spirits

As well as mundane animals you occasionally encounter intelligent supernatural animals on the Earth. Monkey himself is of this ilk. Some of these animal spirits are benevolent, some are passive, while some are actively malign.

Fox Spirits

Fox spirits usually appear as beautiful women. They cause mortal men to fall in love with them, and gain Immortality by capturing the breath of mortals.

Attitudes: Yin: Beautiful. Yang: Cruel

Skills: Seductive 4, Rogue 4

Magic Powers: Shape Change into Human 5, Capture Mortal's Breath 4

Tiger Spirits

Tiger spirits are another shape changer; they devour their human victims, turning them into more tiger spirits in the process.

Attitudes: Yang: Aggressive

Skills: Tiger Kung Fu 4

Magic Powers: Shape Change into Human 5

Mortals

Although mortals are sidelined in the novel, often not even having a proper name, there are still numerous bandits, mandarins, farmers, townspeople, Buddhist priests and Taoist sages to be encountered in the mortal world.

Monkey

The Ten Hells

The Ten Hells are a vast underworld consisting of ten courts, each ruled by a Demon Judge, and eighteen levels of Hell where the wicked are punished before drinking the milk of forgetfulness and being reincarnated in their next life. In Hell, a scribe keeps a book that contains the name of every soul and its allotted time on Earth.

How you get there

The entrance to the Ten Hells is situated in the modern day province of Sichuan, in south west China. It takes the form a cave that goes deeper and deeper into the earth. Further down the case, one can hear the screams of the damned. A visitor who goes deeper still will find themselves at the entrance to Hell.

Who rules it?

King Yama is the ruler and chief Judge of this Underworld. He is assisted by the ten Demon Judges.

What does it look like?

The Ten Hells is made up of the ten courts and eighteen levels of Hell. The appearances of the levels vary.

Eighteen levels of Hell

Chamber of Wind and Thunder. Those responsible for terrible crimes borne arising from greed meet their punishment here.

Chamber of Grinding. People who wasted and flaunted their wealth are ground into dust on this level.

Chamber of Flames. Thieves, bandits, raiders and other people who stole or cheated are burned here.

Chamber of Ice. Those who mistreat and disrespect their elders are sent here to be frozen.

Chamber of Oil Cauldrons. Sex offenders are sent here to be boiled in oil.

Chamber of Dismemberment by Sawing. Pimps and Kidnappers are sawn and dismembered here eternally.

Chamber of Dismemberment by Chariot. The exploiters of the poor are sent to be run over and torn apart by a chariot here.

Monkey

Chamber of Mountain of Knives. Those guilty of fraud or of making too much profit at the expense of others are forced to climb a mountain of knives.

Chamber of Tongue Ripping. Those who are loose of tongue in life have it ripped out in this hell.

Chamber of Pounding. Murderers are pounded to a pulp here.

Chamber of Torso-severing. The hell for schemers and ungrateful men.

Chamber of Scales. Tyrants, mean merchants and daughters-in-law who disrespect their in-laws all end up suspended upside down by hooks pierced into their bodies.

Chamber of Eye-gouging. Peeping Toms have their eyes gouged out here.

Chamber of Heart-digging. Reserved for the Evil Hearted.

Chamber of Disembowelment. The place of punishment for traitors, hypocrites and tomb robbers.

Chamber of Blood. The blasphemous are skinned alive here.

Chamber of Maggots. Those who used loopholes in the law to exploit others in life are eaten alive by maggots here.

Chamber of Avici. A hell reserved for the especially heinous criminals, who stand on a platform over a raging inferno. Unlucky ones fall in and are consumed by the flames.

Who are you likely to meet there?

Great Immortals

King Yama (also called Yan Wang and Yanluo)

King Yama is the ruler of the ten hells and its chief judge, who does the initial sentencing of the dead. He appears a large man with a scowling red face, bulging eyes and a long beard. King Yama wears traditional robes and a crown on his head.

Monkey

Major Immortals

Demon Judge

The ten Demon Judges manage the ten courts and administer the eighteen levels of hell.

Attitudes: Yang: Disciplined, Judgemental, Merciless

Skills: Mandarin 5, Restrain and Capture Kung Fu 4

Magic Powers: Pass Judgement on the Dead 6

Ox Head and Horse Head

In life this pair were an Ox and a Horse whose owner worked them to death. When they arrived in the Underworld, King Yama took pity on them and turned them into the guards of the entrance of the Ten Hells responsible for escorting the dead from their place of death to King Yama. They have animal heads and human bodies, and are armed and armoured.

Attitudes: Yin: Watchful

Skills: Restrain and Capture Kung Fu 5

Magic Powers: Magic Polearm and Chains 3

Minor Immortals

Demon Guard

While they are just as fearsome and scary as their Earthly cousins, their anger and cruelty is directed at tormenting the sinners trapped in Hell, and they obey the orders of Hell's rulers.

Attitudes: Yin: Creepy. Yang: Angry, Strong, Scary, Ugly, Disciplined

Skills: Mandarin 1, Buddhist 1, Restrain and Capture Kung-Fu 3, Torturer 5

Magic Powers: Whip of Pain 3, Know Weakness 4



Monkey

Six Immortals

These Immortals were created by players during the playtest games of Monkey.

They are presented here as ready made Immortals that your players can pick up and play, or use as inspiration for their own Immortals.

Breath - by Donald Oddy

Manju - by Rob Rundle

Ratsy - by Stuart Mousir-Harrison

Scribe - by Neil Gow

Shate - by Alex Joss

Whitetails - Mark "Mr C" Conry



Breath

Immortal type: Local Deity, a spirit of the Wind

Virtue: 1

Fortune: 2

Crime (Weakness): Was responsible for the winds in a small rural area and constantly failed to follow the orders of his overseer, The Great Wind of the South (Unreliable)

Attitudes:

Yin: Dizzy, Charming, Lazy

Yang: Fast, Reactive

Skills

1. Wu Shaman 5
2. Rogue 3
3. Poet 1

Magical Powers

Flight 2

Shape change 1

Move air 1 (Limitation: Air must be pure, not mixed with other mater)

Disassociate spirit from body 1 (Limitation: Body can be damaged while spirit away)

Magic Mirror: Project Lightning 1 (Limitation: Target must be in straight line from mirror) Reveal true form 2 (Limitation: Target must be reflected in mirror)

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Manju

Immortal type: Demon

(Hunter of souls escaped from the Ten Hells of King Yama)

Virtue: 1

Fortune: 2

Crime (Weakness):

(Violence) If there's a fight in the offing, Manju is up for it. He was thrown out of the Western Heaven for brawling with the demon hunter Prince Natha.

Attitudes:

Yin: Lazy

Yang: Fast, Agile, Rash, Loud

Skills

1. Kung Fu 5
2. Demon Hunter 3
3. Acrobat 1

Magical Powers

Flight 1

Shape change 1

Demon Strength 2 (Limitation: Tires him out after use)

Teleport 1 (Limitation: Destination must be in line of sight)

Ratsy

Immortal type: Terrestrial Animal Spirit

Virtue: 1

Fortune: 2

Crime (Weakness):

(Glutton) You are a glutton and greedily you broke into the Queen Mother of Heaven's garden and ate her sacred peaches. After a satisfied and long sleep you were awoken by the Jade Emperor's guards.

Attitudes:

Yin: Obnoxious*, Thin

Yang: Agile*, Clever, Fast

*Ratsy draws two cards for these *Dominant* Attitudes.

Skills

1. Rogue 4
2. Rat Kung Fu 2
3. Taoist Sage 1

Magical Powers

Flight 1

Shape change 1

Stinking Cloud 3 (Limitation: Blown away by strong winds)

Bamboo pole of jumping: Jump over things 3 (Limitation: May never jump over Official buildings, such as Mandarin's houses or offices)

Scribe

Immortal type: Celestial, a minor autocrat of the Western Heaven's Administration.

Virtue: 1

Fortune: 2

Crime (Weakness):

(Forgetfulness) Through forgetfulness he made errors in the Transcripts of Heaven.

Attitudes:

Yin: Noble, Precise, Obnoxious.

Yang: Clever, Arrogant

Skills

1. Mandarin 5
2. Poet 3
3. Scholar 1

Magical Powers

Flight 1

Shape change 1

Know three trivial things about everyone 2 (Limitation: Only trivial minor stuff, never anything important)

Order and calm on command 3 (Limitation: Targets must be able to hear Scribe)

Shade

Immortal type: Demon

Virtue: 1

Fortune: 2

Crime (Weakness):

(Trickster) Oh the jokes you played on the unwitting fools of the Western Heaven when you were there! Sorry to say they didn't have a sense of humour and you were kicked out and reduced to a shadow of your glorious self

Attitudes:

Yin: Kleptomania, Stealthy, Trickster, Liar

Yang: Short temper

Skills

1. Rogue 5
2. Kung Fu 3
3. Taoist Sage 1

Magical Powers

Flight 1

Shape change 1

Ethereal move 1 (Limitation: Cannot move through holy buildings)

Invisible 1 (Limitation: Can always be seen by children)

Steal Memories 1 (Limitation: must be able to touch target)

Create Emotion 2 (Must be in eye contact with target)

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Whitetails

Immortal type: Animal Spirit (Fox)

Virtue: 1

Fortune: 2

Crime (Weakness):

(Theft) While in the Western Heaven crafty Whitetails tried to steal Lao Tzu's famous Pills of Immortality.

Attitudes:

Yin: Thin, Agile*

Yang: Cunning*, Rash, Fast

*Whitetails draws two cards for these *Dominant Attitudes*.

Skills

1. Street knowledge 2
2. Kung-Fu 4
3. Rogue 1

Magical Powers

Flight 1

Shape change 1

Magic Fan of the Wind: Gust of wind 2 (Limitation a powerful blast in one direction only) Steel Edge 1, Illusion Magic 3 (Illusion is immaterial)

Bibliography

Novels

Monkey (Penguin) Translated by Arthur Waley

This is the most commonly available English translation, but heavily abridged - missing large chunks of the story, since he choose only to translate 30 of the 100 Chapters . Until I started work on this game I often wondered why certain things happened in the book as they did. This is because the missing bits are the parts of the narrative which explain this fine detail. Probably my least favourite of the translations I have read, but one you'll find easily in your local bookstore.

The Journey to the West (University of Chicago Press)

Translated by Anthony C.Yu

This is a full 100 chapter translation of the story, done by an Asian Academic. Split over four volumes, of four-five hundred pages each, this shows that the story is bigger than the Lord of the Rings (and a lot more fun in my opinion). This is where you go if you really want the full picture of who is who and what is what in Monkey. This version can be heavy going at times, but its ultimately very rewarding.

Monkey: A Journey to the West (Shambhala Classics)

Translated by David Kherdian

A delightfully readable version of the story, which concentrates on the spiritual side of the tale without becoming too heavy or dull. Easily the most enjoyable translation I have read. Unfortunately it's very very abridged.

TV & Film

Monkey (Japanese TV 1978-1980)

This was my first introduction to the story in my youth. Despite some corny acting and atrocious special effects, it captures the spirit of the novel admirably. Highly recommended.

Monkey Magic (Director: Kensaku Sawada)

Ten years after the TV series this film was produced. Bang up to date with whizz bang special effects, while some of the characterisation is a bit off at times (poor Sandy and Pigsy barely get a look in) it's a feast for the eyes. Recommended to get a quick visual feel for

Monkey

the story if nothing else. There are a number of other Chinese TV versions, which I hear are far superior to the Japanese version.

Kung-Fu Hustle (Director: Stephen Chow)

The plot of this film has nothing to do with the story Monkey, but the theme of redemption of the main character and the over the top presentation and fun of the film are bang in the same ball park. The soundtrack is ideal for sessions of Monkey. I can not recommend this film highly enough for carrying the spirit of Monkey.

Comics

The Monkey King (Dark Horse Comics, 2005) by Katsuya Terada

This is an alternative and somewhat dark take on the tale. I found it stripped the story of too much of its humour and charm. Monkey is a Conan the Barbarian type figure and Tripitaka is a nun who team up to rebel against a tyrannical Buddha.

Monkey Subdues the White Bone Demon

A breathtaking work of black and white illustrations, based upon one of the chapters from the novel. A comic book published by Peking Foreign press, from woodcuts from the 17th Century. It was the main source of the public domain art of Monkey and the other Pilgrims used in this book.

Non-Fiction Reference

Asian Mythology (Lorenz Books) by Rachel Storm

This is a copiously illustrated reference book, which covers not only Chinese but also Japanese and Siberian mythology. It's a highly recommended introduction to the complex and sometimes bewildering world of Chinese Myth and Folklore.

Chinese Mythology (Diamond Books) by Derek Walters

A more indepth treatment packed with Immortals and events that you can plunder for your games.

China's Golden Age, Everyday Life in the Tang Dynasty (Oxford University Press) by Charles Benn.

Written by a knowledgeable academic who takes courses in the subject, this is an invaluable and colourful reference to the mortal world of the Tang Empire.

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Action Reference sheet

The following information is collected together from the Action chapter for ease of reference during play.

Simple Action sequence

The sequence of events is as follows.

1. The player draws a number of cards equal to the rank of the skill being used for task.
2. Look at the colour of the cards. Red cards are Yang (active), and black cards are Yin (passive). Decide what type of action you are going to perform. Discard cards you are not going to play from your hand to the discard pile
3. If you have an Attitude that matches the type of action, draw a bonus card. This card, no matter what colour it is, is added to the hand of cards you are going to play.
4. You may add cards from your Fortune Hand that are the same colour as the cards you intend to play from your draw.
5. The Narrator repeats steps 1-4 for the opponent or opposing force.
6. The Player describes their action, then plays the cards used face up on table.
7. The Narrator describes the opposition's action, then plays the cards used face up on table
8. Compare the totals of each hand. Highest hand wins! If it is a draw, the player may try again.

Dramatic Action sequence

The sequence of events is as follows.

The character who initiates the action, for example the Orator who starts the debate or the warrior who starts the fight, goes first. They are the 'attacker'.

Other characters that come next draw cards from the respective fortune decks and determine the order of initiative in that way. A group of Narrator-controlled minor characters may all act together to keep things simple.

1. The attacker decides which skill they are using and draws a number of cards equal to the rank of the skill being used for the task.
2. Look at the colour of the cards. Red cards are Yang (active), and Black cards are Yin (passive). Decide what type of action you are going to perform. Cards that you are not going to play from your hand may be kept for the next draw or discarded. This decision has to be made now.
3. If the attacker has an Attitude that matches the type of action, draw a bonus card. This card, no matter what colour it is, is added to the hand of cards you are going to play.
4. The attacker may add cards from their Fortune Hand which are the same colour as the cards they intend to play from your draw.
5. The defender repeats steps 1-4.

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6. The attacker describes their action, then plays the cards used face up on table.
7. The defender describes their action, then plays the cards used face up on table
8. Compare the totals of each hand. Highest hand wins! If the attacker wins, the defender gains a Strike against them. If the defender wins, the attacker gains a Strike against them. If it was a draw then nobody gains any Strikes.

If either the attacker or the defender gains enough Strikes to knock them out of the Action, then the Action ends. See the section below on “Strikes and Exclusions” for more detail.

If it is important to the story, the Narrator notes the level of Victory and Level of Failure (see above) to determine how badly the loser lost and how well the winner won if that is an issue.

This process then repeats itself in initiative order as long as there are active participants in the action.

Opposing forces and difficulty level

Difficulty level	Description	Equivalent skill rank
1	Easy	Novice
2	Average	Trained
3	Challenging	Journeyman
4	Hard	Expert
5	Difficult	Specialist
6	Almost impossible	Master
7	Impossible	Grand Master

Level of victory

Difference between card totals	Level of win
Winner's total less than 1 1/2 times the loser's	Barely won
Winner's total greater than 1 1/2 the times loser's but less than twice loser's	Impressive win
Winner's total greater than x2 loser's	Triumphant win

Level of Failure

Level of win	Effects
Barely won	You fail but you can try again immediately.
Impressive win	You fail and you can't try again immediately. You lick your wounds and pride, and can come back later to try again, after play has moved onto the next scene or a significant amount of time has passed (between a couple of hours and a full day at the Narrator's discretion)
Triumphant win	You fail spectacularly in such a way that you can't try again (unless you spend a fortune point).

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Character: Player:

Immortal type:

Virtue



Crime (Weakness:):

Fortune



Attitudes

Yin ♠ ♣

Yang ♦ ♥

Skills

.....

Magical Powers

Flight

ShapeChange

.....





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