

As the Tea Leaves Grow

Small Toad – youngest student of Master Iron Willow – gave the rarest tea flower in Master Iron Willow's considerable collection to a passing beauty. Whether she smiles when she looks at it, Master Iron Willow was not pleased by the absence. He tasked Small Toad and his four Brothers to journey the Empire in search of a tea leaf to rival the missing one.

CONSTRUCTED BY: Stuart Chaplin

SHAMELESSLY INSPIRED BY: John Harper's *Lady Blackbird* and Vincent Baker's *Apocalypse World* with a heavy dose of Martial Arts Action!

PLAYTESTED BY the London Indie RPG Meetup Group.

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But the task will not be so easy as the Brothers imagine...

Will they be able to confront each of the Four Great Tea Masters of China?

Will they be able to face the dangers of the Road they face along the way?

Will their Martial Arts and the Teachings of Master Iron Willow be enough to guide them?

And will they be able to return with a worthy flower for Master Iron Willow before the Emperor joins him for tea next month..?

An Overview of the Great Tea Masters of the Empire

Mistress Gu – The fearsome Mistress Gu is renowned throughout the Empire for her deep blue tea. Though few have tasted the brew, all know of her, her tea, and her unrivalled Eight Leaping Carp Style which she practises along the banks of the Yellow River. Known amongst the Fraternity of Chivalrous Men as Silk Whirlwind she has a reputation of teaching harsh lessons to any who offend her. It is said that she was able to check even the Emperor's own consort, the Blue Queen after some perceived slight between them.

Brother Goat – Brother Goat, a quiet hermit, once of the Flame Wardens of Mountain of Seven Dragons, now lives at the top of that mighty peak. It is said Brother Goat has not uttered a word in eight years since he left the Wardens. It is said he has refined his tea with his spirituality. It is said that the top of the Mountain of Seven Dragons is as close as one can get to the peak of Mount Taishan.

Jade Lotus Gardens – The Emperor declared that the Jade Lotus Gardens – the place where the Yellow Emperor stood and the world took shape around him – should be forever honoured as a shrine. It is said that so long as the Gardens flourish, so will the fortunes of the Emperor and his Empire. It is said that each plant within the Empire may be found within the Garden.

Pirate Lord Jewel – Jewel used to be the Admiral of the Emperor's own Navy, one foolish enough to have the temerity to offer his strong dark tea to the Blue Queen in a private audience. His subsequent escape from the palace is the stuff of legend and now his ship – the Ogre – is the scourge of the very Navy he once commanded.

The Painted Sorcerer – When the stranger who came to be known as the Painted Sorcerer first stepped foot in China, pain and terror came before him. Exiled from his own barbaric tribe, he lives on the outskirts of society, offering wisdom to any who would dare drink his foul brew. Those who can reach him and face him down, and then accept his wisdom, must still face the madness such revelations might bring.

Master Iron Willow – Long ago, so the stories say, Master Iron Willow saved the Emperor's life by turning aside an oncoming storm. Since that time it is Master Iron Willow whom the Emperor has sought out every five years to sit and talk and sip the tea that is Master Iron Willow's life. Unlike the other Great Tea Masters, Master Iron Willow has students – five brothers whom he hopes will one day inherit his legacy. However, these five students are a long way off yet and still have much to learn.

When you use Stolen Smile Style, weaving tumbles and acrobatics into your movements, roll+2. On a IO+ choose 3, whilst on a 7-9 choose 2:

- The opponent admits defeat in this round.
- They tell you something they think you want to know.
- You make them look foolish.
- You don't unduly anger them further.

When you provide a distraction for your Brother, drawing the attention to yourself by stories, tomfoolery or just by being yourself, roll+Hx. On a hit, you can keep all eyes on yourself for the sake of your Brother. On a 7-9, however, you must choose whether the person gets frustrated with you or turns their head at the last possible moment.

Small Toad

When you need a favour and call on an old friend or associate, name them and roll+I. On a hit, they'll have what you need, but on a 7-9 they'll need you to do this one small thing for them first. On a miss, you will still call on this friend but they may not be so pleased to see you.

When you weave a story or reveal a hidden part of yourself to provoke a particular emotion, roll+0. On a hit, they will react accordingly and on a IO+, you get +I on your next roll when dealing with that person. If you use it to weave another story, the bonuses are cumulative, but when you web of tall tales unravels, the consequences will be fierce.

You own a few throwing knives, a knapsack filled with a few small things your Brothers failed to keep close enough watch over, and the clothes on your back. Of course, you are not above borrowing anything else you need or fancy.

Hx – Phoenix Whisper+3, Hungry Dragon+2, Moon Rabbit+I, Dark Tortoise-I.

Ask the Phoenix Whisper which of your moves he finds the most interesting, when you use that move, take an experience token.

When you use a possession of yours to help in a roll, take a +I bonus and mark it off. It's not lost per se, though it could be, but you may only take the bonus once. When you have used everything you possess, take two experience tokens.

When you employ a martial style not your own, adopt the unfamiliar stance, take an experience token and roll -I. Follow the instructions on the martial style you're using for the result.

Rolling. When a move says roll+X, roll two six-sided dice and add them and the number listed. A 7+ is a hit, a IO+ is a good hit and a 6- is a miss.

Helping or Hindering. When someone else is trying their hardest and you want them to succeed or fail, you can lend a contribution to the effort, roll+Hx. On a hit. and if you're helping them, they gain an experience token for their effort, on a IO+ you gain one too, which you may spend to alter the roll as if it were your own. If you're hindering, they take a -2 to their roll and are "Betrayed". On a 7-9 you gain the Condition "Traitor".

Spending Experience. You may spend five experience token, to buy a new move, raise the value of another move by I (so roll+I become roll+2) up to a maximum of roll+3. You may buy a second move that allows you to take an experience token, you may never have more than two moves that do so however. Additionally you may spend an experience token to add I to the value of any roll.

Hx. Hx is a measure of how well you feel you know your Brothers. If your Hx with your Brother reaches +4 or -4, it resets to =0 and you gain an experience token. When someone saves you from danger, faces down death with you, trusts your judgement or reveals something about themselves that you or the audience did not previously know, mark +I Hx with them!

When you use Mountain Bear Style, taking down any opponent you face, roll+2. On a 10+ choose 3, whilst on a 7-9, pick 2:

- Their numbers mean nothing to you.
- They get the hell out of your way.
- Your impenetrable skins shrugs off their blows.
- You don't exercise your full strength.

When you break your silence to make a wry observation or ask a sensible question, roll+0. On a hit you may ask a question about your current situation or a person you are talking with, which will be answered both truthfully and appropriately. On a 10+ you may ask 3, on a 7-9 you may ask 1. If you, or a Brother, acts on these answers, you may roll with a plus +I.

Hx – Dark Tortoise+3, Small Toad+2, Moon Rabbit+I, Phoenix Whisper-I.

Ask the Dark Tortoise which of your moves he finds the most interesting, when you use that move, take an experience token.

When you use a possession of yours to help in a roll, take a +I bonus and mark it off. It's not lost per se, though it could be, but you may only take the bonus once. When you have used everything you possess, take two experience tokens.

When you employ a martial style not your own, adopt the unfamiliar stance, take an experience token and roll -I. Follow the instructions on the martial style you're using for the result.

Hungry Dragon

When you draw up to your full height and employ your considerable strength to achieve your goals, roll+I. On a hit, your strength can overcome any obstacle. On a 7-9, however, you must choose whether your efforts take longer than you had anticipated or whether they leave you exhausted.

You own your strong body and honest face, a knapsack with figures you've carved in wood and the knife which carved them, tied to a long halberd. You also have a plain wooden bowl given to you by Brother Gao, the Abbot of the Twin Blossom Temple.

When you step between your Brother and danger, placing yourself in harm's way for their sake, roll+Hx. On a 10+ you may deliver your Brothers and yourself safe and dry. On a 7-9, you must pick 1:-

- You are safe and free from danger.
- Your Brothers are safe and free from danger.
- You buy some time and space to breathe.

Rolling. When a move says roll+X, roll two six-sided dice and add them and the number listed. A 7+ is a hit, a 10+ is a good hit and a 6- is a miss.

Helping or Hindering. When someone else is trying their hardest and you want them to succeed or fail, you can lend a contribution to the effort, roll+Hx. On a hit, and if you're helping them, they gain an experience token for their effort, on a 10+ you gain one too, which you may spend to alter the roll as if it were your own. If you're hindering, they take a -2 to their roll and are "Betrayed". On a 7-9 you gain the Condition "Traitor".

Spending Experience. You may spend five experience tokens, to buy a new move, raise the value of another move by I (so roll+I become roll+2) up to a maximum of roll+3. You may buy a second move that allows you to take an experience token, you may never have more than two moves that do so however. Additionally you may spend an experience token to add I to the value of any roll.

Hx. Hx is a measure of how well you feel you know your Brothers. If your Hx with your Brother reaches +4 or -4, it resets to =0 and you gain an experience token. When someone saves you from danger, faces down death with you, trusts your judgement or reveals something about themselves that you or the audience did not previously know, mark +I Hx with them!

When you try fix something, or break it beyond repair, roll+0. If you are trying to fix something, pick

2 on a I0+, I on a 7-9:-

- You fix it well
- You fix it quickly
- You fix it with parts to hand

If you are trying to break or sabotage something, on a I0+ it goes to plan, whilst on a 7-9, someone should pick whether it breaks too well, too quickly, too late or without the intended effect.

When you speak up in your Brother's defence, for the sake of his honour and your own, roll+Hx. On a hit your words stand as a challenge to all who would speak ill of you. On a 7-9 your Brother picks one: -

- It's your argument not his.
- Someone challenges you with more than words.
- A third party notes your impropriety.

Phoenix Whisper

When you fight with Diving Falcon Style, swooping and falling upon those you face, roll+2. On a I0+ choose 3, whilst on a 7-9, pick 2:

- You deal your opponent a blow they won't soon forget.
- The opponent admits your victory in this round.
- They give you something they think you want.
- No one can keep up with your movements.

Secreted about your person are a pair of falcon claw daggers, a few scraps of food, and a curious looking glass you bought off a passing peddler. You also wear a fine set of robes, though old and worn, which shine in the sun like fire.

When you step as light as the wind, to sneak into or out of somewhere beyond reach, roll+I. On a hit you get there without issue. On a 7-9 however, you must pick whether you are Trapped, separated from your Brothers or whether your Brothers call for you and you are not there.

Hx – Moon Rabbit+3, Small Toad+2, Dark Tortoise+I, Hungry Dragon-I.

Ask the Moon Rabbit which of your moves she finds the most interesting, when you use that move, take an experience token.

When you use a possession of yours to help in a roll, take a +I bonus and mark it off. It's not lost per se, though it could be, but you may only take the bonus once. When you have used everything you possess, take two experience tokens.

When you employ a martial style not your own, adopt the unfamiliar stance, take an experience token and roll -I. Follow the instructions on the martial style you're using for the result.

Rolling. When a move says roll+X, roll two six-sided dice and add them and the number listed. A 7+ is a hit, a I0+ is a good hit and a 6- is a miss.

Helping or Hindering. When someone else is trying their hardest and you want them to succeed or fail, you can lend a contribution to the effort, roll+Hx. On a hit, and if you're helping them, they gain an experience token for their effort, on a I0+ you gain one too, which you may spend to alter the roll as if it were your own. If you're hindering, they take a -2 to their roll and are "Betrayed". On a 7-9 you gain the Condition "Traitor".

Spending Experience. You may spend five experience token, to buy a new move, raise the value of another move by I (so roll+I become roll+2) up to a maximum of roll+3. You may buy a second move that allows you to take an experience token, you may never have more than two moves that do so however. Additionally you may spend an experience token to add I to the value of any roll.

Hx. Hx is a measure of how well you feel you know your Brothers. If your Hx with your Brother reaches +4 or -4, it resets to =0 and you gain an experience token. When someone saves you from danger, faces down death with you, trusts your judgement or reveals something about themselves that you or the audience did not previously know, mark +I Hx with them!

When you demonstrate Broken River Style, surprising and dashing your enemies against your blows, roll+2. On a IO+ choose 3, whilst on a 7-9, pick 2:

- You demonstrate the weakness of your opponent's style.
- You humble your enemy.
- They get the hell out of your way.
- You show yourself the equal of any man.

When you show off or act with style, adding an uncalled for flourish to a mundane action, roll+0. On a hit you may accomplish your goal with skill and flourish. On a 7-9 this exposes you to additional danger. On a IO+ it does not.

Moon Rabbit

You wear a man's clothes, and carry a man's sword, but you also have about yourself a few pieces of Jade, tied on a string and the fine figure of a woman. Next to you breast you keep your father's dog tag, his life blood staining it and obscuring his name.

When you order your Brothers around, take charge or generally make yourself heard to them, roll+Hx. On a 7-9, choose one of the following, on a IO+ both: -

- If they do it they'll take +I to their rolls and an experience token.
- If they refuse to do it, they get the condition "Conscience".

When you seduce or manipulate someone who is not your Brother, tell them what you want and roll+I. On a hit they'll ask you to promise something first - large or small - and do it if you keep your promise. On a IO+ whether you keep your promise will be your choice later. On a 7-9 they'll need some assurance right now.

Hx - Small Toad+3, Hungry Dragon+2, Dark Tortoise+I, Phoenix Whisper-I.

Ask the Small Toad which of your moves he finds the most interesting, when you use that move, take an experience token.

When you use a possession of yours to help in a roll, take a +I bonus and mark it off. It's not lost per se, though it could be, but you may only take the bonus once. When you have used everything you possess, take two experience tokens.

When you employ a martial style not your own, adopt the unfamiliar stance, take an experience token and roll -I.

Follow the instructions on the martial style you're using for the result.

Rolling. When a move says roll+X, roll two six-sided dice and add them and the number listed. A 7+ is a hit, a IO+ is a good hit and a 6- is a miss.

Helping or Hindering. When someone else is trying their hardest and you want them to succeed or fail, you can lend a contribution to the effort, roll+Hx. On a hit, and if you're helping them, they gain an experience token for their effort, on a IO+ you gain one too, which you may spend to alter the roll as if it were your own. If you're hindering, they take a -2 to their roll and are "Betrayed". On a 7-9 you gain the Condition "Traitor".

Spending Experience. You may spend five experience tokens, to buy a new move, raise the value of another move by I (so roll+I become roll+2) up to a maximum of roll+3. You may buy a second move that allows you to take an experience token, you may never have more than two moves that do so however. Additionally you may spend an experience token to add I to the value of any roll.

Hx. Hx is a measure of how well you feel you know your Brothers. If your Hx with your Brother reaches +4 or -4, it resets to =0 and you gain an experience token. When someone saves you from danger, faces down death with you, trusts your judgement or reveals something about themselves that you or the audience did not previously know, mark +I Hx with them!

Dark Tortoise

When you exercise Floating Leaf Style, drifting and dancing like a leaf on the wind, roll+2. On a 10+ choose 3, whilst on a 7-9, pick 2:

- You check your opponent.
- You remain untouched by your enemies' blows.
- Your opponent reveals something they wished hidden.
- You gain a sense for your opponent's style.

When, having slowly sipped your tea, you calmly look and examine the leaves, clear your mind of everything but your question and roll+1. On a hit, the leaves will tell you something new and interesting about the current situation and might ask of you something in return. On a 10+ the vision is clear and sharp but on a 7-9 the image is clouded by doubt and uncertainty. If you already know all there is to be known about the situation, the leaves will make that clear.

When you act according to a plan or in a situation you have prepared for, guided by experience and the Tao, roll+0. On a 10+ the plan goes off without any problems, you move through the motions as you practised. On a 7-9, it all goes well, except, someone should pick one:

- You are placed in a danger you had not anticipated.
- Someone else is placed in danger that you had not prepared for.
- An unexpected opportunity arises.

You carry about yourself a short staff you use to walk with and a longer beard, and a sack which carries a tea set with many fine tea leaves. You also bear a wisdom beyond your years and attentive ears.

When your Brother consults your advice and you instruct them, everyone benefits. If they follow your advice they take +1 Ongoing in pursuit of that cause of action. Additionally, decide if the action is fated to succeed or to fail - if the action turns out as fated, the person you advised take an experience token. If the action does not turn out as you fated, you take an experience token.

Rolling. When a move says roll+X, roll two six-sided dice and add them and the number listed. A 7+ is a hit, a 10+ is a good hit and a 6- is a miss.

Helping or Hindering. When someone else is trying their hardest and you want them to succeed or fail, you can lend a contribution to the effort, roll+Hx. On a hit, and if you're helping them, they gain an experience token for their effort, on a 10+ you gain one too, which you may spend to alter the roll as if it were you're own. If you're hindering, they take a -2 to their roll and are "Betrayed". On a 7-9 you gain the Condition "Traitor".

Spending Experience. You may spend five experience token, to buy a new move, raise the value of another move by 1 (so roll+1 become roll+2) up to a maximum of roll+3. You may buy a second move that allows you to take an experience token, you may never have more than two moves that do so however. Additionally you may spend an experience token to add 1 to the value of any roll.

Hx. Hx is a measure of how well you feel you know your Brothers. If your Hx with your Brother reaches +4 or -4, it resets to =0 and you gain an experience token. When someone saves you from danger, faces down death with you, trusts your judgement or reveals something about themselves that you or the audience did not previously know, mark +1 Hx with them!

Hx – Hungry Dragon+3, Phoenix Whisper+2, Moon Rabbit+1, Small Toad-1.

Ask the Hungry Dragon which of your moves he finds the most interesting, when you use that move, take an experience token.

When you use a possession of yours to help in a roll, take a +1 bonus and mark it off. It's not lost per se, though it could be, but you may only take the bonus once. When you have used everything you possess, take two experience tokens.

When you employ a martial style not your own, adopt the unfamiliar stance, take an experience token and roll -1.

Follow the instructions on the martial style you're using for the result.

Spending Experience. You may spend five experience token, to buy a new move, raise the value of another move by I (so roll+I become roll+2) up to a maximum of roll+3. You may buy a second move that allows you to take an experience token, you may never have more than two moves that do so however. Additionally you may spend an experience token to add I to the value of any roll.

Hx. Hx is a measure of how well you feel you know your Brothers. If your Hx with your Brother reaches +4 or -4, it resets to =0 and you gain an experience token. When your Brother saves you from danger, faces down death with you, trusts your judgement or reveals something about themselves that you or the audience did not previously know, mark +I Hx with them!

Rolling. When a move says roll+X, roll two six-sided dice and add them and the number listed. A 7+ is a hit, a 10+ is a good hit and a 6- is a miss.

Helping or Hindering. When someone else is trying their hardest and you want them to succeed or fail, you can lend a contribution to the effort, roll+Hx. On a hit. and if you're helping them, they gain an experience token for their effort, on a 10+ you gain one too, which you may spend to alter the roll as if it were you're own. If you're hindering, they take a -2 to their roll and are "Betrayed". On a 7-9 you gain the Condition "Traitor".

Hungry Dragon fights with **Mountain Bear Style**, and may **draw himself up to his full height**, or **make a wry observation**. He will always **step in front of danger** for his Brothers.

Small Toad fights with **Stolen Smile Style**, and often **calls on his friends for favours**, and **tells stories**. He will always **provide a distraction** for his Brothers.

Moon Rabbit fights with **Broken River Style**, and occasionally **seduces or manipulates**, and always **shows off**. She will always **order around** her Brothers.

Phoenix Whisper fights with **Diving Falcon Style**, and often **sneaks unnoticed by all**, and **fiddles with things**. He will always **defend the honour** of his Brothers.

Dark Tortoise fights with **Floating Leaf Style**, and often **reads the tea leaves**, and **acts according to the Tao**. He will always **advise** his Brothers when asked.

Almost Certainly Dead - When you are almost certainly dead (but no one has seen the body), and it's time for you to reappear to save someone, roll+Hx of the person you're saving. On a hit you dramatically reappear in the nick of time. On a 10+ you take +I in your rescue attempts too. On a miss, you are also at the mercy of whatever is plaguing your friends.

Conscience - When your conscience plagues you for something you have done or failed to do and you need to make amends, roll+Hx. On a 10+ you can be there to make right what was wrong - as proud or as humble as you or they would wish. On a 7-9 you can make it better, but there will be pain in the healing - for you or for them.

Exhausted - When you are too tired to act, talk or even think but need to anyway, roll-I. On a hit, you can find hidden reserves of strength and push on. On a 7-9 this extra effort strains and injures you.

Anger - When your blood burns with rage, your vision fills with darkness and you cannot distinguish friend from foe and your Brother tries to get through to you, roll+Hx with them. On a hit they are able to get through to you and calm the fires of your blood. On a 10+ this happens before you injure them in your rage.

Trapped - If you are trapped, captured or in chains and you need to call out for help, shout a name and roll+Hx. On a 10+, they'll come for you like a shining star, proud and powerful. On a 7-9 they'll be there but there will be pain - for you or for them - in the coming.

Injured - When you have a busted bone or bleeding wound and need to push through the pain or avoid putting any additional pain or stress on it, roll+0. On a 10+ you're fine, or at least as fine as any injured soul. On a 7-9 choose 2: -
- You do not scream out in pain.
- You do not slow down or misstep
- You do not collapse Exhausted

Betrayed - When you find it difficult to trust your Brothers after their past cruelties to you but you must anyway, roll+Hx or +0 (whichever is lower). On a 10+, you can trust them long enough. On a 7-9, you stall, flinch or hesitate - someone can offer you a tough choice, a hard bargain or worse outcome.

Hunted - When you are dogged, hunted, chased or pursued and you need to lose the tail, even if only for a moment, roll+I. On a hit, you can find that moment's peace and freedom from your pursuers. On a 7-9, they find someone else instead on whom they take out their frustration.

Enthralled - If you are hypnotised, awed or bedazzled by strange powers or beauty and your Brother cries out your name to bring you to your senses, they roll+Hx. On a 10+, the illusion is shattered and you are yourself again. On a 7-9 you'll be brought to your senses, but not before you commit some terrible act!

Traitor - When you have betrayed your Brothers and you find it hard to trust others or yourself but you must anyway, roll+Hx or +0 (whichever is lower). On a 10+, you can trust them long enough. On a 7-9, you stall, flinch or hesitate - someone can offer you a tough choice, a hard bargain or worse outcome.

Almost Certainly Dead - When you are almost certainly dead (but no one has seen the body), and it's time for you to reappear to save someone, roll+Hx of the person you're saving. On a hit you dramatically reappear in the nick of time. On a 10+ you take +I in your rescue attempts too. On a miss, you are also at the mercy of whatever is plaguing your friends.

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When you eat at the Hungry Tiger Inn, sampling the food of Master Beanpole Yu, roll+I (Hungry Dragon +0). On a 10+, choose two, whilst on a 7-9 pick one:

- The food has not been drugged.
- Mistress Gu, the Silk Whirlwind, does not take offence at you.
- A brawl does not break out amongst the patrons.

When you sip the Blue Tea of Mistress Gu, judging its virtue, roll+0 (Dark Tortoise +I). On a 10+ you carefully taste the worth of the tea and its value to Master Iron Willow. On a 7-9 someone should pick whether the tasting is interrupted before you can reach a verdict or whether you are forced to find fault with Mistress Gu's brewing rather than with the leaf.

When Bandit King Swollen Butterfly uses the the Dark Moon Strike on you, leap out the way and roll+0. On a 10+ you deftly avoid the blow and the Bandit King is

- left open for a counterattack. On a 7-9 pick one:*
- You avoid the thrust of the blow but are left injured.
- You are struck with the lesser Violent Spirit Poison.
- One of your Brothers is struck by the poisonous blow instead. On a miss, you are almost certainly dead.

When you drink the foul dark brew of the Painted Sorcerer, look at a one of your Brothers and roll+Hx. On a hit you and your brother share a memory communicated in an instant with that look. On a 10+ you share a memory that is dear or poignant to the two of you and you each take an experience token. On a 7-9, either you share the memory and your Brother takes the experience token or your Brother shares the memory and you take the experience token. On a miss, you are both struck with a vision of something that could divide you and pit you against each other.

When you drink the strong dark tea of the Pirate Lord Jewel, match him cup for steaming cup and roll+0 (Small Toad +I). On a hit Jewel is impressed by your fortitude and good humour. On a 10+ the Pirate Lord will put the grand ship Ogre at your disposal for a journey. On a 7-9, Pirate Lord Jewel will off you the tea to take back if you wish but you must give him something of value in exchange.

When you fight off the Violent Spirit Poison, tossing and turning fitfully in your sleep, roll-I (+I if you have drunk the 8 Tailed Swallow Soup). On a 10+ you are able to sleep off the poison within a couple of nights. On a 7-9 choose whether the poison leaves you Exhausted from the effort of fighting it or it wracks your body with pain, leaving you Injured.

When your surroundings force you to step lightly and well, roll+X. On a 10+, you step well and true. On a 7-9, pick one:

- You step slowly.
- You are unbalanced.
- You do not find safe foothold.

When you stop and talk to Brother Mountain and he offers you a steamed bun, either take it and roll +I (Hungry Dragon +2) or politely refuse and roll+0 (Hungry Dragon -I). On a hit, Brother Mountain will provide insightful advice. On a 10+ he will cut straight to the heart of the matter, providing clear and useful instruction. On a 7-9, he will only provide vague platitudes, though still sharp and keen.

When you sip the rust red tea of Brother Goat to fight a restless spirit, inhale the steam, sip, and roll+I. On a hit you are able to see and touch the spirit as though it were flesh. On a 7-9 however, you must pick I:

- You are left blind to the material world for the duration.
- The effect is permanent and you will be forever amongst the restless dead.
- Your body sleeps whilst your spirit meets the ghost.
- Your vision is haunted with images of your own death.

When you wander amongst the trees and flowers of the Jade Lotus Garden, keep your eyes and ears open and roll+0 (+2 if you've tasted the fruit of the Plum Tree or can see Spirits). On 10+ choose 3, on a 7-9 pick I:

- You notice movement in the trees.
 - You realise the trees are more dead than alive.
 - You sense a great darkness coming from the Plum Tree.
 - You see the tormented spirits of the Garden and hear them wail.
- On a miss, you notice nothing until the tormented spirits are close enough that you may smell their putrid breath.*

When you face the Flame Wardens of the Mountain of The Seven Dragons, take care to avoid the fire they throw and roll+I (+2 if you have drunk the tonic of Master Lao). On a 10+ choose 2:

- You win the fight.
 - You do not get injured.
 - You learn the fire-throwing technique.
- On a 7-9, you fight well and so choose I:*
- You win but are Injured by the flames.
 - There is no clear victor and you are Exhausted by the bout.
 - You lose, but are otherwise left unscathed.

Fire Throwing - Add to options of your Martial Style: "Fire Throwing - your flames burn and blaze through any defence."

Make the Empire Fantastic. Master Iron Willow's students adventure in a truly fantastic Empire – a fantastical China and a GM should strive to highlight the fantastic in every aspect. Between the Mountain of the Seven Dragons, the Bandits of Marshlands and the Painted Sorcerer, the Empire is a vivid and colourful place with something new, weird or interesting beneath every rock or around every corner.

Running the Game

Principles: -

Make the Empire fantastic!

Embrace the cliché

Ask provocative questions

Say “yes”, then reveal the price

Reward with new problems

Ask provocative questions. Don't plan! Ask Moon Rabbit how she feels watching Small Toad flirt with every girl! Ask Phoenix Whisper where she has crept off to after being told to stay put! Ask questions about the things that interest you, and drive play towards their answers. When the players do something and make a move, ask questions like “When you stand up and your head scrapes the ceiling, how do the other patrons react? What happens?” or “When you invoke the mystic arts of the Flame Wardens, what does it look like? Does the air crackle with power?” Keep asking questions at a steady pace and building off the answers and the game will run like a well kept cruiser. Even when you're not asking questions, listen to your players and what they say - remember running the game is as much about listening as it is about talking.

Embrace the cliché. I make no bones about the clichés on which the various characters are based - nor about the clichés found in the Jade Lotus Garden, the Four Great Tea Masters, the Bandits, or the scenario. Don't be afraid to make use of the same, or other clichés to fuel the game. Who else but Phoenix Whisper's old rival is the only pilot around? Who but Brother Gao is the traveller being attacked on the road? Who is the ominous, dark champion of the Bandits but traitorous student of Master Iron Willow? Take these clichés, run with them and make them your own and the game will sing for you!

Reward with new problems. So the players have just headed to the Hungry Dragon Inn to seek aid from Master Beanpole Yu? Great, but they better be careful of the bandits supping there already. Small Toad has just declared his love for Princess Golden Lotus? Reward them with he declaring her love for Phoenix Whisper! If the game is working as intended then there should be no better reward for the players than a new problem. These problems oughtn't invalidate the achievements the players have already made but rather provide new challenges and new obstacles to mar their progress.

Say "yes" then reveal the price. The move-structure employed by the characters comes, quite unashamed, from Vincent Baker's truly spectacular Apocalypse World. However, where moves from Apocalypse World call on the GM to make a decision, I have instead said "someone". Say "yes" to the ideas at the table, use them - and if they seem too good to be true, make them pay for the privilege. If the players want to do something, let them do it - or at least try to do it. However, letting players do something does not mean you have to let them have it for free. When the players suggest heading to the Jade Lotus Gardens in the heart of the Empire, provide obstacles - bandits on the road; and attach a price - they may escape the Sea Pirates, if they leave behind an innocent fisherman. When Small Toad suggests that perhaps a former Magistrate resides nearby, say "Yes" but make it one who knows the misdeeds of which Small Toad has been accused. Say "yes" then reveal the price.

Conditions. There are ten different conditions that may afflict the characters. Conditions are cues to the players and constraints on their characters and moves suitable for their fictional situation. Whilst certain moves can inflict a condition of some sort as part of their use, conditions should be inflicted upon characters as circumstances dictate - often as a consequence of missing a move. Use the conditions to create opportunities or permission to treat a character in a certain way - "You're hunted right? Well as you're eating in the wine house, you notice someone near by keeps shooting you shifty glances."