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STEVE JACKSON
AND IAN LIVINGSTONE

The Crimson Tide

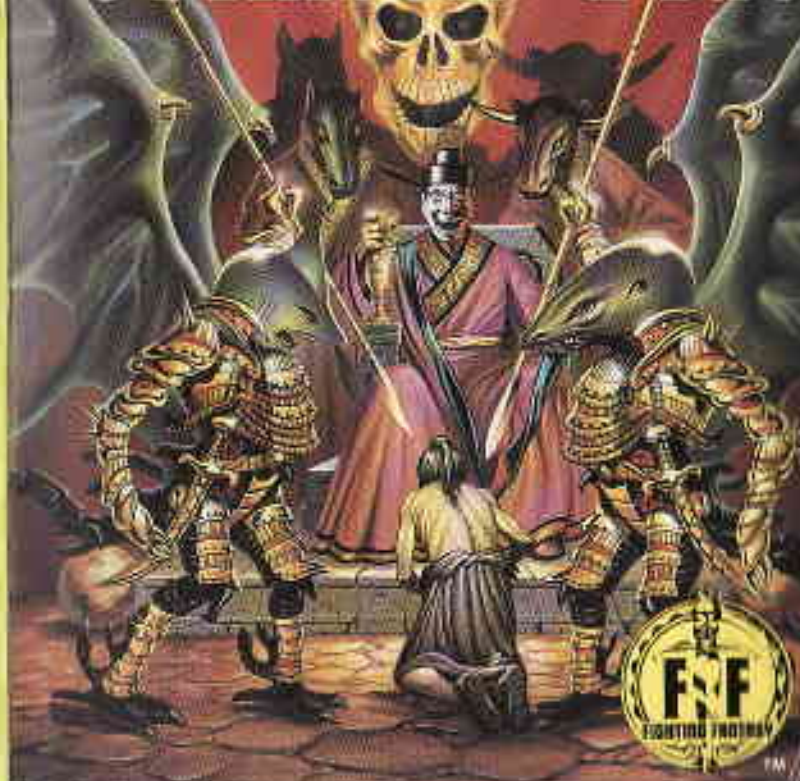
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Steve JACKSON AND
Ian LIVINGSTONE
PRESENT

The Crimson Tide



able to find one that isn't too dangerous – provided you can pay. How much money do you have? If you have:

None

Only copper coins

Gold coins

Turn to 340

Turn to 228

Turn to 168



37

The young fellow called Suiyuan is cut down even as you are raising the sword aloft. There is a moment of stillness, followed by cries of, 'The sacred sword is with us!' The revolutionaries start to fight back and, simply by force of numbers, oust the Dragon Guards; but more than half the revolutionaries have fallen in the bitter fighting. Their leader addresses you: 'Now that Suiyuan is dead, you must carry his torch. Take the sacred sword to the capital. Appeal directly to Councillor Merzei – he must listen to us!' You protest that you know nothing of the cause, but your words fall on deaf ears. You hurry out of the city and head south. Turn to 99.

38

The current sweeps you down the fissure, dashing you against walls that have been worn smooth by the gushing water. Lose 1 point of Temporary STAMINA. Water fills your ears and your nose and you gulp down several mouthfuls by accident. Your head is filled by a monstrous roaring sound. In an instant the darkness gives way to blinding light and you tumble through air filled with spray, before plunging into a deep, dark pool. Summoning the last reserves of your strength you splash out, finally dragging yourself from the pool to slump on the bank like a wet rag. You have escaped from the prison mine! Turn to 263.



39

'Well, a sage once wrote that no man may live under the same sky as the killer of his father,' Yao says. 'But another sage wrote that nothing justifies murder. For myself, the only sage I believe in is the herb which goes into my cooking pot.' He stares deeply into his bowl, then continues. 'I may be able to help you, but first you must do me a small favour. A month ago, an eager young fellow called Suiyuan came to me and asked if I would help him in his cause – something to do with restoring justice to the land. I said I'd help him, but I must confess

Puffin Books

THE CRIMSON TIDE

In the Isles of the Dawn, far to the east, mighty forces strive to gain power over the land. Wandering bands of mercenaries act as they please, looting, burning and pillaging the once-peaceful countryside.

YOU are the child of a rice-farming family, unskilled in combat but filled with dreams of heroism and glory. When mercenaries arrive in your village you are flung into an adventure which tests your courage to the limits. Your father's dying wish is for you to learn the martial arts of the Baochou Monastery. But is this the best way to bring his killer to justice?

As you grow and learn, you must face the horrors of the wide world beyond the village -- a world of strange customs and malignant creatures. Many encounters await you: with sorcerers, monks, samurai and malevolent spirits. Many fates could befall you: slavery, betrayal, imprisonment or death. But in the end it will be your courage, skill and knowledge that will help you win the ultimate battle: to conquer the crimson tide of revenge!

Two dice, a pencil and an eraser are all you need to embark on this fabulous adventure, which is complete with its elaborate combat system and a score sheet to record your progress.

Many fearsome dangers lie ahead and your success is by no means certain. Powerful adversaries are ranged against you and it's up to YOU to decide which route to follow, which dangers to risk and which foes to fight.

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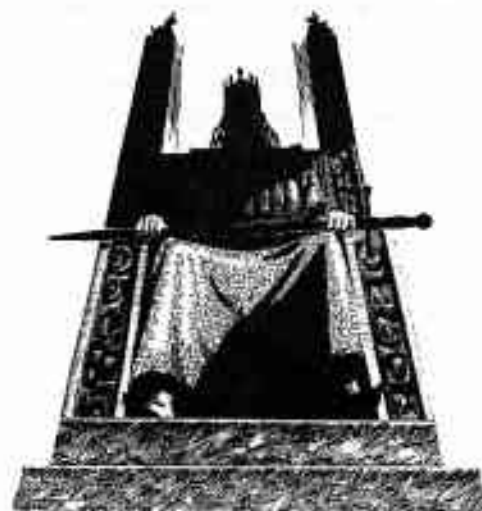
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The *Crimson Tide*



Paul Mason

Illustrated by Terry Oakes



Puffin Books

Dedicated to Keiko, Ambassador of Ai

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INTRODUCTION

You begin this adventure as a teenager, the child of a poor peasant family in the Isles of the Dawn. Before embarking on your adventure, you must first determine your own strengths and weaknesses. Use dice to find out your initial scores. As you grow older in the course of the adventure you will find that these will increase quite rapidly. On pages 16-17 there is an *Adventure Sheet* which you may use to record the details of your adventure. On it you will find boxes for recording your **SKILL**, **STAMINA**, **FEROCITY** and **LUCK** scores, as well as your Age.

You are advised either to record your scores on the *Adventure Sheet* in pencil, or make photocopies of the sheet for use in future adventures.

Skill, Stamina, Ferocity and Luck

Roll 1 die and enter this total in the **SKILL** box on the *Adventure Sheet*.

Roll 2 dice and enter this total in the **STAMINA** box.

Roll 1 die, add 6 to this number and enter the total in the **LUCK** box.

There is also a **FEROCITY** box. Roll 1 die, add half of your **STAMINA** to this number (halves round up), and enter the total in the **FEROCITY** box.

For reasons that will be explained below, your scores in **SKILL**, **STAMINA**, **LUCK** and **FEROCITY** will change constantly during the adventure. You must keep an accurate record of these scores, and for this reason you are advised either to write small in the boxes or to keep an eraser handy. Unlike other Fighting Fantasy gamebooks, *The Crimson Tide* begins with you as a child. For this reason your **SKILL**, **STAMINA** and **FEROCITY** may eventually exceed the number you roll at the start. For **SKILL** and **FEROCITY** you should simply keep track of their current levels until you reach the age of 18. So far as **STAMINA** is concerned, you should keep track of both your Permanent **STAMINA** and your Temporary **STAMINA**. The paragraphs will make it clear whether it is Permanent or Temporary **STAMINA** that is affected, but you must remember that combat always affects Temporary **STAMINA**. Your **LUCK** score, unlike all the above, may not exceed its *Initial* score, and you should never erase this.

Your **SKILL** score reflects your swordsmanship and general fighting expertise; the higher the better. Your **STAMINA** score reflects your general constitution, your will to survive, your determination and overall fitness; the higher your **STAMINA** score, the longer you will be able to survive. If your **STAMINA** score drops to zero, your character is dead; stop reading, close the book and then start again from the beginning. Your **LUCK** score indicates how naturally lucky a person you are. Luck – and magic – are facts of life in the fantasy kingdom you are about to explore. Your **FEROCITY** is a measure of your thirst for vengeance. Being ferocious

is useful in battle, but you are less able to control yourself. If your **FEROCITY** score drops to zero or less, make a note of the paragraph number you are at and turn at once to paragraph 200.

Age

You begin the book as a thirteen-year-old. Months and years may pass in the course of your adventure, however, and you should keep track of your Age in the box provided. Only amend your Age when told to do so in a paragraph. Whenever your Age increases, you should do two things: reduce your **FEROCITY** by 2, and return your Temporary **STAMINA** to its Permanent value, for time is a great healer. As soon as you reach the age of eighteen, you will no longer be able to increase either your **SKILL** or your Permanent **STAMINA**.

Combat

You will often come across paragraphs in the book in which you are instructed to fight a creature of some sort. An option to flee may be given, but if not – or if you choose to attack the creature anyway – you must resolve the battle as described below.

First record your opponent's **SKILL** and **STAMINA** scores in the first empty Monster Encounter Box on your *Adventure Sheet*. The scores for every potential adversary are given each time you have an encounter which may end in combat. The sequence for combat is then:

1. Roll 2 dice for your opponent. Add its SKILL score. This total is the opponent's Attack Strength.
2. Roll 2 dice for yourself. Add the number rolled to your current SKILL score. This total is your Attack Strength.
3. If your Attack Strength is higher than that of your opponent, you have wounded it: proceed to step 4. If your opponent's Attack Strength is higher than yours, it has wounded you: proceed to step 5. If both Attack Strength totals are the same, you have avoided each other's blows – start the next Attack Round from step 1, above.
4. You have wounded the creature, so deduct 2 points from its STAMINA score. (You may use your LUCK here to do additional damage – see below.) Now proceed to step 6.
5. This creature has wounded you, so deduct 2 points from your own STAMINA score. (Again you may use LUCK at this stage – see below.)
6. Make the appropriate adjustments either to the opponent's or to your own STAMINA score (and to your LUCK score if you used LUCK – see below).

7. Begin the next Attack Round by repeating steps 1–6. This sequence continues until the STAMINA score of either you or your adversary has been reduced to zero (death).

Escaping

In some paragraphs you will be given the option of escaping from a fight should things be going badly for you. However, if you do run away, your opponent automatically gets in one free attack on you (deduct 2 STAMINA points) as you flee – such is the price of cowardice. (Note that you may use LUCK to minimize this wound in the normal way – see below.) You may Escape only if this option is specifically given to you in the relevant paragraph.

Luck

At various times during your adventure, either in battle or when you find yourself in a situation in which you could be either lucky or unlucky (on each occasion you are invited to *Test your Luck* in the relevant paragraph), you have to call on your LUCK to make the outcome more favourable. But beware! Using LUCK is a risky business, and if you are *unlucky*, the results could be disastrous. The procedure for *Testing your Luck* is as follows: roll 2 dice. If the number rolled is equal to or less than your current LUCK score, you have been Lucky and the result will go in your favour. If the number rolled is higher than your current LUCK score, you have been Unlucky and you will be penalized.

Each time you *Test your Luck*, you must subtract 1 point from your current LUCK score. You will soon come to realize that the more you rely on your LUCK, the more risky this will become.

Using Luck in Battles

In certain paragraphs you will be told to *Test your Luck* and will then discover the consequences of being Lucky or Unlucky. However, you always have the option of using your LUCK in battle, either to inflict a more damaging wound on an opponent you have just wounded or to reduce the seriousness of a wound your opponent has just inflicted on you.

If you have just won an Attack Round, you may *Test your Luck* as described above. If you are Lucky, you have inflicted a severe wound on your opponent and may deduct 2 extra points from the creature's STAMINA score. However, if you are Unlucky, the wound was a mere graze and you must restore 1 point to its STAMINA (so that, instead of inflicting the usual 2 points of damage, you have now caused only 1).

If you have just lost an Attack Round and have been wounded, you may *Test your Luck* to try to lessen the effect of the wound. If you are Lucky, you have managed to avoid the full impact of the blow; restore 1 point of STAMINA (so that, instead of causing 2 points of damage on you, it has done only 1). If you are Unlucky, you have had to take a more serious blow; deduct 1 extra STAMINA point.

Remember: you must subtract 1 point from your LUCK score every time you *Test your Luck* regardless of the outcome.

Restoring Skill, Stamina, Ferocity and Luck

Skill

As you grow and learn, your SKILL score should increase. However, there will come a point when you can learn no more – when you reach the age of eighteen. At this point, write down your *Initial* SKILL value on your *Adventure Sheet* to indicate that it may increase no further. From this time on, only a special weapon will allow you to increase your SKILL; but remember that only one weapon can be used at a time! You cannot claim two SKILL bonuses for carrying two magic swords.

Stamina and Provisions

Your Permanent STAMINA score will increase as you train your body. However, when you reach the age of eighteen, it can increase no more. At this point, your STAMINA has reached its *Initial* value and you should draw a circle round the number of your Permanent STAMINA on your *Adventure Sheet*.

Your Temporary STAMINA score will change a lot during your adventure as you fight monsters and undertake arduous tasks. As you near your goal, your STAMINA level may become dangerously low and battles may be particularly risky, so be careful!

In the course of the adventure you may acquire Provisions. You may rest and eat at any time except when engaged in battle. Eating a meal restores up to 4 STAMINA points. When you eat a meal, add up to 4

points to your STAMINA score and deduct 1 of your Provisions. (A separate Provisions Remaining Box is provided on the *Adventure Sheet* for this purpose.) Remember that you have a long way to go, so use your Provisions wisely! Remember also that Provisions and potions may never restore your STAMINA score to a number higher than its permanent value.

Ferocity

As you are affected by the events of your adventure, so your FEROCITY may increase or decrease. Full details will be given in the appropriate paragraphs.

Luck

Additions to your LUCK score are awarded during the adventure when you have been particularly lucky; when this occurs, details will be given in the relevant paragraphs. Your LUCK score may never exceed its *Initial* value. Unlike the other three scores, the number you roll for LUCK is its *Initial* value.

Equipment

You start your adventure with no equipment apart from the clothes you stand up in and a wooden sword, but you will probably acquire various items during your travels. Keep a careful note of anything you may pick up.

Notes

In the course of this adventure you will have to make notes in the appropriate box of your *Adventure Sheet*. You should make sure that you copy the words down correctly, and that you list them in the order in which you come across them. Since you may have to make several notes, try to write small.

ADVENTURE SHEET

SKILL <i>Temporary</i> <i>Permanent</i>	STAMINA <i>Temporary</i> <i>Permanent</i>	LUCK <i>Temporary</i> <i>Permanent</i>
--	--	---

FEROCITY When FEROCITY=0, turn to paragraph 200	AGE <i>Initial</i> <i>Age= 13</i> When AGE increases, lose 2 FEROCITY	MONEY
---	---	--------------

EQUIPMENT LIST PROVISIONS REMAINING	NOTES
--	--------------

ENCOUNTER BOXES

Skill= Stamina=	Skill= Stamina=	Skill= Stamina=
------------------------	------------------------	------------------------

Skill= Stamina=	Skill= Stamina=	Skill= Stamina=
------------------------	------------------------	------------------------

Skill= Stamina=	Skill= Stamina=	Skill= Stamina=
------------------------	------------------------	------------------------

Skill= Stamina=	Skill= Stamina=	Skill= Stamina=
------------------------	------------------------	------------------------

BACKGROUND

Your world is a world of mud and water. Ever since you were a baby, all you've known are the simple baked-mud houses of your village and the vast watery expanses of rice paddies, interspersed here and there by pastures. Although you have not yet entered your fourteenth summer, you are used to working in the fields. You are lucky to have been born strong and hardy – at the end of a day spent planting tender shoots in the mud you still have some energy left for play and for practice. You fancy yourself a mighty warrior, like those who occasionally ride by, so you have carved a sharp stick for your sword and swing it in circles above your head. At first the other children laughed at you but, after you killed a giant Mudworm, they learned new respect for you.

The events of the outside world rarely concern you. Even when you hear that there is civil war in the land, your only concern is that the soldiers won't harm your rice crops. Rice is a luxury; a good rice crop means wealth . . . and most goes in taxes to the tribunal. No, you care little for the great events of the kingdom. After all, one king is much like another. Poo Ta has never done you any favours, so what do you care if he is replaced by some other 'divine' ruler?

Then one day the foreign mercenaries arrive in your village. The gleam of their black lacquered armour

makes them look like horribly distended beetles. Their gimlet eyes shine with evil intensity. The villagers who stand in their way are ruthlessly hacked down. They collect all the rice and round up all the women, including your mother. Your father protests and, as you watch, the leader of the mercenaries cuts him down with his narrow, slashing, curved blade. 'The new king seeks slaves,' says the coarse-tongued barbarian, 'and you scum aren't going to get in my way.'

You stare at the man, fixing his appearance in your mind. His armour is composed of scales, laced together, with occasional plates and spikes covering vulnerable areas. His helmet is wide and his face is covered by a fierce, bestial mask; it is a scowling parody of a man, with bulging brows and wickedly curved horns. Through large holes the evil brown eyes of your father's attacker return your stare with what could almost be amusement.

Then, with a yell, the mercenaries mount their horses and leave, driving their captives before them with whips. The horses make slow progress through the flooded fields, and it seems to take an eternity before the killers disappear from sight.

Your father dies in your arms. His last words are, 'Go to the Baochou Monastery. Avenge me and save your mother!'

Now turn to paragraph 1.



I

You leave your village with several other youngsters, all determined to seek revenge. You carry with you your wooden sword (make a note of it on your Equipment List) and some food (note down that you have 2 Provisions). The paddy fields lie all about you, with the sun sparkling on the still, muddy water. You make your way along a path on the top of a polder — the low earth-barrier separating one rice field from the next. Several kilometres distant is the local town of Yenshu, in which the magistrate of your district holds his tribunal. You have never been there yourself, but your cousin Quan visited Yenshu's temple two years ago and so he knows the way. Not much is said on the journey until you arrive at the road which leads to Yenshu. Here, where the polder tracks join the wider thoroughfare, a small settlement is to be found: an inn and the huts of several artisans. The foreign mercenaries have been here, too. The buildings are scorched and blackened from fires, and broken pottery lies strewn all around. Suddenly little Hani lets out a shriek and points: the bloodied corpse of another victim sprawls amid the wreckage of the horse trough.

'We must have vengeance upon these murderers,' says Sunai, the eldest of you, clenching her fist.

'The magistrate in Yenshu will deal with them,' replies Quan, who already has the bearing of a monk, though he is not yet even a novice.

You stand among the wreckage, discussing the fate which you hope will befall the mercenaries, while

Sunai counts the slain. Quan says he believes the invaders are from far across the seas – from the land of Hachiman, where the men are savage and primitive, and accustomed to mistreating women. 'Barbarians such as these,' he points out, 'have a crude religion reflecting only a fragment of Arn, and so have no foundation upon which to build a civilization. Their land is ruled by warriors who are constantly warring with one another.'

Sunai finishes her unpleasant task and reports that six men lie dead here. Now you must hurry to the magistrate to report the matter and set the wheels of justice in motion. But the barbarians may still be stalking the land. If you hurry along the road to Yenshu, you may catch up with them. On the other hand, if you travel to Yenshu along the polder-paths, the journey will take much longer, and it will be more arduous for the younger children. You have the wooden sword in your hand. It seems that you are the leader. If you decide to travel along the road, turn to 92. If you would prefer to make your way among the rice paddies, turn to 288.

2

As you crawl out through the opening, you slip on a patch of slime and tumble head first into the river below. A current grips you, sweeping you along past the river wall; it is all you can do to keep your head above water. Ahead of you a small sailing boat drifts into your path. If you try to get a handhold on it as you pass, turn to 83. If you concentrate on staying afloat, turn to 175.

3

You move forward to step between the doors, but you are blocked by an invisible barrier. A bell begins to toll and shouts come from within. The monk who escorted you here backs off, making frantic gestures, then turns and runs away. If you now hurry down the mountain, turn to 213. If you stay to see what all the fuss is about, turn to 388.

4

You return to the junction of passages by the double doors. Meng looks at them thoughtfully, but says nothing. Now do you:

Return through the double doors?	Turn to 230
Go down the left-hand passage?	Turn to 58
Go down the right-hand passage?	Turn to 193
Go down the tunnel ahead?	Turn to 158

5

Since you didn't have any success with the magistrate in Yenshu, Sunai suggests that she should approach the prefect. She sets out next morning, promising that she won't rest until she has persuaded someone to take action. While she's gone, you may wander the city in search of information (turn to 119) or await her return in the safety of Bofu's house (turn to 239).

6

Before the man's body hits the ground, you are scamp-ering after the farmers. A few arrows swish past your

head, but the lumbering, armour-clad mercenaries are too weighed-down to pursue you, and their horses are scattering, away from the fire. Turn to 89.

7

You have to pay 1 Gold Piece to obtain a space on the floor of the boarding house's main room, but the proprietor also promises you food. He is true to his word and a hot stew with pickled vegetables does much to revive you. In the morning you are forced to consider your next move. Will you:

- | | |
|---|-------------|
| Search for employment? | Turn to 328 |
| Visit the tribunal and attempt to bribe the constables to take action? | Turn to 292 |
| Risk making enquiries about the mercenaries in the shadiest inns of the town? | Turn to 210 |
| Leave the town and travel north? | Turn to 18 |

8

The priests look at you with long faces and sad eyes. 'You are a parasite upon humanity,' their spokesman says. 'You understand that we cannot allow you to live?' The priests close in. Your adventure ends here.

9

You creep along the foul-smelling tunnel. Side-passages lead off, but all of them are too small for you to enter. After a while you hear faint voices coming from ahead. You make your way stealthily to where a flight of steps leads up from the sewer. The voices come

from a chamber at the top of the stairs. If you continue along the tunnel, turn to 63. If you sneak up the stairs and eavesdrop, turn to 116. If you call out, turn to 392.

10

Glumly, you bow to the magistrate and make your way from his tribunal. You dare not disobey his orders – his constables are fierce and well armed – so you head straight for the gate. Note down the word 'king' on your *Adventure Sheet* and turn to 115.

11

The alarm is raised by shouting and the crashing of gongs. Before you can react, Royal Guards surround you, close in and strike. Your adventure ends here.

12

In a flurry of whirling wood the staves beat down upon you. A spike of pain shoots through your head, and you black out.

When you come round, you are lying in a dirty back-alley. All your possessions are missing (cross them off your *Adventure Sheet*), and you have lost 2 points of Temporary STAMINA. Translucent shapes dance before your eyes, testimony to the damage inflicted by the constables' staves. You find it hard to concentrate, but somehow you manage to haul yourself to your feet and stagger off. Turn to 251.

13

Although there are still pockets of resistance, the civil

war is over. The God-King Poo Ta died in the last great battle and, in the absence of any legitimate heir, the hero of the hour, Maior, was installed as the new king. Some say that Maior used sorcery to seize the throne, but your drinking companion believes that a good strong ruler will do the isles a power of good, no matter how he came by his crown. Turn to 156.

14

It is a long journey through unfamiliar countryside. The locals are suspicious, so only occasionally do you find one who is prepared to put you up for a night. Add 1 year to your Age. In one village you hear tell of a band of warriors from Hachiman who are said to be roaming the countryside to the east. The other children are scared, for they believe these may be the mercenaries who sacked your village. If you digress in order to encounter the warriors, you will have to bid your friends goodbye; turn to 349. If you continue on to the capital, Shoudu, turn to 289.

15

The barbarians look you up and down as you enter their camp. You notice that one of them is staring at you intently. 'I know that face,' he grates. 'He's a young whippersnapper from one of the villages we demolished near Yenshu.' Turn to 206.

16

You pretend to be asleep and, as the warder puts down the bowl of gruel, you leap on him. Roll 3 dice. If the total of the dice is less than the sum of your

SKILL and FEROCITY, turn to 311. If the dice roll is equal to or greater than your SKILL plus FEROCITY, turn to 143.

17

The demonic fish-man transforms itself back into water and splashes into the stream once more. You stand motionless for a moment, panting with the exertion and half expecting Yuemo to reappear. Instead, a tiny fish leaps up out of the water and into your waiting hand. Its scales are golden, and it stares up at you with a look akin to intelligence in its eye. Pocketing your strange catch (note it down on your Equipment List), you wade out of the stream. If you carry on in the direction you were originally going, turn to 380. If you turn round and retrace your footsteps back the way you came, turn to 129.

18

You walk for days, sometimes resting in the huts of friendly farmers but more often sleeping rough. You are used to hard work, but now you drive yourself to spend every waking hour on the march. Add 2 points to your Permanent STAMINA. Eventually you are climbing through vine-covered hills to overlook the city of Traole, provincial capital of this region. If you enter the city, turn to 377. If you continue past it, towards the mountains which loom on the horizon, note down the word 'offers' on your *Adventure Sheet* and turn to 81.

19

Meng points to the double doors at the far end of the chamber. Each of the elegantly designed doors has a handle. If you open the left-hand door, turn to 85. If you open the right-hand door, turn to 363. If you push both handles together, turn to 307.

20

Merzei pulls aside a hanging drape and indicates a bare passageway. 'This leads to the king's private quarters. Good fortune be with you,' he says.

At the end of the passage is a wooden panel. It takes a few moments for you to work out how to slide the panel to one side, then you step cautiously into the chamber beyond. The king is sitting at a simple reading desk; he is a large man with strangely curled hair and a proud nose. When he looks up, his dark-brown eyes seem to bore into your soul, but he betrays neither surprise nor fear. Even though he is dressed simply, King Maior's regal bearing is overwhelming. You fall to your knees and avert your gaze. 'You are here seeking justice,' says Maior. 'Speak your case.'

Once again you tell your story, complaining that the authorities allow mercenaries to do what they like, and describing how your mother was enslaved by the barbarians who killed your father. If you have the golden sword, turn to 218. Otherwise turn to 107.

21

You join the mercenaries in their orgy of destruction as they smash up the village. They yell and shriek as



they chase after the poor farmers. If a farmer puts up any kind of resistance, the mercenaries surround him and cut him to pieces. Although the bloodlust sickens you, you go along with it, even setting fire to a couple of huts to make it look as though you are joining in. Then it is over. You heft bags of grain on to the backs of some packhorses and herd together a few captive farmers. Your hopes of finding out where the mercenaries send their captives are dashed, however. The leader sends them off with a guard of only two men, both trusted lieutenants.

You continue to ride southwards. After a few days the two lieutenants rejoin the group, bringing with them bulging bags of money, and the gold is distributed. As a new recruit, your share is just 1 Gold Piece.

Several days later, you ambush a small party of samurai – warriors from the land of Hachiman – escorting a covered litter. For the attack, you find yourself in the front rank, facing one of the deadly fighters.

SAMURAI

SKILL 11

STAMINA 12

If you defeat the Samurai, turn to 98.

22

Most of your spells take time to cast, but you know one that is perfect for this situation. You fling out your hand and a bolt of forked lightning leaps from it full into the chest of the mercenary leader. A normal person would simply be shaken, but he is encased in metal. The power of the spell is amplified a hundred-fold and, with a blinding flash, a roar and the acrid

scent of charred flesh, the hulking figure falls. Turn to 305.

23

You charge down the darkened slope, trying to avoid the loose rocks which threaten to trip you at every step. Behind you, the howls die away and you check your headlong descent. From directly ahead you can hear the rushing of a stream, so you veer off to the left and press on into the valley. Turn to 129.

24

You talk to an old barber who is plying his trade in the streets. He is friendly towards you and, when you guide the conversation round to the subject of the rebels, he makes it clear that he knows something about them. He agrees to arrange for you to meet them later that night, inside a deserted building full of machinery. He warns you that, if you go along, you have to consider yourself as one of them. Several hours later, you follow the barber's directions to the building and soon find yourself in the middle of a gathering of desperate revolutionaries. Turn to 290.

25

After a short walk, you find yourself outside the boarding house in which the others spent the night. They have slept late; as they rub the sleep from their eyes, you tell them of your conversation with your uncle. Turn to 296.

26

The prisoners pour out of their cell; they hug you and pat you on the back, then set about releasing all the other prisoners, including your friends. Sunai protests that it is wrong to go against the authorities, but nothing she can say will dissuade you as you make your way to the door at the end of the corridor. You burst out, overpowering the guards, and try to get out of the tribunal building. Constables bar your way, but there are too many of you. You charge out into the courtyard and make for the gates. There, a small detachment of constables prepare to hold off your attack. You face one of them.

CONSTABLE

SKILL 5

STAMINA 6

If you defeat the constable, turn to 110.

27

The other figure is wearing robes similar to yours, but his face is painted bone white. As soon as he sees you, he crouches. If you have the word 'wood' on your *Adventure Sheet*, turn to 373; otherwise, turn to 132.

28

You find several silver ingots in a pouch on the belt of one of your attackers. You are just turning your attention to the other body when the constables arrive. Your protestations of innocence fall on deaf ears. You are dragged before the magistrate, who is told how you were caught red-handed looting the bodies of your victims. The evidence is stacked against you – even the bloodstained weapon proclaims you the

murderer. The magistrate is not a lenient man. He sentences you to death by a hundred and one cuts.

29

Write down the golden sword on your *Equipment List*. Whenever you use this weapon in combat, you may add 2 to your Attack Strength. Although it's quite dark now, you resume your journey. Turn to 295.

30

You can search for an inn, in the hope of tracing the mercenaries (turn to 36), or go to the temple in search of divine guidance (turn to 258).

31

Write down the word 'never' on your *Adventure Sheet*. Little Hani's shrieks fade away as you splash through the paddy field.

After some time you catch up with Sunai, Quan and the others, but Hani is not with them. Downcast, you prepare to make your way to Yenshu along the polder-paths. Turn to 288.

32

You take up a stance as Zhanshi approaches. 'You're a monk!' the leader exclaims. Turn to 206.





33

You make a small offering at the Altar of Earnest Entreaty, then file out into the courtyard, where a priest is addressing a respectful crowd of worshippers. He is complaining about the increasing drift away from the worship of Am and blaming it on the increasing presence in the isles of foreigners. He says that the delegation from Hachiman, who were in the city recently, were no more than ignorant barbarians and he hopes that they have no success in the capital city, whither they are now headed. If you decide to head south towards Shoudu yourself, turn to 99. If, instead, you set off northwards, turn to 81.

34

In a quiet corner of the pool you waylay one of the inn's less unpleasant inhabitants. In between gulps of heated wine he tells you that he recently saw a body of soldiers from Hachiman passing through the town on their way south. They seemed to be guarding someone important. As he begins a long explanation as to why the curved swords of Hachiman are stronger than straight swords, you take your leave. Turn to 362.

35

You scoop up a handful of the papers and hurry out into the night. Write on your Equipment List that you have paper talismans. Turn to 295.

36

There are plenty of inns in Traole, and you should be

able to find one that isn't too dangerous – provided you can pay. How much money do you have? If you have:

None

Turn to 340

Only copper coins

Turn to 228

Gold coins

Turn to 168



37

The young fellow called Suiyuan is cut down even as you are raising the sword aloft. There is a moment of stillness, followed by cries of, 'The sacred sword is with us!' The revolutionaries start to fight back and, simply by force of numbers, oust the Dragon Guards; but more than half the revolutionaries have fallen in the bitter fighting. Their leader addresses you: 'Now that Suiyuan is dead, you must carry his torch. Take the sacred sword to the capital. Appeal directly to Councillor Merzei – he must listen to us!' You protest that you know nothing of the cause, but your words fall on deaf ears. You hurry out of the city and head south. Turn to 99.

38

The current sweeps you down the fissure, dashing you against walls that have been worn smooth by the gushing water. Lose 1 point of Temporary STAMINA. Water fills your ears and your nose and you gulp down several mouthfuls by accident. Your head is filled by a monstrous roaring sound. In an instant the darkness gives way to blinding light and you tumble through air filled with spray, before plunging into a deep, dark pool. Summoning the last reserves of your strength you splash out, finally dragging yourself from the pool to slump on the bank like a wet rag. You have escaped from the prison mine! Turn to 263.



39

'Well, a sage once wrote that no man may live under the same sky as the killer of his father,' Yao says. 'But another sage wrote that nothing justifies murder. For myself, the only sage I believe in is the herb which goes into my cooking pot.' He stares deeply into his bowl, then continues. 'I may be able to help you, but first you must do me a small favour. A month ago, an eager young fellow called Suiyuan came to me and asked if I would help him in his cause – something to do with restoring justice to the land. I said I'd help him, but I must confess

that it has slipped my mind until now. I really don't want to get involved in politics, but I do have an article that you could take to aid the young man.' He hands you his sword. 'This is the Sacred Sword of Tsui. Guard it carefully and take it to Suiyuan in Traole. Do this for me and I will help you in your quest.' Note down the Golden Sword on your Equipment List. If you use it in combat, it will add 2 to your Attack Strength.

You stay a night with Master Yao, then set off back to Traole. Turn to 235.



40

You bow to the magistrate and make your way out of the tribunal. If you have the word 'art' on your *Adventure Sheet*, turn to 351. Otherwise, turn to 251.

41

You are set to work, cleaning the monks' practice hall. They use a variety of weapons, and it is also your task to clean these. Days pass and you wonder when you are going to be taught the martial arts yourself. Even though you clean the practice hall, you are always told to leave whenever the monks come there to practise. If you watch the monks practise and train yourself in secret, turn to 231. If you carry on as you are, turn to 343.

42

You reach the pool at the bottom of the tunnel where you slid down and you can hear voices at the top. Even if you could shin back up there, you would not escape. You must press on down the tunnel. Turn to 255.

43

You make your way to your uncle's house near the North Gate. If you have 10 Gold Pieces, turn to 118. If you haven't, turn to 381.

44

Meng shakes his head sadly. The mercenary leader takes a step closer and raises his sword. If you stand your ground, turn to 369. If you attack him, turn to 352.

45

Do you have a circular brooch? If you have, turn to 140. If you haven't, turn to 81.



46

There is hardly any moon to shed light on the fields around you. Occasional gurgling noises and the whisper of the wind suggest that fierce monsters lie in wait, hiding in the darkness until you lie, asleep and defenceless. You stare this way and that, straining to make out what horrors may be lurking in the night. You look up at the stars, but their faint gleam is cold comfort.

Suddenly the sounds die down. Walking across the fields towards you is a skeleton, gleaming with unearthly light. Fires burn in its empty eye-sockets, and it carries a huge, broad-bladed sword. You leap to your feet and draw your wooden sword. A tremor of fear runs through your body as the ghastly spectre closes in for the kill.

DEATHS MESSENGER SKILL 6 STAMINA 6

If you defeat the apparition, turn to 170. If you are defeated by it, do not begin your adventure again from the beginning, but turn instead to 246.

47

The guards escort you back to your cell, where they find the warder you overcame. You are dragged before the magistrate and given a severe beating. If you have a cudgel, turn to 185. Otherwise turn to 330.

48

You snatch up the bowl, but nothing happens. Write down on your Equipment List that you have a clay

bowl. Meng chuckles. 'Easy when you know how,' he comments, 'but how do you depart? Think hard. Use your head.' You go back up the passage. Now, do you:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------|
| Return through the double doors? | Turn to 230 |
| Go along the tunnel opposite? | Turn to 276 |
| Go down the passage to your right? | Turn to 158 |

49

In the streets of Traole the mood is tense. You pass a squad of Dragon Guards heading towards the building you have just left. If you leave the city now, travelling south, turn to 99. If you try to obtain a job here, turn to 237.

50

The old man leads you along the path, through a ravine and into a narrow valley. You follow him into a small hut, sparsely furnished, where he lights a fire and starts to brew some tea in a battered old kettle. Only when you are seated, with a steaming bowl of tea before you, does he speak. Turn to 150.



51

From a side-alley you watch fearfully as a crowd of protesters are driven back by a relentless line of heavily armoured soldiers. If you have the word 'never' on your *Adventure Sheet*, turn to 353. Otherwise turn to 171.

52

Maio smiles. He turns to the fat official and explains to him that your village was destroyed by mercenaries. 'You must help to sort this matter out, Pantu. My land is more troubled than you make out.' Pantu bows and casts a sour look in your direction. Then the king dismisses you both, instructing you to follow Pantu. Turn to 400.

53

Abbot Dry Jade smiles. 'You are a good monk,' he says. You resume your duties in the kitchen. Add 1 year to your Age, 2 points to your Permanent STAMINA and 1 point to your SKILL. Deduct 2 points from your FEROCITY.

Another year goes by, and Dry Jade visits you once more. He gives you a monk's knife (note it down on your Equipment List) and asks you how you are doing now. If you tell him you are still satisfied with your chosen career, turn to 199. If you ask to be taught the martial arts, turn to 278. If you feel that the time is ripe for you to leave the monastery and resume your quest, turn to 236.



54

You let out a blood-curdling yell as you swing your wooden sword at the barbarian. Taken by surprise, he staggers back, grunting in pain. You follow up with a thrust to the stomach, but he is too quick for you. Grabbing the end of your sword, he tugs sharply, unbalancing you. Before you can dodge away he is upon you, pinning your arm behind your back. 'Ha! You fight like a sabre-tooth,' he snarls. 'Perfect for the arena.' Somehow he manages to tie your hands together and throw you across the back of his horse. The jolting ride that follows bruises every bone in your body.

Eventually you arrive in a town and clatter through its streets. You are delivered to the arena, where you are put into training under the master swordsman Jian, a muscular fellow with a strangely curved right eyebrow. Closely guarded by day and by night, you are taught the use of the sword, spear, halberd, bow and axe.

Jian teaches you well. After two years you are nearly his match and are ready to face your first opponent in the arena. Throughout all this time, you never forget your parents, and the fire of vengeance in your heart is fuelled with each passing day. Add 2 years to your Age, 6 points to your SKILL, 10 points to your Permanent STAMINA, and 10 points to your FEROCITY.

Finally the day of your debut dawns. Jian has told you that your first battle is the most important. You are led out before a howling crowd and face . . . a ravening Arena Beast, a leathery nightmare with soul-draining eyes.

ARENA BEAST

SKILL 8

STAMINA 13

Each time the Arena Beast injures you, roll 2 dice. If the total you roll is less than your SKILL, you have avoided looking into the eyes of the beast. If your roll is equal to or greater than your SKILL, you have gazed into the eyes of the Arena Beast and must lose an additional 1 point from both your SKILL and FEROCITY.

If you defeat the Arena Beast, turn to 274.

55

If you are tattooed, turn to 187. Otherwise, turn to 294.

56

You ready yourself and clench your fists. Roll 2 dice. If the result is less than your FEROCITY turn to 122. If the result is equal to or greater than your FEROCITY, turn to 385.

57

'You are wrong,' he replies. 'Now be on your way.' He indicates the path that leads straight ahead. If you obey him, turn to 295. If you walk past him along the left-hand fork, turn to 271.

58

The passage carries straight on for a while, then bends to the right. You follow it and enter a strangely shaped chamber. In the wall opposite are five short passages, each less than two metres high. In the centre of the room, a large clay bowl sits on the block of

stone. Around it are strewn the bones of a dozen skeletons. Meng says, 'Many have tried to take the cup: do you dare?' Do you:

Grab the bowl from the stone?

Turn to 48

Approach warily and touch the bowl?

Turn to 257

Go back the way you came?

Turn to 4

59

You hurry along the corridor, finding a locked door at the far end. You open it with the warder's keys, and peer cautiously out. Two guards are sitting sleepily outside. There's no chance of escaping this way without disturbing them. Gently you pull the door closed, but just as you are locking it you hear a shout from the other side. The guard must have heard you. You race back the way you came, looking for another exit. There's no way out — except a stinking tunnel, covered by a grille in the floor. You unfasten the grille and peer into the darkness. If you snatch an unlit torch from a wall bracket near by, note it down on your *Adventure Sheet*. Then you slide down the tunnel. Roll 2 dice. If the result is less than your Permanent STAMINA, turn to 136. If the result is equal to or greater than your Permanent STAMINA, turn to 232.

60

The fragrance of mulberry leaves fills the air. Sounds become muted as you look down on the mercenaries: they are frantically drawing their weapons and gawping up at you in horror. Their expressions become blank and their heads begin to droop. Then their

leader shouts out harshly and they start to retreat. Soon you are alone in the deserted camp. You drowse ... and wake up to find yourself staring into the narrowed eyes of an old man. 'A curse is upon you,' he says. 'I can lift it if you wish.' Do you:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| Tell him you want the curse lifted? | Turn to 179 |
| Attack him? | Turn to 279 |
| Refuse his offer and leave? | Turn to 339 |

61

Luckily Sunai has some copper coins, which are enough to pay for you all to sleep in the draughty dormitory of Yenshu's most disreputable boarding house. There is not enough money for food, however, so you must make do with what you have brought from your village. The talk in the dormitory is of the civil war that rages in the north of the lands. It is said that Maior and Feior, twin sons of Bezenvial, have returned to the isles and are waging war on the God-King, Poo Ta. Bezenvial, the Dark Master, was once the ruler of the Isles of the Dawn, and you have heard the old folk telling stories about that terrible time. Now the Twins of Evil are using their magic to destroy the loyal legions of the isles and are employing mercenaries from the savage lands across the sea. It is even said that they have brought to the isles some of the creatures known as Orcs – horrible, stunted animals with little intelligence but with much cruelty and cunning.

You fall asleep with images of bestial snarling faces whirling in your mind. Next morning, you wake late and eat a frugal breakfast. Turn to 296.

62

You come to, and find yourself standing in front of your Superior. In your hands is the clay bowl, which the Superior silently takes from you and places reverently on a plinth (cross it off your *Adventure Sheet*). You are congratulated on your success. Write down the word 'monk' on your *Adventure Sheet*. If you choose to remain with the sect, turn to 155. Otherwise you must wash the white paint off your face (cross it off your *Adventure Sheet*) and leave. If you make enquiries in the town, turn to 375. If you head north, turn to 81.

63

The stench gets worse as you make your way along the tunnel. After some time you reach a junction. From the passage leading off to your right you can hear the faint splash of water. If you go to the left, turn to 146. If you follow the passage to your right, turn to 284.





64

The creature rears up before you to its full height, and you see for the first time the tiny legs, running all the way down its belly. Before it can act, you leap in and deliver it a stinging blow. The shriek in your inner ear almost knocks you off your feet, but you recover and charge the thing once more.

CANGUI

SKILL 6

STAMINA 8

If you defeat the creature, turn to 148.

65

You start to swing a blow against the old man, but he catches your eye and all the energy leaves your limbs. He raises his arms and a blast of fire engulfs you. Your adventure ends here.

66

Your enemy doesn't even bother to raise his sword. You launch your best blow but it fails to penetrate the black lacquered armour. The mercenary merely laughs. You are seized from behind, bound and hung from a pole. For hours the mercenaries make sport of you; add 2 points to your FEROACITY. Eventually they tire of their sport; they pack up camp and depart, leaving you where you are.

It takes you two days to work yourself free, by which time you are faint from hunger. Deduct 2 points from your STAMINA. The mercenaries have set off riding towards the south. You could try to follow them on foot (turn to 273) or head in a northerly direction

towards the coast and try to obtain passage on a ship (turn to 142).

67

You explain to the others that you must act alone. Quan nods in agreement when you mention the monastery, but Sunai seems more doubtful.

'Give up and become a monk, then,' she says. 'I intend to make something of myself here in Yenshu.'

After a tearful farewell, you leave the town by the north gate and trudge off alone. Turn to 115.



68

Your companion smiles and tells you that, as it happens, he does know something about mercenaries, but he wonders why you are asking. Do you tell him that:

You wish to become a mercenary?

Turn to 189

You're seeking revenge against a mercenary?

Turn to 252

You have no special interest?

Turn to 350

69

You are back at your temple. One of your fellow monks conducts you to the Superior, who chides you for your failure and sends you back to your monk's cell. From now on you live the spartan life of a monk. Your requests to leave the order are politely declined. Your quest for revenge ends here.

70

Add 2 points to your **FEROCITY**. The monk picks himself up from where he fell and dusts himself off. 'You are a good fighter,' he says. 'Proceed!' Although you could have sworn that your last blow killed him, he looks barely out of breath as he sits himself down and resumes his meditation. Turn to 338.

71

You bray in triumph at your victory, but five Dragon Guards take the place of the one you have just defeated. You are quickly overpowered, dragged off and thrown in prison. Five days later, you are informed that, as a menace to public order, you are to be executed. Your adventure ends here.

72

You tear the mask from the man's head. Beneath it

there is no face – just a swollen mass of raw, red flesh. You put on the mask and raise your arms. The mercenaries kneel before you, their new leader. The red haze still dances before your eyes; the haze of hatred and death, the crimson tide of revenge, never leaves you, and the mask never comes off your face until your dying day.

73

The months pass and turn into years. You come to realize that the slave master controls his workforce by building up false hopes in them. Though you may improve your lot slightly, you will never be free. By the time this realization dawns, your body is too worn out for action. Even if you were to find a way of escaping from the mines, you couldn't hope to rescue your mother or bring bloody vengeance upon the foreign mercenaries. Your adventure ends here.

74

You concentrate hard on releasing the old man; after a while he shakes his head and looks around him, puzzled. You kneel before him, bowing your head, and apologize for your attack upon him. Gruffly he forgives you and tells you to follow him. You make your way along a path to a sheltered valley, and come upon the hut in which Master Yao lives. Turn to 360.

75

You make your way down the path from the monastery after thanking Dry Jade for his hospitality. Turn to 295.

76

Roll 2 dice. If the total rolled is less than your SKILL, turn to 376. If the result is equal to or greater than your SKILL, turn to 318.



77

Maïor sends for a horse from the stables. Since you have never ridden in your life, you ride behind him. You travel for several days, camping rough at night. You are surprised to discover that Maïor is quite accustomed to the hard life of a traveller. As your journey, he tells you something of his history: how he came to power as his father, Bezenval, had decreed in the Black Vein Prophecy, but how he rejected his father's legacy of evil. At long last you arrive at a country mansion – from the size of it, the residence of an important official. Maïor tells you that your mother is here. He explains that all children are connected to their parents, whether they like it or not, and perceptive eyes can follow the connection – this is how he found his way here. He strides in, brushing aside the protesting guardian of the door. You follow him all the way into the main hall, where a large gathering is

enjoying a banquet. Your eyes immediately alight on your mother. As you run to embrace her, Maior's voice rings out, filling the hall: 'I am the king. This woman is now free.' The banquet guests sit dumb-founded; none dares protest.

You leave the house with the king and your mother. She is overjoyed to see you and weeps for several hours. You travel to the nearest town with your mother riding beside you. Maior takes her to the tribunal and informs the magistrate that he is to take care of her as if she was royalty. Then you are riding once again.

Thanks to Maior's uncanny gift, less than a week passes before you arrive at the mercenary camp. As you walk among the tents the mercenaries take one look at Maior and back away. He pauses before the largest tent and raises the hammer to strike the small drum which hangs there. Before he can do this, the tent-flaps part and your enemy emerges, fully armoured and with the accursed demon mask in place. He reaches for his sword, but Maior makes a gesture, and patterns of light form in the air. Your enemy stands, mesmerized. If you draw the golden sword and strike him down, turn to 174. If you tell Maior that you want the man to be allowed to live, turn to 393.

78

Your life is uneventful, but at least you have food to eat and clothes to wear. Your adventure ends here.

79

Before you leave, Yao gives you some paper talismans

which he says may come in useful. You thank him for his courtesy, bid him farewell and press on northwards. Turn to 295.

80

You look back on the scene of carnage and destruction, reminded of what happened to your own village. You promise yourself that you will have your revenge, ignoring the shouts hurled in your direction by the mercenaries. After riding for several hours, you rid yourself of the mercenary gear and make a present of the horse to a farmer, in return for a good meal and a pair of stout walking sandals. Turn to 166.

81

You trudge along the road, passed by the occasional merchant. After two days of marching you find yourself among the foothills. The road is now no better than a track, climbing steadily up the sandy slopes. To your left you can see the highest peak of the mountain; another track branches off to the right. If you press on ahead, turn to 97. If you take the branching path, turn to 253.

82

You set off after the mercenaries as they trek eastwards, then turn towards the south. It is easy to follow them at a distance – you simply keep an eye open for the plumes of smoke as they burn and ransack villages in their path. After several months' travel you realize you are only a few kilometres from Traole. If you persist in following the mercenaries, turn to 310. If you make your way to Traole instead, turn to 235.



83

As the boat passes, you manage to grab its steering oar and haul yourself painfully up, finally dragging yourself over the rail. You collapse, panting, on deck, scarcely aware of the curses of the surprised steersman.

When you recover, a well-bred face is studying you intently. 'The wretch can join the crew. You were telling me this morning that we were short handed,' it remarks to a stocky fellow. The captain puts you to work swabbing the deck, as the craft sets sail down river towards the coast. Its ultimate goal is the capital. Zhenguei, the powerful man whose boat this is, plans to rejoin his ministry there. You are given plenty of work on the coast-hugging journey, and any complaints are met with a sound thrashing from the bos'n. Add 1 year to your Age and 3 points to your Permanent STAMINA.

When you reach Shoudu you are dismissed. The captain gives you a sailor's scarf before you disembark and tells you that, if you're ever short of a job, you should think about becoming a sailor. When you leave the boat you find yourself in Shoudu's docks. If you make for the palace in order to bring a complaint before the king, turn to 202. Otherwise turn to 195.

84

With a roar that would turn a young man's hair grey, you frighten away the spectators and race up the arena stairs. A guard faces you at the top, but you bowl him aside and leap into space. Luck is with you, for your fall is broken by the stall of a meat vendor.

You pick yourself up from the wreckage of his tent, snatch up a piece of roasted meat on a stick, and leap upon a nearby horse. Then you are riding like the wind, howling your defiance at your captors and whirling your sword about your head. Note down that you have a sword and the roasted-meat stick (which counts as 1 Provision) on your Equipment List. Apart from these you have no possessions. Write down the word 'arena' on your *Adventure Sheet*.

You ride for hours, until the sparkling blue expanse of the sea opens up on your right. Turning inland, you ride through rice country similar to your home district. Time passes and mountains loom up on the horizon. Then all at once the horse stumbles. You land with a splash, unhurt, but the horse has fared worse; you have driven the poor beast too hard, and it cannot continue. You have to abandon it here and continue on foot, into the lower slopes of the mountains. Turn to 264.

85

You push open the black door and step through. You are in the great hall of a temple – a huge statue of Arn dominates the wall opposite. If you have a white face, turn to 320. If you are wearing a red robe, turn to 139.

86

Traole is enormous. You can hardly believe how many houses and people are crowded within its walls. You wander along the streets, ignored by the bustling city folk. As you stand admiring the fruit for sale on a sidestreet stall, you hear a commotion from further

along the road. A great cloud of dust is being kicked up, and it's moving towards you. If you go to see what's happening, turn to 322. If you hurry away from the clamour, turn to 51.



87

A kilometre ahead, the highway passes through an area of dense, high reeds before crossing a river via an ancient stone bridge. This is the perfect place for an ambush. The warriors are travelling slowly so you have plenty of time to sneak ahead of them and hide yourself. You let them pass your hiding place until all but one of them are on the bridge, then you charge. You

catch the rear guard by surprise – he topples into the river – but the next whirls round and attacks.

SAMURAI

SKILL 11 STAMINA 12

If you defeat the samurai, turn to 323. You may escape at any time by turning to 214.

88

Your head spins horribly as you leap to your feet, but you manage to keep your balance, and you charge out of the hut. You see the man making his way along a rough path into woodland, so you turn in the opposite direction and plunge among the trees, running for hours before exhaustion forces you to rest. Regain 1 point of LUCK. Turn to 263.

89

Once you are all safe, the farmers kneel down before you. 'Young Deliverer,' one of them says, 'we are forever in your debt. If ever you need our help, we will provide it.' You take them up on their offer by returning with them to their village. The other villagers are overjoyed and, although the mercenaries had stolen most of the food, there is enough for you to have a light meal, before you lie down to rest on a comfortable mat. Recover 2 points of STAMINA. After you have rested, it is time to consider the situation. Turn to 131.

90

If you have the word 'green' written on your *Adventure Sheet*, turn to 248; otherwise, turn to 348.

91

Your surprise attack works like a dream. He cries in sudden pain, lets go of your arm and clutches his bloody nose. 'You . . .' he begins, then stops and reconsiders. 'Good, good,' he says. 'I asked for that, I suppose.' As he mops the blood off his face, he tells you that tomorrow he'll take you to the mercenary band. Note down the number '336' on your *Adventure Sheet*. At any time when you are given the option to leave by the North Gate, you may turn instead to 336 to wait for your companion. Turn to 197.

92

The roads in your district are frequently used by merchants who come to buy surplus rice from the peasants. Strangely, there are no merchants in sight on this road and, after walking for an hour, you discover the reason. A small cloud of dust appears ahead of



you, then resolves itself into the shape of a fiercely armoured, mounted warrior – perhaps one of the mercenaries who attacked your village. He will be on you in moments. The rest of the children flee into the rice fields. If you run after them, turn to 133. If you wait and try to ambush the mercenary, turn to 325.

93

You wake up to see the concerned face of Dry Jade looking down at you. Your STAMINA is restored to its permanent level. Now that you have failed in the test, you face a choice. If you stay at the monastery and give up your quest for revenge, turn to 199. If you decide to leave, turn to 281.

94

It is pitch dark among the rice paddies and, as you file along a polder, you pause to wonder where all the leaves are coming from. There are no trees with leaves like these within many kilometres of your village. *Test your Luck*. If you are Lucky, turn to 347. If you are Unlucky, turn to 163.

95

The priests start their chanting. Tremors wrack your body, your vision swims and you feel as if some large reptile is thrashing around in your stomach. You hear a shriek of agony from far away – then you realize it is your own voice. Deduct 2 points from your STAMINA. Finally the ordeal is over. Cross the word 'silk' off your *Adventure Sheet*. Even though you are so weak you can hardly stand, you thank the priests and

trotter out into the streets. Your head whirls. Where to go now? What to do? Do you:

Travel northwards?

Turn to 45

Travel southwards?

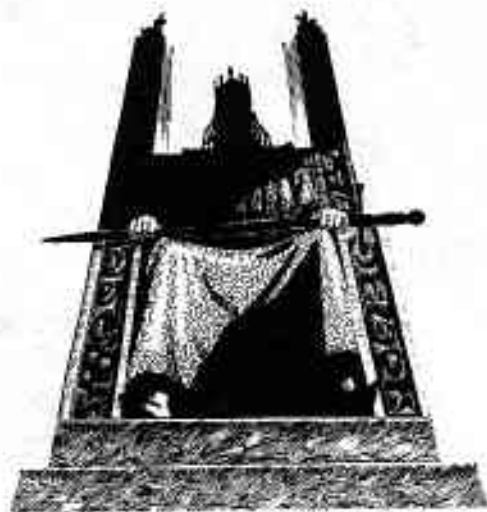
Turn to 99

Look for work in Traole?

Turn to 375

96

The fellow doesn't return your greeting but keeps the grin fixed on his face. He advances with arms outstretched and throws them round you to hug you. Surprised at his friendly gesture, you are defenceless against the shock of his attack. Pain smears your chest and you look down and catch a glimpse of something black and skittering, covered with blood ... your blood. Your adventure ends here.





97

The path winds upwards and you squint up at the looming majesty of the chief of the Golden Crane Mountains. You can't see any buildings or signs of life at the summit. Ahead, a sandy path forks off to the left. At the junction sits a shaven-headed fellow in the red robes of a monk. Will you:

- | | |
|---|-------------|
| Ignore him and carry straight on? | Turn to 295 |
| Bow to him? | Turn to 229 |
| Ignore him and take the left fork? | Turn to 338 |
| Ask him if Baochou Monastery lies
at the summit of the mountain? | Turn to 161 |

98

Mercenaries stream past you as your opponent falls; the battle is won. But there is one surprise: from the covered litter, which the samurai died to protect, comes a high, pure note. The wooden frame starts to shake then splinters. A flapping white object shoots up vertically from the wreckage of the litter and disappears into the sky. The mercenary leader searches among the rubble and unearths a wooden plaque. 'A useful find,' he comments, tucking it into his belt. The mercenaries loot the bodies of the samurai, whooping cheerfully over the quality of their blades and armour.

Over the next few days, as the band travels, you look for an opportunity to attack the mercenary leader, but none presents itself: he is much too careful and suspicious to allow anyone near him. Finally you are forced to give up this plan. You are starting to acquire

some of the habits of the mercenaries – if you stay with them any longer you will truly become one of them. One night you slip away from them, discard all your mercenary gear, and continue southwards, now alone and on foot. Turn to 289.

99

You make good time back to your village. There is less evidence of the destruction here – indeed, it seems possible that the village could be rebuilt. With renewed hope you stride out again towards Yenshu. You are so used to sleeping rough that you don't even consider spending hard-earned money to stay in the town. Turn to 166.

100

You edge closer to the camp. If you have the word 'magic' written on your *Adventure Sheet*, turn to 396. Otherwise roll 2 dice. If the result is less than your SKILL, turn to 312. If the result is equal to or greater than your SKILL, turn to 261.

101

In the cave, the other slaves greet you without interest. They give you a pick and show you the rock face at which they work. There are no guards, but you soon discover that if one slave attempts to escape, *all* the slaves in the escapees' work detail are punished. The members of your work detail are all resigned to their fate and give you dire warnings as to the consequences of making trouble for them. The work is back-breaking, and you soon lose track of time (add 1 year to your

Age). Now and again you dream of your father being killed by the foreign mercenary and of your mother being dragged off into a slavery no doubt as soul-destroying as your own.

One day the slave master, Kuangong, informs you that you have worked hard and as a reward are to join a different work detail; here you will have better food and will work slightly shorter hours. Also, you realize, you may now have an opportunity to escape and gain your revenge on those who brought this tragedy upon your family. If you make a plan to escape, turn to 216. If you decide to wait in the mines, hoping to earn your freedom through hard work, turn to 73.



102

Abbot Dry Jade smiles. 'You are a good monk,' he says. You resume your duties in the laundry. Add 1 year to your Age, 2 points to your Permanent STAMINA and 1 point to your SKILL. Deduct 2 points from your FEROCITY. Another year goes by, and Dry Jade visits you once more. He gives you a monk's staff. Note it down on your Equipment List – it may be



used as a weapon) and asks how you are doing. If you tell him you are still satisfied with your lot, turn to 199. If you ask to be taught the martial arts, turn to 278. If you feel the time has come for you to leave the monastery and resume your quest, turn to 236.

103

Your enemy is bearing down upon one of the villagers. You intercept him and swing your sword at his head, but it seems to bounce ineffectually off his demon mask. 'Scum!' he grates.

MERCENARY LEADER SKILL 12 STAMINA 15

You may escape this combat at any time by turning to 80. If you are still fighting the leader after 5 Attack Rounds, turn to 206.

104

The tunnel lurches as you strike a flint and ignite the torch. There is a deep gurgle and a blast of foul-smelling air, then a huge tongue lashes out at you from the darkness. You parry it with the torch, raising a blister on the pink obscenity. With a deafening shriek another blast of air strikes you, blowing you clear out of the creature's mouth. You see the vast jaws close and the reptilian thing slithers away into the darkness. Then there is a flash: your torch has ignited the gas that collects in these sewers. You have only moments to escape the inferno, so you fling the torch to one side and run (cross the torch off your Equipment List). The flames lick at you, singeing

your hair. Lose 1 point of Temporary STAMINA. Turn to 42.

105

Blows rain down on you, shredding your rough peasant tunic and making a bloody ruin of your back. You crawl out of the magistrate's chamber and collapse in the road outside the tribunal. Deduct 2 points from your Temporary STAMINA. No one moves to help you, so eventually you manage to haul yourself to your feet and stagger off down the street. If you have the word 'art' on your *Adventure Sheet*, turn to 351. Otherwise, turn to 251.

106

You struggle to resist the creature, but your legs are stuck in sweet-smelling mud. Summoning all your determination, you swing at the Cangui and succeed in wounding it. A shriek resounds in your head and the worm rears up, revealing tiny legs running down its underside. It looms above you for a moment then plunges down, crushing the life out of you.

107

'This is a most serious matter,' says the king. He strikes a tiny gong on his reading desk. 'I will have the matter dealt with by my personal adviser.' Into the room glides a fat figure dressed in finery a hundred times more extravagant than the king's simple robe. Maior informs him that he is to deal with your case as a matter of urgency. You bow low before the king and leave with Pantu. Turn to 400.

108

You hear a young man in a tavern cursing the rulers of the isles. As he leaves the tavern, you sidle up to him and broach the subject of the rebels. He stares at you with eyes bleary from drink, and takes a swing at you.

DRUNK

SKILL 4

STAMINA 10

If you defeat the drunk, turn to 315.

109

The abbot shows you round the monastery, where some two hundred monks study, meditate and train. You are given a red robe (note it down on your Equipment List) and are assigned a mat in the dormitory. The abbot asks which task you would prefer: you may work in the kitchen, help with the laundry, or clean the martial arts practice chamber. Which do you choose:

The kitchen?

Turn to 374

The laundry?

Turn to 186

Cleaning duties?

Turn to 41

110

You smash through the ranks of constables and run into the streets. Following the lead of one of the other prisoners, you race through the dark streets until you are sure you haven't been pursued. She leads you to a deserted building full of machinery, explaining that this is a water clock. Marvelling at the clever mechanism, you pick your way through the clock and gather by the central wheel. Turn to 290.



III

The samurai take up positions of readiness as you approach, but they are not threatening. One of them points to the covered litter and grunts at you in his guttural language. The covering is moved aside and you find yourself face to face with the occupant. The Ambassador Keiko speaks your language perfectly; she explains that she is visiting the isles in order to negotiate a trade agreement. The initial talks were going well when the king's new adviser, Pantu, abruptly cancelled them and ordered Keiko to leave the palace. Rather than return empty-handed to Ojin (as she calls Hachiman), she is travelling the land, hoping that the palace authorities will have a change of heart.

You tell her your story; she listens with evident sympathy. She tells you that the men who destroyed your village were not from Ojin, since samurai never hire themselves out to foreigners. They must have been from the southern Isles of the Dawn, where a different dialect is spoken. She also promises to help you. She gives you a wooden plaque (note this down on your *Adventure Sheet*) which will enable you to enter the palace. Once you are in there, you must do everything you can to see the king in person. Perhaps you will even be able to help Keiko by finding out if the king knows about the trade mission, she wonders. You bow to Keiko then depart and continue your journey. Turn to 289.

112

'You are wrong,' he replies. 'Now be on your way.' He

indicates the path that leads straight ahead. If you obey him, turn to 295. If you walk past him along the left-hand fork, turn to 271.

113

You crawl out through the opening and slip on the slime but regain your balance. There are plenty of handholds on the river wall, so you quickly scramble up and over. You're free, and back among the streets of Traole! Now do you:

Head north?

Head south?

Investigate the inns for mercenaries?

Head for the temple in search of
divine assistance?

Turn to 81

Turn to 99

Turn to 36

Turn to 258



114

The old man starts telling you about charms and enchantments, but then his voice begins to falter. You realize that your control over him is slipping and that, if you are to learn all there is to know about magic, you must trick him. You tell him that when you clap your hands he will be free from your control, but that he will believe you to be a friend to whom he has promised to pass on his magical arts. Sure enough, when you clap your hands together, Yao takes your arm and leads you back to the sheltered valley in which his rush hut stands. Turn to 247.

115

You find your way back to your village without much difficulty. The little settlement is deserted now, and tears spring to your eyes at the sight of the world you have known lying in ruins. As you kneel silently at your father's grave, in your mind you see once more the glaring mask of the butcher who cut him down.

The danger you have already faced on your way to Yenshu has forewarned you against setting off unprepared. Now you are on your own, so you scavenge around for anything that may be of use. You find one of the pronged spears used against Mudworms in the paddy fields, 30 copper coins on a string, a wide-brimmed hat to protect you from the sun and some sturdy walking sandals. (Add these to your Equipment List.) You head off alone. If you travel south, towards Yenshu, turn to 371. If you head north, turn to 18.

116

There are three voices talking within the chamber. 'So it is decided,' one rasps. 'We have no choice but to side with Maier. The prophecy says he will prevail. Thus may darkness be brought upon the land.' The other two grunt their assent.

If you creep away quietly and continue along the tunnel, turn to 63. If you burst in and attack the conspirators, turn to 225.

117

You leap to the attack. Before your disbelieving eyes, your father is transformed into a creature from your own worst nightmares, a monster of writhing tentacles and venomous fangs.

MENGEMO

SKILL 9

STAMINA 10

If you defeat the Mengemo, turn to 19.



118

Your uncle is surprised to see you back so soon. When Yubei sees you, her features darken and she explodes with anger. 'What are you doing back here? I should never have been so generous. Get out of this house!' Zhonggao remonstrates with her, but to no avail, and you are cast out into the street.

As the shadows lengthen, you wander forlornly through Yenshu, heading for the boarding house. You turn a corner, preoccupied with your own thoughts, and find yourself face to face with a stout fellow sporting close-cropped hair and a tattooed torso. 'Peasant scum,' he snarls. 'There's no place for you in this town.' He steps forward and launches a swift punch.

TOWN THUG

SKILL 6

STAMINA 7

If you beat him, turn to 7.

119

You keep a wary eye open for signs of trouble as you roam the city. Twice you see squads of soldiers in dragon-crested helmets patrolling the streets. By making careful enquiries of street vendors you learn that warriors from Hachiman passed through Traole quite recently. They left the city by the South Gate, heading for the capital, Shoudu. Also, the rumour goes, a rabble-rouser by the name of Merzei visited the city in order to recruit converts to his peasant uprising. He too left by the South Gate, pursued by a squad of Dragon Guards! You return to Bofu's house

to find that Sunai has not returned. She finally turns up two days later. It's obvious from her expression that her mission has failed. Her face is pale, her hair is dishevelled and her hands shake as she takes the cup you pass her. She refuses to say what happened but insists that she is going back to Yenshu the very next morning. The others are frightened by her present mood and agree to go with her. It seems you will be on your own from now on. Next morning you thank Bofu for his hospitality and bid your friends farewell. If you travel north, turn to 81. If you stay in Traole, turn to 30.



120

Brandishing your weapon, you charge into the camp. Roll 3 dice. If the total rolled is less than your **FEROCITY**, turn to 224. If the result is equal to or greater than your **FEROCITY**, turn to 206.

121

The mighty tower of Yenshu stands before you once

more. You pass through the gates of the town and find yourself in streets that are almost deserted. Your first priority is to find somewhere to bed down for the night. If you visit your uncle, turn to 43. If you opt for a boarding house, turn to 238.

122

Your opponent moves closer, staring fixedly into your eyes. At the last moment you tear your gaze away as his jerkin opens and ravening insectoid jaws leap from within.

CHONGGUI

SKILL 8

STAMINA 10

If you defeat the Chonggui, turn to 331.

123

The demon mask thrusts right into your face. At this close range you can make out the glint of human eyes through the circular eye-holes. 'If you're a member of my band, you obey my word without question - understand?' the leader of the mercenaries hisses. You are surprised to find yourself listening carefully to the man's accent: although it is rough, you can't help but feel that he is speaking his native tongue. Perhaps Quan was wrong to suggest that these barbarians are from across the seas. 'I said: do you understand?' demands the leader. You nod energetically. One of the mercenaries, Shasi, leads you away and fits you up with some armour, weapons and a horse. The band packs up camp and sets off southwards.

Over the next few days your suspicions are confirmed:

you discover that the mercenaries are from Tura, the southernmost of the Isles of the Dawn. When you reach the next village, the leader shouts, 'Rich pickings,' and the mercenaries charge in. Do you:

Join in with their pillaging?

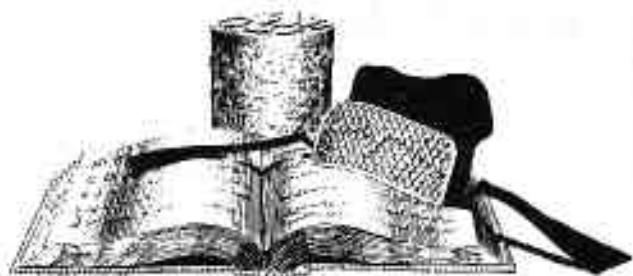
Turn to 21

Ride off?

Turn to 80

Attack the leader?

Turn to 103



124

'That will be your first task,' says Maior. The king offers the sword once more. Unless you know another option, you may now take the sword (turn to 52) or say that you are not worthy (turn to 370).

125

As soon as you release your friends they start shouting. Guards rush in, overpower you, drag you before the magistrate and give you a severe beating. If you have a cudgel, turn to 185; otherwise, turn to 330.

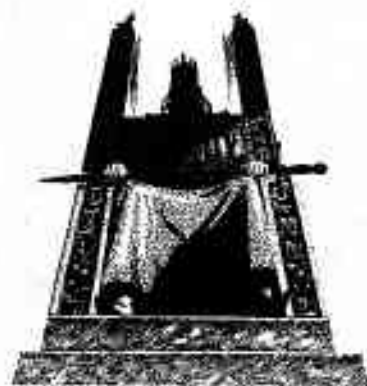
126

The next day you are brought before the tribunal. The

city magistrate accuses you of attempting to overthrow the authorities. He points to the constables with their pointed staves and urges you to confess your crimes, for no criminal may be sentenced without first confessing. If you confess, turn to 330. If you deny everything, turn to 379.

127

You tie the scabbard to your waistband and turn to leave the chamber. Meng is gone. Everything that was dark is now light. You stand in the palm of a giant whose face is your own. His fingers bend; he closes his hand upon you, crushing you . . . Your adventure ends here.



128

There is another fearsome howl, and then an enormous, shaggy shape rears up in front of you. If you are prepared to trust in your good fortune and walk on up the path, turn to 313. If you ready your weapon and take up a defensive stance, turn to 285.



129

Walking through the night gloom, you almost bump into what — at first sight — looks like a tree-stump. With a jolt you realize that in fact this is the stationary figure of a man. He raises his head to gaze at you, and you catch the glint of sharp eyes from beneath bushy white brows. The old man reaches up to stroke his long white beard. Then he mutters something incomprehensible and beckons to you with his finger. You notice that he has a sword at his belt. If you launch a surprise attack on him, turn to 211. If you show him respect and follow him warily, turn to 50.

130

You select a nearby shrine, light an incense stick and begin to pray. The circular design of the shrine reminds you of the brooch the Abbot gave you. It seems to revolve, and a gentle voice says, 'South, south, to the capital. That way lies release.' You look around. A priest is standing near by, but you can't be sure whether or not it was he who spoke. If you leave the temple and travel south, turn to 99. Otherwise, turn to 364.

131

It would be far too dangerous to approach the camp, now that the mercenaries are alerted. If you wish to keep close to the mercenaries, shadowing them and awaiting an opportunity for action, turn to 82. If you decide to travel back south, in search of something or someone to help you in your quest for revenge, turn to 273.

132

The monk sidles towards you, moving with the fatal grace of a hunting spider. You are calm as he attacks, mentally back at your menial tasks in the monastery. As quick as lightning, he launches a kick to your body. Your arm sweeps down, just as it did during countless hours of work, effortlessly brushing his kick aside. His next attack is more careful.

WHITE-FACED MONK SKILL 6 STAMINA 6

If you defeat the monk, turn to 267. If he defeats you, turn to 93.

133

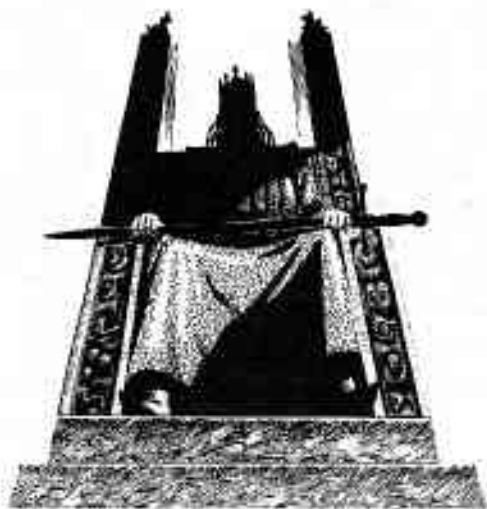
The children scatter and flee, but in his haste poor Hani slips and falls, sprawling across the polder. The horseman comes to a halt, sending up a cloud of dust. If you continue to flee into the rice paddies, turn to 31. If you turn and try to distract the horseman's attention away from Hani, turn to 157.

134

A short distance from the camp you come upon a low rise and you watch the mercenaries from this vantage point. Sure enough, these are the very barbarians who destroyed your village. As you watch, a group of farmers is driven into the camp by mercenaries wielding whips. Some are tied up and are then suspended, upside down, from poles, while others are pegged out on the ground. Their plaintive cries rise up to you. If you try to help them, turn to 270. If you stay where you are, turn to 329.

135

You make a move to step forward between the doors, but an invisible barrier blocks your passage. A bell begins to toll and shouts echo from within. If you turn and hurry down the mountain, turn to 213. If you wait to see what all the fuss is about, turn to 388.



136

Your landing is soft but revolting. You hold your breath and stagger from the muddy pool which broke your fall. The walls here give off a faint glow, and you can see that you are in a low tunnel. If you set off to the left, turn to 326. If you go right, turn to 255.

137

Yao leans over, deep in thought. He stays like this, unmoving, for long moments, as you await his words of insight. Yao's head sinks lower on his chest and a contented sigh escapes his lips . . . then he begins to snore! Whatever wisdom you may learn, it is unlikely you'll obtain it from this old man. You make your way out of his hut. Turn to 144.



138

If you decide to travel north, towards Traole, turn to 18. If you determine to travel south, towards Shoudu, the capital of the isles, turn to 166.

139

When the monk Black Cauldron steps into the hall you realize that you are in the monastery at Baochou. He commiserates with you on your failure in the test. If you stay at the monastery and give up your quest for revenge, turn to 199. If you resolve to continue, turn to 281.



140

You travel for several days, watching as the approaching mountains rise ahead of you. You make your way along the track until it meets the path up to Baochou. Looking up at the mountain, you see no sign of the monastery, so you carry on along the path. Turn to 295.

141

The wind whips up around you, blowing leaves into your eyes. You become aware of a glow approaching through the darkness and resolving itself into a huge, sightless worm. With a start you realize that you are not dreaming. Your scream wakes the others and they stagger to their feet as if drunk. The worm slithers towards you, and a gentle whispering noise caresses your ears, sapping your resistance. If you are prepared to fight the creature, turn to 64. If you'd rather flee from it, turn to 163.



142

A few days later you reach a coastal port and persuade a friendly merchant to take you on board. You sail the next day, keeping the coastline hard by the port side.

Although there is much talk about the troubled state of the land, the merchant is cheerful and optimistic, and the journey passes pleasantly. After only a few weeks you arrive at the docks in Shoudu. The merchant has advised you to try to bring your case before the king, while the ship's captain says he's prepared to offer you a job as a cabin boy if you fancy the life of a sailor. Turn to 195.



143

You knock the warder over, but he rolls upright in an instant and draws a cudgel. He circles warily, waiting for the right moment to strike.

WARDER

SKILL 5

STAMINA 6

If you defeat the warder, turn to 366.

144

You follow the path until you are out of the valley. As it's dark now, you decide you had better rest for the night. Luckily you find a sheltered spot in a grove of trees. While you sleep you may recover 2 points of Temporary STAMINA. Next morning you return to the path and press on. Turn to 295.

145

The people you meet in the street treat you with suspicion, but when you ask for directions to your uncle's house they become friendlier. You are directed to a pleasant little dwelling close by Yenshu's North Gate. When you strike the gong which hangs outside the door, a slender woman answers; she leads you into the main hall where your uncle Zhonggao waits. When he rises to greet you, the similarity to your father in voice and appearance is striking. Zhonggao must have been your father's brother, though he had always been described to you as if he were only distantly related. Your uncle smiles to welcome you and you tell him the fate of his brother. A shadow passes across his face as you speak of the foreign barbarian's foul deed.

'The spirit of the land is weak once more,' he muses. 'Is Bezenvial's clammy grasp still at our throat?'

'The child must be given money,' says Zhonggao's wife, Yubei, the woman who answered the door. 'Shelter too, and any other help we can render. They may have spurned you because of me, but they are still your family, and you must help avenge your brother's death.' You sleep well, and in the morning you hungrily devour a delicious bowl of rice porridge with pickled vegetables. While you eat, Zhonggao ponders upon your best course of action. 'The magistrate is busy, and perhaps too callow to take action. It may be wisest to make for Baochou, there to learn the fighting arts, so that you can take revenge yourself.' If you decide to visit the magistrate, turn to 391. If you start the journey to Baochou, turn to 365.

146

A figure looms out of the darkness of the tunnel. It is a man, dressed in the rough leathers of an artisan. His beady eyes stare at you and his teeth are bared in a fixed grin. As he walks towards you he spreads his arms wide to show you that he is unarmed. If you run back the way you came, turn to 284. If you greet him with friendship, turn to 96. If you attack him, turn to 56.

147

The palace is surrounded by many high walls; however, you are fit enough to climb them, and by good fortune it is a moonless night. In pitch darkness you slither over the outer walls and creep along the roof of an outbuilding. A dim light glows from the balcony above your head, so you haul yourself up and over. You make your way noiselessly through a lattice-wood door to an ornately decorated corridor. You pause for a quick rest but have no time to catch your breath. A Royal Guard rounds the corner and, on seeing you, draws his sword and rushes to challenge you.

ROYAL GUARD

SKILL 8

STAMINA 12

If you defeat the guard in 10 rounds or less, turn to 250; otherwise, turn to 11.

148

The bloated body of the Cangui lies before you. As you watch, the spongy flesh peels away until all that is left is the emaciated body of an old man with silvery-grey hair and beard. His face is composed and at peace. Gain 1 point of LUCK (this may not increase



your LUCK score above its *Initial* value) and 1 point of SKILL. The others congratulate you on your victory and help you dig a grave in the sodden earth for the old man. Next morning there is no sign of the leaves which swirled around you last night. Turn to 368.

149

The current sweeps you down the fissure, dashing you against the rock walls. Your head strikes stone and roaring blackness overwhelms you. Deduct 2 points from your Temporary STAMINA.

You regain consciousness with a thousand tiny demons stabbing at your head with firebrands. Sparks swim before your eyes, but you can make out the interior of a peasant hut. A face looms before you, full of concern. Through the haze which clouds your mind you hear the word 'mine'. A damp cloth, scented with pungent herbs, is pressed to your forehead, restoring some of your shattered senses. A peasant woman is tending to you and behind her a man is making his way out of the hut. If you leap up and try to escape, turn to 303. If you wait here a while, turn to 245.

150

'My family name is Yao,' he begins, 'though I seem to have forgotten my other names...' He pauses to sip his tea. 'I don't have many visitors here; I'm in retreat from the world - all that hustle and bustle, it's not for me. I just look for a simple existence in which I can practise my little tricks and try to stop thinking about things.' He peers at you. 'What brings you here?'

If you tell him that you are seeking the murderer of your father, turn to 39. If you tell him you seek to learn his wisdom, turn to 367.

151

You make your way timidly into the inn and gulp at the motley collection of cut-throats and ne'er-do-wells who splash about in the pool, guzzling all manner of peculiar concoctions. You pluck up the nerve to talk to a nearby drinker but he curses colourfully and tells you to get out. Reluctantly, you leave the inn. It's the same story at the other taverns you visit. Turn to 362.

152

The world goes black. Deduct 2 points from your FEROCITY. Check your *Adventure Sheet*. Do you have:

A clay bowl and a white face?

Turn to 62

A clay bowl and red robes?

Turn to 217

Just a white face?

Turn to 69

Just red robes?

Turn to 93



153

The monks explain that there is a religious artefact they require, and that you have the unique qualities needed to retrieve it from its resting place underground. They train you in their Spider-style martial arts until you are ready for your expedition (write down the word 'spider' on your *Adventure Sheet*). Add 1 year to your Age, 3 points to your SKILL and 3 points to your Permanent STAMINA. Before you descend into the Underworld, your face is painted white in the fashion of their order (note this on your *Adventure Sheet*). Finally, you pass through the gilded gates which mark the entrance to the realm below. Turn to 399.

154

You adopt a firm stance, concentrating on raising sufficient energy to knock over your enemy. He launches a surprise swing at you with his sword; almost without effort, you deflect its force and pull the murderer towards you. Caught off balance, he topples and crashes to the ground. You kick his sword from his grasp, then crouch down beside him. Too late you remember the other mercenaries! Turn to 206.

155

For the remainder of your days you live the hard life of a monk. Your quest for revenge is over.

156

You may question your drinking companion on another subject if you wish, but you must pay another 2 Gold

Pieces for drinks. If you have no more money or if you simply don't wish to ask more questions, turn to 197. Otherwise, you may ask him about:

The civil war	Turn to 208
A band of mercenaries	Turn to 68
Warriors from Hachiman	Turn to 268

157

'Hoi! Hoi!' you call, gesticulating wildly with your arms. 'Foulbreath! Mudworm! Savage!'

The mercenary curses back at you, leaping off his horse and advancing. You back away, making sure that the barbarian can't see Hani dragging himself to his feet and struggling over the polder. Luckily the man's heavy armour slows him and you evade him easily. Finally he remounts, spits in your direction, then tugs hard at the reins and kicks his feet into the horse's flanks. The horse leaps towards you. Too late you dodge to one side. A steel-shod hoof cracks you across the head and you topple backwards into muddy water, losing consciousness. Lose 2 points of Temporary STAMINA. Gain 1 point of FEROCITY.

You come to, alone and soaked to the skin. There is no sign of Quan and the others. If you head back to your village, turn to 115. Alternatively you can try to carry on and reach Yenshu. The road may be dangerous, but you're not familiar with the polder-paths. If you decide to stick to the road, turn to 384. If you travel along the polders, turn to 332.



158

The tunnel is short and wide and gives on to a roughly circular chamber. The room is lit by thousands of tiny lights dancing in the air, some darting about, others staying still. In the middle of the room stands a tall, dark shape: a figure etched permanently in your memory, its demon mask mocking you. Beside you Meng gestures urgently. If you wait to see what Meng has to say, turn to 233. If the Fear is upon you, turn to 212; otherwise, you may attack the figure (turn to 352).

159

The guard raises his sword to strike you down. The last thing you see is the sword-hilt crashing down at you.

You wake up in a pile of rotting straw. Your head feels like a pounded rice-husk but at least being unconscious has helped you recover somewhat. Regain 2 points of Temporary STAMINA. Turn to 243.

160

You turn to attack the man who betrayed you, but he has a sword readied and is backing away from you, a mocking smile twisting his face in cruel delight. You charge towards the leader of the mercenaries, the man who slew your father – but against so many men you have no chance. Your adventure ends here.

161

The monk looks up at you and smiles. 'No,' he replies.

Then he lowers his head and withdraws once more into his private world of meditation. Will you:

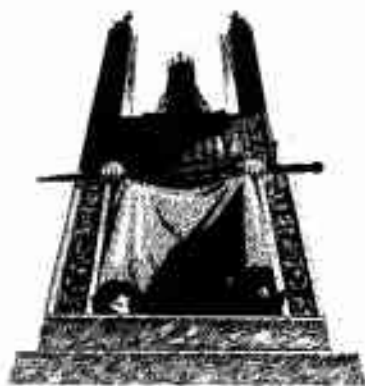
Carry on along your original path? Turn to 295

Pass the monk and take the left-hand path? Turn to 338

Question the monk further? Turn to 221

162

The doors of the building fly open and a squad of Dragon Guards swarms in, hacking indiscriminately at the untrained townspeople. If you have the golden sword and wish to use it, turn to 37. Otherwise turn to 342.



163

You haven't gone far before you realize that you have got lost among the muddy fields. There is no light anywhere now and the stars are blotted out by clouds. You stop where you are, passing an uncomfortable night stretched out along the polder. Deduct 1 point from your Temporary STAMINA.

Next morning you look out over an unfamiliar expanse of paddy fields. It takes you several hours to find a rough track, and you are not even sure that it is the same one you were using yesterday. Turn to 368.

164

You start to swing a blow against the old man, but he catches your eye with a powerful gaze. Time seems to hold its breath as you stare at each other. You look deeply into his eyes and have the strangest feeling, as if you were flying through a tunnel, finally emerging in a cavernous chamber. The image fades. The old man stands stock still, mesmerized. If you take his fine sword and leave him where he is, turn to 29. If you question him, turn to 398.

165

Once the agreement has been reached, Sunai takes over, organizing preparations for the journey. From somewhere you obtain some food and some scraps of wood to reinforce your sandals for the walk.

You set off in the crisp morning air, making good time along the roads. Soon you pass the deserted settlement which you encountered on your way to Yenshu. None of you can bear to return to your village, so you pass on. Dusk falls around you; shadows grow long. Leaves flutter past, blown in the wind. Despite the darkness, the road lies clear before you, glowing in warm light. If you press on in the dark, turn to 319. If you decide to make camp here, turn to 277. If you move off the road, turn to 94.



166

The next few weeks merge into one another in a blur as you settle into a routine of travel. Although you pass many farmers working in the fields, there are few travellers on the roads. One day you meet a fellow dressed in rather tattered scholar's robes. You recognize him as an itinerant puzzler. Scholars who fail the bureaucratic examinations often find it hard to secure employment, and many opt for the life of a puzzler. According to tradition, a puzzler may ask a question of anyone he meets on the road. If he does not receive the correct answer, custom dictates that the puzzler is entitled to charity – at the very least, the price of a meal. This puzzler is barely older than you are and doesn't seem entirely sure of himself. He asks: 'One day I bought a tree. The next day it grew by a half of its height. The day after, it grew by a third of its new height. The day after that it grew by a quarter of its height, and so on . . . How many days did it take the tree to grow to a hundred times its original height?' If you think you have worked out the correct answer, note it down on your *Adventure Sheet* and turn to 275. If you can't solve the puzzle, make a note of what you are giving the puzzler and then turn to 378.

167

You ready your weapon as Zhanshi circles in towards you. He swings wildly and you try to block . . . but it was a feint. With a nimble flick of his sword Zhanshi disarms you. 'Get out of here,' he roars. 'You're just a know-nothing peasant.' As you make your way dejectedly from the camp, you can feel the eyes of the

mercenary leader following you all the way. You feel safe only when you are out of sight of the camp. Turn to 131.

168

You find a decent-looking tavern in the better-off part of the city. You pick out a cheerful young man and offer him a drink. He is soon chatting merrily away and you guide him carefully on to the subjects that interest you. The first drink costs you 2 Gold Pieces (cross them off your *Adventure Sheet*). Will you try to find out about:

The civil war?

Turn to 208

A band of mercenaries?

Turn to 68

Warriors from Hachiman?

Turn to 268



169

You approach the central tent in the camp and beat upon the little drum which hangs by the flap. There is a grunt from within. The fearsome figure of the mercenary leader emerges – his face hidden by the demon mask. If you attack him immediately, turn to 346. If you choose to talk to him first, turn to 240.

170

With a bold sweep of your sword, you chop through the skeleton's neck. Its skull topples and a moment later the ghastly vision disappears into thin air. Write down the word 'when' on your *Adventure Sheet*. Your STAMINA is restored to its permanent level. Add 1 point to your SKILL but deduct 2 points from your FEROCITY. Now turn to 345.

171

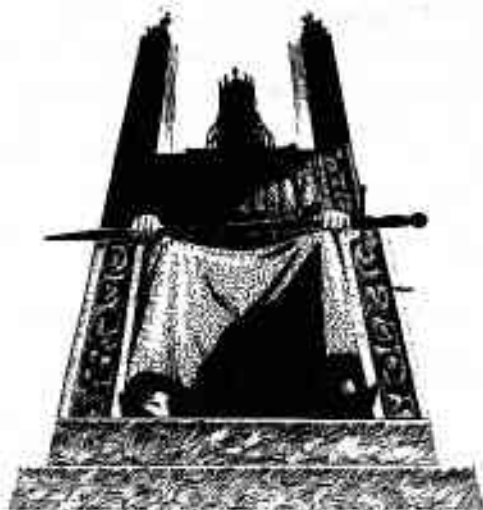
You notice Hani staring about him, wide-eyed. Then his face lights up in a big grin and he points to a small house at the far end of the alley. 'Uncle Bofu!' he says happily. You make your way to the house and knock hesitantly. After a while the door opens a crack and a worried face peers out at you. When it alights on Hani, however, the door is flung wide open and you are all ushered in.

Bofu is not a rich man but he offers you all the hospitality he can. He suggests that you abandon your quest for vengeance and settle down in Traole. Sunai, however, reminds you that you did decide to bring your case before the prefect. If you decide to stay in Traole for a while, turn to 5. Or you may prefer to leave the others to approach the prefect, while you travel north (turn to 386).



172

You don't have long to wait; an old man with a golden sword at his belt soon comes shuffling into the hut. He doesn't seem surprised by your presence, while you kneel before him and apologize for presuming upon his hospitality. Instead, he seats himself, takes the cup of tea you offer and sniffs its vapour before speaking. Turn to 150.



173

'You are wrong,' he replies. 'Now be on your way.' He indicates the path that leads straight ahead. If you obey him, turn to 295. If you walk past him along the left-hand fork, turn to 271.

174

With a yell of exultation you swing the sword and it strikes your enemy on his left shoulder, cleaving straight through his armour and piercing his heart. For a moment the figure stays upright, blank eyes staring at you from the demon mask, then it collapses. You reach down to remove the mask and look upon the face of the man you have hated for so long. It comes off easily and you stare at a face ... your own face! The mask slips easily over your head, and you look out at the world through its eye-holes. Maior looms up in front of you and his features are twisted with contempt. He gestures and ... your adventure ends here.

175

You dog-paddle desperately, narrowly missing the steering oar of the sailing boat as it passes. The current drags you along for many hundreds of metres, until the buildings of Traole are no longer rising on either side. The river widens and the current slows; you struggle to the bank, pull yourself from the water and collapse, exhausted. When you recover, you see that you are some way from the city, on the north bank of the river. If you decide to return to Traole, turn to 262. If you prefer to head north now, turn to 81.





176

The tribunal is a distinctive building with a bell-tower; it dominates the town. Its magnificent gates are wrought of black wood, with beaten copper inlays, and above them is a huge sign. For the first time in your life you wish you could read. Inside the courtyard you join a queue of petitioners, all waiting to bring their cases before the magistrate. It is mid-afternoon by the time your turn comes and you have been lulled by the warmth of the sun. You stifle a yawn as the constables usher you into a large circular chamber. Around its walls stand grim-faced guards with jointed staves and, at the wall opposite, the magistrate reclines on a large marble throne. Behind him hangs a drape depicting the golden fist, symbol of the God-King's authority. The magistrate of Yenshu is a fat man. He peers at you through bored and bleary eyes and waves his hand vaguely in the air as if trying to catch a fly. You stand forlornly in the middle of the chamber, unsure of your next move.

'Kneel, dog, and speak your piece,' growls the constable who ushered you in. His staff whacks you behind the knees, and you collapse to the floor.

In a few minutes you have stammered out your story to the local representative of divine justice. He doesn't seem very impressed. 'This tribunal has no funds for compensation and insufficient resources to follow and capture the bandits, who no doubt are many kilometres away by now. Begone, and exercise greater care in future!'

If you protest at the magistrate's judgment, turn to 316. If you leave the chamber, turn to 40.

177

The other figure is wearing robes similar to yours, but his face is not white. As soon as he sees you, he drops into a crouch. He sidles close to you, poised for action, then attacks.

MONK

SKILL 10

STAMINA 12

If you defeat the monk, turn to 267.



178

You are in a long corridor, full of cells, and most of them are occupied. In one, six people are gathered in a huddle, talking in low voices. They look up as you appear at the grille and stare at you for a moment. Then one says, 'Quickly, free us! We can let out the other prisoners in the name of justice!' If you unlock the door, turn to 26. If you ignore their pleas and continue to search for your friends, turn to 293.

179

The old man leads you along a path deep into the mountains, where his rush hut nestles in a shady valley. He ushers you into his sparsely furnished dwelling and prepares you a cup of smoky-flavoured tea. Then he begins his magic. A paper talisman is stuck to your forehead and the Master pricks you with long needles, all the time chanting in a voice that is surprisingly sonorous for one of his advanced years. On and on the spell goes; you lose track of time but are prevented from going to sleep by the old sorcerer's constant activity. After a long time you feel a sick sensation welling up in your stomach and you retch. Then a stubby white caterpillar is writhing on the hard earth floor in front of you; it is crushed by the heel of the old man. 'I am tired now,' he says. 'My energy is low. I must rest, and you must go now.' He gestures to the door.

You bow and thank him for his help, but he just waves you away. As you leave his hut he winks at you, smiling a secret smile. Cross the word 'silk' off your *Adventure Sheet* and turn to 144.

180

The proprietor of the boarding house spreads his arms wide and bares his teeth. 'No money, no room. This is the way the world works. Anything else would not be harmonious.' These townsfolk may be wealthy, but generosity doesn't seem to accompany their good fortune. You find a deserted back-street and sleep on a pile of stinking rags.

You are woken by a kick in the ribs. Through bleary eyes you look up into the scarred faces of two roughly dressed ruffians. One spits at you, and the other draws his sword. You roll to one side, but the blade nicks you in the arm, causing a flesh wound. Deduct 1 point from your STAMINA. Then you are in a desperate fight for life.

	SKILL	STAMINA
First RUFFIAN	10	12
Second RUFFIAN	10	12

The second ruffian will take some time to draw his knife. Fight 3 Attack Rounds against the first ruffian alone. At the end of this time the second ruffian will join in. If the first ruffian is still alive, you should choose which opponent you are going to attack at this time. Against the other, roll your Attack Strength as normal, but if successful, you may not injure him – you are merely parrying his blow. Of course, if his Attack Strength is greater than yours, he will inflict the usual amount of damage on you. If you defeat the ruffians, turn to 282.

181

Mischievous eyes glint from a childlike face. 'Greetings, fellow monk,' says the strange fellow. 'My name's Merzei – you may have heard of me. What's your business here?' Something about the man's open manner makes you trust him instinctively, so you tell him that you are here to petition the king to do something about the destruction of your village. The

king is merciful,' says Merzei, 'and I'm sure he will help you if you put your case to him. I cannot lead you to him myself, for I am out of favour, but I can show you the way.' If you have a wooden plaque, turn to 20; otherwise, turn to 358.

182

You charge up the stairs, but the red figure is ready. With movements as precise as a spider's, he crouches then launches a kick which strikes you with the force of a battering ram. You fly backwards and crash on to the stone floor below. Your adventure ends here.



183

'Such a criminal waste of money,' says the slave master, ignoring your outburst. 'And I thought you looked quite promising.' He waves his hand casually and the four guards let fly their crossbow bolts. You slip into blackness before you hit the ground. Your adventure ends here.

184

Yao agrees to lift the curse on you and quickly begins his magic. A paper talisman is stuck to your forehead and the Master pricks you with long needles, all the time chanting in a voice that is surprisingly sonorous for one of his advanced years. On and on the spell goes and you lose track of time but are prevented from falling asleep by the old sorcerer's constant activity. At last you feel a sick sensation well up in your stomach and you retch. A stubby white caterpillar lies writhing on the hard earth floor, before it is crushed by the old man. Cross the word 'silk' off your *Adventure Sheet*. 'I am tired now,' says Yao. 'My energy is low. I must rest.' He slumps on to a rush mat and is quickly snoring. You seize the opportunity to catch up on some sleep yourself.

You wake up, refreshed, in the morning; Master Yao is already up and about, preparing a simple breakfast of mountain mushrooms. Over the food, Yao asks you what you intend to do. If you reply that you are seeking the man who murdered your father, turn to 39. If you ask the seer to teach you his magical arts, turn to 247.

185

You are found guilty of the murder of the warder and are sentenced to the death of one hundred and one cuts. Your adventure ends here.

186

You start work the next day, cleaning the monks'

robes; your main task is to dash the wet robes against a large stone. Days pass and you begin to wonder when you are going to be taught these 'martial arts' for which the monks are famous. The monastery is a tranquil place, however, and the hard work builds you up. Add 1 year to your Age and 2 points to your Permanent STAMINA.

At the end of the year, the abbot visits you and asks you how you are progressing. If you tell him you are doing fine and are well satisfied, turn to 102. If you ask to be taught the martial arts, turn to 278.

187

'Why is it we always seem to attract the criminal element?' he asks with a laugh. 'Let's see how well you fight - if you're any good, we'll accept you.' He gestures to a mercenary who's loitering near by. 'Beat Zhanshi here.' Do you fight the mercenary:

With martial arts? (You must have 'crane', 'wood', 'spider' or 'sword' written on your <i>Adventure Sheet</i>)	Turn to 32
With the Sacred Sword of Tsui?	Turn to 317
With Arena skills? (You must have the word 'arena' on your <i>Adventure Sheet</i>)	Turn to 244
With anything else?	Turn to 167

188

When you wake up, you are in a different chamber,

lying on a comfortable rush mat. You feel much better (your STAMINA is fully restored to its permanent level) and you find a tasty cold meal that has been left for you. As you are finishing it, a monk in red robes enters the chamber. You recognize him from your encounter in the sewers, though his face is no longer so pale. 'I apologize for the distress you have been caused,' he says. 'We have tried to make amends by whatever means we could. Now you may choose to go your way if you wish or . . . you may help us in a little matter.' If you wish to leave, turn to 304. If you agree to help the monk, turn to 153.

189

He peers into your eyes. 'D'you reckon you've got what it takes?' he asks. Quick as a flash, his hand shoots out and grabs your arm, twisting it painfully. Do you:

Turn with the blow to lessen its force?

Turn to 344

Match your opponent, strength for strength?

Turn to 308

Headbutt him in the face?

Turn to 91

190

Your head spins and you lose your balance. Sparks are flying before your eyes - the blow you took on your head was worse than you thought. You crawl towards the door, but the effort is too much for you. You collapse, panting. Turn to 245.

191

With the slight ghost of a smile playing about his features, Master Yao says he can free you of the curse and begins chanting. You realize that, if you are freed of the Cangui, Yao will be released from your control. You bark at him to stop chanting, and consider how to work things out. Finally, you tell Yao that when you clap your hands he will be released from your power, but that he will consider you a friend whom he has promised to rid of a curse. Hoping that this trick will work, you clap your hands together. Turn to 179.

192

Sunai and the other children prepare to enter Traole. You wish them luck; they tell you that their prayers go with you. You watch them until they pass through the gates of the city and out of sight, not knowing whether you will ever see them again. Turn to 81.

193

The tunnel goes on straight ahead for thirty metres, then bears to the left; it continues for another thirty metres, leading finally into a chamber. Five small tunnels lead from the wall opposite but, as you enter the room, you can see that each is only five metres long and all are empty. In the middle of the chamber, a scabbarded sword rests on a block of stone. The sword's hilt is golden and the scabbard is beautifully decorated. Meng says, 'This is the Sacred Sword of Tsui. To draw it requires strength, to use it requires wisdom. It is not a sword for the greedy or small-minded.' Do you:

Pull the sword from its scabbard?
 Take the sword in its scabbard?
 Leave the chamber and go back the
 way you came?

Turn to 341

Turn to 127

Turn to 4

194

You awaken. Your body is suffused with a comforting warmth. You reach up to wipe the sleep from your eyes, but find that your arms are pinioned: you are wrapped in folds of silky smoothness. You drift back to sleep, your head full of dreams of mulberry leaves fluttering in the breeze. Who knows how long you remain like this? You are only dimly aware of what is going on around you.

Finally your bindings become dry and brittle. Flexing your limbs, you push outwards. The cocoon sloughs away, and you unfurl yourself in the blinding warm sunlight. There is no sign of the others or of the sweet-scented trees but, a short distance away, a road wends its way into the mist-laden distance. Write down the word 'silk' on your *Adventure Sheet* and turn to 18.



195

Shoudu is so large that you cannot take in its size. You see more people in one day here than you have seen throughout the rest of your life, for this mighty metropolis is the earthly resting-place of the God-King. By ancient tradition, he may be petitioned in cases of great injustice . . . but if the injustice stems from his own servants, will he help? If you go to the palace after all, turn to 202. If you try to break into the palace, turn to 147. If you decide to take up the ship captain's offer of employment as a sailor, turn to 314.

196

The crowd round you is howling, pressing in and blocking your escape. Their bloodlust is greater even than yours and slowly, inexorably, you are pushed back into the pit.

Jian strides over to you, smiling thinly. 'A bold attempt, my young tiger, but for such as you and me, the only escape is death.' Jian speaks the truth. Like you, he is a prisoner of the arena. You live out the rest of your short life here, killing for the pleasure of others.

197

You take your leave of the inn and ponder your next move. Do you:

Leave the city, making for the north?

Turn to 45

Visit the temple?

Turn to 258

Leave the city and head south?

Turn to 99



198

You reach out for the sword, and the hairs on the nape of your neck rise. You pause and glance round the room. The fat official returns your gaze. You take the sword and the sense of danger grows. Suddenly a venomous snake rears beside you, fangs dripping, ready to strike. You sweep the sword round in a lazy arc, slicing the serpent's head from its body. It writhes for several seconds, sloughing off its official's robes. King Maior stares at the body, then at you.

'It seems I owe you a great debt,' he says. He walks over to a small lacquered box, unlocks it, and takes a brooch from it. 'For too long I have allowed others to be my eyes and ears. Merzei tried to tell me this, but I was too proud to listen to him,' he says; then, tossing a cloak across his shoulders, he strides out of the chamber, gesturing for you to follow. As Maior passes through the palace, servants prostrate themselves before him. You pass through the mighty jade gates and out into the courtyard. Maior asks: 'Which first — rescue your mother or avenge your father?' If you choose the former, turn to 77. If you choose the latter, turn to 327.

199

Abbot Dry Jade is delighted. He tells you that you have conquered the attraction of the dull material world and are well on the path to enlightenment. You remain in the monastery, working hard. Your father's death will remain unavenged.

200

You have attained inner peace – your desire for revenge no longer clouds your mind. Add 2 to your SKILL. If you ever have to roll the dice and compare the result to your FEROCITY, you may now always choose not to be ferocious if you wish; that is, you may choose the 'greater than' option. Now turn back to the paragraph you came from.

201

There is uproar, with shouts of 'Murder!' and 'Call the constables!' However, no one gets in your way as you leave the inn. Turn to 197.

202

At the palace you join the queue of townspeople waiting to bring their pleas before the king. Eventually you come before an official who writes down the details of your case. He tells you to come back in a week's time for an audience with a high dignitary, who will decide whether you are fit to plead before the king. If you come back in a week, turn to 297. If you cannot wait that long and break into the palace in the meantime, turn to 147.

203

You are filled with the calm of Baochou Monastery. Once more you are back there, performing the menial tasks that occupied you for so many days. Your body moves calmly and naturally and you are mildly surprised to observe that the wild swings of your adversary's sword fail to touch you. You close in, using your opponent's force against himself. He howls with

frustration and launches a double-handed swing at you. You intercept the blow in mid-flight and turn to avoid the blade, twisting his hands downwards. There is a sharp crack as the bones of his arm break and he crashes to the ground. You toss his sword away and deliver a blow into his back, penetrating through his armour as far as his black heart. Turn to 305.

204

You get little sleep. The wind whispers conspiratorially, and occasional sucking and gurgling noises from the fields suggest that vile Mudworms are lurking near by. The moon is slight, and directly above you the constellation they call Death's Messenger is glittering balefully in the night sky. Is this an omen? The whispering of the wind grows louder and for a moment you fancy you can see Death's Messenger striding across the field towards you, his skeletal figure gleaming with an unearthly light. You leap to your feet, grasping your sword, and the apparition vanishes. It must have been an illusion, brought on by your tiredness. Turn to 345.

205

As soon as the officials see your tattoos, they summon guards. You are beaten (deduct 2 points from your Temporary STAMINA) and thrown out of the city. If you now head north, turn to 81. If you set off southwards, turn to 99.

206

Back-armoured barbarians move in to surround you. The last sight your eyes will ever behold in this world

is the glittering steel of their raised swords. Your adventure is over.

207

You flee down the path in the darkness. Behind you the howling takes on a mocking tone. *Test your Luck*. If you are Lucky, turn to 23. If you are Unlucky, turn to 256.

208

If your Age is less than 15, turn to 372. Otherwise turn to 13.

209

The image of your father freezes while you are in mid-move, then it fades away. Turn to 19.

210

You steel yourself, then head for the Red Water Inn, the most dangerous drinking house in town. It is said that the pool in which the inn's denizens drink is coloured red so that it won't be so obvious when blood is spilt. Roll 3 dice. If the result is less than your FEROCITY, turn to 34. If the result is equal to or greater than your FEROCITY, turn to 151.

211

If you have the word 'silk' written on your *Adventure Sheet*, turn to 164. Otherwise, turn to 65.

212

The dancing lights merge into one; they form a giant white image of your enemy's demon mask, its soulless

eyes staring blankly at you, its features twisted with hatred. You shriek and run from the chamber. Behind you, Meng calls: 'You're out of your mind!' but you ignore him. You race along the tunnel for many minutes, before remembering that it was only a few metres long. You stop and try to pull yourself together before proceeding. Turn to 276.

213

You make your way down the track in the increasing gloom of evening, and soon the clamour behind you fades. When you reach the main path, there is no sign of the monk who was there earlier. You press on into the valley, following the course of a mountain stream. Turn to 129.



214

You just manage to evade two simultaneous attacks from warriors on either side of you by plunging into the reeds. Arrows whiz after you, but you keep your head low and finally put a safe distance between yourself and the samurai. Turn to 289.

215

You race off down the tunnel. A coarse voice calls after you: 'May the Fear be upon you!' You run on, until you are certain there is no pursuit. Turn to 63.

216

The other slaves don't seem to realize that they could escape at any time if only they would collaborate with one another. Perhaps they just deserve to live out their lives working for Kuangong. But you are destined for greater things. Your opportunity comes when you smash through the rock face and come upon an underground stream. Its first spout drenches you, but it gives you an idea: the stream must surface somewhere, so, if you can only swim along it, you will be free. Wasting no time, you grab the secret cache of food which you have been storing for just such a moment (note that you have 1 Provision on your *Adventure Sheet*), then widen the hole in the rock face and plunge into the wet blackness of the stream. *Test your Luck*. If you are Lucky, turn to 38. If you are Unlucky, turn to 149.

217

You come to, standing in front of Dry Jade. In your hands is the clay bowl, which the Abbot takes from you. He turns to another monk standing near by, a monk with a white face, and with a smile, he flings the bowl to the floor, where it breaks into a thousand shards (cross the clay bowl off your *Equipment List*). Note down the word 'turn' on your *Adventure Sheet*. Dry Jade turns to you. 'The true prize of the Deep

Land is in your heart,' he declares. 'You have nothing more to learn from us, so return to the world.' Your STAMINA is restored to its permanent level. Turn to 281.

218

Maio notices the Sacred Sword of Tsui at your belt. He points to it and asks if he may examine it, so you hand it over reverently. Maio passes his hand over the blade; there is a light crackling sound like static from fine cloth. 'A good blade for a hero,' says the king. He strikes a tiny gong on the reading desk. 'There is discord in the land, that I know, but I am too distant from my people to know what to do. I need an agent.' Into the room glides a fat figure dressed in extravagant robes. Maio rises to his feet and offers you the sword back. 'Take this and you will become my agent.' Do you:

- | | |
|---|-------------|
| Take the sword and swear loyalty? | Turn to 52 |
| Refuse, insisting that you are not worthy? | Turn to 370 |
| Say that you will take the sword if the mercenary leader is to be brought to justice? | Turn to 124 |

Or you may know of another option.



219

You all travel back to the wreckage that once was your village and try to rebuild as best you can. Eventually you make something of a life for yourself, but you never avenge the death of your father.

220

The barbarians look you up and down as you enter their camp, but not one of them lifts a weapon against you. If you have the word 'never' written on your *Adventure Sheet*, turn to 354; otherwise, turn to 169.

221

'You are disturbing the peace of the mountain,' says the monk. 'Either tell me this, or leave me in peace: what is wide at its feet, narrow at its head?' Will you reply:

Heaven?	Turn to 173
A pine tree?	Turn to 112
A mountain?	Turn to 397
A giant?	Turn to 57

Alternatively, you may carry on along your original path (turn to 295) or ignore the monk and take the left-hand fork (turn to 271).

222

The temple you are in is unfamiliar. After some time a white-faced monk enters and, seeing you, hurries off to fetch others. They escort you out of the temple and into the streets of Traole. If you head north from here, turn to 140. If you go south, turn to 99. If you stay in the town and make enquiries, turn to 375.

223

You split up and wander through the town, asking about the mercenaries. Whenever you mention them, however, the townspeople become suspicious and refuse to talk to you. When you rejoin the others, you discover that they have had the same experience, although Quan learned from a priest at the temple that most of the fighting is in the south, near the capital. If you leave the town and travel south, turn to 14. If you leave the town and head north, turn to 165. If you stay in Yenshu in order to make more enquiries, turn to 335.



224

With a roar, you leap past the surprised guards and sprint towards the large tent in the middle of the encampment. As you approach, the fearsome figure of your father's killer emerges. Turn to 346.



225

You charge up the last few steps and leap into the chamber. Three red-robed figures get to their feet in surprise and stare at you with dark eyes that glint from white faces. Their movements are controlled and they have the poise of hunting spiders. Another flight of stairs leads up, out of the chamber. If you press home your attack, turn to 318. If you try to flee from the chamber, turn to 76.

226

Soon the gaudily painted houses of Yenshu come into sight, dominated by the grey tower which, you presume, rises from the magistrate's tribunal. Few people are about as you enter the town, and those you do pass regard you warily before hurrying by. You remember that a distant uncle of your family lives in Yenshu. He was always regarded as the black sheep of the family, but he might give you a welcome. Turn to 145.

227

You bid the children farewell and head off northwards. Over the next few days of travel you discover that Yao is more powerful than he lets on. One night, you wake up to see him talking to an eagle, and you are never sure where the food he invariably produces comes from. Eventually you reach the Golden Crane Mountains and Yao leads you along the treacherous paths to his sheltered hut. If you ask him to teach you his magical arts, turn to 247. If you stay with him for a short time, then carry on northwards, turn to 79.

228

Your meagre finances are enough to buy a few drinks in one of the rougher inns of the city. You pick out a fellow with care and offer him a drink. He is soon chattering away merrily and you craftily guide him on to the subjects that interest you. He says that a bunch of mercenaries in black lacquered armour passed through the city recently, making themselves unpopular with everybody because of their foul manners and habit of brawling. Eventually an officer of the Dragon Guards told them to leave. They apparently headed northwards. If you leave the inn at once and make your way to the North Gate, turn to 45. If you visit the temple before leaving, turn to 258.



229

You bow respectfully to the monk. For a moment you think he hasn't seen you, but then he looks up with a smile and says, 'Answer me this: I have roots deep in

the ground, and I loom up, up, up above your head, yet I never grow. What am I? What will you reply:

A pine tree?
The heavens?
A mountain?
A giant?

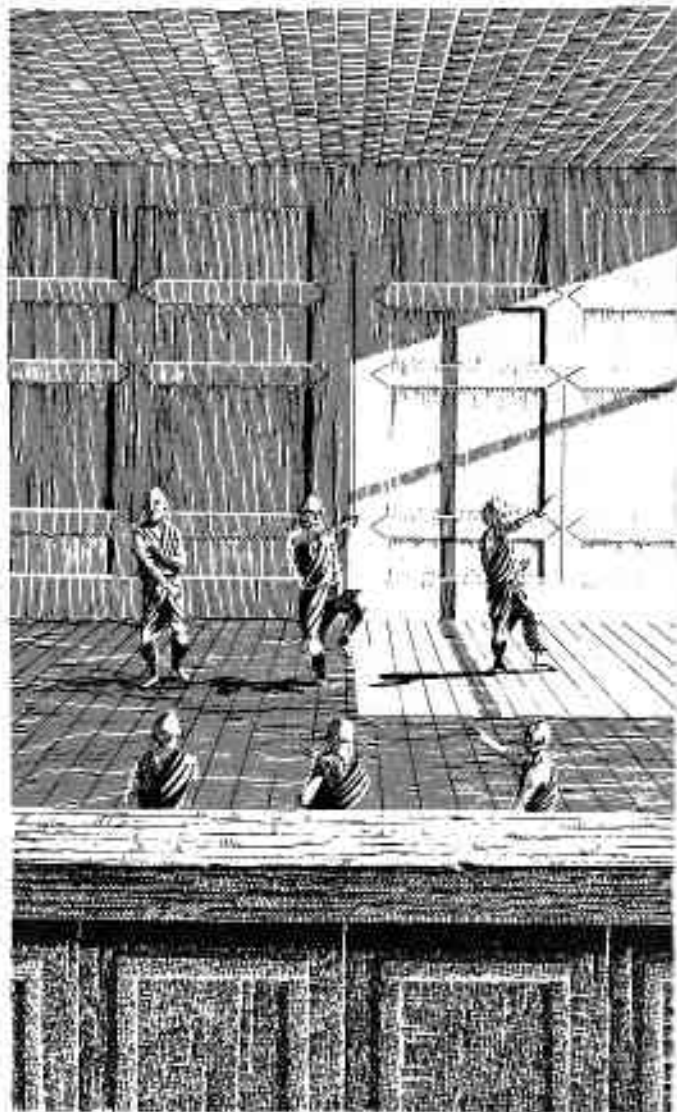
Turn to 112
Turn to 173
Turn to 397
Turn to 57

Or, if you'd rather carry straight on down the path, turn to 295.

230

With a start you awaken from a nightmare in which mercenaries had laid waste your village. You look around – your hut is safe, your father and mother are sleeping soundly. Cross all Equipment and Notes off your *Adventure Sheet*.

Next morning you get up and set out for the fields. On the horizon you spot a cloud of dust approaching and a sense of grim foreboding settles in the pit of your stomach. Even before you can see the black armour, you *know*. You run back to the village, shouting to everyone to flee, but they ignore you. Then the mercenaries arrive. Just as in your dream, the demon-masked leader hacks down your father before your appalled gaze. The other mercenaries round up villagers to sell as slaves; you hide as your mother is dragged, screaming, away from the corpse of her husband. The barbarians sling burning torches into the huts and leave. You cradle your father in your arms, but it is too late. Perhaps you can learn from your dream. Was there a message there for you? Turn to 1.



231

Every day, just before the monks begin their practice, you hide yourself in a cupboard overlooking the practice hall. You observe the monks carefully and each night you repeat their moves yourself. Write the word 'crane' on your *Adventure Sheet*. Add 1 year to your Age, 2 points to your SKILL and 3 points to your Permanent STAMINA. Turn to 300.

232

Your landing is soft, but you almost black out from nausea as the smell hits you. You stagger out of the muddy pool in which you landed and run off down the tunnel. When your head clears, you find yourself travelling along a low tunnel, its stone walls lit by a faint green luminescence. Turn to 326.

233

If you can say where you are, you may leave this place now,' says Meng. Do you:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| Ignore him and attack your enemy? | Turn to 352 |
| Say: 'The Land of Roots'? | Turn to 44 |
| Say: 'My mind'? | Turn to 152 |
| Say: 'The Demon Plane'? | Turn to 333 |

234

As you rush him, the mercenary seems not to be prepared for your attack. Then at the last moment he dodges to one side and clouts you across the back of your head. The world swims around you sickeningly, but you are vaguely aware of having your hands tied

and being flung across the back of a horse. A long and bumpy journey ensues, but it is painful for you to turn your head, so you see little more than the horse's flank. Finally you are pitched to the ground. The mercenary calls out: 'Hey! Another worker for you! You'll get a few years' digging out of this one.'

Around you are dirty grey cliffs riddled with gaping black holes. Clinking, as of metal on stone, echoes faintly all around and you see a gang of slaves pushing a trolley laden with stones out of one of the cave mouths. Footsteps approach. Above you looms a short fellow, dressed in fine purple clothes. He flicks a speck of dust off his brocaded coat, and wrinkles his moustache delicately as he examines you critically. 'I'll give you fifty scrip,' he says after a while.

'Gold only,' grates the mercenary.



With a sigh, the purple-clad fellow tosses a small clinking bag to the barbarian, who tips its contents on to his palm and slowly starts to count the tiny coins. Your heart leaps as you realize that the rope round your arms is loosening. As the mercenary counts his payment you begin to ease yourself free. Finally, the barbarian nods, satisfied, and rides off. Cross off any Provisions you may have on your *Adventure Sheet* and cross the wooden sword off your Equipment List; add 2 points to your FEROACITY. As the man dressed in purple turns, you slip your hands out of their bonds. If you attack him, turn to 306. If you wait to see what he is going to do next, turn to 266.

235

You pass through the gates into the bustling town. A wave of confidence sweeps over you as you look around. It's time to make a few enquiries here. Turn to 375.

236

When you tell Dry Jade of your decision, he shrugs. 'I expected this; however, before you go, let me show you something.' He puts a wooden practice block – the kind the monks use in their training – on the table and tells you to relax. Once you are fully relaxed he tells you to hit the block. Without thinking, you chop at it, using the same gesture you have used in your work since you entered the monastery. The block shatters. 'You are a good pupil,' says Dry Jade. 'Some learn their martial arts the long way, but your hard work and dedication have taught you the secret of our

style — to relax, and make all your movements as natural as a crane in flight.' Note down the word 'sword' on your *Adventure Sheet*. 'You may leave now with my blessing,' says Dry Jade, 'or you may stay a little longer and help us in a small matter.' If you decide to stay, turn to 300. If you prefer to leave, turn to 281.

237

By chance you bump into a merchant whose cart has a broken wheel and he offers you employment as his assistant. He is planning a trading mission out to the lake-hut villages of the Shenglai people, far to the east of Traole. As it is an arduous journey, he would be glad of someone to help with the cart; he is even prepared to pay you a share of the profits. A few days later, your cart rattles out through the East Gate. You never return to Traole and never avenge the death of your father. You have adventures, true, but this one ends here.



238

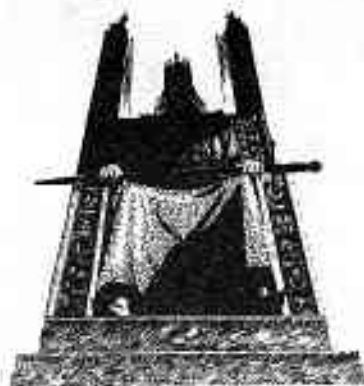
It is easy to find a boarding house with a draughty dormitory in which you can bed down. However, the proprietor demands payment in cash, in advance. If you have any money, turn to 7. If you haven't, turn to 180.

239

After Sunai has been absent for three days, you become very worried. You are just discussing going to the tribunal to find out what has happened to her when she turns up again. It's obvious from her expression that she has failed. Her face is pale, her hair is dishevelled and her hands shake as she takes the cup you pass to her. She refuses to say what happened, but insists that she is returning to Yenshu the very next morning. The others are frightened by her reaction and agree to go with her. It seems you will be on your own from now on. Next morning, you thank Bofu for his hospitality, bid your friends farewell, and, as they head south, you leave by the North Gate. Turn to 81.

240

You look up into the impassive mask of your father's murderer. 'Well, what is it?' he demands. If you accuse him of murder, turn to 321. If you ask to join his mercenary band, turn to 55.





241

You step through the doors into a massive chamber. There is a *chunk!* as the doors close behind you, and echoes dance about. Facing you is a large statue of Am, god of the Isles of the Dawn. At his feet, a small metal bowl gives off a thick green smoke. From a side passage steps a monk. 'I am Dry Jade, Abbot of Baochou Monastery,' he says. 'You are welcome.' If you tell him that you wish to become a monk, turn to 109. If you ask him for assistance in your quest, turn to 355.

242

The interior of the hut is sparsely furnished, with an ash-filled fireplace in the middle of the room. A battered old kettle sits beside the fireplace, with an open pot of leaves next to it. Against the far wall is a low desk, on which brushes hang from a rack and small pieces of yellow paper are stacked in a neat pile. Drawn by curiosity, you look at the papers, on which complicated characters are written in red ink. If you take some of the papers and leave the hut, turn to 35. If you brew up some tea and wait for the hut's occupant to return, turn to 172.

243

After a few hours a prison warder brings you some food. You can't help noticing how frightened he is. With a little more rest you will probably be well enough to overpower him. You have no idea how long the authorities intend to keep you here, or what they will do with you when you are finally summoned

before them. Regain 2 points of Temporary STAMINA. If you attack the guard on his next appearance, turn to 16. If you wait for your summons, turn to 126.

244

You draw your sword and, remembering the lessons Jian taught you, prepare to confront Zhanshi.

ZHANSHI

SKILL 7

STAMINA 10

If you defeat Zhanshi; turn to 123.



245

It isn't long before Kuangong strides into the hut, followed by his four guards. He looks you up and down. 'You see, it really isn't worth while trying to escape,' he chides.

The four guards tie your hands and feet, drag you from the hut and sling you over the back of a mule. As soon as you reach the mine, irons are fitted to your feet. You are assigned to the escapees detail and all hope deserts you. Your adventure ends here.

246

The skeleton dashes the sword from your hand, hurls its own blade aside and grasps your neck in its bony fingers. The bleached white skull presses against your face and a hissing voice sounds in your head. 'Now you are mine, you will do my bidding!'

You are woken by the first bright rays of the sun across your face. Once again you are wet and caked with mud. Your STAMINA is restored to its permanent level. Add 2 points to your FEROCITY. Turn to 345.

247

'If you wish to learn magic,' says Yao, 'the first thing to understand is that everything you see, hear and touch is an illusion, created by your own mind. You should think of yourself as a character in a story created by your own imagination. Then you will find that anything is possible. All the chants, talismans and gestures that I will teach you are no more than window dressing.'

But teach you he does. Soon you have dozens of spells at your disposal. Note down the word 'magic' on your *Adventure Sheet*. Several days later, you say farewell to Master Yao, and continue on your way. Turn to 295.



248

The figure pauses half-way down the stairs, its foot poised above a step. Its eyes widen as it stares at you. Then it whirls round and races back up the stairs, uttering a guttural cry of 'Ghost!' A flurry of footsteps patters away.

You cautiously follow the steps up. At the top is an empty chamber, with another flight of stairs leading up out of it. You ascend them with great care, but your way is blocked by a wooden door which you cannot open. You have no option but to go back down and carry on along the tunnel. Turn to 63.



249

Before you leave, Dry Jade bids you farewell. 'May Arn bless your path and protect you from harm.' He hands you a brooch decorated with the circular symbol of Arn. (Make a note of this circular brooch on your Equipment List.)

You set off back the way you came, this time heading south, and trudge all the way back to Traole. If you have the word 'offers' on your *Adventure Sheet*, turn to 377. Otherwise, turn to 235.

250

You drag the guard's body out on to the balcony, then make your way back in and along the corridor. This section of the palace seems to provide living quarters for courtiers. Sneaking into a chamber, you find some clothes with which to disguise yourself. Feeling safer in your disguise, you start searching through the maze of corridors and chambers for the king's personal quarters. Turn to 383.

251

Now that your attempt to gain help from the magistrate has failed, your thoughts turn to your father's last words: 'Go to Baochou Monastery.' The monks there teach fighting arts that enable one person to defeat many. But they are proud of their skills, and do not teach them lightly. You know that the monastery lies to the north, beyond your village and in the direction of the provincial capital, Traole. Leaving Yenshu behind, you start to retrace your steps. Make a note of the word 'king' and turn to 115.





252

He nods sympathetically as you tell him of your quest. Then he says simply: 'I know who you're searching for - I can find them.' He agrees to meet you at the North Gate the next morning. Make a note of the number 356' on your *Adventure Sheet*. At any time when you are given the option to leave by the North Gate, turn instead to paragraph 356 to wait for your companion. Turn to 197.

253

As darkness falls, you follow the path down into the valley, encountering a bubbling stream splashing over rocks. Spray fills the air with moisture, and out of the stream rises an ominous shape: part man, part fish, with razor-sharp fins instead of hands. Water laps round your feet, preventing you from moving, and the Yuemo approaches, its mouth opening and closing rhythmically.

YUEMO

SKILL 7

STAMINA 8

If you have a pronged spear, add 2 to your Attack Strength while fighting the Yuemo. If you win this battle, turn to 17.

254

You stare back at him. He seems disconcerted that you hold your ground and his eyes drop, faced by your fearless gaze. He gestures to his men, however, and they seize your arms from behind before you can move. 'I'll give you something to remember me by,' says your enemy, striding over to the fire and drawing

a flaming brand from it. He waves it before your eyes, then presses it against your chest. Agony grips your whole body. A searing, blinding pain shoots through your limbs. You lose consciousness. Deduct 2 points from your Temporary STAMINA.

When you awaken, you are alone; the mercenaries have struck camp and left. You are terribly thirsty, so you crawl over to a nearby stream and take great gulps of cool water. As you wash, you realize that an ugly scar now marks your chest. The wound is still tender – the mere touch of cloth bringing waves of pain. You must find some way of wreaking your revenge on the mercenary leader. Turn to 273.

255

There is only a faint light coming from the walls of the tunnel. If you have a torch and wish to light it before proceeding, turn to 301; otherwise, turn to 9.



256

You charge down the darkened slope, leaping over rocks. Faster and faster you race, until your feet splash into water and you tumble head first. Deduct 1 point from your STAMINA. Dragging yourself to your feet, you find yourself face to face with the ghastly apparition of a Yuemo: part fish, part man, with razor-sharp fins which slash at you.

YUEMO

SKILL 7

STAMINA 8

If you defeat the Yuemo, turn to 17.



257

You touch the bowl. Its surface feels smooth, cool . . . then white hot. You try to pull your hand away, but it is too late. You are incinerated. Your dream of revenge is over.

258

The main temple in Traole is a huge building, a complex of shrines and altars. If you have a circular brooch, turn to 130. If you have the word 'silk' on your *Adventure Sheet*, turn to 334. Otherwise, turn to 33.

259

You hurry back, stepping gingerly over the body of the Chonggui's host. Finally you reach the junction and make your way along the other passage. Turn to 284.

260

The gaudily painted houses of Yenshu soon come into sight. Quan eagerly points out the large sloping roof of the temple, which he has visited, and the tower rising from the magistrate's tribunal. Few people are about as you wander the streets and those you do pass regard you warily before hurrying past. The sun is low in the sky, so you must find somewhere to bed down for the night. You remember that a distant uncle of your family lives in Yenshu – but he was always regarded as something of a black sheep, so you have no idea what kind of welcome he may give you. Write the word 'art' on your *Adventure Sheet*. If you go off on your own to try to find your uncle, turn to 145. If you stay with the others in a boarding house, turn to 61.

261

You attract the mercenaries' attention by yelling insults at them and waving your arms, then you run away from their camp. A few arrows whine into the ground near you, but you get away safely. Unfortunately, none of the farmers seems to have been able to escape, and now the mercenaries are on their guard. Turn to 131.

262

You re-enter the bustling city, avoiding the constables

and Dragon Guard patrols. If now you look for an inn, turn to 36. If you go to the temple, turn to 258. If you head out through the South Gate, turn to 99.

263

You drift off into sleep and when you reawaken it is dark. You thread your way through the trees during the night, and when the dawn comes you find yourself looking out over the countryside from a high vantage point, safe in the knowledge that you have escaped a life of slavery. You set off, sure it won't take long to work out where in the isles you are. Turn to 18.



264

A plume of smoke rises from an encampment a few kilometres away and, even from this distance, you think you can make out the distinctive black armour of the mercenaries. If you creep up close, remaining hidden, turn to 134. If you march boldly into the camp, turn to 390.

265

It is a long corridor with cells on both sides, and you peer into them in the hope of finding your friends. By the time you do find them, however, you can hear shouts coming from the other end of the corridor. Guards charge along it towards you. Feverishly you cast about for a way of escape, but there is nowhere to go. The guards rush towards you and attack with their jointed staves. Your adventure ends here.

266

The man gestures to you to rise. 'I am Kuangong,' he says, 'and I own this mine. If you behave yourself, you will find life here tolerable and productive. Now go and join your work detail - you will find them resting in their living cave, yonder.' He points to one of the dark entrances in the cliff face. As you make your way to the cave, you take the opportunity to scan the area, noting that the mine is enclosed on three sides by sheer cliff faces which are riddled with cave workings. Behind Kuangong is an ornate house, next to a pretty lake with decorated walkways.

Within the cave you are greeted without enthusiasm by a gang of slaves. They explain to you that if you work hard you will get decent food and conditions, but that, if you make trouble, everyone will suffer. Soon a gong sounds and you make your way over to one of the mine tunnels. Your job is to chip away at the rock face with a pick, while others carry the debris to a waiting trolley. After a day's work you are too tired to think of anything but getting a good night's

rest. The same happens the next day, and the next. By the time you have grown accustomed to the work you will have lost track of how many days have passed.

Add 1 year to your Age, 2 points to your Permanent STAMINA and 2 points to your FEROCITY. If you determine to escape, turn to 216. If you wait in the mines, hoping to earn your freedom through hard work, turn to 73.



267

The monk's body lies still. As you watch, it gradually fades until nothing is left. You notice Meng standing near by. 'The way lies ahead,' he says, pointing to a wide corridor leading out of the chamber. This in turn leads to a similar chamber. The first sight to greet you here is your father, holding out his hands to you. 'He can be freed if you will but give him your most prized possession,' Meng says. Do you:

Give him your most prized
possession (underline the item on
your Equipment List)?
Attack him?
Ignore him and walk on?

Turn to 387
Turn to 117
Turn to 209

268

The young man tells you that the Isles of the Dawn can learn much about arms and warfare from the warriors of Hachiman. He says that when there were samurai in the city recently, he watched them practising and marvelled at their control and self-discipline. When you enquire further, he tells you that the Hachiman samurai left a week ago, but he doesn't know where they were heading for next. Turn to 156.

269

Once agreement has been reached, Sunai takes over, organizing preparations for the journey. Somehow you obtain some food and scraps of wood to reinforce your sandals for the walk. You set off in the crisp morning air, making good time along the roads. Soon you are passing the deserted settlement which you encountered on your way to Yenshu. None of you can bear to return to your village, so you hurry on. Dusk falls around you; the shadows are growing long when you almost bump into an old man who is standing in the middle of the path. After a few moments of huffing, fidgeting and tugging at his beard, he returns your bows. Then he turns on his heel and strides away, pausing only to beckon to you to follow him.

You travel with Master Yao for several days, learning little about him but finding out plenty of trivial facts. Quan confides to you that he thinks Yao is a little mad – he is certainly forgetful, but he seems harmless. Add 1 year to your Age. Eventually you reach the hills overlooking Traole, the capital of your province.

Yao says that he is walking on to the mountains beyond, but the children are eager to enter the huge city. If you decide to accompany Yao, turn to 227. If you bid him a good journey and enter the city, turn to 86.

270

You sidle down the slope towards the encampment. The shrieks of agony grow louder. If you charge in to attack the mercenaries, turn to 120. If you try to distract their attention, in the hope that some of the villagers will be able to get away, turn to 100.

271

As you try to pass the monk, he gets to his feet and bars your way. He raises his hands in the way a crane prepares for flight, and attacks.

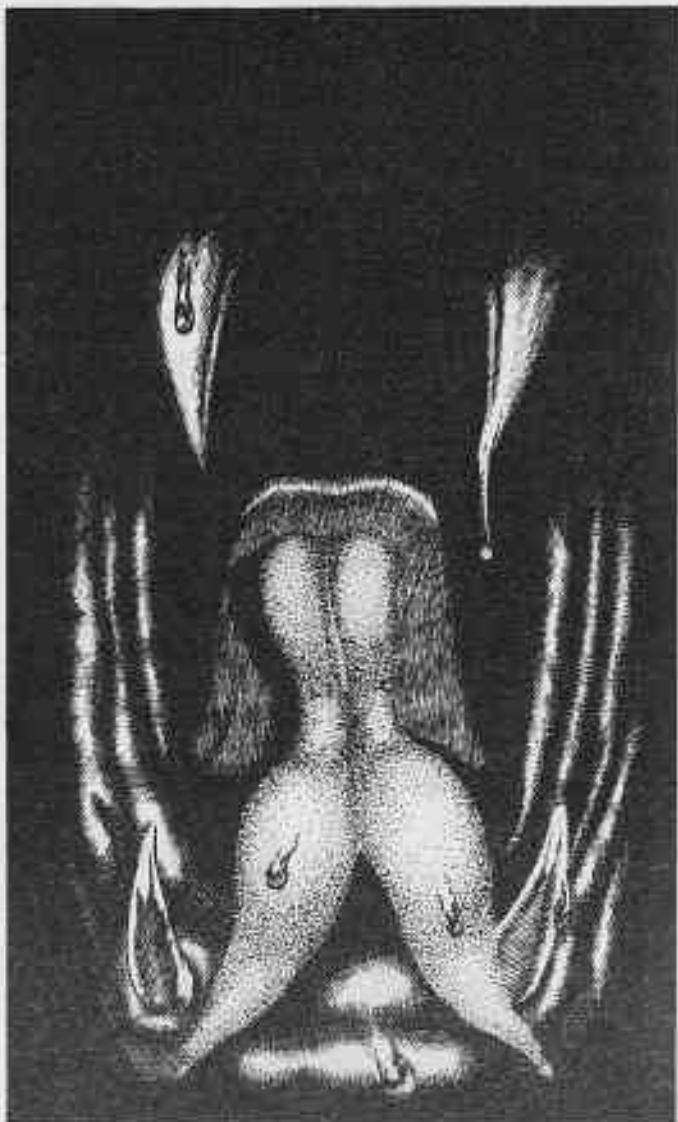
MONK

SKILL 7

STAMINA 12

If you defeat the monk, turn to 70.





272

A monstrous tongue licks out of the darkness to attack you.

CESUOSHE'S TONGUE SKILL 6 STAMINA 12

If you're fighting without a weapon, you must reduce your Attack Strength by 4 points. If you defeat the tongue, turn to 337.

273

You turn back southwards, through the mountains. Although you are impatient to deal with your enemy, you must find a way of ensuring that he will receive his just deserts. Note down the word 'to' on your *Adventure Sheet*. If you have a red robe, turn to 129; otherwise, turn to 235.

274

With the Arena Beast slain, you recognize an opportunity to escape. If you can leap up into the crowd, you may be able to lose yourself in the crush. You disguise your intention by walking round the arena, your sword raised in triumph. Then you nimbly vault over the barrier into the tiers of spectators. Chaos erupts around you. Roll 3 dice. If the result is less than your FEROCITY, turn to 84. If the result is equal to or greater than your FEROCITY, turn to 196.

275

At your confident answer, the puzzler looks taken aback. He peers at you suspiciously, scratches his head, mumbles, 'Umm, yes,' and shuffles off. The

thought crosses your mind: I wonder whether he knew the correct answer himself! You resume your journey. Add 1 year to your Age and 1 point to your Permanent STAMINA.

You reckon you have covered over half the distance to Shoudu when you hear about a band of warriors from Hachiman that is said to be roaming the countryside to the east. If you make a diversion to seek out the warriors, turn to 349. If you push on to the capital, turn to 289.

276

As you walk along the tunnel, you are hit by a sudden feeling of dizziness. It passes, however, and you emerge into a large hall – the hall of a temple. If you have a white face, turn to 69. Otherwise, turn to 139.

277

The fragrance of the leaves lulls you. Quan says they are from the mulberry tree and are used to make a fine fabric. You light a small fire and settle down for the night. If you stay on guard, turn to 141. If you rest your weary limbs and go to sleep, turn to 194.

278

The abbot sucks in his breath. 'It is a shame that you cannot control your emotion,' he says. Nevertheless he allows you to begin training. Your tutor is Flying Turtle, a short, bald fellow. Every day he takes you out into the woods behind the monastery, shows you a pile of wood, and tells you to stamp on every piece

until it is broken. You then carry the broken wood back to the monastery, where it is used to fuel the kitchen fires. You don't seem to be learning much self-defence but, when you protest, Flying Turtle just shouts at you.

Weeks and months pass. Add 1 year to your Age, 4 points to your Permanent STAMINA and 2 points to your SKILL. Write the word 'wood' on your *Adventure Sheet*. Turn to 300.

279

You start to sit up, preparing to leap at the old man, but he seems to guess what you're up to. He flicks a paper talisman at you and gestures with his hands. The paper sticks to your forehead and starts to burn. Unbearable pain shoots through your body and the last sound you hear is a high, keening wail. This is the end of your adventure.

280

The magistrate cuts off your protests with an imperious gesture. Reaching into a cup placed before him, he takes out several coins and tosses them to the floor. Straight away, the ring of constables closes in on you, whirling their staves. *Test your Luck*. If you are Lucky, turn to 105. If you are Unlucky, turn to 12.



281

If you plan to travel to the south, turn to 249. If you would rather head northwards, turn to 295.

282

The second thug lets out a screech as he slumps down against a wall, twitches, then lies still. In one of the houses near by a bamboo screen scrapes as it is pulled back. A ruddy light across the rooftops foreshadows the imminent arrival of dawn. If you stay to examine the bodies of the ruffians, turn to 28. If you flee from the alleyway and leave town as quickly as you can, turn to 18.

283

You crouch, remembering the lessons Jian taught you: no fancy flourishes, no wasted energy – just look for an opening and exploit it. But your opponent is skilled, too. You cross swords a dozen times, with neither of you gaining an advantage. As he is wearing armour, you realize you'll have to try something special if you are to win. You feint to his head, then try a leg sweep. He falls but grabs your leg and pulls you down with him. Then you are wrestling on the black soil. He rolls on top of you, the devilish mask staring ferociously down at you. The sun glints on the horns of his helmet, and he brings his head down sharply ... Your adventure ends here.

284

Smaller tunnels feed into the main one, and soon you are wading through a foul-smelling stream. A glimmer

from up ahead grows – it's the end of the tunnel. You hurry towards it and peer out over the river which flows through the middle of the city. *Test your Luck*. If you are Lucky, turn to 113. If you are Unlucky, turn to 2.



285

Your eyes strain into the darkness and then the hairs on your neck stand up straight. The creature you face – which may be a bear but may be something worse – snuffles and grunts, turning its head this way and that. Finally it shuffles off. You move on warily, casting anxious glances into the darkness. The path leads to a huge gate set into the mountain. A pair of black wooden doors stand slightly ajar. If you have the word 'silk' written on your *Adventure Sheet*, turn to 135; otherwise, turn to 241.

286

As you turn to leave, you can't help but notice a glint of gold on the sword at Master Yao's belt. When you ask him about it, he tells you that it is the Sacred Sword of Tsui, a bane of demons. Your father's murderer wore the mask of a demon, so it seems only just that you should take this weapon. You clip it to your belt and stride off. Note that you have the golden sword on your *Adventure Sheet*. Whenever you use it in combat, you may add 2 points to your Attack Strength. Turn to 295.

287

One of the officials recognizes you from your previous appearance at the tribunal. Before you can escape you are surrounded and beaten, then hurled into a cell. Next morning you are summarily executed. Your adventure ends here.

288

You trudge along the polders, checking with Quan every now and again to make sure he knows the proper route. Soon, you begin to see a range of hills which rises abruptly out of the plane ahead of you. The steep slopes are lush with rich, green foliage.

Quan points excitedly towards them. 'Yenshu lies just south of those hills!' he cries. No sooner has he spoken than there is a dreadful sucking noise from the field to your left and a slime-covered Mudworm, fully as long as a man, rears up, its blind snout questing towards

Quan. It will be on him in moments, unless you can intercept it and fight it off.

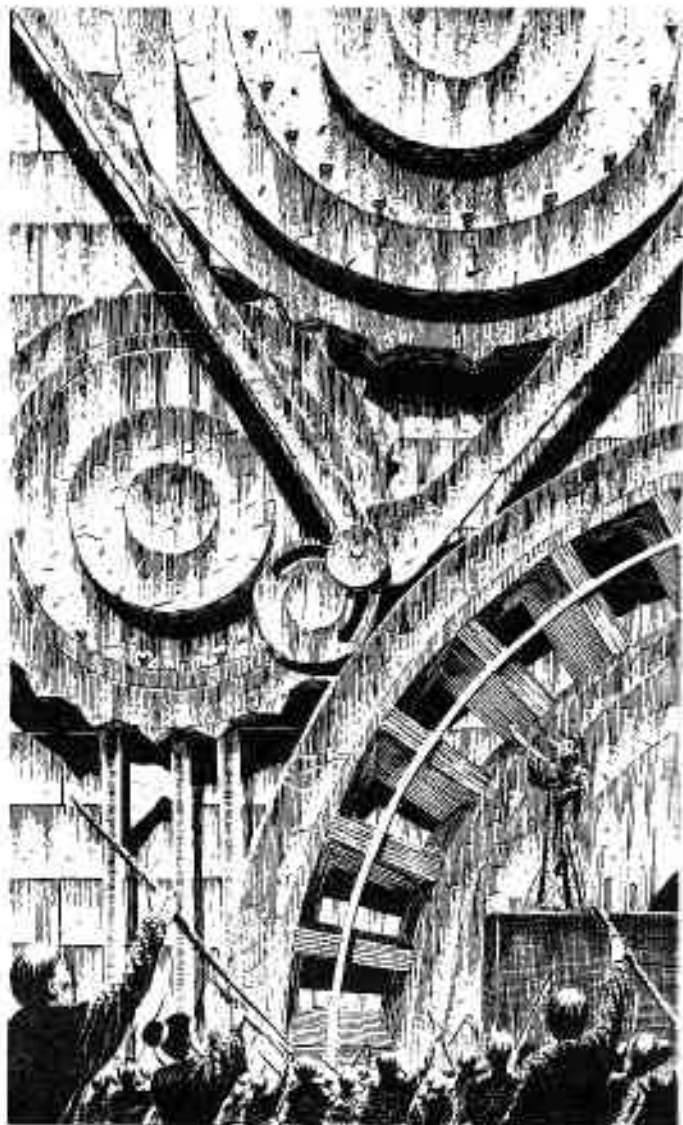
GIANT MUDWORM SKILL 12 STAMINA 6

If you defeat the Mudworm, turn to 357.



289

The rest of the journey passes uneventfully. Eventually Shoudu rises before you, sprawling along the banks of the mighty Red River. At first you don't take in its size, but as you approach the city you begin to realize that your home district, fields, woods, hills and all, would fit comfortably within its walls. You pass through the enormous North Gate and look around. Although there is the bustle of everyday business, there are signs that the civil war has scarred the capital. On one side the charred remnants of a building bear silent testimony while, on another, a pair of flint-featured Dragon Guards survey the citizens with barely disguised contempt. Nevertheless Shoudu is the seat of the God-King and by ancient tradition he may be petitioned in cases of great injustice. If you have a wooden plaque and wish to use it, turn to 302. If you seek to petition the king, turn to 202. Or you may try to break into the palace: turn to 147.



290

There must be almost fifty people crammed into the strange building. Intricate machinery stands idle, waiting for the combination of knowledge and motive power that will set it going. The imposing figure of the rebel leader climbs on to a squat cylinder. Although quite old, she plainly has plenty of energy. Most of her speech makes little sense to you, with its references to 'Merzei's great vision' and 'government by council'; but there's no doubting the enthusiasm of the assembled group. You push your way towards the front as the leader introduces Suiyuan, a young man who urges the assembled crowd to arm for the struggle. Then everybody is chanting: 'Down with the tyrant!' The atmosphere is electric. You can feel the violence hanging in the air like a heat-haze before a storm. If you leave the building before the storm breaks, turn to 49. If you join in the chanting, turn to 162.

291

At your last blow, your enemy simply dissolves into splinters of light. A shaft of pain shoots through your head. If you have a clay bowl written down on your *Adventure Sheet*, cross it off. Add 4 points to your **FEROCITY**. If you have a white face, turn to 69. If you are wearing a red robe, turn to 93.

292

The constables laugh at you when they see the paltry sum you are offering. Unfortunately, bribery is a serious offence, even of such a small amount, and you are sentenced to slavery. All your possessions are

taken from you (cross them off your *Adventure Sheet*). Four constables escort you on a week-long journey to the mine where you will work.

Here, dirty grey cliffs are riddled with gaping black holes. The clinking of metal on stone echoes faintly all around, and you see a gang of slaves pushing a trolley laden with stones out of one of the cave mouths. The constables throw you to the ground and leave.

Footsteps approach. Above you looms a short fellow, dressed in fine purple clothes. He flicks a speck of dust off his brocaded coat and wrinkles his moustache in disapproval as he examines you critically. Turn to 266.

293

The prisoners curse you as you abandon them. After a while you find the cells in which your friends are held. If you free them, turn to 125. If you spend a little time talking to them first, turn to 389.

294

He laughs in your face, hissing like a snake. 'Take yourself out of here, brat, before I teach you what it means to be a mercenary.' If you attack him now, turn to 346. If you hurry out of the camp and make new plans, turn to 131.

295

Eventually you come through the mountains and look out across an expanse of rice fields which stretch all the way to a glistening silver ribbon on the far horizon: the sea! If you have the word 'to' on your *Adventure Sheet*, turn to 395. Otherwise, turn to 264.

296

The others think that you should be the one to go and present the case to Yenshu's magistrate. Only one person is allowed to petition the tribunal over any particular case and Sunai insists that you are the best speaker. You can't really refuse, so you are soon on the streets, heading for the imposing official residence of the magistrate. Turn to 176.



297

On reporting to the palace the following week, you are shown into a large, circular audience-chamber and told to kneel before the throne at one end. Into the room glides a corpulent figure, swathed from head to foot in the most elegant silks and fine brocade. He seats himself on the throne and tells you that he is Pantu, official Adviser to His Majesty. After listening impassively to your case, he nods his head and gestures to a guard. Then he leaves the chamber without a word. The guard escorts you down a corridor and pushes you roughly into a small cell, slamming the door behind you and hurrying away. Over the next few days you learn altogether too much about the sadistic appetites of Pantu, the king's Adviser. Your fate is not a pleasant one.

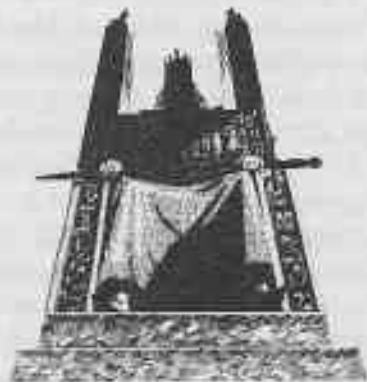
298

The other figure is dressed in the red robes of a monk. As soon as he sees you, he crouches then, faster than thought, lashes out. Your mind goes blank.

You awaken to see the concerned faces of two monks looking down at you. You are no longer in the tunnels. 'I am Dry Jade,' says one of the monks. 'Welcome to Baochou Monastery.' Dry Jade explains that you were accidentally involved in a contest between their monastery and another. If you thank Dry Jade for his kindness and leave the monastery, turn to 249. If you ask him about becoming a monk, turn to 109.

299

You point out to the others that the best future you can hope for is to build a new life in this town. Reluctantly, they agree with you; you all split up and search through the town for places to stay and work. Turn to 328.



300

You are summoned before a council of the highest-ranking monks in Baochou Monastery. Dry Jade tells you that, because of your special qualities, you have been selected to represent the monastery in a quest to recover a sacred relic, a drinking vessel said to have belonged to Shazi, a prophet of Am in ancient times. The relic is hidden in the realm below, a mysterious underworld full of hidden dangers. You are led to the black marble gates which mark the entrance to the underworld, where the monks bid you farewell. Turn to 399.



301

By the guttering torchlight you can see several tunnels leading in different directions, but they are all too narrow to squeeze through. After a short distance, a set of stone steps to your left leads up. Peering up it, you see a red-robed figure at the top, black eyes regarding you from a chalk-white face. Then the figure begins to descend the stairs. If you turn and flee along the tunnel, turn to 215. If you wait to see what is going to happen, turn to 90. If you attack this apparition, turn to 182.

302

You present yourself at the palace and show the wooden plaque. The official eyes you suspiciously but when you proudly declare that you are the personal agent of Ambassador Keiko, he grudgingly lets you in. You stride across the courtyard to the main palace building, then step between the enormous jade doors of the Great Hall. Check your *Adventure Sheet*: if you have either of the words 'magic' or 'silk' written there, or if you possess paper talismans, turn to 11. Otherwise, turn to 383.

303

Roll 2 dice. If the result is less than your STAMINA, turn to 88. If the result is equal to or greater than your STAMINA, turn to 190.



304

Soon you find yourself on the streets of Traole. Add 1 point to your LUCK and 1 point to your SKILL. Since you have just escaped from prison, you decide you had better leave as quickly as possible. If you want to travel north, turn to 81. If you decide to travel south, turn to 99.



305

A red haze fills your mind as you stand over the body of your defeated enemy. The mercenaries are waiting, watching to see what your next move will be. If you spit on the body and walk away, turn to 206. If you wish to don your enemy's mask and helmet and take command of the mercenaries, turn to 72.



306

As the man reaches out with his hand to make some gesture you grab his outstretched arm and yank sharply. An almost comical expression of surprise crosses his face and he tumbles to the ground. You leap up, looking for a way out. An ornate building stands near by, beside a lake crossed by prettily decorated walkways. Beyond it loom the grey, cave-riddled cliffs, surrounding you on all sides but one. In that direction the mercenary is riding off along a dusty road. You turn to see four men walking calmly out of the building and levelling their crossbows at you.

The man you threw to the ground picks himself up and starts to brush the dust from his clothes. He seems very calm. 'A bad start, slave. It doesn't do to behave with such discourtesy towards Kuangong, your host. Now go and join your work detail in yonder cave.' He points to one of the dark holes high up in the cliff, into which a gang of sweating slaves has just disappeared, pushing an empty trolley. Add 2 points to your **FEROCITY**. If you go up to the cave, turn to 101. If you stay and argue, turn to 183.

307

The doors open smoothly, revealing dimly lit corridors beyond. Here, flaming sconces burn on the walls, and in their guttering light you can see passages leading both left and right; a tunnel continues straight on. 'A weight is upon your shoulders,' says Meng. 'Do you yet know where you are?' Which passage do you follow:

The left-hand one?
The right-hand one?
The middle one?

Turn to 58
Turn to 193
Turn to 158

308

You strain with the effort, but your opponent is too strong. He twists your arm until your eyes fill with tears, then he lets go. 'You aren't strong enough yet to be a mercenary,' he says. 'You're still a child.' He leaves you rubbing some life back into your arm. Turn to 197.



309

The tribunal is easy to find and soon you stand within its courtyard, waiting to bring your case. If you have a tattooed face, turn to 205. If you have the word 'staff' on your *Adventure Sheet*, turn to 287. Otherwise turn to 361.

310

The mercenaries push on southwards; you continue to track them at a safe distance. After several weeks you see a horseman ride into the camp and spend some minutes in the leader's tent. When he emerges, you notice his livery – the symbol of the golden fist is embroidered on his equipment. Soon afterwards the mercenaries pack up and start travelling; now, however, they are riding at a brisk pace and soon leave you behind. For two days you follow in their wake, tracking them by making enquiries of local farmers. Then the trail goes cold. Alone in unfamiliar country, you can do little but head for the nearest large town. Farmers give you directions that will take you to Shoudu, the magnificent capital of the Isles of the Dawn. Add 1 year to your Age and 1 point to your Permanent STAMINA. Turn to 289.



311

The warder is unprepared for your attack and you knock him out easily. You take his keys (note them down on your Equipment List) and leave your cell. If you make a break for it straight away, turn to 59. If you inspect the other cells first, turn to 178.

312

You untether the horses, then you set light to one of the outlying tents and sneak round to the back of another. When the mercenaries spot the fire, they all rush across to put it out and in the confusion you manage to untie the farmers. As you are leading them out of the camp, however, a sleepy figure emerges from the tent right in front of you.

MERCENARY

SKILL 7

STAMINA 10

If you defeat the mercenary in fewer than 10 Attack Rounds, turn to 6. Otherwise, turn to 206.

313

You catch a glimpse of flaring nostrils and eyes shot with yellow before a claw swats you. You sense the stench of animal fur close by, then you black out. Add 2 points to your FEROACITY.

When you wake up, it is dawn. You stare longingly up the path, but fear presses hard upon you. You stretch your aching body and set off down the track. There is no sign of the monk you saw last night. Turn to 295.



314

You rejoin the ship before it leaves the harbour. It sails out into the vastness of the sea. Adventures aplenty await you on the high seas, but this one is over. You have failed to avenge your father.

315

You leave the drunk's body lying in the gutter, where it belongs. If you seek out some other way of contacting the rebels, turn to 24. Or you could set off north; turn to 140.

316

You point out to the magistrate that the despoilers of your village were mercenaries, not bandits, and that they will prevent the peasants from paying their rice tax to his tribunal. He rubs his eyes and glares at you. 'Less impertinence from you! Return to your village immediately!' he croaks. If you follow his instructions, turn to 10. If you refuse, turn to 280.

317

You draw the sacred sword, and a gasp goes up from the mercenaries. 'Wait!' calls the leader. 'Let me see that sword!' He strides up to you and wrenches the sword from your grip before you can react. 'Far too good for the likes of you,' he says. Turn to 206.



318

You leap forward but, with a deft movement, one of the figures grabs your arm and pulls you to the ground. You try to defend yourself, but a hand darts out and raps you on the head . . . you black out. Turn to 188.

319

The road glows brighter and the rich scent of the leaves makes you feel that the whole world about you is living and breathing, an extension of your own body. Shapes loom up in the darkness on either side of the path, twisted shapes from which leaves flutter, and a musky sibilance glides towards you. Ahead, the light grows brighter. A huge, slithering shape rears its head, like an impossibly beautiful Mudworm. Sightless eyes quest for you, and a melodious, wordless voice speaks soothingly in your head. If you wish to resist the creature, roll 2 dice: if the result is less than your **FEROCITY**, turn to 64. If the result is equal to or greater than your **FEROCITY**, turn to 106. If you abandon yourself to the ecstatic aura of the creature, turn to 194.



320

A monk enters. Unlike yours, his face is not painted white, but it registers surprise when he sees you. He leaves without speaking, returning a few minutes later with the Abbot, Dry Jade. 'You must have returned from the Land of Roots,' he says. 'This is Baochou Monastery. Although you are not of our sect, we can offer you hospitality.' If you stay for only a few days before leaving and heading back to Traole, turn to 249. If you wish to join the monastery, you must wash the white paint off your face (cross it off your *Adventure Sheet*) and turn to 109.

321

He laughs mirthlessly. 'I admire your presumption,' he hisses, 'but I advise you to come back and face me when you have the skill and the wits to succeed.' Anger wells up in you at his contemptuous words. Roll 3 dice. If the result is less than your **FEROCITY**, turn to 346. If the result is equal to or greater than your **FEROCITY**, turn to 254.





322

Within the cloud of dust people are gesticulating frantically and shouting wildly and, beyond them, you can see a wall of advancing soldiers. Then the dust cloud is upon you and you are caught within a teeming confusion of bodies. You look around for the others, but all you can make out is vague shapes. Hands grab you and a moment later you are grappling with an armoured figure.

DRAGON GUARD

SKILL 8

STAMINA 10

If you beat the guard, turn to 71. If your STAMINA drops to 1 exactly, turn to 159.

323

Before you can react, two warriors strike out at you, one from each side. Against their perfectly timed simultaneous attack you can do nothing. Mercifully, their blades are razor sharp; your end is swift.

324

He moves too quickly for you to be sure what happens next. You ward off one blow but feel a sharp pain in your neck that makes your limbs go limp. You remember hearing about a technique called the Striking Cobra which requires such skill that only a handful of experts are said to possess it. One of these experts is Merzei, the former monk and revolutionary who helped bring King Maior to power. As Royal Guards drag your paralysed body to the dungeon, you curse the bad fortune which led to your defeat by a monk of Baochou. Your adventure ends here.

325

You crouch behind a polder and hold your breath as the horseman comes to a halt, sending up a cloud of dust. He shouts in a harsh accent: 'You, ratlings! Come here!' His harness jingles as he dismounts. Now is your chance. You leap out from your hiding place and charge him, brandishing your trusty wooden sword. Roll 2 dice. If the total is less than your **FEROCITY**, turn to 54. If the total is equal to or greater than your **FEROCITY**, turn to 234.

326

The tunnel narrows and the glow from the walls lessens. The ground beneath your feet becomes soft and spongy, and you can hear a throbbing noise coming from up ahead. Then the whole tunnel moves! The ceiling lowers and you realize that you are walking down the gullet of some huge monster! If you attack the creature, turn to 272. If you have a torch, and you wish to use it, turn to 104. If you turn tail and flee, turn to 359.

327

'First you must find the culprit,' says Maior. 'I hesitate to use my father's techniques, but I suppose the situation calls for it. Picture the man!' You concentrate hard on the demon mask of your enemy, while Maior stares at you, softly humming a single note. The mask becomes larger and larger, consuming your whole mind until . . .

You stand in the mercenaries' camp. Your enemy steps

out of the tent in front of you. 'Who in the seven hells are you?' he says.

'Your nemesis,' you reply. His hand leaps to his sword hilt but the golden sword moves faster. The demon mask looks down at the bloody stump of its sword hand. It lets out a bestial growl, then its left hand reaches down to its belt. You raise your sword for the killing blow but, before you can strike, a flash of metal from the mercenary's belt flies true to your heart. For a few seconds you stare at the dagger hilt, dimly aware of your enemy's lifeless body collapsing to the blood-soaked ground. You have found your revenge, but have paid the ultimate price.

328

As luck would have it, you soon find an opportunity at a nearby basket weaver's shop. The man's son has gone off to join the army and he needs someone to help him with his craft. You settle in easily and soon pick up enough ability to be of some use to the basket weaver. Add 1 year to your Age and 3 points to your Permanent **STAMINA**. Over months of work you manage to save up 10 Gold Pieces. When the news comes that the basket weaver's son has been killed, you realize that you must now choose between staying on as an apprentice (turn to 78) or pursuing your quest to avenge your father and find your mother (turn to 138).

329

After a while, the agonized shrieking stops. Their sport over, the mercenaries return to their activities:

polishing their weapons and armour, cooking food and practising their warlike skills. Several of them take up positions on guard at the edge of the encampment. If you creep silently away and plan your next move, turn to **131**. If you try to make your way into the enemy's camp, turn to **206**.

330

You break down, sobbing, and admit your guilt. The magistrate questions you about the details of your plot, but of course you can tell him nothing. You are sentenced to slavery. All your possessions are taken (cross them off your *Adventure Sheet*). Make a note of the word 'staff' on your *Adventure Sheet*.

Four constables escort you on a week-long journey to the mine where you will work. Here, dirty grey cliffs are riddled with gaping black holes. Clinking, as of metal on stone, echoes faintly all around, and you see a gang of slaves pushing a trolley laden with stones out of one of the cave mouths. The constables throw you to the ground and leave.

Footsteps approach. Above you looms a short fellow, dressed in fine purple clothes. Idly he flicks a speck of dust off his brocaded coat and wrinkles his moustache as he examines you with some distaste. Turn to **266**.

331

The creature twitches several times, then rapidly melts away until all that is left is the corpse of an ordinary man. You leave it where it lies and continue your journey.

After several minutes' walk, the tunnel starts to widen, then opens into a circular chamber. Around the edge of the chamber runs a walkway. On the opposite side of the room a wide stairway leads down. If you decide to go back the way you came, turn to **259**. If you go down the stairway, turn to **399**.

332

You have only a vague idea of the direction you ought to take, and the sun is already low in the sky ... you must have lain unconscious for over an hour. When night falls you are still among the paddy fields. A range of hills rises out of the plain some kilometres away and you believe that Yenshu must be near them, but travelling at night along polder-paths is too dangerous. Choosing a spot that is not too muddy, you prepare for an uncomfortable night out in the open. Roll 2 dice. If the result is less than your **FEROCITY**, turn to **204**. If the result is equal to or greater than your **FEROCITY**, turn to **46**.



333

Meng shakes his head sadly. The mercenary leader takes a step closer and raises his sword. If you stand your ground, turn to **369**. If you attack him, turn to **352**.

334

As you step into the temple, your head starts to throb. The world starts to spin and some red-clad priests stare at you strangely. They surround you and escort you from the temple to a nearby place of rest. As your head clears they examine you, burning incense and chanting. Finally, one of them explains: 'You have been afflicted with a terrible curse. Your body now plays host to the spirit of a silkworm – a Cangui. The creature will slowly take you over, until eventually all you will be able to do is feed its insatiable hunger. We can exorcize the Cangui, but you must *want* it to be removed – and furthermore you may not live for very long once the spirit is removed: it has been sapping your strength and contaminating your vital functions.' If you agree to the exorcism, turn to 95. If you do not, turn to 8.



335

After a week spent scouring the town for leads, you are all tired. You have heard plenty about the civil

war, but little that may be of practical use. No one is sure whether to back the king or the usurpers, but you know that the mercenaries you seek were probably in the pay of Bezenvial's children. Do you:

Head north, away from the fighting?	Turn to 269
Head south, towards the fighting?	Turn to 14
Look for a job here?	Turn to 299
Go back to your village?	Turn to 219

336

You wait for several hours before the man you met in the tavern turns up. He is dressed for travelling and carries a sword at his side.

You march north for several days, into the Golden Crane Mountains. Your companion talks little, and you make good time. One day, when you are looking out over the rice paddies beyond the mountains, you spot the sea glistening on the horizon. Closer to hand, a plume of smoke is rising from an encampment; your companion tells you that this is the camp of the mercenaries. You approach the tents and the young fellow hails them. Your heart leaps when, from a central tent, the hated figure of the mercenary leader, complete with demon's head mask, emerges. You've found the right mercenaries! Your companion introduces you as a new recruit. Turn to 123.

337

Foul liquid sprays out of the writhing tongue as it withdraws into the darkness, and a great gout of

stinking air blows you clear of the creature's mouth. The Cesuoshe's jaws close and it retreats along the tunnel. You wipe some of the stinging slime off yourself, and make your way down the tunnel, back the way you came. Regain 1 point of LUCK. Note down the word 'green' on your *Adventure Sheet* and turn to 42.

338

The monk ignores you, and you make your way along the path. As you trudge along, the shadows lengthen and, before you have gone very far, the darkness of night envelops you. Clouds mask the sliver of moon and you can make out the path ahead only with difficulty. There is a rustling noise from up ahead, followed by a bestial shriek. If you steel yourself and carry on, turn to 128. If you run back down the path, turn to 207.

339

The old man shakes his head sadly as you pick yourself up and leave, but he doesn't try to stop you. After making your way south through the mountains, you find yourself outside Traole once more. If you ignore it and head south, turn to 99. If you enter the city, turn to 235.

340

You are quickly expelled from the first inn you come to when they find you have no money. It seems these city folk are more interested in cash than in people. If you now decide to go to the temple, turn to 258. If you prefer to leave the city by the North Gate, turn to 45.

341

You draw the sword and hold it aloft. Meng claps his hands admiringly. 'The sword is woven into your fate,' he cries. 'See how it glows.' Sure enough, the blade grows bright gold. Then it fades, and with that the sword evaporates. Its scabbard is nowhere to be seen either. You follow Meng back up the passage. Do you:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------|
| Return through the double doors? | Turn to 230 |
| Go along the tunnel opposite? | Turn to 58 |
| Go down the passage to your right? | Turn to 158 |

342

There is widespread panic and in the confusion you are pinned beneath one of the large wooden cogs of the strange machinery. One of the Dragon Guards pulls a lever and the machinery starts up. The cog drags you in towards its centre; you struggle, but . . .

343

Days pass as you accustom yourself to a never-changing ritual. Add 1 year to your Age and 2 points to your STAMINA. Deduct 1 point from your FEROCITY.

At the end of a year, the abbot visits you and asks how you are progressing. If you tell him you are doing fine, turn to 199. If you tell him you want to learn the martial arts, turn to 278.





344

You move swiftly and, by turning easily, you slip out of the man's grasp. He sneers at you. 'You fight like a monk – you've got some axe to grind.' He draws a knife from his robe and closes in.

YOUNG RUFFIAN

SKILL 6

STAMINA 5

If you don't have a weapon, you must reduce your Attack Strength by 4 points. If you defeat the ruffian, turn to 201.

345

You set off once more along the polder-paths, heading for the range of hills. The warmth of the sun on your face restores some of your spirit, although your limbs still ache from your uncomfortable night. Turn to 226.

346

Choose how you wish to attack the mercenary leader. You may choose an option only if you possess the appropriate item or have the word already written on your *Adventure Sheet*.

With 'magic'?

Turn to 22

With Arena skills ('arena')?

Turn to 283

With martial arts ('crane', 'wood' or 'spider')?

Turn to 154

With a wooden sword, pronged spear or cudgel?

Turn to 66

With the Sacred Sword of Tsui?

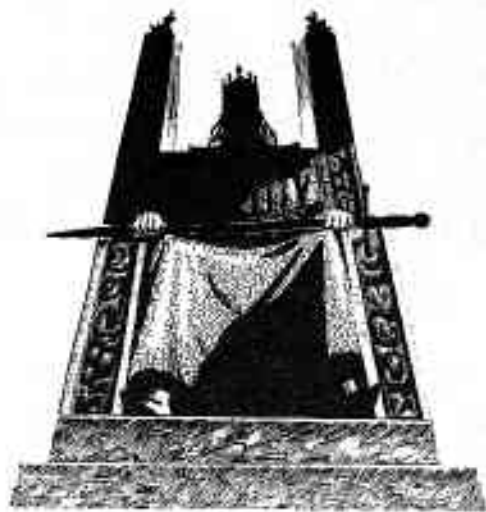
Turn to 382

With a monk's staff or knife?

Turn to 203

347

After a short while, you find a dry patch that's large enough for all of you, so you settle down for the night. Next morning you resume your journey. There is no longer any sign of the leaves you saw last night, nor of the trees they might have come from. Turn to 368.



348

It is a man, dressed in the red robes of a monk. He moves with the agility of a spider as he approaches you. Then, with blinding speed, his hand lashes out and raps you on the head . . . you black out. Turn to 188.

349

It doesn't take you long to find the warriors – word of their presence has spread through the local community, and several peasants give you directions. From a sheltered spot in a copse you survey a small band of well-armoured warriors as they make their way along the highway. There are half a dozen of them, escorting a covered palanquin – a travelling chair. Do you:

Approach them peacefully?

Turn to 111

Ambush them and use force (you must have the golden sword, or one of the following words written down on your *Adventure Sheet*: 'arena', 'crane', 'spider', 'sword', 'wood')?

Turn to 87

Ambush them by magic (you must have 'magic')?

Turn to 394

Ignore them and carry on to Shoudu?

Turn to 289

350

He explains that mercenaries have appeared in the isles only in the last few years; most are former militiamen who hire themselves out to officials in order to deal with the increasing bandit problem. Then he changes the subject. Turn to 156.

351

Back at the boarding house, the others are waiting for you. They look up expectantly as you enter, but your downcast features stifle their hope. Over the next few hours you all discuss the possibilities. Sunai believes

that the next step is to travel to Traole, the provincial capital, and appeal to the authorities there. Quan, who once had such faith in the magistrate, counsels against her plan, arguing that it is clear that nothing can be done, so the correct course of action is to do nothing. You remember that the monastery of Baochou, which your father mentioned with his dying breath, is said to lie to the north, beyond Traole.

Once again, the children look to you for a decision. Will you:

- | | |
|--|-------------|
| Travel to Traole alone? | Turn to 67 |
| Travel to Traole with the others? | Turn to 165 |
| Attempt to pick up the trail of the mercenaries? | Turn to 223 |

352

With a yell of hatred, you charge the armour-clad figure.

MERCENARY LEADER SKILL 12 STAMINA 18

If you defeat him, turn to 291.



353

The streets quickly empty of people. You wander in search of somewhere to stay, but no one is even prepared to listen to your entreaties. In the end you have to rest in a dirty side-street.

You are woken by guards kicking you in the ribs. They drag you off down the street, shouting at you all the way. You are separated from your friends and flung into a foul prison cell. Turn to 243.

354

Just then a familiar figure emerges from a tent, laden down with bowls and drinking cups. His eyes light on you; he drops what he is carrying and calls out your name. But as Hani runs towards you the mercenaries react. Turn to 206.

355

'Your goals are clouded by a crimson tide,' Dry Jade replies. 'We cannot help one such as you until you have purged yourself of your pain, and by then you may no longer wish for our help.' Despite his refusal, Dry Jade offers you a surprisingly hearty meal of beans and pickled radish, and a bed mat for the night.

Next morning you wake up, refreshed and clear-headed. Will you:

- | | |
|--|-------------|
| Change your mind and ask to become a monk? | Turn to 109 |
| Set off back to Traole? | Turn to 249 |
| Continue your journey northwards? | Turn to 75 |



356

You wait for several hours before the man you met in the tavern turns up. He is dressed for travelling and carries a sword at his side. You march north for several days, into the Golden Crane Mountains. Your companion talks little, and you make good time. One day you are looking out over the rice paddies beyond the mountains when you spot the sea, glistening on the horizon. Nearer to hand, a plume of smoke is rising from an encampment, and your companion tells you the camp belongs to the mercenaries. That night you creep up for a closer look. Sure enough, the soldiers are wearing black lacquered armour and, when a tall figure with a glaring death-mask helm emerges from a tent, you know you have the right mercenaries. Before you can act, however, your companion starts yelling. Lanterns are shone in your direction. If you have the word 'silk' written on your *Adventure Sheet*, turn to 60. Otherwise, turn to 160.

357

The creature falls with a splash, chopped in two by your ferocious attack. Though panting with the exertion, you feel exhilarated by the battle. Add 1 point to your SKILL. The children congratulate you on your victory, though Sunai points out that it was a mistake not to have brought along one of the pronged spears that are used to fight off Mudworms while working in the fields. Turn to 260.

358

Merzei is just pulling aside a hanging drape when a

shout of 'Murder!' comes from the corridor. Royal Guards rush into the chamber, their swords drawn. Merzei turns to face you. Turn to 324.

359

The whole tunnel lurches, hurling you to the floor. The slime burns your hands and exposed flesh, but worse is to come. A huge tongue lashes out from the depths of the creature, wraps round you and drags you down, to be digested at leisure. Your adventure ends messily.

360

Over a cup of tea, Master Yao asks why you are travelling in the mountains. If you tell him that you are seeking the man who murdered your father, turn to 39. If you tell him that you're searching after wisdom, turn to 367. If you tell him you are trying to rid yourself of the strange curse which is upon you, turn to 184.



361

Eventually you find yourself before a clerk to whom you describe the attack that took place on your village. He carefully notes down all the details as you speak. When you finish, he asks if you can provide any means of identifying the mercenaries. Apart from a description of their appearance, you can't. He sucks in his breath. 'You must understand that these are troubled times and we are very busy,' he tells you apologetically. 'If you can identify the culprits, we may be able to commence proceedings.' Dejected, you leave the tribunal. If you go to an inn to search out rumours concerning the mercenaries, turn to 36. If you seek divine assistance at the temple, turn to 258.



362

If you leave the town by the North Gate, turn to 18. If you make your way south, turn to 166. If you go in search of employment here, turn to 328.

363

You push open the white door and step through. You find yourself in the precincts of a temple. The door clicks shut behind you; Meng has not followed you in. If you have a white face, turn to 69. If you wear a red robe, turn to 222.

364

Out in the streets, people are carrying on their lives as normal, shouting, smiling, shopping. You feel that you are apart from them. The loss of your parents is painful, and you realize that you must seek forgetfulness in action. If you look for work in Traole, turn to 375. If you set off to the north, turn to 140.

365

Zhonggao warns you about the strictness of the monks. 'They will test you to see whether you are suitable. You must show determination or they will never allow you in.'

Yubei presses a small bag into your hand as you leave. Inside are 10 Gold Pieces: more money than you've seen in your life. You thank her for her kindness and promise your uncle that you will not fail.

Zhonggao instructs you to travel north, back to your village, and then to continue past Traole until you reach the Golden Crane Mountains. The monastery is to be found at the summit of the highest peak. Note down the word 'king' on your *Adventure Sheet* and turn to 115.

366

You take the warder's keys and his cudgel (note them down on your Equipment List) and leave the cell. If you make a break for it straight away, turn to 59. If you inspect the other cells first, turn to 265.

367

'Wisdom is knowing what you *can* eat and what you can't,' says Yao. 'All this philosophy gets you nowhere. Mind you, there's a few things I've learnt which may be of use to you...' *Test your Luck*. If you are Unlucky, turn to 137. If you are Lucky, turn to 247.

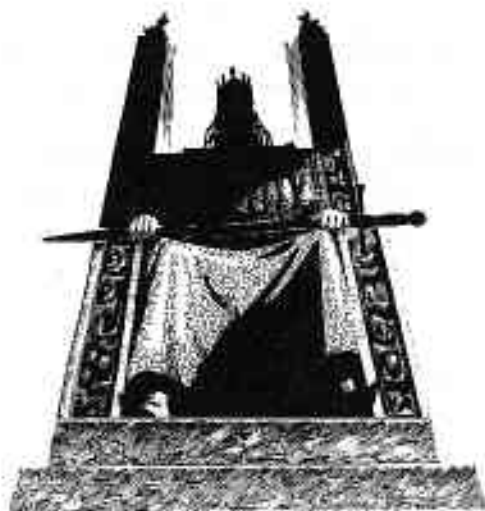
368

The journey to Traole is a long one: you cannot travel too fast because of the younger children, and you often have to repay the farmers in whose huts you shelter by doing a week's work for them. Add 1 year to your Age.

Eventually you climb through vine-covered hills that overlook the city of Traole, provincial capital of this region. You have heard tell of this place – stories of expensive houses and wide streets full of garishly clad merchants, thieves, entertainers and scholars. In Traole, it is said, you can make a fortune in a day... and lose it in a minute. If you enter the city, turn to 86. If you continue past it and towards the mountains which loom on the horizon, turn to 192.

369

Your enemy swings his sword down upon you. Everything dissolves into blackness. Deduct 4 points from your **FEROCITY**. If you have clay bowl written down on your *Adventure Sheet*, cross it off. If you have a white face, turn to 69. If you have a red robe, turn to 93.



370

Maior frowns. 'Worth comes from the heart, not from one's position in society. Nevertheless I will do what I can to help you.' He turns to the fat official and explains how mercenaries have destroyed your village. 'Have this loyal citizen escorted to reasonable lodgings, then deal with the matter of these mercenaries, Pantu.' The official bows and leads you from the chamber. Turn to 400.

371

Now that you are better prepared, you make good time to Yenshu. If you have the word 'king' written on your *Adventure Sheet*, turn to 121. Otherwise, turn to 226.

372

The battle for control of the isles still rages to the south. The God-King's faction includes a peasant army led by the rabble-rouser Merzei and the sorcerous talents of Bezenvial's son, Maior. Ranged against them are various disaffected officials and their followers: bandits, mercenaries and even foul creatures, united by Bezenvial's other son, Feior. The fate of the isles still hangs in the balance, but either way it looks as if one of Bezenvial's evil progeny will be on the winning side. Turn to 156.





373

The figure sidles towards you, moving like an insect. As fast as a praying mantis, his leg sweeps at you. Instinctively, you stamp down, the way you broke wood for Flying Turtle. Your opponent screams in pain. His next approach is more wary.

WHITE-FACED MONK SKILL 8 STAMINA 8

If you defeat the monk, turn to 267. If he defeats you, turn to 93.

374

You are put to work in the kitchen, chopping up the monks' food with a cleaver. Days pass and you wonder when you are going to be taught these 'martial arts' for which the monks are famous. The monastery is a tranquil place, however, and since you work in the kitchen you are never short of food. Add 1 year to your Age and 2 points to your Permanent STAMINA.

At the end of the year, the abbot visits you and asks how you are progressing. If you tell him you are well pleased with your lot, turn to 53. If you ask to be taught the martial arts, turn to 278.

375

You are treated with suspicion by everyone you approach. You soon learn that there have been attacks on prominent citizens and officials: a band of revolutionaries is active, and the Dragon Guards are using brute force in their attempts to bring the rebels to justice. Somehow you sense that you share some of the goals

of the rebels, but it's hard to find out how to contact them. If you are to locate the rebels, you must put your trust in someone. *Test your Luck*. If you are Lucky, turn to 24. If you are Unlucky, turn to 108.

376

Before the red robes have a chance to react, you leap past them and up the far steps. They give chase, but you reach the door at the top before they do and you slam it in their faces, slipping a bar into place. The chamber you are in is unmistakably part of a temple. You find your way through a maze of deserted tunnels before ascending another flight of stairs up to a courtyard. Here, red-robed monks stare at you quizzically as you emerge. You bow nonchalantly to them and make your way over to the gate. Turn to 304.

377

As you approach the city, you begin to take in its size. It is *enormous*. Soon you are lost amid its busy streets. Do you:

- | | |
|--|-------------|
| Try to find the tribunal, so as to bring your case before the prefect? | Turn to 309 |
| Search for an inn in the hope of tracing the mercenaries? | Turn to 36 |
| Go to the temple in search of divine assistance? | Turn to 258 |

378

Cross the item or items off your *Adventure Sheet*. The puzzler looks almost surprised, but he is certainly

grateful. He hurries off in the direction of the nearest village. You continue your journey towards Shoudu. Add 1 year to your Age and 1 point to your Permanent STAMINA.

You reckon you must be more than half-way to the capital when you hear about a band of warriors from Hachiman; they are said to be roaming the countryside to the east. If you veer off to encounter the warriors, turn to 349. If you press on to the capital, Shoudu, turn to 289.

379

The magistrate shakes his head and summons forth the instruments of torture. For hours, your body is wracked with intense pain, but still you can tell him nothing. Finally he frees you and cautions you against ever returning to the city. He has a tattoo etched upon your face (note this on your *Adventure Sheet*) and you are ejected from Traole through the North Gate. Add 2 points to your FEROCITY. If you set off northwards from here, turn to 81. If you make your way south, turn to 99.

380

The path wends its way through a ravine and into a sheltered valley. It leads past a small hut which huddles beneath a hulking rocky overhang. If you pause to inspect the hut, turn to 242. If you push on out of the valley, turn to 144.



381

Your uncle Zhonggao and his wife Yubei are pleased to see you. You tell them all about the murder of your father and your plans to avenge him and rescue your mother. They feed you and give you a comfortable mat for the night. Next morning, before you take your leave, Yubei gives you a pouch containing 5 Gold Pieces. You thank your relatives and set off through the North Gate. Turn to 18.

382

The sword leaps into your hands as if it had a will of its own. Your opponent parries its first blow, his sword quivering with the shock of the impact. Your second blow is too fast for him and it slices through the black scales of his abdominal armour. His sword swings weakly, but you brush it aside and hack off his head. Turn to 305.

383

After passing through the enormous Great Hall you ignore the many side-passages and make for the doors at the far end, above which hangs an enormous golden fist. Slipping through, you find yourself in a corridor, decorated with the portraits of previous god-kings and lit by small lanterns. By the way the paint has faded, some of these paintings must be over a thousand years old! The corridor leads to a gloomy dark chamber with a table in the middle. You start to cross the chamber when a slight figure slips out of the shadows near by and bars your way. If you are wearing a red robe, turn to 181; otherwise, turn to 324.

384

You keep your eyes peeled as you make your way along the road. Once, you spot a cloud of dust approaching you from ahead, but you hide behind a polder and the horseman doesn't catch sight of you. The bright sun dries your wet clothes and bakes the mud on to your face. You notice a range of hills rising out of the plain ahead of you, and you believe you can make out a tower at their foot. You are nearing your goal.

A shout from the fields to your right catches your attention. It is Quan, waving frantically; behind him are the others. You splash across a field to meet them and tell them what happened to you. Sunai explains that they had given you up for lost, assuming that the mercenary had killed you. Turn to 260.



385

Your opponent moves closer and fixes your eyes with his. You stand, paralysed, as his jerkin opens and slavering insectoid jaws leap from within. Your adventure ends here.



386

You make your farewells and Sunai wishes you good luck in your quest. Before you leave, Bofu gives you a bag of food (it contains 2 Provisions). You make your way out through the North Gate and set your sights on the mountains which rise to the north. Turn to 81.

387

Your father smiles. He passes the item back to you in silence, then his image slowly fades away. Deduct 2 points from your FEROCITY. Turn to 19.



388

The doors to the monastery burst open and five monks rush out. Each of them is carrying a golden sword and they point them at you. In unison they chant: 'Pao-Yeh-Pao-Lo-Mi.' Golden shafts stream from the swords and stab agonizingly at you. Deduct 2 points from your Temporary STAMINA. The monks advance, forcing you down the path. Finally you have no option but to turn and run. The slope is very steep, though, and you find you can't stop yourself. Finally, your legs give way, you trip over a rock, roll several metres down the slope, then black out.

When you wake up, you are staring into the narrowed eyes of an old man. 'A curse is upon you,' he says. 'I can lift it if you wish.' Do you:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| Tell him you want the curse lifted? | Turn to 179 |
| Attack him? | Turn to 279 |
| Refuse his offer and leave? | Turn to 339 |

389

The other children, especially Sunai, are shocked that you attempted to go against the authorities by trying to escape and they urge you to give yourself up. If you free them, turn to 125. If you give yourself up, turn to 47. If you try to escape on your own, turn to 59.

390

The sun is shining brightly overhead as you stride confidently into the camp. Sure enough, these are the barbarians who destroyed the tranquillity of your

village life. If your Age is 15 or over, turn to 220. If your Age is less than 15, turn to 15.

391

You thank your uncle and aunt for their help. Before you leave, Yubei presses a small pouch into your hands. 'If you are to succeed, you will need this. May Arn bless your path,' she says. In the bag are 10 Gold Pieces, more money than you've seen in your life. Note them down on your *Adventure Sheet*.

You promise Zhonggao and Yubei that you will not fail them, and you stride out into the streets of Yenshu. If you have the word 'art' on your *Adventure Sheet*, turn to 25. Otherwise, turn to 176.

392

A figure, dressed in red robes, appears at the top of the stairs. Black eyes peer down at you from a deathly pale face. The figure begins to descend the steps. If you flee, turn to 215. If you wait to see what is going to happen, turn to 90.

393

Maioir smiles. He reaches out towards the demon mask. A scintillating globe surrounds the man's head, then Maioir grasps the mask and tosses it aside. For a moment it hisses and spits as if alive, then flares up and burns to ashes. You gaze upon the face of the mercenary, a face curiously similar to yours. He looks confused – he can remember nothing of the events of the last few years.

With Maioir, you rejoin your mother, then return to the capital. On the way you tell him of Keiko's trade mission. Thanks to the treacherous adviser, Pantu, he had heard nothing of it. Back in the capital, Maioir sets about repairing some of the wrongs caused by the serpent creature's deceptions. Merzei is reinstated as the Grand Councillor, with special responsibilities for controlling and curbing the excesses of the Dragon Guards – using them to disband by force any mercenary bands still roaming the countryside. You are given the honorary title 'Eyes and Ears of the God-King'. Your duty is to travel the land, ensuring that justice always prevails over corruption. You carry the Sacred Sword of Tsui to ensure that you can fight for a just cause. Maioir gives you a golden gauntlet with which to wield it and as a symbol of the God-King's power. Before you leave the capital, you introduce Ambassador Keiko to the king. They are soon deep in discussions, and you begin to wonder whether there may soon be more than just a trade bond between the nations. From your personal tragedy you have forged a new chance for the peoples of the isles. You can hold your head up high at last and call yourself heroic.

394

You begin to chant, preparing a spell which will charm the samurai and place them in your power. By the time the warriors are approaching along the highway, your spell is ready. You step out in front of them and gesture at each in turn, all the time keeping up the chant. They try to draw their swords but, one by one,

they fall under your control. You approach the litter to find out what it is the samurai are guarding. From it peers a beautiful white face. On seeing you it gasps, then lets out a cry — a pure note which reverberates right through your skull! Beside you, the samurai stir. Turn to 323.

395

You make your way down the lower slopes of the mountain to a small village. This shows all the signs of having been visited by the mercenaries: several of the huts are burnt out, and the villagers look haggard and frightened. Sure enough, when you ask them, they tell you that the mercenaries were here, but that they rode off to the south-east. Your path obviously lies to the south — but you are on foot, while the mercenaries ride. A wheeling seagull in the sky above your head gives you an idea — you should travel north to the sea and take a ship southward along the coast. Turn to 142.

396

You begin to chant as loudly as you dare, smearing your fingertips with earth and your eyelids with blood. Soon a cloud begins to billow up from the ground round the mercenaries and the farmers. You move into it, clearly able to see the shapes of the barbarians as they stagger around. One of them stumbles forward, close to you, but you touch him lightly on the shoulder and the earth-power sends him sprawling. You free the farmers from their bonds and lead them out of the camp. Turn to 89.

397

'You are correct, in so far as any question has an answer,' he replies. 'Follow me.' He turns and makes his way along the left-hand path.

As night falls, you ascend the mountain, finally reaching what seems to be a huge gateway into the mountainside. Your escort indicates a narrow gap between the colossal doors. 'Enter!' he says. If you have the word 'silk' written on your *Adventure Sheet*, turn to 3. Otherwise, turn to 241.

398

You learn that the man you have entranced is Master Yao, a reclusive sorcerer of these parts. He knows nothing of politics, preferring to spend his time perfecting his magical arts. You have managed to mesmerize him through the spirit of the Cangui which inhabits your body. Will you:

Free Master Yao from the
enchantment?

Turn to 74

Force him to teach you magic?

Turn to 114

Force him to free you of the Cangui?

Turn to 191

Leave him where he is and proceed?

Turn to 286

399

You start down the steps. Visibility is limited: the tunnel is lit only by a faint luminescence from the walls. Your body feels light and your mood is euphoric. After a while the steps reach a platform, a small square chamber. Out of the shadows emerges an old man, his

face familiar but not identifiable. 'I am Meng Zhidao. I will guide you through these tunnels. In everything there is a pattern, and you will understand only if you observe the pattern. Balance, balance and progress – concentrate on these. Now follow me.' He turns and starts to descend another flight of steps. As if in a dream, you follow. At the bottom of the stairs another tunnel leads off into the gloom. Without hesitation you follow Meng Zhidao along it. You emerge into a foul-smelling cavern, but you have no time to take in its contents before you become aware of another figure, which has just emerged from a parallel tunnel to your right. If you have a red robe, turn to 27. If you have a white face, turn to 177. Otherwise, turn to 298.

400

He leads you through the labyrinthine corridors of the palace until you come to an area of dusty stonework. He gestures you through a doorway, then tugs a lever. The floor gives way; you are plunged into a deep, bone-filled pit. Pantu cackles: an unnerving, high-pitched sound. There is no way out of the pit; you are trapped. Your adventure is over.

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