

PLEASURES OF THE HARBOUR

Pleasures of the Harbour is a mystery adventure in the style of the film *Magic Blade* and the book *Horizon Bright Moon Sabre*, and is meant for a party of any level. In a boat city named Ao Town on the southeast coast of China, the players find themselves swept into a web of intrigue and danger.

Although this adventure is intended for characters of any level, low-level characters will need to use their wits and form alliances with NPCs in order to survive. High level characters may face higher level threats, as NPCs should respond to their presence by seeking powerful allies.

SYNOPSIS

In this adventure, the players go to Ao Town, a floating city of boats, platforms, and other structures founded by pirates. It exists just outside the normal legal purview of the empire. There, they are asked by Xie Lijuan [239] to recover her 'uncle' in the city, only to discover that her 'uncle' is a living weapon: the Heart-Shaping Crown. He was controlled by Sun Lan the Yama Queen [231], and taken by Righteous Killer Long [223], who is trying to do good and liberate him. Righteous Killer Long hires a group of actors to fend off any meddlers, and Sun Lan plots a glorious massacre to draw out Righteous Killer Long. As the players follow clues, Sun Lan leaves a trail of dead bodies so she can find inspiration for her massacre (attracting sharks to the area in the process), while Righteous Killer Long sends his actors after the party to frighten them away. The players are free to investigate and ally with whomever they see fit. They could track down Righteous Killer Long and recover the weapon, or perhaps they might join forces with him to take on the Yama Queen. It is even conceivable that the party will work with either Righteous Killer Long or Sun Lan to kill Xie Lijuan.

The players might also get swept up in the drama between King Feng the Iron Sail [204], Wan Shu [236], and Gu Shengtong [198].

BACKGROUND

Recently, Righteous Killer Long invited Sun Lan the Yama Queen to gamble with him at the Mountain God Casino in Ao Town, although his true goal was to steal the Heart-Shaping Crown from her. He hired actors to impersonate himself so that he could sneak into her room and steal the Heart-Shaping Crown. She had no idea that she was actually gambling with one of the actors and not the real Righteous Killer Long during the theft. When one of her servants informed her that the Heart-Shaping Crown was missing, she killed the actor and stormed off. After going into hiding in Hundred Blossoms Pavilion, Righteous Killer Long has the actors continue to masquerade as him to throw any interlopers off his trail.

After the incident at the casino, Sun Lan hatched a new plan. She is currently plotting to carry out a large-scale massacre to lure Righteous Killer Long out of hiding. Leading up to the final bloodbath, she begins killing random people to find inspiration.

Righteous Killer Long also has allies in the city helping him to fend off investigators: Hanging Ghost Monk of Dongwu Temple and Physician Kang, who took the Heart-Shaping Crown to Turtle Beak Cavern and hired three Golden Crab Gang Chiefs to protect him there.

Most people in the Jianghu don't know that the Heart-Shaping Crown is actually an old man. Righteous Killer Long's motivations are pure: he simply wishes to liberate him.

HOOK

If playing this adventure after the Obsidian Bat adventure, the GM should be able to find plenty of ways to get the players to Ao Town. After all, the entire plot of Obsidian Bat revolves around Xie Lijuan. That said, the journey from the Kaifeng region to southeastern China will involve a trip of roughly two weeks by boat or a month and a half on foot, leaving the GM plenty of opportunities for adventure along the way.



Xie Lijuan sends an invitation to the party asking them to meet her outside Ao Town. When they arrive, she asks them to find her lost uncle, who she says was kidnapped by Righteous Killer Long to cover his gambling debts. She claims to have too many former lovers in Ao Town, and thus wants to avoid the place. She offers the Asura Trident to the players if they help her, as well as a large sum of money. She is hiring nobodies because she doesn't want her involvement to be publicly known.

There are many reasons why players might respond to an invitation from Xie Lijuan. A lot of people want information about her, so they could just be responding in order to find out where she is. They might have become connected to her organisation in a previous adventure (for example, in *The Obsidian Bat* when they interact with Qing Yun). Also, her reputation is such that refusing an invitation could be dangerous.

The Heart-Shaping Crown

Many assume that this weapon is an ancient imperial crown, but it is actually a person. He is a crazy old man who can hypnotise and control people with his gaze, except that he has no will of his own, and follows any instructions given by whoever controls him. When he speaks, roll 3d10 against Wits. On a Success people believe or do what he says within reason (they won't believe anything outrageous or do anything contrary to their own moral code). On a Total Success they believe or do anything he says (even if it conflicts with their sense of reality or their moral code). His ability only works on one target at a time. Among the few people who know the secret of the 'weapon', some claim that its powers are a function of the man's skull, and that it will still work after his death.

EVENTS

When the players go from one location to another, roll on the Event Table. Fit that event to what is going on. Alternatively, you can plan out a series of events for a more structured approach. When ten events have occurred (or whenever you deem fit, based on the party's progress), the two final events occur in sequence. Feel free to ignore the Event Table results or to stop rolling for events if things occurring within the scenario cause that to make less sense (for example, if the party resolves things with Righteous Killer Long and the ten actors, it wouldn't make sense for the actors to continue hounding them).

In the first final event, Sun Lan slaughters workers at a casino and pins the blame on the party. In the second, Righteous Killer Long attacks the party, seeking justice over the slaughter.

Note that any actor result is one of the actors Righteous Killer Long has hired to play himself. Each pretends to be him, and is trying to interrupt or thwart the player characters in their investigation.

Also notable is that there are sharks in the waters that the town is built over, and their numbers increase over the course of the investigation because Sun Lan's killings effectively chum the waters. You can mention the rise in shark activity to players who make a point of observing the waters or asking around.

EVENT TABLE ONE	
d10	Result
1-6	Roll on Table Two: Righteous Killer Long Events
7-10	Roll on Table Three: Sun Lan Events

EVENT TABLE TWO: RIGHTEOUS KILLER LONG EVENTS	
d10	Result
1	Actor Meng Yun dramatically approaches the party and tells them to back off, and that they shouldn't snoop into other peoples' business. He tries to bluff if they become violent, threatening to annihilate them with his 'Ferocious Tornado Style'.
2	Actor Xiang Zhou tries to stop the party.
3	Two actors, Fa Han and Zuan Si, approach from opposite directions and meet the party at the same time. They were not supposed to come together, and they bicker as they each claim to be Righteous Killer Long. At a certain point, they run away in separate directions.
4	Physician Kang and actor Chen Kang try to stop the party from investigating. They block their path, warn them away, then attack if they persist.
5	Actor Wei Ying tries to mock the party and humiliate them in front of the locals. He avoids fighting if he can, but boasts that he will use violence by sunset if they don't leave town.
6	Actor Wu Shen approaches the party and asks them to join him for tea at the Tea Smoke Teahouse. He will offer them 5,000 coins, which he places on the table in the form of 5 gold ingots, to leave without asking any questions. If they negotiate, he will go as high as 10,000. If they refuse, he tells them to watch what they drink while in town, because he will ensure poison passes their lips.
7	Actor Ying Jiangnu confronts the party with great drama, then immediately attacks them.
8	Actor Wang Han approaches the party and warns them that they have incurred his anger. He intends to take their heads if they persist. If they are at all aggressive or refuse, he attacks.
9	King Feng the Iron Sail [204] sends a messenger on his behalf inviting the players to a private meal with him, where he intends to offer them rewards if they can help track down his wife.
10	The true Righteous Killer Long [223] approaches the party with Liu Shishi [209] at his side, and tells the players they must leave. He only intends to engage them for one round and then depart quickly (he has all the remaining non-levelled actors on hand to leap in and help his escape).

EVENT TABLE THREE: SUN LAN EVENTS

d10	Result
1	Pipa-Playing Witch [221] approaches the party and explains that Sun Lan the Yama Queen [228], her master, is interested in speaking with them (Sun Lan wants their help in finding and getting rid of Righteous Killer Long).
2	The players hear crowds gathering around a dead body (see 'Sun Lan's Killings' for more details). A Medicine and Alchemy roll against TN 8 reveals that the corpse was immobilised immediately before death. On a total success, the cause of immobilisation is revealed to be a pattern of needle marks on various acupoints. A Jianghu roll at TN 6 confirms that the cause of immobilisation was the Ten Needles of the Courts of Hell, the signature weapon of Sun Lan the Yama Queen.
3	The players stumble upon a mutilated corpse, a victim of Sun Lan's that she used as inspiration for poetry (see 'Sun Lan's Killings' for more details). There is also a line of poetry written in blood above the corpse: "How swiftly death comes, a dewdrop of blood in the parched dawn." A Medicine and Alchemy roll at TN 8 reveals that the corpse was immobilised immediately before death. On a total success, the cause of immobilisation is revealed to be a pattern of needle marks on various acupoints. A Jianghu roll at TN 6 confirms that the cause of immobilisation was the Ten Needles of the Courts of Hell, the signature weapon of Sun Lan the Yama Queen. A Detect roll at TN 10 will reveal tiny drops of blood leading in the direction of Sun Lan's hideout at the Mirrored Sky Society. A Survival roll at TN 9 will allow the players to follow those blood drops.
4	The players find a pile of mutilated corpses on the way to their next location. The severed limbs, heads, torsos, etc. have been artfully arranged into a mandala (see 'Sun Lan's Killings' for more details). There is also a line of poetry written in blood above the corpse: "Those who speak waste their breath, those who know breathe not." A Medicine and Alchemy roll at TN 8 reveals that the corpses were immobilised immediately before death. On a total success, the cause of immobilisation is revealed to be patterns of needle marks on various acupoints. A Jianghu roll against TN 6 confirms that the cause of immobilisation was the Ten Needles of the Courts of Hell [93], the signature weapon of Sun Lan the Yama Queen.
5	An actor is found dead in the road (choose any random actor still alive) with a message pinned to his chest that reads: "My Dear, you have committed evil by stealing my Heart-Shaping Crown. I will soon collect what you owe me. Keep my Crown safe until then – Yama Queen."
6	Poetry is found written on a wall: "Even should one zealously strive for peace, that very striving will lead to pain." A Scholarly Arts roll against TN 6 reveals that the poem is written in the style of Sun Lan. On a total success, the character realises that this is different from her early popular poetry, and has never been distributed widely. Furthermore, the player character recognises the calligraphy as Sun Lan's. A Detect roll at TN 9 reveals that the poetry is written in blood.
7	Gu Shengtong [198] sends an emissary to the party and tries to persuade them to work with her. She offers them money, men, and other resources (as well as other assistance in their current investigation) if they kill Lady Iron Hand.
8	A mad beggar wanders the streets and says he witnessed a murder. The beggar provides the description of a woman who carried out the murders (or who fled the scene). The beggar says: "She was beautiful, but terrifying. She had long black hair and green eyes. She licked the blood from her fingers as she walked away." A Jianghu roll against TN 7 confirms that the physical description matches that of Sun Lan.
9	Inspector Shi Jia [225] accosts the party and asks if they know anything about the recent killings (see 'Sun Lan's Killings').
10	Handsome Bearded Hero [225] or Qing Yun [222] (roll Detect at TN 7 to spot) follows the party and tries to determine whether they are still loyal to Xie Lijuan. If not, they confront the players.

SUN LAN'S KILLINGS

Throughout the adventure, Sun Lan carries out a number of horrific murders to find inspiration for her poetry. These murders occur whether or not the players encounter them.

These killings increasingly attract more sharks to the area. You can mention the rise in shark activity to players who make a point of observing the waters. There is a note about encounters with sharks in the Ao Town entry below.

Here is a full list of the people she kills with basic details of them:

Dead Body (Event Table Result 2)

This is the body of Little Guan, an apprentice to the local butcher, Nie Bao; see 'Butcher Nie'.

Mutilated Corpse (Event Table Result 3)

This is the body of Zhu Nuan, a woman who sells fans in the morning market.

The Pile of Mutilated Corpses (Event Table Result 4)

This mound is made up of 20 people. Their organs are arranged into the pattern of a mandala. They are a group of retired scholars who had been celebrating at the Hundred Blossoms Pavilion and happened upon Sun Lan. Here are all their names, with minor notes about personality for some in case the players should ask around: Lin Yu, Leng Tian, Hua Fei, Zhu Kang (the most dour and poetic of the group), Meng She, Sima Fuling, Song Guo, Qin Shu, Fan Bu, Li Qi, Ban Yong, Feng Hua (the most jovial and carefree of the group), Yao Pu (the leader of the group), Hong Bai, Ouyang Qi (the most romantic of the group), Pei Xiang, Hu Si, Ma Chengda, Xiao Lushan, and Jin Buwei.

Dead Actor (Event Table Result 5)

This is one of the actors hired by Righteous Long. Sun Lan killed this person and pinned a note to his chest. Select any of the actors at random.

FINAL EVENT ONE: SUN LAN SLAUGHTERS SCHOONER CASINO

Sun Lan convinces the poets at the Mirrored Sky Society to go with her to kill everyone at Schooner Casino. They do so in a way that leaves clues implicating the player characters. The poets dress as members of the party and use the same weapons as the party. Only close examination of the slaughter reveals that the attacks were sloppy and not performed by skilled martial artists. The purpose of doing this is to draw out Righteous Killer Long and potentially pit him against the meddlers. If the players agree to work with Sun Lan at any point, she instead shifts the blame to Righteous Killer Long himself and tries to get the players to face off with him.

FINAL EVENT TWO: RIGHTEOUS KILLER LONG CONFRONTS THE PARTY

If Righteous Killer Long believes the party is guilty of the slaughter at the Schooner Casino, he seeks them out. He accuses them of the murders and attacks them. This is very dependent on the circumstances; if he is with the party when the slaughter occurs, for example, it is likely that he will not find the deception convincing, and it should be easy for the players to work with him against Sun Lan. Adapt as needed to the circumstances. The players should be given a chance to convince him of their innocence (even if it is between sword strokes).

THE NINE ACTORS AND OTHER ENCOUNTERS

These are the remaining actors who Righteous Killer Long hired to portray him and fend off any meddlers. They are very skilled actors, but most, with the exception of a few noted below in the stat block, are not skilled at martial arts. They tend to exaggerate their gestures and move in a theatrical style. Even when they attack, their aim is usually to frighten the player characters away. Each actor possesses a different clue that can be gained through interrogation or clever discussion (or even bribery).

WU SHEN, FA HAN, ZUAN SI, WEI YING, MENG YUN, AND XIANG ZHOU (NINE ACTORS)

These actors are utterly unskilled in martial arts, but can put on a convincing performance. They will even flip and do weapon forms using athletics to give the impression that they know martial arts.

Clues (actor with clue noted in parenthesis): Wu Shen (The uncle they seek is a man called the Heart-Shaping Crown), Fa Han (Righteous Killer Long said something about a Top Ten Weapon falling into the wrong hands), Zuan Si (Righteous Killer Long is good friends with Lady Ren of the Tea Smoke Teahouse), Wei Ying (Physician Kang of Singing Phoenix Manor is one of Righteous Killer Long's allies), Xiang Zhou (the proprietor of Li's Antiques might know a thing or two), and Meng Yun (Sun Lan is up to something).

Defences: Hardiness 7, Evade 5, Wits 8

Skills: Lightness Martial Arts: 0d10, External Martial Arts: 0d10, Internal Martial Arts: 0d10, Speed: 2d10, Muscle: 1d10, Detect: 1d10, Talent: 3d10, Trade: 2d10, Survival: 1d10, Disguise: 3d10, Magical Arts: 1d10, Theft: 2d10, Persuade: 3d10, Command: 2d10, Athletics: 3d10

Level/Killing Aura/Drinking Limit: 0

Killing Aura Darkness: 1 (can make a Command roll against Wits to seem like it is 7)

Max Wounds: 1

Equipment: Guan Dao [80]

YING JIANGNU (NINE ACTORS)

Ying Jiangnu is the only female actor in the group, but is very good at impersonating Righteous Killer Long. She also has some training in martial arts and is hoping to impress Righteous Killer Long with her abilities and thus become his disciple. She dresses in particularly fine robes while masquerading as him. She learned Life-Chasing Sword from Sword Goddess [210], who owed her a single favour. Ying Jiangnu is not a killer, and just fights to stop the party.

Clue: She knows that Righteous Killer Long is staying at Hundred Blossoms Pavilion.

Defences: Hardiness 7, Evade 7, Wits 6

Skills: Lightness Martial Arts: 2d10, External Martial Arts: 2d10, Internal Martial Arts: 0d10, Speed: 2d10, Muscle: 2d10, Detect: 2d10, Talent: 3d10, Trade: 3d10, Disguise: 3d10, Magical Arts: 3d10, Athletics: 3d10, Persuade: 2d10, Command: 2d10, Jianghu: 2d10, Religion: 2d10, Institutions: 2d10

Level/Killing Aura/Drinking Limit: 4

Killing Aura Darkness: 0

Max Wounds: 4

Resist: 1

Eccentricities: Dutiful

Social Resources: None

Grudges/Rivalries: None

Allies: Righteous Killer Long [223], Liu Xiuling [210]

Minions: None

Equipment: Guan Dao [80]

Signature Abilities: Guan Dao Master [46], Life-Chasing Sword I [50]

Counters: Defence of Sun Bin [64]

WANG HAN (NINE ACTORS)

Wang Han is obsessed with becoming Righteous Killer Long and truly believes he is turning into a great martial hero. Although he has developed some basic martial arts abilities by emulating Righteous Killer Long, he still has much to learn. He fights savagely, yearning for the glory of combat, but not realising its bitter consequences.

Clue: Wang Han knows that Righteous Killer Long is staying with Liu Shishi. The two are lovers, and he gets very jealous of anyone who shows her attention. Wang Han also knows that the Heart-Shaping Crown is not with Righteous Killer Long but was passed to Physician Kang.

Defences: Hardiness 7, Evade 8, Wits 5

Skills: Lightness Martial Arts: 0d10, External Martial Arts: 0d10, Internal Martial Arts: 0d10, Speed: 2d10, Muscle: 1d10, Detect: 1d10, Talent: 3d10, Trade: 2d10, Survival: 1d10, Disguise: 3d10, Magical Arts: 1d10, Theft: 2d10, Persuade: 3d10, Command: 2d10, Athletics: 3d10

Level/Killing Aura/Drinking Limit: 1

Killing Aura Darkness: 0

Max Wounds: 3

Resist: 0

Eccentricities: Irascible

Social Resources: None

Grudges/Rivalries: None

Allies: Righteous Killer Long [223]

Minions: None

Equipment: Guan Dao [80]

Signature Abilities: Guan Dao Master [46]

Counters: Reaching Defence [67]

CHEN KANG (NINE ACTORS)

Chen Kang has become good friends with Physician Kang. He is also an able martial artist.

Clue: Chen Kang knows that Xie Lijuan has no uncle. The Heart-Shaping Crown is a man who was held against his will by Sun Lan.

Defences: Hardiness 7, Evade 7, Wits 7

Skills: Lightness Martial Arts: 1d10, External Martial Arts: 2d10, Internal Martial Arts: 2d10, Speed: 2d10, Muscle: 2d10, Detect: 1d10, Talent: 3d10, Trade: 2d10, Survival: 1d10, Disguise: 3d10, Magical Arts: 1d10, Theft: 2d10, Persuade: 2d10, Command: 3d10, Athletics: 2d10

Level/Killing Aura/Drinking Limit: 2

Max Wounds: 3

Resist: 0

Eccentricities: None

Social Resources: None

Grudges/Rivalries: None

Allies: Physician Kang, Righteous Killer Long [223]

Minions: None

Equipment: Guan Dao [80]

Signature Abilities: Guan Dao Master [46]

Counters: Metal Skin [67]

PHYSICIAN KANG

See 'Singing Phoenix Manor' entry.

AO TOWN

Leadership: King Feng the Iron Sail [204] and Gu Shengtong [198]

Population: 12,000

This southeastern coastal community is a makeshift settlement of boats and floating structures strewn together, as well as some permanent structures on shore. It is controlled by King Feng the Iron Sail, a pirate who devised an arrangement with the empire allowing him to operate a town of pleasure and gambling, provided that he occasionally gives them information and tribute. However, the town is mostly set up to convert into a fleet and depart at a moment's notice.

Although most of the inhabitants are Chinese, there are a substantial number of Korean and Japanese inhabitants as well (particularly among King Feng's retinue of constables, officials, and soldiers). This is because King Feng the Iron Sail recruited pirates from throughout the East China Sea and Yellow Sea when he was actively engaged in piracy.

LAW AND ORDER

The city has a loose group of constables led by the sheriff, Gu Shengtong. However, it should be noted that these are former pirates who have become lawmen. Their methods are crude, their understanding of law lacking, and they don't particularly enjoy their work. Residents are free to call upon them, or petition King Feng the Iron Sail, but generally prefer to sort things out themselves. In fact, bringing an accusation before King Feng the Iron Sail often results in a punishment for the accuser. They will be slow to investigate the murders, but once they do, the party will have to work with the approval of the sheriff. The GM should feel free to introduce local law enforcement and Gu Shengtong when appropriate as events unfold.

King Iron Sail also directly commands 100 soldiers for defensive purposes.

Gu Shengtong

See Gu Shengtong entry [198]

Constables (45)

Defences: Hardiness 5, Evade 5, Wits 6	Max Wounds: 1
Skills: Lightness Martial Arts: 1d10, External Martial Arts: 1d10, Internal Martial Arts: 0d10, Speed: 1d10, Muscle: 1d10, Detect: 2d10, Medicine and Alchemy: 2d10	Resist: 0
Level/Killing Aura/Drinking Limit: 0	Equipment: Sabre [80]
	Signature Abilities: None
	Counters: None

Ao Town Soldiers (100)

These are loyal soldiers under the direct command of King Iron Sail.

Defences: Hardiness 5, Evade 5, Wits 5	Resist: 0
Skills: Lightness Martial Arts: 0d10, External Martial Arts: 1d10, Internal Martial Arts: 0d10, Speed: 0d10, Muscle: 0d10, Detect: 1d10	Equipment: Spear [81]
Level/Killing Aura/Drinking Limit: 0	Signature Abilities: None
Max Wounds: 1	Counters: None

FLOATING RUMOURS

These are rumours that can be heard from asking people around town. Generally speaking, an easy way to handle this is to let the person with the highest Survival skill roll against TN 7 to spend several hours asking around. On a success, a rumour can be found; on a total success, two can be found. Some of the rumours are true, some are not. You can roll randomly on the Rumour Table, or if players are asking something specific and the answer is on the table, you can simply give them that result.

If any player has the Signature Ability Art of 10,000 Eyes and Ears, and uses it successfully, you can give him or her all the rumours on this table.

RUMOUR TABLE	
d10	Rumour
1	Righteous Killer Long came into town recently and has been seen at some of the local brothels and gambling halls.
2	Supposedly, one of the top ten weapons [91] is going to be passing through the nearest major city, and possibly Ao Town.
3	There have been strange murders going on in town recently.
4	Righteous Killer Long was killed by Sun Lan the Yama Queen at Mountain God Casino very recently.
5	Xie Lijuan was spotted in the area recently, but no one expects her to come to Ao Town. Several jilted lovers of hers are permanent residents, and she has been informally banned from town.
6	The scholars of the Mirrored Sky Society are very excited that Sun Lan, the famed poet, is in Ao Town.
7	Righteous Killer Long is an immortal who cannot die (this obviously false rumour is grounded in the fact that Righteous Killer Long hired actors to disguise themselves as him).
8	Physician Kang of Singing Phoenix Manor is good friends with Righteous Killer Long.
9	There has been a dramatic rise in the number of sharks lately.
10	All of Ao Town is built on top of a gigantic turtle. If you swim out far enough, you can see the turtle's head (this false rumour is spread by people who want to see someone get eaten by sharks).

THE SHARK-INFESTED WATERS OF AO TOWN

The waters of Ao Town teem with sharks. Anyone who spends more than ten minutes in the water must make a Survival roll against TN 7 to avoid an encounter with them. Use the 'Shark' entry on page 250 for such encounters. The sharks have been attracted by blood falling through the platforms and walkways as a result of the Yama Queen's killings. As the adventure goes on, the number of sharks visibly grows. When players have a shark encounter, the number of sharks involved increases by one each day (beginning with one shark and going up to ten).

GOLDEN CRAB GANG

This is a group of criminals, largely former pirates, who force small shops and businesses to pay protection money in their territory. They claim to be the 'good guys' protecting innocent merchants from the wicked Black Turtle Society. They are known for their Golden Crab Style. They were hired by Physician Kang to help protect the Heart-Shaping Crown.

Golden Crab Gang (80)

Defences: Hardiness 5, Evade 5, Wits 5

Skills: Lightness Martial Arts: 1d10, External Martial Arts: 1d10, Internal Martial Arts: 0d10, Speed: 2d10, Muscle: 2d10, **Detect:** 2d10, Survival: 3d10, Trade: 2d10, Drinking: 1d10, Theft: 2d10

Level/Killing Aura/Drinking Limit: 0

Max Wounds: 1

Golden Crab Chiefs (8)

Defences: Hardiness 8, Evade 6, Wits 6

Skills: Lightness Martial Arts: 2d10, External Martial Arts: 2d10, Internal Martial Arts: 0d10, Speed: 3d10, Muscle: 3d10, **Detect:** 3d10, Survival: 3d10, Trade: 3d10, Drinking: 2d10, Theft: 3d10, Gambling: 1d10, Command: 3d10, JIanghu: 3d10, Peoples and Places: 2d10, Religion: 1d10

Level/Killing Aura/Drinking Limit: 1

Max Wounds: 3

Resist: 0

Equipment: None

Signature Abilities: Golden Crab Style [45]

Counters: Water Torrent [69]

BLACK TURTLE SOCIETY

The Black Turtle Society is cruel and ruthless. Its members engage in all manner of criminal activity, and collect protection money from anyone in their territory. They are also aggressively trying to expand into the Golden Crab Gang's area of the city. Wealthy merchants are one of their favourite targets. They often leave a black turtle shell at a person's residence. Anyone who receives such a shell is understood to have four days to pay 10,000 coins. Anyone who doesn't pay is fed to the sharks.

Black Turtle Society Members (20)

Defences: Hardiness 9, Evade 5, Wits 6

Skills: Lightness Martial Arts: 0d10, External Martial Arts: 2d10, Internal Martial Arts: 2d10, Speed: 1d10, Muscle: 3d10, **Detect:** 2d10, Endurance: 2d10, Medicine and Alchemy: 3d10, Survival: 3d10, Disguise: 3d10, Magical Arts: 2d10, Theft: 1d10, Empathy: 2d10, Persuade: 2d10, Institutions: 2d10, JIanghu: 2d10, Peoples and Places: 2d10

Level/Killing Aura/Drinking Limit: 1

Max Wounds: 3

Resist: 0

Equipment: None

Signature Abilities: Empowering Palm [41]

Counters: Yan's Gambit [69]

Black Turtle Assassin (4)

Defences: Hardiness 9, Evade 5, Wits 7

Skills: Lightness Martial Arts: 0d10, External Martial Arts: 2d10, Internal Martial Arts: 3d10, Speed: 1d10, Muscle: 3d10, **Detect:** 2d10, Endurance: 2d10, Medicine and Alchemy: 3d10, Survival: 3d10, Disguise: 3d10, Magical Arts: 2d10, Theft: 1d10, Empathy: 2d10, Persuade: 2d10, Institutions: 2d10, JIanghu: 2d10, Peoples and Places: 2d10

Level/Killing Aura/Drinking Limit: 4

Max Wounds: 4

Resist: 1

Equipment: None

Signature Abilities: Empowering Palm [41], Empowering Palm of the Heavens [41]

Counters: Yan's Gambit [69]



KEY LOCATIONS IN AO TOWN

A. MORNING MARKET

This is where people gather to trade and sell goods every day from sunrise to noon. Pavilion tents, food stalls, booth shops, and more can be found here.

I. IRON SAIL PALACE

This is the residence of King Feng the Iron Sail, the leader of Ao Town. King Iron Sail effectively acts as a city lord from his residence, where he regularly receives petitioners from morning to noon. However, the real power in Ao Town is Sheriff Gu Shengtong [198], who manages most of his ground level affairs.

For information on King Iron Sail's estranged wife, see 'Lady Iron Hand' in Chapter Eleven [236].

King Feng the Iron Sail

See King Feng the Iron Sail entry [204]

2. DONGWU TEMPLE

This is a ruined Buddhist temple that is rumoured to be inhabited by a 'hanged ghost'. In truth, this is Hanging Ghost Monk [199], who lurks here and tries to frighten off meddlers. There is the body of a poet, killed by Hanging Ghost Monk, in the debris. Hanging Ghost Monk is friends with Righteous Killer Long, and lets him use the area to broker agreements. He will explain what he knows to the players, but he has promised to kill anyone who enquires about Righteous Killer Long or the actors. If necessary, he will tell the players to defend themselves as he readies an attack.

What Hanging Ghost Monk knows:

- Righteous Killer Long is a good man and is only trying to protect an elder who has been exploited by the more wicked ranks of the Jianghu. But he is determined to stop meddlers, and the player characters will put themselves in danger if they continue to pursue the matter.
- If killed but given time to speak before death, he tells them if they want to do good, they should work with Righteous Killer Long against Sun Lan the Yama Queen.
- The dead body is a poet from the Mirrored Sky Society who asked too many questions about Righteous Killer Long, so Hanging Ghost Monk killed him with his rope dart. He utters 'Amitabha' (a buddhist mantra) at the end of this explanation.

Hanging Ghost Monk

See Hanging Ghost Monk entry [199]

3. HUNDRED BLOSSOMS PAVILION

This four-storey boat is a brothel. Righteous Killer Long [223] comes here often, and is currently residing in a three-room suite on the fourth floor with Liu Shishi [209], a famed courtesan and the sister of Sword Goddess [210].

The brothel is run by Madame Kuan, a hot-tempered auntie with a gentle and compassionate heart (she views Righteous Killer Long like a son). She treats her workers well, but expects 60% of what anyone makes (and is very shrewd about business in general).

Investigating the Hundred Blossoms Pavilion

Madame Kuan is actively protecting Righteous Killer Long, and is on the lookout for suspicious people asking questions. Clever players can pretend to be customers, try to get work at the brothel, or find other ways to gain entrance and snoop around. There are guards, however. The brothel's walls are made of lacquered wood.

The Pile of Mutilated Corpses

If the players inquire about the Pile of Mutilated Corpses (result 4 on 'Event Table Three: Sun Lan Events'), people here will mention a party of retired scholar-officials. A few of the courtesans will fondly recall Ouyang Qi, and his death will motivate them to reveal that Righteous Killer Long is present and can be counted on to get vengeance.

Guards (10)

These are little more than bouncers. There is one guard on each floor, and the rest are stationed at various places (for example, each suite has a guard in front).

Defences: Hardiness 5, Evade 5, Wits 5

Skills: Lightness Martial Arts: 0d10, External Martial Arts: 1d10, Internal Martial Arts: 0d10, Speed: 1d10, Muscle: 1d10, Detect: 1d10

Level/Killing Aura/Drinking Limit: 0

Max Wounds: 1

Resist: 0

Equipment: Sticks (2d10 damage and +1d10 to attack)

Signature Abilities: None

Counters: None

Madame Kuan

Madame Kuan is in her sixties and still quite beautiful. Although she carries herself with a stern, even harsh demeanour, her heart is tender. With clients, her disposition can turn very quickly depending on her perception of their wealth and generosity (she is more kind to those who seem like big spenders). She treats anyone with imperial connections exceptionally well.

Madame Kuan is helping Righteous Killer Long and has a deep maternal relationship with him. She has a bit of jealousy towards Lady Ren, of the Tea Smoke Tea House, who raised Righteous Killer Long.

Defences: Hardiness 5, Evade 5, Wits 7

Skills: Lightness Martial Arts: 0d10, External Martial Arts: 1d10, Internal Martial Arts: 0d10, Speed: 0d10, Muscle: 0d10, Detect: 3d10, Talent: 3d10, Trade: 2d10, Gambling: 3d10, Empathy: 2d10, Command: 2d10, Jianghu: 3d10, Institutions: 2d10, Scholarly Arts: 3d10

Level/Killing Aura/Drinking Limit: 0

Killing Aura Darkness: 0

Max Wounds: 1

Resist: 3

Eccentricities: None

Social Resources: None

Grudges/Rivalries: Lady Ren

Allies: Righteous Killer Long

Minions: Workers

Equipment: None

Signature Abilities: None

Counters: None

4. MOUNTAIN GOD CASINO

This is a gambling hall run by Boss Wong (who secretly works for Sun Lan). There are a number of sectioned-off areas and tables for gaming (including a wide range of dice and domino-based games). There are also private inn rooms guests can stay at the standard rates [104].

RIGHTEOUS KILLER LONG

References to Righteous Killer Long in quotation marks below refer to Qing Wan disguised as him.

Clues to be found here:

- People describe a recent high-stakes game between “Righteous Killer Long” and Sun Lan. Sun Lan flew into a rage during the game after one of her servants whispered in her ear, then killed “Righteous Killer Long” by first immobilising his body with her Ten Needles of the Court of Hell and then snapping his neck. Though this is unknown to the witnesses, the man killed was actually an actor named Qing Wang hired to play Righteous Killer Long.
- Sun Lan had a room here (which players can inspect), but she and her retinue left on the night of the event.
- “Righteous Killer Long’s” body was taken away by a local woman named Qing Pei (see ‘Qing Pei’s Restaurant’ for details).

Clues in Sun Lan’s room:

- If the players inspect Sun Lan’s room, they can find poetry that has been recently carved into the wall. It hints that Sun Lan can be found at the Mirrored Sky Society. The poem reads: “Black clouds under mirrored sky; owls cower inside. Lazing low they scream, cry, at mercy of the crown. In the mirrored sky she speaks, the poet queen. Made of painful moans like this, the needles draw her words.”
- What happened: Righteous Killer Long hired an actor named Qing Wan to pretend to be him and distract Sun Lan. While Qing Wan was playing dice with Sun Lan, Righteous Killer Long snuck into Sun Lan’s room and rescued the Heart-Shaping Crown. When one of Sun Lan’s servants reported that the Heart-Shaping Crown was missing, she killed Qing Wan (believing he was Righteous Killer Long). Qing Wan’s mother, Qing Pei, quietly came and took the body back to her home for mourning.

5. THE SCHOONER CASINO

This is a small, rundown casino, where the tables cheat against patrons frequently. It is run by Boss Yen, who currently owes 25,000 coins to the Black Turtle Society. He would be willing to help anyone who can get him out of this predicament.

What people know:

- Sun Lan the Yama Queen has been here several times, but only to play a few rounds of dice. Note: This is true, she has been here because she is planning an attack.
- Righteous Killer Long has a long-standing feud with Boss Yen, so he rarely comes here, but they used to be friends.

6. MIRRORED SKY SOCIETY

This is a society of local poets who are mostly scholar-officials. They are admirers of Sun Lan and have all her works. She has agreed to visit them and is staying here. What they do not realise is that she intends to create a masterpiece of poetry that will drive them to murder the workers at Schooner Casino (using her Inspired Word Signature Ability).

Sun Lan is happy to work with the party if she can get her Heart-Shaping Crown back.

7. QING PEI’S RESTAURANT

This small ship serves as a restaurant that specialises in seafood and noodles. The owner, Qing Pei, is an old lady. Her son was one of the actors hired to be a double for Righteous Killer Long. His name was Qing Wan, and he was killed by Sun Lan at the Mountain God Casino. Qing Pei retrieved his body and is in mourning, with it laid out before an altar in her residence (attached to the ship).

What Qing Pei knows:

- Her son was hired by a local swordsman to go to the casino. They had made an arrangement at Dongwu Temple.
- Her son was part of a local troupe that operated out of the Blue Phoenix Theatre.

8. SINGING PHOENIX MANOR

This is the residence of Physician Kang. He is reluctant to help the players in their investigation and has promised to stop anyone from meddling. If they come to him, he will urge them to either go home or help him investigate Sun Lan. Physician Kang placed the Heart-Shaping Crown in Turtle Beak Cavern.

What Physician Kang knows:

- Righteous Killer Long handed him the Heart-Shaping Crown, and he took him to Turtle Beak Cavern, then hired three Golden Crab Gang chiefs to stand guard.
- Righteous Killer Long is trying to protect the Heart-Shaping Crown because he believes others are exploiting him.
- Righteous Killer Long is staying at the Hundred Blossoms Pavilion.

Physician Kang

Physician Kang is a large man with a healthy appetite and elegant demeanour. He is particularly interested in the goings-on of Sun Lan the Yama Queen, and is worried that she is planning a reprisal. He has promised Righteous Killer Long that he will stop any meddlers, but will also seek to turn meddlers to his side and warn them about Sun Lan's devious nature. He will not kill anyone, he will merely stop them and treat their wounds.

Defences: Hardiness 8, Evade 5, Wits 7

Skills: Lightness Martial Arts: 0d10, External Martial Arts: 2d10, Internal Martial Arts: 3d10, Speed: 1d10, Muscle: 3d10, Detect: 2d10, Medicine and Alchemy: 3d10, Survival: 2d10, Trade: 1d10, Drinking: 3d10, Gambling: 3d10, Persuade: 3d10, Empathy: 1d10, Endurance: 2d10, Jianghu: 2d10, Scholarly Arts: 2d10, Institutions: 2d10

Level/Killing Aura/Drinking Limit: 1

Killing Aura Darkness: 0

Max Wounds: 4

Resist: 1

Eccentricities: Eater

Social Resources: None

Grudges/Rivalries: None

Allies: Righteous Killer Long [223], Hanging Ghost Monk [199]

Equipment: None

Signature Abilities: Acupoint Attack Style [35], Enlightening Fist Style [42]

Counters: Acupoint Defence [63], Closing Defence [64]

9. BLUE PHOENIX THEATRE

A theatre with many talented poets, actors, and musicians. Operas are performed here, as well acrobatics and even animal acts and magic shows. This theatre also functions as a teahouse. The teahouse is inside the ship, while the stage is actually in the open air and faces the road so that people can gather around to watch. This is a place where many of the less savoury elements of the city congregate. Criminal deals are often arranged here, prostitutes seek clientele at the teahouse, and more than one murder has occurred during the chaos of a performance.

The director, Yu Guo, is a very athletic and acrobatic performer. He likes plays and operas that feature tragedy and bloodshed.

What Yu Guo knows:

- Ten of his actors recently left to work with a local swordsman. The actors are: Qing Wan (see area 7), Wu Shen, Fa Han, Zuan Si, Wei Ying, Meng Yun, Xiang Zhou, Ying Jiangnu (the only female in the group of ten), Wang Han, and Chen Kang.
- Three poets from the Mirrored Sky Society came here asking about actors impersonating Righteous Killer Long.
- His actors said something about meetings with Righteous Killer Long at the Tea Smoke Teahouse.

10. TEA SMOKE TEAHOUSE

This teahouse is little more than a respectable front for a brothel. It is operated by Lady Ren, who is knowledgeable of the scholarly arts and has many contacts in the Imperial Bureaucracy. She is also quite fond of Righteous Killer Long, whom she regards as a son. Lady Ren will talk to the players, but only if they promise not to harm Righteous Killer Long.

What Lady Ren knows:

- Righteous Killer Long let the actors interview him on multiple occasions in order to prepare some special performance. It seemed they wanted to use him for inspiration. (Note: This is a misunderstanding on Lady Ren's part, they were trying to learn more about portraying him).
- Righteous Killer Long is staying at the Hundred Blossoms Pavilion.
- She pleads with the party to help protect Righteous Killer Long.

Lady Ren

See her entry in Chapter Eleven [205]

11. LI'S ANTIQUES

This shop is run by Thief Goddess Li [231], who just goes by Miss Li here. She sells and buys stolen goods of all kinds. She also trades local information for the right price. Thief Goddess Li knows all of the available clues in the adventure, as she has been doing her own snooping, and will sell this information to the players at 4,000 coins per clue.

Li recently stole the Cloak of Qi Shihuang [94], and she would be willing to part with it if someone could obtain an equally valuable item or pledge four years of service to her (the precise details of this service can be negotiated).



12. BUTCHER NIE

This is the shop of Butcher Nie, operated by him and his apprentice Little Guan. They have a variety of pork cuts and some beef as well. Price varies by cut, but generally pork is 2 coins per catty and beef is 5 coins per catty.

What Butcher Nie knows:

- If Little Guan is killed, he can identify the body, and can deduce that it was the Sun Lan Yama Queen who killed him.
- He knows that the man killed at the Mountain God Casino was really an actor who is the son of Qing Pei (see 'Qing Pei's Restaurant').
- He knows that the Tea Smoke Teahouse is really a brothel. He also knows that Righteous Killer Long was raised by the owner, Lady Ren.
- He knows that the poets at the Mirrored Sky Society are always up to no good. He doesn't trust them. He says they smell like nefarious sorts.

Nie Bao (Butcher Nie)

Butcher Nie is a difficult man to get along with. He shouts at any customers who express dissatisfaction or who make excessive demands. But he is a gossip and knows a lot about the happenings in town. He has punched more than one displeased customer in the face. He has an apprentice named Little Guan (who will likely die by the hand of Sun Lan over the course of this adventure). Butcher Nie views Little Guan as a son. Nie Bao can share his expertise on anatomy and butchery to help shed light on the murder victims and the methods used to kill them. He will also help the players fight Sun Lan after Little Guan dies (if they intend to contend with her), because he will want revenge.

Defences: Hardiness 8, Evade 7, Wits 5

Skills: Lightness Martial Arts: 1d10, External Martial Arts: 3d10, Internal Martial Arts: 1d10, Speed: 2d10, Muscle: 3d10, Detect: 2d10, Medicine and Alchemy: 1d10, Survival: 2d10, Trade: 3d10, Drinking: 3d10, Gambling: 3d10, Command: 2d10, Reasoning: 2d10, Endurance: 1d10, Jianghu: 3d10, Peoples and Places: 3d10

Level/Killing Aura/Drinking Limit: 2

Killing Aura Darkness: 15

Max Wounds: 3

Resist: 0

Eccentricities: Irascible

Grudges/Rivalries: None

Social Resources: None

Allies: Little Guan

Minions: None

Equipment: Cleaver [77]

Signature Abilities: Studied Blade Style [57]

Counters: Closing Defence [64]

13. TURTLE BEAK CAVERN

This sea cave is long and narrow, and difficult to wade through, with many jagged rocks rising up that resemble curved turtle beaks. It requires a Survival roll against TN 7 every ten minutes to avoid encounters with 1–2 sharks.

There are three Golden Crab Chiefs guarding the Heart-Shaping Crown.

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Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

Kemp House, Chawley Park, Cumnor Hill, Oxford OX2 9PH, UK

29 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2, Ireland

1385 Broadway, 5th Floor, New York, NY 10018, USA

E-mail: info@ospreygames.co.uk

www.ospreygames.co.uk

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