# The Way of the Unseen Fist:

# Tactical Combat Rulebook

## Part I: The Foundation of Combat

This section establishes the fundamental rules of the tactical environment, defining space, time, and the core resolution mechanics that govern every action on the grid. It transforms the narrative concepts of the world into a concrete, measurable framework for miniature-based gameplay, providing the bedrock upon which all subsequent tactical rules are built.

### Chapter 1: The Battlefield Grid

The world of *The Way of the Unseen Fist* is a place of stark contrasts, from the forgotten alleyways of sprawling metropolises to the silent depths of ancient forests.1 To represent these diverse battlegrounds, this system uses a tactical grid, turning abstract space into a defined arena where every step and every position matters.

#### 1.1 The Scale of Battle

All combat and tactical movement is resolved on a square grid. This grid represents a top-down view of the battlefield, with each square serving as the basic unit of measurement for distance and area.

* **Grid Scale:** Each square on the grid represents an area 1.5 meters across (approximately 5 feet). This is a standard and effective scale for representing personal combat, allowing for clear positioning and movement without excessive complexity.1
* **Miniature Placement:** A standard human-sized character, represented by a miniature or token, occupies a single square on the grid. Larger creatures, such as powerful Yaoguai, may occupy multiple squares, as detailed in Chapter 10.1
* **Measuring Distance:** Distance between two points on the grid is measured by counting the squares. When measuring for movement or the range of an ability, counting diagonally is permitted. The first diagonal square counts as 1 square of movement, the second counts as 2, the third as 1, the fourth as 2, and so on. This method provides a more accurate representation of diagonal distance than simply counting each diagonal as one square.

#### 1.2 Line of Sight & Facing

What a character can see determines what they can target. In a tactical environment, a character's orientation, or "facing," is critical for both offense and defense.

* **Line of Sight (LoS):** A character has a line of sight to a target if an unobstructed straight line can be drawn from any corner of their square to any corner of the target's square. Obstacles such as walls, pillars, or other characters can block LoS. Characters, even allies, are considered blocking terrain for LoS unless they are prone.
* **Facing and Combat Arcs:** Each miniature on the grid must have a designated "front." This facing determines its combat arcs, which are crucial for flanking and surprise attacks. A character's facing can be changed freely as part of any movement, but changing facing without moving still requires spending movement points (see Chapter 5).
  + **Front Arc:** The 180-degree arc (three squares wide at a distance of one square) directly in front of the character. A character can attack any target within their front arc without penalty and can actively defend against attacks originating from this arc.
  + **Flank Arcs:** The squares to the immediate left and right of the character, outside the front arc. Attacks made against a character from their flank arc receive a bonus.
  + **Rear Arc:** The area directly behind the character. Attacks made from the rear arc are often undefendable and gain a significant bonus to hit.

#### 1.3 Cover & Concealment

The environment is a weapon. A wise warrior uses their surroundings to their advantage, seeking protection from enemy attacks while maneuvering to deny the same to their foes. The system distinguishes between Cover, which physically blocks attacks, and Concealment, which merely obscures vision.

* **Cover:** A physical obstacle that can stop or deflect an attack. Cover provides a bonus to a character's Defense value and may also possess an Armor Value that absorbs damage.
* **Concealment:** An environmental effect like smoke, thick fog, or magical darkness that makes a character harder to see. Concealment imposes a penalty on attack rolls made against the character but offers no physical protection.

The following table provides mechanical effects for common battlefield conditions. These modifiers are cumulative, though the total penalty from Concealment cannot exceed a certain limit (e.g., -10 for total blindness).1

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Condition | Type | Effect |
| Low Obstacle (Crate, Rubble) | Partial Cover | +2 to Defense |
| Solid Obstacle (Stone Pillar) | Hard Cover | +4 to Defense; provides Armor |
| Foliage (Thick Bushes) | Light Concealment | -2 penalty to be targeted |
| Smoke, Fog, or Dim Light | Heavy Concealment | -4 penalty to be targeted |
| Total Darkness | Total Concealment | -10 penalty to be targeted |

#### 1.4 Terrain & Environment

The type of ground a character moves across can dramatically affect their speed and tactical options. The grid map should be marked with different terrain types to represent the battlefield's features.

* **Clear Terrain:** Open, flat ground like a street or clear field. It costs the standard amount to move through (see Chapter 5).
* **Difficult Terrain:** Rubble, thick undergrowth, shallow water, or steep stairs. Moving through difficult terrain costs more movement resources.
* **Impassable Terrain:** Solid walls, deep pits, or other obstacles that cannot be crossed by normal movement. Abilities like *Qinggong* may allow characters to bypass these obstacles.1
* **Elevated Terrain:** Rooftops, ledges, or hills. Being on higher ground provides a bonus to ranged attacks against lower targets and can make a character harder to reach in melee.

### Chapter 2: Time, Actions & Initiative

A fight is a chaotic flurry of motion. To manage this chaos, the game breaks down combat into structured rounds and turns, giving each participant a chance to act. This system evolves the original game's Major/Minor action structure into a more granular and flexible Action Point system, providing players with a greater range of tactical choices each turn.

#### 2.1 The Combat Round

A single combat round represents approximately 5-6 seconds of in-game time. During a round, every character and enemy on the battlefield will have an opportunity to take a turn. This duration is a standard convention in detailed role-playing games, allowing for a sequence of discrete actions while maintaining a sense of rapid, cinematic pacing.1

#### 2.2 Determining Initiative

To determine the order of action, an Initiative roll is made at the beginning of the first combat round. This roll is made only once per combat unless a dramatic event reshuffles the turn order at the Storyteller's discretion.

* **Initiative Roll:** Each participant rolls a single ten-sided die (d10) and adds their Agility Virtue rating.
* **Turn Order:** Characters act in descending order of their total Initiative result. In the case of a tie, the character with the higher combined Agility + Athletics skill total acts first. If a tie persists, the characters act simultaneously.

#### 2.3 The Action Point (AP) System

The original game's division of a turn into one Major and one Minor Action provides a simple narrative structure but lacks the flexibility required for a tactical miniatures game.1 A character should be able to move, strike, and then move again to seek cover—a sequence impossible under the old system.

To facilitate this dynamic, high-flying martial arts action, this system uses Action Points (AP). At the start of each of their turns, a character gains a pool of AP. Every action they take, from moving a single square to launching a complex attack, costs a specific number of points from this pool. This forces players to make meaningful tactical decisions about how to best use their limited time in a round.

* **Action Point Pool Calculation:** A character's starting AP for their turn is determined by their physical speed and mental acuity.
  + **AP Formula:** AP=6+Agility+⌊Mind÷2⌋
  + This formula makes the Agility Virtue the primary determinant of how much a character can accomplish in a turn, while the Mind Virtue reflects a character's ability to process information and react quickly, granting them additional tactical options.

#### 2.4 The Action Catalog & AP Costs

The following table provides the AP costs for the most common actions a character can take. This list is not exhaustive and will be expanded upon in subsequent chapters, which detail more complex maneuvers like *Dianxue* and activating *Fulu* talismans. Unspent AP are lost at the end of a character's turn.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Action | AP Cost | Notes |
| **Movement** |  |  |
| Move 1 Square (Clear Terrain) | 1 AP |  |
| Move 1 Square (Difficult Terrain) | 2 AP |  |
| Change Posture (e.g., Stand to Prone) | 1 AP | See Chapter 5 for details. |
| **Combat** |  |  |
| Standard Attack | 4 AP | Make a single attack roll. |
| Aim | 2 AP | Gain a bonus on your next attack. |
| Draw/Stow Weapon | 2 AP |  |
| **Defense (Reaction)** |  |  |
| Active Dodge | 3 AP | Can be performed on an opponent's turn. |
| Parry | 2 AP | Can be performed on an opponent's turn. |

This table serves as the fundamental tool for player interaction during their turn, allowing them to budget their actions and plan their tactics with precision.

### Chapter 3: The Dice & The Tao

The core dice mechanic of *The Way of the Unseen Fist*—a d10 dice pool where a result of 7 or higher is a Success—is a robust and flavorful system that will be retained.1 This chapter adapts this mechanic to the tactical grid, integrating its unique elements like Stunt Points and the Yin/Yang Dice to create a combat experience that is both mechanically deep and thematically resonant.

#### 3.1 Assembling the Dice Pool

When a character attempts an action where the outcome is uncertain, the player assembles a pool of ten-sided dice (d10s).

* **Dice Pool Formula:** The number of dice in the pool is the sum of the character's relevant Attribute and their applicable Skill rating (Dice Pool = Attribute + Skill).
* **Success Threshold:** The standard Target Number (TN) for a Success is 7. Each die that rolls a 7, 8, 9, or 10 counts as one Success. The Storyteller may adjust this TN based on circumstances, from 6 for an easy task to 10 for a legendary one.1
* **Dice Pool Cap:** To ensure game balance and speed of play, a dice pool cannot exceed a maximum of 10 dice, regardless of a character's Attribute and Skill total. Bonuses from circumstances or spending Momentum may temporarily allow this cap to be exceeded by one or two dice.

#### 3.2 Degrees of Success & Stunt Points

The number of Successes rolled determines the quality of the outcome. In combat, exceptional results grant the character the opportunity to perform special maneuvers known as Combat Stunts.

* **0 Successes:** Failure. The action fails completely.
* **1 Success:** Marginal Success. The character achieves their basic goal, but without any added benefit.
* **2 Successes:** Full Success. A clean, competent execution of the action.
* **3+ Successes (Critical Success):** An exceptional result. The character gains one **Stunt Point** for every Success beyond the second.1 These points are spent immediately to purchase tactical effects from the Combat Stunt Table below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Stunt Points | Effect |
| 1 Point | **Add Damage:** Add +2 to the Stamina damage of the attack. |
|  | **Shove:** Push the target back one square. |
|  | **Trip:** The target must succeed on a contested Agility roll or be knocked Prone. |
| 2 Points | **Bypass Armor:** The attack's damage ignores the target's Armor Value. |
|  | **Disarm:** The target must succeed on a contested roll or drop a held weapon. |
|  | **Lingering Wound:** The attack inflicts the Bleeding condition (ongoing damage). |
| 3 Points | **Called Shot:** Make a free Called Shot to a specific hit location without the standard penalty. |
|  | **Stun:** The target is Stunned for one round, reducing their AP on their next turn. |

This system rewards players for achieving outstanding results with immediate, tangible tactical advantages, allowing them to turn a successful attack into a truly cinematic and decisive moment.

#### 3.3 The Yin/Yang Dice on the Grid

To preserve the game's unique flavor, two dice in every pool are designated as the Yang Die (a light color) and the Yin Die (a dark color). These special dice can introduce unpredictable elements to the battlefield, reflecting the ever-present influence of fate and the spiritual world.1

* **The Dragon (Yang 10):** If the Yang Die rolls a 10, it represents a surge of positive energy or heroic fortune. The character gains one point of **Momentum**. Momentum is a resource that can be saved and spent on later turns for a variety of tactical benefits, such as:
  + Gaining +2 AP for the current turn.
  + Adding one bonus die to a single roll.
  + Activating a powerful Archetype-specific ability.
* **The Ghost (Yin 1):** If the Yin Die rolls a 1, it represents a karmic imbalance or a surge of disruptive energy. The Storyteller introduces a **Tactical Complication**. This is not merely a narrative setback but a tangible event on the grid that changes the state of the battle. Examples include:
  + A character's weapon jams, requiring a 2 AP action to clear.
  + A piece of cover is destroyed by a stray shot.
  + An environmental hazard appears, such as a burst pipe creating a patch of slippery difficult terrain.
  + A previously unnoticed group of Yaoguai reinforcements arrives on the edge of the map.

The Yin/Yang dice ensure that the battlefield is a dynamic and unpredictable environment, where both heroic luck and unforeseen misfortune can alter the course of a fight in an instant.

## Part II: The Warrior's Art

This section translates the abstract attributes and abilities of a character into concrete tactical mechanics. It details how heroes move, fight, and withstand injury on the grid, providing a comprehensive framework for personal combat that is both detailed and evocative of the Wuxia and horror genres.

### Chapter 4: The Character on the Grid

A character is more than a collection of numbers; they are a warrior, a sorcerer, a hero. This chapter redefines their core statistics—the Five Virtues and their derived traits—in the context of the new tactical system, giving each attribute a clear and vital role in combat.

#### 4.1 The Five Virtues Revisited

The Five Virtues remain the foundation of a character, but their functions are now explicitly tied to the grid-based mechanics.1

* **Body (体):** Represents physical power and resilience.
  + **Tactical Function:** Determines the **Stamina** track. It is the basis for rolls to resist physical effects like being shoved, tripped, or remaining conscious from pain. It also determines a character's base lifting and carrying capacity.
* **Agility (敏):** Represents speed, dexterity, and reflexes.
  + **Tactical Function:** This is the most critical Virtue for tactical action. It is the primary contributor to the **Action Point Pool**, the **Defense** value, and the **Initiative** roll.
* **Mind (智):** Represents intellect, perception, and tactical acumen.
  + **Tactical Function:** Contributes to the **Action Point Pool**, reflecting a character's ability to process battlefield information quickly. It also determines the number of tactical and lore-based skills a character can effectively learn.
* **Spirit (神):** Represents willpower and internal energy.
  + **Tactical Function:** Determines the size of the **Qi Pool** and the **Wounds** track. It is the basis for rolls to resist fear, intimidation, and the terrifying spiritual assaults of powerful Yaoguai.
* **Essence (精):** Represents spiritual purity and harmony.
  + **Tactical Function:** Primarily used for resisting the corrupting influence of demonic entities and as a prerequisite for learning the most advanced and powerful forms of *Fashu* and *Qinggong*.

#### 4.2 Tactical Derived Statistics

These statistics are calculated from the Five Virtues and form the core of a character's combat profile on the grid.

* **Action Points (AP):** The number of points a character can spend on their turn. Calculated as: 6+Agility+⌊Mind÷2⌋.
* **Defense:** The base Target Number an opponent must meet or exceed with their attack roll Successes to hit the character. Calculated as: 8+Agility.
* **Move Rate:** The number of squares a character can move by spending 1 AP. The base Move Rate is 1. This can be improved through skills like Athletics or special abilities.
* **Stamina:** The character's capacity to endure fatigue, bruises, and minor injuries. Calculated as: Body×5.
* **Wounds:** The character's capacity to withstand life-threatening harm. Calculated as: Spirit×2.
* **Qi Pool:** The character's personal reserve of internal energy for powering martial arts and supernatural abilities. Calculated as: Spirit×3.

### Chapter 5: Movement & Positioning

In a tactical game, movement is as crucial as combat. A well-placed warrior can control the flow of battle, protect allies, and exploit enemy weaknesses. This chapter provides a comprehensive rule set for movement, turning the grid into a three-dimensional chessboard.

#### 5.1 Basic Movement

Movement across the grid is paid for with Action Points. The cost of movement depends on the terrain being crossed.

* **Clear Terrain:** Moving one square forward or diagonally costs 1 AP.
* **Difficult Terrain:** Moving one square into rubble, dense foliage, or up a steep incline costs 2 AP.
* **Sideways and Backward Movement:** Moving into a side or rear square without changing facing costs an additional +1 AP per square.

#### 5.2 Changing Posture

A character's posture can provide significant tactical advantages and disadvantages. The three primary postures are Standing, Crouching, and Prone. Changing between them costs Action Points and affects a character's combat capabilities, a concept drawn from the detailed tactical options in systems like *GURPS*.1

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Posture | AP Cost to Change | Melee Attack Modifier | Defense Modifier | Ranged Target Modifier |
| Standing | N/A | None | None | None |
| Crouching | 1 AP | -1 | +1 | -2 to be hit |
| Prone | 1 AP | -4 | -2 | -4 to be hit |

* **Crouching:** A crouched character is harder to hit with ranged attacks and gains a bonus to their Defense, but suffers a minor penalty to their own melee attacks.
* **Prone:** A prone character is very difficult to hit with ranged attacks but is extremely vulnerable in melee, suffering a penalty to both their attacks and defenses. Standing up from a prone position costs 2 AP.

#### 5.3 Advanced Movement: The Art of Qinggong

*Qinggong*, or the Lightness Art, is a hallmark of the Wuxia genre, allowing heroes to perform incredible feats of mobility that defy gravity.1 In the tactical game,

*Qinggong* is a powerful tool for battlefield navigation, allowing agile characters to bypass obstacles and control the vertical dimension of the map.

The original narrative ability to run on walls is now codified into a balanced, high-skill tactical option. It is not a passive ability but a "stance" that must be consciously activated by spending a precious resource—Qi. This makes its use a tactical decision. By treating vertical surfaces as difficult terrain, the system makes wall-running possible but slower than ground movement, creating a trade-off between safety and speed. This approach transforms a narrative concept into a core mechanic that reinforces the Wuxia theme while maintaining game balance.

* **Activating Lightness Stance:** As a free action at the start of their turn, a character with the Qinggong skill can spend 1 Qi point to enter a Lightness Stance, which lasts until the start of their next turn.
* **Wall-Running:** While in a Lightness Stance, a character can treat vertical surfaces (walls, cliffs, tree trunks) as difficult terrain. They can move up or across these surfaces at a cost of 2 AP per square. The character must end their turn on a stable, horizontal surface or they will fall.
* **Water-Dashing:** While in a Lightness Stance, a character can treat liquid surfaces (water, deep mud) as clear terrain, moving across them at a cost of 1 AP per square. As with wall-running, they must end their turn on a solid surface.
* **Enhanced Leaping:** A character can spend 2 AP to make a standing or running leap. The base distance in squares is equal to their Body score. By spending 1 Qi point as part of the leap, they can add their Agility score to this distance, allowing for incredible acrobatic jumps across gaps or over enemies.

### Chapter 6: The Anatomy of Harm

Combat is brutal and decisive. This chapter introduces a detailed system for damage and injury, using a hit location chart and a two-tiered health system to add tactical precision and meaningful consequences to every successful attack.

#### 6.1 The Two Tiers of Damage

The game's existing dual health tracks, Stamina and Wounds, are now integrated into a thematically-driven damage system.1 This mechanical division is inspired by the power scaling seen in systems like

*Rifts*, where certain types of damage are fundamentally more dangerous than others.1 Mundane physical harm is transient and affects Stamina, while supernatural or Qi-infused attacks inflict true, lasting harm by targeting the Wounds track. This makes encounters with Yaoguai mechanically terrifying, as their natural attacks bypass the buffer of Stamina and strike directly at a character's life force.

* **Stamina Damage:** This represents fatigue, bruises, and superficial cuts. It is caused by mundane sources like unarmed strikes from normal humans, conventional weapons, and environmental impacts. When a character's Stamina track is reduced to 0, they become **Exhausted**. An Exhausted character suffers a -2 penalty to all dice pools and their AP pool is halved. Stamina recovers relatively quickly with rest.
* **Wound Damage:** This represents severe, life-threatening injuries. It is caused by supernatural attacks (the claws and fangs of Yaoguai), *Fashu* spells, and martial arts techniques where a character channels Qi into their strike. Wound damage is applied directly to the Wounds track. For every 2 Wounds a character loses, they suffer a cumulative -1 penalty to all dice pools. When a character's Wounds track is reduced to 0, they are dying or dead. Wounds are difficult and slow to heal.

#### 6.2 The Hit Location System

To add a layer of tactical depth and cinematic detail, the game uses a "Called Shot" system for targeting specific body parts. This approach, inspired by the precision of systems like *GURPS*, transforms combat from a simple exchange of damage numbers into a series of tactical decisions with specific outcomes.1

An attacker may declare they are targeting a specific hit location before making their attack roll. Doing so imposes a penalty on the roll, but a successful hit can have debilitating effects beyond simple damage.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Hit Location | Attack Penalty | Damage Multiplier | Crippling Effect |
| Torso | 0 | x1 | N/A |
| Vitals | -3 | x3 (Wound) | Target must make a Body roll or be Stunned for 1 round. |
| Arm (L/R) | -2 | x0.5 | On a Critical Success, target must make a Body roll or drop any item held in that hand. |
| Leg (L/R) | -2 | x0.5 | On a Critical Success, target's Move Rate is halved until healed. |
| Head | -5 | x2 | Target must make a Body roll or be Stunned for 1 round. |
| Eye | -9 | x4 (Wound) | On a Critical Success, target is permanently Blinded in that eye. |

* **Damage Multiplier:** The damage rolled is multiplied by this value. Note that attacks to the Vitals or Eye always inflict Wound damage, bypassing Stamina.
* **Crippling Effect:** These effects are triggered on a Critical Success (3+ Successes) against that location, representing a particularly well-aimed blow.

#### 6.3 Armor & Protection

Armor provides a crucial layer of defense, but its effectiveness depends on the type of damage it faces.

* **Protection Value (PV):** All armor has a Protection Value. This number is subtracted from incoming damage before it is applied to Stamina or Wounds.
* **Layered Protection:** Armor is designed to stop physical trauma. As such, it will have two PV ratings:
  + **Stamina PV:** This value is typically high and is subtracted from all incoming Stamina damage.
  + **Wound PV:** This value is much lower, often zero for mundane armor. It is subtracted from incoming Wound damage. Only magically enchanted armor, blessed items, or armor made from specific supernatural materials (like pure jade) will have a significant Wound PV, making such items incredibly valuable for fighting Yaoguai.

### Chapter 7: A Thousand Unseen Fists

A turn in combat is more than just an attack. It is a series of decisions—when to press the advantage, when to defend, when to maneuver for a better position. This chapter provides a comprehensive catalog of tactical maneuvers available to characters, each with a specific AP cost and a defined role in the flow of battle. This list expands on the actions from the original game, drawing inspiration from the structured maneuver lists of tactical systems like *GURPS*.1

#### 7.1 Offensive Maneuvers

These actions are focused on directly harming or hindering an opponent.

* **Standard Attack (4 AP):** Make a single melee or ranged attack roll against a target.
* **All-Out Attack (3 AP):** The character focuses entirely on offense, gaining a +2 bonus to their attack dice pool. However, they are left exposed and cannot perform any Active Defenses (Dodge or Parry) until the start of their next turn.
* **Feint (2 AP):** The character makes a false move to create an opening. This is a contested roll of the attacker's Agility + Martial Arts vs. the defender's Mind + Martial Arts. If the attacker wins, the defender's Defense value is lowered by the attacker's margin of victory for the next melee attack made against them this turn.
* **Grapple (5 AP):** The character attempts to seize and immobilize an opponent in an adjacent square. This is a contested roll of the attacker's Body + Martial Arts vs. the defender's Agility or Body + Martial Arts (defender's choice). If the attacker wins, the target gains the **Grappled** condition. A Grappled character cannot move and suffers a penalty to their attacks and defenses.

#### 7.2 Defensive Maneuvers

These actions are used to avoid or block incoming attacks. Defensive actions are **Reactions**, meaning they can be performed during an opponent's turn by spending AP from the character's next turn's pool. A character cannot spend more AP on reactions than their Agility score.

* **Active Dodge (3 AP):** When targeted by an attack that has successfully hit, the character can spend 3 AP to attempt to evade it. The character makes an Agility + Athletics roll. Each Success rolled reduces the attacker's number of Successes by one. If the attacker's Successes are reduced to less than the defender's base Defense, the attack misses.1
* **Parry (2 AP):** When targeted by a melee attack that has successfully hit, a character with a ready weapon can spend 2 AP to attempt to block it. This is a contested roll of the defender's Agility + Martial Arts vs. the attacker's roll. If the defender scores more Successes, the attack is parried and has no effect.
* **All-Out Defense (+2 AP):** At the start of their turn, a character can declare they are taking a defensive stance. They spend 2 AP from their pool immediately. For the rest of the round (until their next turn begins), they gain a +2 bonus to all their Defense rolls (Dodge and Parry).

#### 7.3 Tactical Options

These maneuvers focus on positioning, preparation, and controlling the flow of the battle.

* **Wait (1 AP):** The character holds their remaining AP and declares a trigger condition (e.g., "if an enemy moves into this doorway"). If that condition occurs before their next turn, they can interrupt the current turn and spend their held AP to perform actions. This is a powerful tool for setting up ambushes and controlling enemy movement.
* **Aim (2 AP):** The character takes a moment to line up a shot or find an opening. They gain a +2 bonus to the dice pool of their next attack roll made this turn.
* **Shove (4 AP):** The character attempts to physically push an adjacent opponent. This is a contested roll of Body + Athletics. If the attacker wins, they can push the target back one square for each point in their margin of victory.

## Part III: The Supernatural Veil

This final part adapts the unique supernatural elements of *The Way of the Unseen Fist*—the ritualistic magic of *Fashu*, the precise art of *Dianxue*, and the terrifying nature of the Yaoguai—into the tactical grid-based framework. These systems are designed to be mechanically distinct and thematically potent, ensuring that the supernatural feels fundamentally different from the mundane.

### Chapter 8: Fashu on the Battlefield

*Fashu*, the art of Taoist sorcery, is not a matter of flashy gestures and spoken words, but of careful preparation and the channeling of Qi into physical talismans (*Fulu*).1 This chapter translates this ritualistic practice into a tactical system of battlefield control, powerful buffs, and devastating targeted effects.

#### 8.1 Activating Fulu

The three methods of activating a talisman—Attach, Burn, and Ingest—are now defined as specific tactical actions with distinct applications on the grid.1 This design choice transforms the Fulu from a simple "magic item" into a versatile tactical tool. The "Burn" activation, in particular, is expanded to use physical area-of-effect templates, making spell placement a key skill for a sorcerer. The talisman's Potency, determined during its creation, now has a direct and visible impact on the battlefield, dictating the size or power of the magical effect.

* **Attach (4 AP):** The sorcerer attempts to physically slap the talisman onto a target in an adjacent square. This requires a melee attack roll using Agility + Martial Arts. If successful, the talisman's effect is delivered to that single target. This is the primary method for delivering curses and debilitating effects.
* **Burn (5 AP):** The sorcerer sets the talisman alight, releasing its stored Qi in a burst of power. This is used for area-of-effect spells. The sorcerer places an AoE template on the grid according to the talisman's description.
* **Ingest (3 AP):** The sorcerer burns the talisman and consumes the ashes (often mixed with a liquid). This action applies the talisman's effect, typically a buff or healing spell, to the sorcerer themselves.

#### 8.2 Area of Effect Templates

When a talisman is activated with the Burn method, its magic manifests in a specific shape on the grid. The size of this shape is often determined by the talisman's charged Potency.

* **Burst:** A circular area affecting all squares within a given radius from a central point. A Potency 3 Burst might affect all squares within 1 square of the center point.
* **Cone:** A triangular area that originates from one of the caster's front squares and extends outwards. A Potency 4 Cone might be 6 squares long.
* **Line:** A straight line of squares, typically 1 or 2 squares wide, extending from the caster.
* **Wall:** A line of squares that creates a persistent magical barrier. A Potency 5 Wall might create a barrier 5 squares long that lasts for several rounds.

#### 8.3 Tactical Fulu Catalog

This section redefines the sample talismans from the core rules with specific, grid-based tactical stats.1

* **Talisman of Corpse Suppression:**
  + **Activation:** Attach
  + **Effect:** The target undead creature must make a contested Spirit roll against the talisman's charged Potency. If it fails, it is **Paralyzed** for a number of rounds equal to the sorcerer's margin of victory.
* **Talisman of Evil Warding:**
  + **Activation:** Burn
  + **Effect:** Creates a **Wall** template on the grid with a length in squares equal to the talisman's Potency. The wall lasts for 1 minute. Yaoguai and other evil spirits cannot move through the wall and take 1d10 Wound damage if they end their turn in a square adjacent to it.
* **Talisman of the Five Thunders:**
  + **Activation:** Burn
  + **Effect:** The sorcerer chooses a target square within 20 squares and line of sight. A **Burst** template with a radius of 1 square appears, centered on that point. All characters within the burst take Wound damage equal to 3× the talisman's Potency.
* **Talisman for Healing the Spirit:**
  + **Activation:** Ingest
  + **Effect:** The sorcerer immediately heals a number of lost Wounds equal to the talisman's charged Potency.

### Chapter 9: The Art of the Pressure Point

*Dianxue*, the art of striking pressure points, is a quintessential Wuxia ability that disables foes without necessarily killing them.1 To represent its precision and unique effects, this system integrates

*Dianxue* with the hit location rules. A pressure point strike is no longer a simple contested roll but a highly difficult "Called Shot" to a specific acupoint. This requires great skill (to overcome the high penalty) but rewards success with powerful, debilitating status effects instead of raw damage. This creates a distinct mechanical identity for the pressure point master, separating them from a brawler who simply targets the torso.

#### 9.1 The Dianxue Strike

A *Dianxue* strike is a special Attack maneuver that costs 5 AP.

1. **Declare Target:** The attacker declares they are making a *Dianxue* strike and chooses a specific acupoint from the Acupoint Chart below. Each point corresponds to a hit location but carries a significantly higher attack penalty.
2. **Attack Roll:** The attacker makes their Agility + Martial Arts dice pool roll with the listed penalty.
3. **Contested Roll:** If the attack hits (i.e., the number of Successes meets or exceeds the target's Defense), the attacker does not roll damage. Instead, they immediately make a contested roll: the attacker's Mind + Medicine skill vs. the defender's Body + Martial Arts skill.
4. **Apply Effect:** If the attacker wins the contested roll, the defender suffers the debilitating effect associated with that acupoint.

#### 9.2 The Acupoint Chart & Effects

The following table details some of the major acupoints available for *Dianxue* strikes. A character must have ranks in the Medicine skill to even know of the existence of the more advanced points.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Acupoint Location | Hit Location | Attack Penalty | Effect on Success |
| Pericardium 6 (Arm) | Arm | -8 | **Qi Blockage:** Target cannot spend Qi for 1d3 rounds. |
| Stomach 36 (Leg) | Leg | -8 | **Limb Numbness:** Target's Move Rate is reduced to 1 for 1d3 rounds. |
| Conception Vessel 17 (Torso) | Vitals | -10 | **Breathless:** Target is Stunned for 1 round and loses half their AP on their next turn. |
| Governor Vessel 20 (Head) | Head | -12 | **System Shock:** Target is Paralyzed for 1 round. |

### Chapter 10: The Ten Thousand Demons

The Yaoguai are the primary antagonists of the game, a diverse host of monsters, demons, and hungry ghosts from Asian folklore.1 To make them effective and terrifying opponents on the tactical grid, they require detailed stat blocks that define their unique abilities and weaknesses in mechanical terms.

#### 10.1 Yaoguai on the Grid

Each Yaoguai type will have a dedicated stat block designed for tactical play. This format will include:

* **Core Stats:** The creature's Five Virtues, AP, Defense, Stamina, and Wounds.
* **Attacks:** A list of its available attacks, including AP cost, dice pool, and damage type (Stamina or Wound).
* **Special Abilities:** A description of any unique powers, such as a ghost's ability to become incorporeal or a demon's fear-inducing aura, with their AP costs and mechanical effects.
* **Weaknesses:** A clear, mechanical definition of the creature's vulnerabilities.1 This is crucial, as exploiting these weaknesses is often the key to victory.

#### 10.2 Monster Size & Reach

Drawing from the conventions of other tactical games, larger Yaoguai will occupy more than one square on the grid, making them imposing physical presences.1

* **Size:** A creature's size is noted by the grid space it occupies (e.g., 2x2, 3x3). Larger creatures are easier to hit (they receive a penalty to their Defense value) but are also more difficult to move around.
* **Reach:** Larger creatures often have a longer melee reach, allowing them to attack targets from 2 or more squares away without needing a special weapon.

#### 10.3 Sample Yaoguai Tactical Stat Blocks

The following are examples of how classic Yaoguai from the source material would be represented in the tactical system.

* **Jiangshi (Hopping Vampire)**
  + **Size:** 1x1
  + **AP:** 6
  + **Defense:** 10
  + **Stamina/Wounds:** 40 / 15
  + **Attacks:**
    - **Clawed Strike (4 AP):** Agility + Martial Arts (6 dice). Inflicts 1d10 Wound damage. On a Critical Success, also drains 1d3 Qi from the target.
  + **Special Abilities:**
    - **Hopping Movement:** The Jiangshi cannot walk normally. Its Move action is a "Hop" that can clear 1 square of distance (including low obstacles) for 2 AP. It cannot run.
    - **Unyielding Flesh:** Has Stamina PV 8 and Wound PV 4.
  + **Weaknesses:**
    - **Talisman Vulnerability:** A *Talisman of Corpse Suppression* that successfully attaches paralyzes the Jiangshi automatically for 1 minute.
    - **Aversion:** Repulsed by mirrors and glutinous rice.1 Must succeed on a Spirit roll to move into a square adjacent to a character holding a mirror.
* **Huli Jing (Nine-Tailed Fox Spirit)**
  + **Size:** 1x1 (in humanoid form)
  + **AP:** 12
  + **Defense:** 15
  + **Stamina/Wounds:** 25 / 12
  + **Attacks:**
    - **Enchanting Touch (4 AP):** Agility + Deception (8 dice). Inflicts no damage. Contested roll vs. target's Spirit. If successful, target is Charmed for 1d6 rounds.
  + **Special Abilities:**
    - **Illusory Double (3 AP):** Creates an identical, illusory copy of itself in an adjacent square. The double has the same stats but disappears after taking any damage. Attacks against the Huli Jing have a 50% chance of targeting a double if one is present.
    - **Shapeshift (6 AP):** Can assume the form of any human it has seen. This is a perfect disguise.
  + **Weaknesses:**
    - **Mirror Reflection:** If forced to see its reflection in a mirror, a Huli Jing must make a Spirit roll. If it fails, its illusion powers are disabled for 1 round and its true form (a fox-like creature) is revealed.
* **Mogwai (Gremlin Demon)**
  + **Size:** 1x1 (Small)
  + **AP:** 10
  + **Defense:** 14 (due to small size)
  + **Stamina/Wounds:** 10 / 5
  + **Attacks:**
    - **Vicious Bite (4 AP):** Agility + Martial Arts (5 dice). Inflicts 1d6 Stamina damage.
  + **Special Abilities:**
    - **Aqueous Mitosis:** If a Mogwai begins its turn in a square containing water (or is hit by a water-based attack), it immediately spends its entire turn undergoing mitosis. At the start of its next turn, 1d3 new, identical Mogwai appear in adjacent empty squares.1
  + **Weaknesses:**
    - **Fragile:** Vulnerable to physical damage.
    - **Sunlight:** Takes 1d10 Wound damage for every round it is exposed to direct sunlight.

# **The Way of the Unseen Fist - Volume 1: The Guide for the August Storyteller**

## **Section 1: The Art of the August Storyteller**

This section is dedicated to the craft of running *The Way of the Unseen Fist*. The role of the game master, known here as the August Storyteller, extends beyond that of a mere referee. The Storyteller is the architect of atmosphere, the director of cinematic action, and the guardian of the game's unique thematic heart. To run this game is to master a delicate balance between two powerful genres: the high-flying, honor-bound action of Wuxia and the creeping, psychological dread of supernatural Asian horror. This chapter provides the tools and techniques necessary to weave these disparate threads into a single, unforgettable tapestry of adventure, suspense, and heroism. It is a guide to not only adjudicating the rules, but to breathing life into a world where the spiritual barriers are failing and only a handful of heroes stand against the encroaching darkness.

### **1.1. Introduction: The Sundered Veil**

The world of *The Way of the Unseen Fist* is not the one its inhabitants believe they know. Beneath the mundane veneer of the 21st century, with its cold logic and sterile technology, a hidden war rages.1 The spiritual partition that has long separated the mortal realm from the worlds beyond—a fragile barrier known as the Veil—is fraying. This is not a sudden, cataclysmic apocalypse, but a quiet, creeping rot. In the forgotten alleyways of sprawling metropolises, in the silent depths of ancient forests, and in the abandoned temples of remote mountains, the old powers stir. The

*Yaoguai*—monsters, demons, and hungry ghosts of Asian folklore—are bleeding back into reality.1

As the August Storyteller, the primary goal is not to defeat the players, but to make their characters' successes taste all the sweeter by presenting challenges that are just hard enough to demand their full skill and creativity.1 The Storyteller embodies all the antagonists, from a lowly Triad enforcer to a terrifying

*Jiangshi*, but the ultimate objective is cooperative storytelling. Fun is the most important goal at the table, a goal achieved when the high-flying martial arts action is seamlessly intertwined with creeping, psychological dread.1

The Storyteller wears many hats: rules moderator, narrator, and the voice of a thousand non-player characters (NPCs).1 More than that, the Storyteller is the primary creator and interpreter of the game's world. It is the Storyteller who describes the unnatural chill in the air that precedes a ghostly apparition, who narrates the cinematic arc of a perfectly executed flying kick, and who reveals the ancient lore that holds the key to a demon's defeat. This guide provides the framework, but it is the Storyteller who brings the Sundered Veil to life at the gaming table.

### **1.2. Mastering the Duality: Wuxia Action and Creeping Horror**

The unique identity of *The Way of the Unseen Fist* lies in its synthesis of two distinct genres. Mastering the tone requires the ability to shift between the explosive energy of a martial arts duel and the quiet, building tension of a ghost story.

#### **Wuxia Action: Directing the Fight Scene**

Combat in this game should feel less like a series of dice rolls and more like a choreographed fight scene from a classic Wuxia film.2 The rules provide the structure, but the Storyteller provides the soul. Narration is the key tool for transforming a mechanical exchange into a cinematic spectacle.

* **Evocative Language:** Descriptions should be active and sensory. Instead of stating "You hit," describe the action: "Your side kick connects with a sickening crack, sending the demon stumbling back against the crumbling temple wall".1 Focus on the sounds of impact, the swirl of clothing, the glint of a weapon, and the environment's reaction to the battle.
* **Narrate the Extraordinary:** The game's mechanics are designed to produce superhuman feats. When a character performs a *Qinggong* leap, describe them running weightlessly up a vertical surface, their robes fluttering as they defy gravity.1 When a*Dianxue* strike lands, narrate the precise, lightning-fast jab to a pressure point and the immediate, debilitating effect it has on the foe.1
* **Incorporate the Environment:** A Wuxia battle is never static. Encourage players to use the environment by describing it in interactive terms. A market stall is not just cover; it's a source of throwable crates and a fragile structure to be kicked into opponents. A bamboo forest offers not just concealment, but springy platforms to launch from and sturdy staffs to be broken off and used as improvised weapons.2

#### **Creeping Horror: Building the Atmosphere**

The horror in this game is not about jump scares; it is about the slow, dawning realization that the characters are facing something fundamentally unnatural and wrong.1 The Storyteller's task is to build this atmosphere of dread long before the monster reveals itself.

* **Sensory Details:** Engage all the senses. Before the *Jiangshi* appears, describe the unnatural cold that seeps into the room, the faint, cloying scent of grave dirt and decay, and the oppressive silence that swallows all other sounds. The horror begins when the world stops behaving as it should.1
* **Foreshadow the Threat:** Use the monster's unique traits to create suspense. The rhythmic, unnatural *thump... thump... thump* of a hopping vampire approaching down a dark hallway is far more terrifying than its sudden appearance. The shadow of a nine-tailed fox flickering at the edge of sight hints at a manipulator who is always one step ahead.1
* **The Uncanny Valley:** Describe *Yaoguai* in terms that highlight their wrongness. A shapeshifted *Huli Jing* might be beautiful, but its smile never quite reaches its eyes, or its movements are just a little too fluid, a little too perfect to be human.10 The horror comes from the subtle cues that betray the monstrous nature beneath the disguise.

#### **Pacing the Duality**

The rhythm of a typical session should ebb and flow between these two tones.1 An adventure might begin with a period of quiet, tense investigation—a horror sequence. The players gather clues, interview unsettled locals, and explore a haunted location, all while the Storyteller builds atmosphere. This slow burn of suspense makes the eventual confrontation all the more explosive. When the monster finally reveals itself, the tone shifts dramatically. The creeping dread gives way to fast-paced, high-stakes Wuxia action. This eruption of violence serves as a catharsis for the built-up tension. After the battle, the quiet returns, but it is now colored by the knowledge of what lurks in the shadows, setting the stage for the next cycle of suspense and action.

### **1.3. The Flow of Information: Clues, Lore, and Weaknesses**

In *The Way of the Unseen Fist*, knowledge is power. A group of heroes, no matter how skilled in martial arts, cannot defeat a powerful *Yaoguai* through brute force alone. They must first become scholars and detectives, uncovering the specific, often esoteric, weaknesses of their supernatural foes.1 The Storyteller's role is to manage this flow of information, turning each major antagonist into a multi-layered puzzle.

This process can be broken down into three distinct stages, providing a framework for designing and revealing crucial clues:

* **Stage 1: Foreshadowing and Environmental Clues:** Before the heroes even know what they are facing, the Storyteller should seed the environment with subtle hints related to its weakness. If a *Gui* (ghost) is vulnerable to peach wood, the heroes might find an unusual number of peach trees in the area, or a local carpenter might complain that his supply of peach wood has been mysteriously rotting. If a *Jiangshi* is repulsed by the crow of a rooster, a nearby farm might report that all its roosters have been mysteriously killed.1 These clues build atmosphere and reward attentive players.
* **Stage 2: Active Investigation and Lore:** Once the heroes have an idea of the creature they face, they can actively seek out knowledge. This is where skills like Lore (*Yaoguai*), Lore (*Diyu*), or Investigation come into play. A successful roll might allow a character to recall a passage from an ancient text, a story told by their master, or a piece of local folklore that explicitly names a creature's weakness. This stage empowers characters with knowledge-based skills and makes research a vital part of the adventure.1
* **Stage 3: Combat and Experimentation:** Sometimes, knowledge can only be gained through direct confrontation. When players are unsure of a weakness, combat becomes a tense process of trial and error. The Storyteller should provide clear feedback. An attack with a normal weapon might be described as having little effect, while a strike with a weapon made of cold iron might elicit a pained shriek from a *Jing* (essence spirit).1 This turns the fight itself into the final stage of the investigation.

Crucially, the game's central theme is that the mundane world is ineffective against the supernatural. This is reinforced mechanically through the damage system. Standard 21st-century weapons, like firearms or steel knives, should primarily inflict Stamina damage on most *Yaoguai*. This makes the creatures feel resilient, otherworldly, and terrifyingly difficult to put down. To inflict true, lasting harm (Wound damage), the heroes must leverage the supernatural themselves. This can be achieved through Qi-powered martial arts, *Fashu* talismans, or by exploiting a creature's specific folkloric weakness—for example, a blessed weapon made of peach wood. This mechanical distinction elevates the "investigate and exploit" loop from a good strategy to a fundamental requirement for survival, binding the game's horror and action elements into a single, coherent whole.

### **1.4. The Yin & Yang of Storytelling: Narrative Mechanics**

The core dice mechanic of the game is not just a tool for resolving actions; it is a narrative engine. The Yin and Yang Dice, in particular, provide the Storyteller with constant opportunities to introduce twists, complications, and moments of heroic fortune that reflect the game's Taoist-inspired philosophy of balance and duality.1

#### **The Ghost (Yin 1): Introducing Complications**

When the Yin Die rolls a 1, it is a "Ghost," representing a surge of disruptive energy or a karmic imbalance. The Storyteller introduces a Complication. This does not negate a success; rather, it creates a "success at a cost" scenario, adding a new layer of challenge to the scene.1 A good Complication should be a logical, tangible event that changes the state of the situation. Below are examples categorized by context:

* **Combat Complications:**
* **Weapon Malfunction:** A firearm jams, requiring a 2 AP action to clear. A sword's hilt becomes slick with blood, imposing a penalty on the next attack.
* **Environmental Shift:** A stray blow shatters a water pipe, creating a patch of slippery, difficult terrain. A lantern is knocked over, and a fire begins to spread. A piece of solid cover is destroyed by a powerful impact.1
* **Unforeseen Reinforcements:** The noise of the fight attracts a nearby patrol of mortal security guards or, worse, another group of lesser *Yaoguai*.
* **Tactical Setback:** A successful attack pushes the enemy into a more advantageous tactical position, such as next to a vulnerable ally.
* **Investigation Complications:**
* **Damaged Evidence:** While successfully picking a lock, the mechanism is damaged, making it impossible to re-lock. A crucial document is successfully retrieved from a fire, but a key paragraph is smudged and illegible.
* **Unwanted Attention:** A successful Lore roll to identify a creature is overheard by a cultist sympathizer in the library. A successful attempt to bribe an official works, but the official now sees the character as an easy mark for future extortion.
* **Triggering an Alarm:** A disarmed trap still sends a silent, magical alert to its master. A successful infiltration of a building goes unnoticed, but a forgotten pressure plate seals the exit route.
* **Social Complications:**
* **Misinterpretation:** A successful Diplomacy check to calm a spirit is achieved, but the spirit misunderstands a key phrase, agreeing to help but with a dangerous condition attached.
* **Offending an Ally:** A character successfully intimidates a thug into talking, but their harsh methods alienate a nearby, potentially helpful NPC who values compassion.
* **Escalation:** A successful negotiation with a Triad boss resolves the immediate issue, but the character's display of skill has now marked them as a valuable but dangerous asset, drawing the unwanted attention of the entire organization.

#### **The Dragon (Yang 10): Highlighting Heroism**

When the Yang Die rolls a 10, it is a "Dragon," representing a surge of heroic fortune or a perfect alignment with the flow of Qi. The character gains one point of Momentum, a resource that players can save and spend on later turns.1 As a Storyteller, these moments should be narrated with appropriate flair. A Dragon is not just a lucky roll; it is a moment of cinematic brilliance.

* **Narrating the Dragon:** Describe how the character moves with impossible grace, how their strike lands with perfect timing, or how a sudden, fortunate coincidence aids their action. For example, a successful leap (a Dragon roll) might be narrated as, "As you leap across the rooftop, a gust of wind catches you at the perfect moment, carrying you an extra few feet to land silently behind your target."
* **Momentum as a Narrative Tool:** Momentum allows players to take narrative control. When a player spends Momentum to add a bonus die or gain extra AP, encourage them to describe the heroic action their character is taking. This resource transforms players from passive rollers of dice into active participants in the cinematic storytelling.1

By embracing the narrative prompts of the Yin and Yang dice, the Storyteller can ensure that every roll has the potential to make the story more dynamic, unpredictable, and exciting, truly capturing the balanced chaos of a world where the Veil is sundered.

## **Section 2: The Laws of Heaven and Earth**

This section codifies the fundamental rules of *The Way of the Unseen Fist*, providing the complete framework for creating and advancing the heroes who stand against the darkness. It details the core mechanics, the attributes that define a character's potential, the step-by-step process of character creation, the unique system of progression through Cultivation, and the arcane arts of *Fashu*. These rules are the "laws of Heaven and Earth" that govern the player characters' existence and their potential to become legends.

### **2.1. The Tao of the Dice: Core Resolution**

The core mechanic of the game is a dice pool system using ten-sided dice (d10s). When a character attempts an action where the outcome is uncertain, the player assembles a pool of dice and rolls them to determine the degree of success.1

* **Assembling the Dice Pool:** The number of d10s in the pool is the sum of the character's relevant Attribute and their applicable Skill rating. For example, attempting to leap between rooftops would use a dice pool of Agility + Athletics. To maintain a brisk pace of play, a dice pool cannot exceed a maximum of 10 dice before circumstantial modifiers.1
* **Determining Success:** Each die that rolls a 7, 8, 9, or 10 is considered one "Success." The Target Number (TN) is typically 7, but the Storyteller may adjust this from 6 for an easy task to 10 for a legendary one.1 The total number of Successes determines the quality of the outcome:
* **0 Successes (Failure):** The action fails. The Storyteller describes the failure, which may introduce a negative consequence.
* **1 Success (Marginal Success):** The character achieves their basic goal, but without any particular skill or flair. The lock is picked, but it takes longer than expected.
* **2 Successes (Standard Success):** The character succeeds cleanly and competently. This is the baseline for a successful action performed under pressure.
* **3+ Successes (Critical Success):** The character succeeds with exceptional skill. For every Success beyond the second, the player gains one "Stunt Point".1
* **Non-Combat Stunts:** Stunt Points can be spent immediately to add a special narrative effect to a successful non-combat action. This empowers players to contribute to the description of their character's success.
* **1 Point Stunts:** Perform the action with notable speed (halve the time required); perform the action with subtlety (attract no unwanted attention); gain a minor situational advantage (e.g., finding a good hiding spot after a successful stealth roll).
* **2 Point Stunts:** Discover an additional, related piece of information during an investigation; make a strong positive impression during a social interaction, granting a bonus to a future roll against that NPC.

### **2.2. The Five Virtues: Attributes and Derived Statistics**

Every character is defined by five core attributes, known as the Five Virtues. These represent a character's fundamental physical, mental, and spiritual capabilities.1

* **Body (体):** Represents physical toughness, resilience, and raw strength. It governs the Stamina track and is used for feats of power like breaking down doors or resisting physical poisons.
* **Agility (敏):** Measures a character's speed, reflexes, and coordination. It is crucial for dodging attacks, performing acrobatic maneuvers, and acting quickly in combat.
* **Mind (心):** A measure of a character's intellect, perception, and tactical acumen. It governs skills related to knowledge, investigation, and the complex art of *Dianxue*.
* **Spirit (神):** The measure of a character's inner strength, willpower, and connection to their personal *Qi*. A high Spirit allows a character to command a larger pool of internal energy and withstand spiritual assaults. It governs the Qi Pool and the Wounds track.
* **Essence (精):** Represents a character's spiritual potency and attunement to the ambient energies of the world. It is the key attribute for sorcerers who practice *Fashu* and for martial artists who channel elemental forces.

From these Five Virtues, several derived statistics are calculated:

* **Qi Pool:** A measure of a character's internal energy reserve, used to power supernatural martial arts and other special abilities. The maximum Qi Pool is equal to a character's Spirit x 2.
* **Stamina:** Represents a character's capacity to endure fatigue, bruises, and minor injuries. It is calculated as Body x 5. When Stamina reaches 0, a character becomes Exhausted, suffering significant penalties.1
* **Wounds:** Represents a character's capacity to withstand severe, life-threatening injuries. The Wounds track is equal to a character's Spirit attribute. Wound damage is typically inflicted by supernatural attacks or exploited weaknesses.1
* **Defense:** The base number of Successes an attacker needs to score to hit the character. It is typically calculated as Agility + Athletics.

### **2.3. Forging a Hero: Character Creation**

The creation of a hero is the first step on the path of the Way. This process is designed to be narrative-first, beginning with a core idea and then using the rules to bring that concept to life.1

* **Step 1: Character Concept:** Begin with a central idea. Is the character a stoic monk seeking enlightenment through martial perfection? A pragmatic sorcerer who sees talismans as just another tool? A young prodigy haunted by visions of the spirit world? This concept will guide all subsequent choices.
* **Step 2: Assign Attributes:** Players are given a set number of points to purchase their starting scores in the Five Virtues. This point-buy system ensures that all characters begin on a balanced footing. A standard starting array might provide 25 points, with the cost to increase an attribute rising as the score gets higher.
* **Step 3: Choose an Archetype:** The character's Archetype defines their core training and supernatural capabilities. Each Archetype provides an attribute bonus and a unique Core Ability.1
* **Talisman Scribe:** A Taoist sorcerer who battles evil with brush and ink. Attribute Bonus: +1 Spirit, +1 Mind. Core Ability: Celestial Script.
* **Iron Palm Monk:** A master of external kung fu, whose body is a living weapon. Attribute Bonus: +1 Body, +1 Agility. Core Ability: Iron Body.
* **Ghost-Leg Assassin:** A practitioner of *Qinggong* who moves with supernatural grace. Attribute Bonus: +2 Agility. Core Ability: Weightless Step.
* **Celestial Bureaucrat:** A ritualist who understands and negotiates with the spirit world. Attribute Bonus: +1 Mind, +1 Essence. Core Ability: Spirit Summons.
* **Five Elements Fist:** A master of internal kung fu who channels elemental *Qi*. Attribute Bonus: +1 Spirit, +1 Essence. Core Ability: Elemental Attunement.
* **Step 4: Select Skills:** Players choose a number of skills to be "trained" in, reflecting their character's background and expertise. Training in a skill allows a character to add its rating to their dice pools.
* **Step 5: Choose Disadvantages (Optional):** Players can select one or more Disadvantages to gain additional Creation Points (CP) for use in Step 6. Disadvantages are narrative hooks that create challenges for the character.1 Examples include:
* **Haunted by an Ancestor (10 CP):** An ancestral spirit follows the character, offering cryptic advice or making demands at inconvenient times.
* **Code of the Righteous Fist (15 CP):** The character will never strike an unarmed opponent with a weapon, nor will they refuse a formal challenge to a duel.
* **Aversion to Peach Wood (5 CP):** The character has a deep, irrational fear or revulsion towards peach wood, a common tool for fighting the undead.
* **Step 6: Spend Creation Points:** Players spend their initial CP (plus any gained from Disadvantages) to purchase additional skill ranks, special techniques unique to their Archetype, or blessed equipment.
* **Step 7: Calculate Derived Statistics:** Finally, players calculate their Qi Pool, Stamina, Wounds, and Defense based on their final attribute scores.

### **2.4. The Path of Cultivation: Advancement**

Character advancement in *The Way of the Unseen Fist* is not a simple matter of gaining levels. It is a narrative journey of spiritual and physical refinement known as Cultivation, a central theme in Xianxia literature.1 Instead of levels, characters progress through a series of five "Realms," each representing a profound transformation.1

Players spend Experience Points (XP), awarded by the Storyteller, to progress through the Stages of each Realm. Advancing from one Realm to the next is a major milestone, requiring a special "breakthrough" scene where the character must overcome a great trial, such as meditating through a "lightning tribulation," defeating a spiritual rival, or gaining a profound insight into the nature of the Tao.1

* **Qi Condensation Realm:** The initial stage where a cultivator learns to sense and draw ambient *Qi* into their body. Benefits include small increases to the Qi Pool and the ability to perform basic *Qi*-infusion, such as adding +1 damage to a strike by spending a *Qi* point.1
* **Foundation Establishment Realm:** The cultivator establishes a stable "Spiritual Root" within their *dantian* (the body's center of *Qi*), allowing for more efficient generation and storage of personal *Qi*. Benefits include a significant increase to the Qi Pool and access to advanced Archetype-specific abilities.1
* **Core Formation Realm:** The practitioner's liquid *Qi* crystallizes into a solid, spinning Golden Core (*Jindan*). This is a massive leap in power, transforming the character into a truly superhuman being. Benefits include large increases to all derived statistics and access to legendary abilities like true flight or projecting blasts of pure *Qi*.1
* **Nascent Soul Realm:** A miniature, spiritual version of the cultivator—a "Nascent Soul"—forms within their Golden Core. This soul can leave the physical body to travel astrally, providing a form of immortality. As long as the Nascent Soul can escape, the cultivator can survive the death of their physical body. Benefits include spiritual projection, creating personal domains of power, and interacting directly with the Celestial Bureaucracy.1
* **Ascension Realm:** The ultimate goal. The cultivator transcends their mortal form and ascends to a higher plane of existence as a *Xian* (Immortal). This is a campaign-ending achievement, with the character effectively becoming a powerful, demigod-like NPC within the game's setting.1

### **2.5. The Sorcerer's Craft: The Arts of Fashu**

Magic in *The Way of the Unseen Fist* is the art of *Fashu*, the manipulation of spiritual energies through ritual, gesture, and, most importantly, the creation of empowered talismans known as *Fulu*.1

* **Fulu Talismans:** These are the primary tool of the Taoist sorcerer. A Talisman Scribe uses the Calligraphy skill to draw complex, esoteric characters onto yellow paper using special inks made from components like cinnabar, rooster blood, or powdered peach wood.1 Once scribed, the talisman is an inert object until it is charged with*Qi*. The sorcerer can imbue a talisman with a number of "Potency" points up to the talisman's maximum, spending an equal number of *Qi* points. This Potency determines the power of the talisman's effect when activated.
* **Activation Methods:** A charged talisman can be activated in one of three ways:
* **Attach:** The sorcerer physically slaps the talisman onto a target. This is the primary method for single-target debuffs, such as paralyzing an undead creature.1
* **Burn:** The user sets the talisman alight, releasing its stored *Qi* in a burst of power. This is used for area-of-effect spells, such as creating a protective barrier or calling down a bolt of lightning.1
* **Ingest:** The talisman is burned, and its ashes are mixed with water or wine to be consumed. This method is used for blessings, healing, and other self-administered effects.1
* **Ceremonial Magic and Spirit Pacts:** Beyond the immediate effects of *Fulu*, sorcerers can perform longer, more powerful rituals. These ceremonies can take hours or even days, requiring multiple successful skill rolls and a significant expenditure of *Qi* and rare material components. The most potent of these rituals involve petitioning or making pacts with entities from the Celestial Bureaucracy. Success can create permanent wards over a building, scry on a distant location, or even bind a minor spirit into service, but failure can have dire consequences, attracting the ire of powerful and ancient beings.1

## **Section 3: The Ten Thousand Forms of Combat**

Combat in *The Way of the Unseen Fist* is a dynamic and tactical affair, designed to capture the fluid, high-stakes action of Wuxia cinema. This section provides the complete and definitive rules for resolving conflict, from the foundational principles of the battlefield grid to the intricate mechanics of supernatural martial arts. It unifies the game's action economy under the flexible Action Point (AP) system, providing players with a rich set of tactical options to bring their heroic concepts to life.

### **3.1. The Battlefield Grid**

To manage the complexities of cinematic combat, the game uses a tactical grid where each square represents a 5-foot by 5-foot area. This grid provides a clear framework for movement, positioning, and the use of powers.1

* **Line of Sight (LoS):** A character has a line of sight to a target if an unobstructed straight line can be drawn from any corner of their square to any corner of the target's square. Solid objects, such as walls or pillars, block LoS.1
* **Cover:** Obstacles can provide cover, making a character harder to hit. Cover grants a bonus to a character's Defense value.
* **Partial Cover (+2 Defense):** Provided by low obstacles like crates, rubble, or thick bushes.
* **Hard Cover (+4 Defense):** Provided by solid obstacles like stone pillars or the corner of a building. Hard cover can also provide an Armor value against attacks that miss due to the cover bonus.1

### **3.2. The Flow of Battle: Initiative and the Action Point Economy**

The original narrative-focused Major/Minor action system provides a simple structure but lacks the granularity needed for a truly tactical game. The Action Point (AP) system offers superior flexibility, allowing for a more dynamic and strategic representation of combat that better emulates the fluid pacing of a Wuxia fight scene.1 A character might use their AP to move a few squares, aim, and then deliver a precise strike, or they might unleash a flurry of smaller movements and defensive preparations. Therefore, the AP system is the definitive combat ruleset for the game.

* **Initiative:** At the start of combat, all participants make an Agility + Athletics check to determine their initiative order, from highest to lowest. This order remains fixed for the duration of the encounter.
* **Action Point Pool:** At the start of each of their turns, a character gains a pool of Action Points. This pool represents the total amount of effort they can exert during their turn. The formula for calculating a character's starting AP is: AP=6+Agility+⌊Mind÷2⌋.1 Unspent AP are lost at the end of the turn.

The following table provides a comprehensive list of actions a character can perform in combat and their associated AP costs. This serves as the primary tactical menu for players during their turn.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Action Type | Action Name | AP Cost | Description |
| **Movement** | Move 1 Square (Clear Terrain) | 1 AP | Move one square forward or diagonally. |
|  | Move 1 Square (Difficult Terrain) | 2 AP | Move one square into rubble, dense foliage, etc. |
|  | Sideways/Backward Move | +1 AP | Additional cost per square to move sideways or backward without changing facing. |
|  | Change Posture (e.g., to Crouching) | 1 AP | Change from Standing to Crouching or Prone. |
|  | Stand Up (from Prone) | 2 AP | Change from Prone to Standing. |
| **Combat** | Standard Attack | 4 AP | Make a single attack roll against one target. |
|  | All-Out Attack | 3 AP | Gain a +2 bonus to the attack dice pool, but cannot perform Active Defenses until the next turn. |
|  | Aim | 2 AP | Gain a +2 bonus to the dice pool of the next attack roll made this turn. |
|  | Feint | 2 AP | Make a contested roll to lower a target's Defense for the next melee attack this turn. |
|  | Grapple | 5 AP | Attempt to inflict the Grappled condition on a target. |
|  | Shove | 4 AP | Attempt to push a target back. |
|  | Dianxue Strike | 5 AP | A special, high-penalty attack targeting a pressure point to inflict a debilitating effect. |
| **General** | Draw/Stow Weapon or Item | 2 AP | Draw or put away a weapon or item. |
|  | Wait | 1 AP | Hold remaining AP and declare a trigger condition to act later in the round. |
| **Defensive** | All-Out Defense | +2 AP | Spend at the start of the turn to gain a +2 bonus to all Defense rolls for the round. |
|  | Active Dodge (Reaction) | 3 AP | When hit, make an Agility + Athletics roll to reduce the attacker's Successes. |
|  | Parry (Reaction) | 2 AP | When hit by a melee attack, make a contested roll to negate the hit. |
| **Fashu** | Attach Talisman | 4 AP | Make a melee attack roll to slap a talisman onto an adjacent target. |
|  | Burn Talisman | 5 AP | Activate a talisman for an area-of-effect spell. |
|  | Ingest Talisman | 3 AP | Consume a talisman's ashes to apply its effect to oneself. |

### **3.3. The Anatomy of Harm**

The game utilizes a dual health system to represent different degrees of injury, reinforcing the thematic divide between the mundane and the supernatural.1

* **Stamina Damage:** Represents fatigue, bruises, and superficial cuts. It is caused by mundane sources like conventional weapons or environmental impacts. When a character's Stamina is reduced to 0, they become Exhausted, suffering a -2 penalty to all dice pools and halving their AP pool. Stamina recovers quickly with rest.
* **Wound Damage:** Represents severe, life-threatening injuries. It is caused by supernatural attacks (the claws of a *Yaoguai*), *Fashu* spells, and Qi-infused martial arts techniques. For every 2 Wounds a character loses, they suffer a cumulative -1 penalty to all dice pools. When a character's Wounds are reduced to 0, they are dying or dead. Wounds are difficult and slow to heal.
* **Called Shots:** To add tactical depth, an attacker can declare they are targeting a specific body part, accepting a penalty to their attack roll in exchange for a greater effect on a successful hit.1

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Hit Location | Attack Penalty | Damage Multiplier | Crippling Effect |
| Torso | 0 | x1 | N/A |
| Vitals | -3 | x3 (Wound) | Target must make a Body roll or be Stunned for 1 round. |
| Arm (L/R) | -2 | x0.5 | On a Critical Success, target must make a Body roll or drop any item held in that hand. |
| Leg (L/R) | -2 | x0.5 | On a Critical Success, target's Move Rate is halved until healed. |
| Head | -5 | x2 | Target must make a Body roll or be Stunned for 1 round. |
| Eye | -9 | x4 (Wound) | On a Critical Success, target is permanently Blinded in that eye. |

### **3.4. The Arts of Movement and Positioning**

Movement is a key tactical element, allowing characters to control the battlefield, exploit the environment, and set up devastating attacks.1

* **Posture:** A character's posture can offer tactical advantages and disadvantages.
* **Standing:** No modifiers.
* **Crouching (1 AP):** Provides a +1 bonus to Defense and makes the character a -2 target for ranged attacks, but imposes a -1 penalty on their own melee attacks.
* **Prone (1 AP):** Provides a -2 penalty to Defense and a -4 penalty to melee attacks, but makes the character a -4 target for ranged attacks. Standing up from prone costs 2 AP.
* ***Qinggong* (Lightness Art):** This supernatural skill allows for incredible feats of mobility.1
* **Lightness Stance:** As a free action at the start of their turn, a character with the *Qinggong* skill can spend 1 *Qi* point to enter a Lightness Stance, which lasts until their next turn.
* **Wall-Running:** While in a Lightness Stance, a character can treat vertical surfaces as difficult terrain, moving up or across them at a cost of 2 AP per square. The character must end their turn on a stable, horizontal surface or fall.
* **Water-Dashing:** While in a Lightness Stance, a character can treat liquid surfaces as clear terrain, moving across them at a cost of 1 AP per square. They must end their turn on a solid surface.
* **Enhanced Leaping:** A character can spend 2 AP to make a leap. The base distance in squares is equal to their Body score. By spending 1 *Qi* point as part of the leap, they can add their Agility score to this distance.

### **3.5. Advanced Combat Maneuvers**

Beyond basic attacks and movement, skilled practitioners of the Way can perform a variety of advanced maneuvers to control their foes and dominate the battlefield.

* ***Dianxue* (Art of the Pressure Point):** This is the art of striking acupoints to disable foes without killing them. It is a highly difficult "Called Shot" that rewards success with powerful debilitating effects.2
* **The Dianxue Strike:** This is a special Attack maneuver that costs 5 AP. The attacker declares their target acupoint from the chart below, makes their attack roll with the listed penalty, and if successful, engages in a contested roll of their Mind + Medicine vs. the defender's Body + Martial Arts. If the attacker wins, the effect is applied.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Acupoint Location | Hit Location | Attack Penalty | Effect on Success |
| Pericardium 6 | Arm | -8 | **Qi Blockage:** Target cannot spend *Qi* for 1d3 rounds. |
| Stomach 36 | Leg | -8 | **Limb Numbness:** Target's Move Rate is reduced to 1 for 1d3 rounds. |
| Conception Vessel 17 | Vitals | -10 | **Breathless:** Target is Stunned for 1 round and loses half their AP on their next turn. |
| Governor Vessel 20 | Head | -12 | **System Shock:** Target is Paralyzed for 1 round. |

* **Other Maneuvers:** These actions provide tactical options for controlling the flow of combat.
* **Feint (2 AP):** A contested roll of the attacker's Agility + Martial Arts vs. the defender's Mind + Martial Arts. If the attacker wins, the defender's Defense value is lowered by the margin of victory for the next melee attack made against them this turn.1
* **Grapple (5 AP):** A contested roll of the attacker's Body + Martial Arts vs. the defender's Agility or Body + Martial Arts. Success inflicts the Grappled condition, preventing movement and penalizing actions.1
* **Shove (4 AP):** A contested roll of Body + Athletics. If successful, the attacker pushes the target back one square for each point in the margin of victory.1

## **Section 4: Weaving the Tapestry of Fate**

This section provides the August Storyteller with the tools to construct compelling narratives, from single-session adventures to sprawling, multi-tiered campaigns. It adapts proven adventure design principles to the unique themes of *The Way of the Unseen Fist*, offering guidance on building encounters, creating non-combat challenges, and rewarding the heroes for their courage.

### **4.1. The Anatomy of an Adventure**

A successful adventure is more than a series of disconnected fights; it is a story with a clear structure and purpose.1

* **Structure:** Every adventure should have a clear beginning, middle, and end.
* **Beginning:** The hook that draws the characters into the story. This should be immediate and engaging, preferably starting with action rather than a simple request. For example, instead of an NPC hiring the party, the adventure could begin with the party witnessing a *Yaoguai* attack firsthand.1
* **Middle:** The core of the adventure, where the characters investigate the threat, overcome obstacles, and make meaningful choices that shape the narrative. This section should feature a mix of combat, investigation, and social encounters.1
* **Ending:** The climax and resolution. This should be a satisfying conclusion that directly results from the players' actions. It often involves a final confrontation with the primary antagonist but could also be a tense ritual or a desperate escape.1
* **Quests:** Quests are the narrative drivers of an adventure, giving the characters clear goals and motivations.1
* **Major Quests:** The central objective of the adventure (e.g., "Cleanse the haunted Sun-Tzu housing estate," "Stop the Huli Jing from enthralling the city's mayor").
* **Minor Quests:** Smaller, secondary objectives that can add depth and complexity. These are excellent opportunities to tie in character backstories. For example, a character with the "Haunted by an Ancestor" disadvantage might be compelled by their spirit guide to recover a lost family artifact from the haunted estate.1

### **4.2. Building Encounters**

An encounter is any scene where the characters face a significant challenge. While many encounters involve combat, they can also be social challenges or environmental puzzles.

* **Encounter Design:** A balanced adventure should feature a mix of encounter types and difficulties.1
* **XP Budget:** Use an Experience Point (XP) budget to balance combat encounters. Determine the encounter's desired difficulty (Easy, Standard, Hard) relative to the party's level, which gives a total XP value. "Spend" this budget on monsters and traps of appropriate levels.1
* **Thematic Composition:** Combine *Yaoguai* in ways that make thematic sense and create interesting tactical situations. A cunning *Huli Jing* might be guarded by enthralled mortal bodyguards, while a powerful *Yao* demon might be accompanied by lesser spirits it has subjugated.
* **Designing for Weaknesses:** The core loop of the game is identifying and exploiting monster weaknesses. When designing an adventure, ensure that clues to these weaknesses are available for players to find *before* the final confrontation. This turns the entire adventure into part of the boss fight.
* **Dynamic Environments:** Design battlefields that are more than flat arenas. Include vertical elements for *Qinggong* users, interactive objects, and terrain that can be used for cover or as a weapon.1

### **4.3. The Celestial Bureaucracy: Running the Spirit World**

The spirit world is not a chaotic wilderness but a highly structured, bureaucratic hierarchy, much like the imperial courts of ancient China.1 This Celestial Bureaucracy, and its grim counterpart in the underworld (Diyu), is not just background lore; it is a source of immense power and a venue for complex non-combat encounters.21

* **Structure of the Spirit World:**
* **The Celestial Court:** Ruled by the Jade Emperor, this heavenly administration is divided into various ministries and departments, each overseen by a specific deity or powerful spirit. These entities govern everything from the weather to the fortune of mortals.24
* **Diyu (The Underworld):** The underworld is also a bureaucracy, organized into Ten Courts of Hell. Each court is presided over by a Yama King who judges the souls of the dead and assigns punishments before their eventual reincarnation. It is a place of judgment and atonement, not arbitrary evil.27
* **Bureaucratic Encounters:** Interacting with these powerful entities should be a challenge of ritual, etiquette, and negotiation, not combat. The Skill Challenge system provides an excellent framework for these encounters.1
* **Example: Petitioning a Spirit Magistrate:** To gain a spirit's aid, the characters might need to perform a Skill Challenge.
* **Complexity:** 2 (6 successes before 3 failures).
* **Primary Skills:**
* **Lore (Celestial Bureaucracy):** To know the correct honorifics and forms of address.
* **Calligraphy:** To scribe a formal, respectful petition.
* **Diplomacy:** To present their case persuasively.
* **Insight:** To gauge the spirit's mood and true intentions.
* **Success:** The spirit grants the requested aid, though perhaps for a price.
* **Failure:** The spirit is offended and may become hostile, or it may assign the characters a difficult, unwanted task as penance for their impertinence.

This system transforms the spirit world into a rich environment for social and political intrigue, offering deep gameplay opportunities for archetypes like the Celestial Bureaucrat and providing a path to power that does not rely solely on martial prowess.

### **4.4. Rewards of the Way**

Heroes are rewarded for their bravery and skill with more than just survival. Rewards should be meaningful and thematically appropriate.1

* **Experience Points (XP):** XP is awarded for overcoming any significant challenge, including combat encounters, skill challenges, and successful investigations. Completing major and minor quests should also grant a substantial XP reward.
* **Treasure:** Monetary wealth is less of a focus than in traditional fantasy games. Instead, "treasure" often takes the form of rare and valuable items for fighting the supernatural.1
* **Examples:** A bundle of perfectly preserved peach wood branches, a pouch of pure cinnabar for scribing potent talismans, an ancient temple bell whose ringing disorients demons, or a flawless piece of jade that can ward off evil.
* **Intangible Rewards:** Often the most valuable rewards are not physical.
* **Examples:** Gaining the favor of a powerful nature spirit, earning a reputation as a ghost-slayer in a particular city, being taught a new, secret *Dianxue* technique by a grateful master, or establishing a hidden, warded sanctuary where the heroes can rest and train in safety.1

## **Section 5: A Bestiary of the Sundered Veil**

This section provides the August Storyteller with a menagerie of monstrous and supernatural creatures that have begun to cross the Sundered Veil. Each *Yaoguai* is more than a collection of statistics; it is a puzzle to be solved, a horror to be survived, and a legend to be born. The creatures detailed here are drawn from the rich well of Asian folklore, each designed to present a unique and terrifying challenge.

### **5.1. Understanding the Enemy: Yaoguai Classifications**

*Yaoguai* (妖怪) is a collective term for a vast array of supernatural beings. While their forms and powers vary wildly, they can be broadly categorized into four main types, each with its own nature and typical vulnerabilities.1

* **Gui (鬼): Ghosts and the Undead.** These are the lingering souls of the dead, bound to the mortal world by obsession, a desire for vengeance, or improper burial rites. They are often driven by a singular, powerful emotion. As creatures of Yin energy, they are particularly vulnerable to things representing Yang energy and life, such as rooster crows (the coming of the sun), peach wood (a symbol of vitality), and glutinous rice (a staple food).1
* **Yao (妖): Demons.** These are malevolent entities, often originating from the underworld realm of Diyu. Their purpose is typically to corrupt, destroy, and spread suffering. They are beings of pure malevolence and are best countered by items of spiritual purity and power, such as pure jade, the sound of blessed temple bells, or the chanting of holy sutras.1
* **Jing (精): Essence Spirits.** These are animals, plants, or even inanimate objects that have lived for so long they have absorbed enough ambient *Qi* to gain intelligence, a spirit, and supernatural powers. Their nature can range from mischievous to predatory. As beings tied to a specific physical form or concept, they are often vulnerable to cold iron (which disrupts magical energies) or having their "true name" discovered and used against them.1
* **Xian (仙): Immortals or Fae.** These are powerful, ancient beings who exist outside the normal cycle of life and death. They are not gods, but they are far beyond mortals. Their motivations are often inscrutable, and their whims can be as dangerous as any demon's malice. They rarely serve as simple combat antagonists and are better used as powerful patrons, enigmatic quest-givers, or the masterminds behind a larger threat.1

### **5.2. Creature Stat Blocks**

The following pages detail a selection of *Yaoguai* for use in the game. Each entry includes lore, a full statistical block, special abilities, tactical advice for the Storyteller, and a clear list of weaknesses.

#### **Jiangshi (Hopping Vampire)**

*Classification: Gui (Undead)*

**Description:** A *Jiangshi* is a reanimated corpse, its limbs stiff with rigor mortis, forcing it into an unnatural hopping gait. Its skin is pale green or grey, and its fingernails have grown into long, blackened claws. They are mindless, relentless predators, driven by an instinct to drain the *Qi* (life force) from the living. They are blind and hunt by sensing the breath of their victims.1

**Statistics:**

* **Attributes:** Body 8, Agility 2, Mind 1, Spirit 5, Essence 1
* **Derived Stats:** Stamina 40, Wounds 5, Qi Pool 0, Defense 6, AP 8
* **Skills:** Athletics 4 (for hopping), Perception 3 (breath sense only)
* **Attacks:**
* **Claws (4 AP):** Body + Martial Arts (Pool: 12d10), deals 4 Stamina damage.
* **Qi Drain (5 AP):** On a successful Grapple, the *Jiangshi* drains 1d10 Stamina and 1 Wound from the target per turn.

**Special Abilities:**

* **Breath Sense:** The *Jiangshi* automatically detects any living, breathing creature within 20 squares. Holding one's breath requires a successful Body + Athletics check to avoid detection.
* **Unyielding Flesh:** The *Jiangshi* is immune to Stamina damage from non-magical, non-blessed sources.

**Storyteller's Notes:** The horror of the *Jiangshi* comes from its relentless, rhythmic approach. Use the sound of its hopping to build suspense. In combat, it is a terrifying brute that forces players to manage their distance and find its weaknesses. It will mindlessly move towards the nearest source of breath.

**Weaknesses:**

* **Glutinous Rice:** Can be thrown to create a temporary barrier that the *Jiangshi* will not cross.1
* **Mirrors:** The reflection of a *Jiangshi* in a mirror can cause it to recoil in fear, forcing an Essence roll to avoid fleeing.1
* **Rooster's Crow:** The sound of a rooster's crow forces the *Jiangshi* to become paralyzed until the next sunset.1
* **Peach Wood:** Weapons made of peach wood bypass its Unyielding Flesh ability and inflict Wound damage instead of Stamina damage.1
* **Talisman of Corpse Suppression:** A *Fulu* with this inscription, if successfully attached to the *Jiangshi's* forehead, will instantly paralyze it.1

#### **Huli Jing (Fox Spirit)**

*Classification: Jing (Essence Spirit)*

**Description:** A *Huli Jing* is a fox that has lived long enough to develop powerful magical abilities, most notably shapeshifting and the creation of illusions. They are cunning and often seductive manipulators, preying on the desires and ambitions of mortals to steal their life essence. A *Huli Jing* rarely engages in direct combat, preferring to turn its enemies against each other or lure them into deadly traps.1

**Statistics:**

* **Attributes:** Body 3, Agility 6, Mind 7, Spirit 6, Essence 8
* **Derived Stats:** Stamina 15, Wounds 6, Qi Pool 16, Defense 12, AP 12
* **Skills:** Deception 8, Lore (Spirits) 5, Persuasion 7, Stealth 6
* **Attacks:**
* **Claws (Fox Form, 4 AP):** Agility + Martial Arts (Pool: 12d10), deals 3 Stamina damage.

**Special Abilities:**

* **Shapeshifting (2 AP):** The *Huli Jing* can transform into any human form it has seen. Maintaining the form requires concentration.
* **Illusory Veil (3 AP):** The *Huli Jing* can spend 3 *Qi* to create a powerful illusion, such as making a solid wall appear as an open doorway. A character must succeed on a contested Mind + Investigation roll vs. the *Huli Jing's* Essence + Deception to see through the illusion.
* **Enthralling Gaze (5 AP):** The *Huli Jing* targets one creature who can see its eyes. The target must make a contested Spirit roll vs. the *Huli Jing's* Essence. On a failure, the target is Charmed and will follow the *Huli Jing's* simple commands for the scene.

**Storyteller's Notes:** A *Huli Jing* should be a recurring antagonist in a social or investigative adventure. It uses its powers to sow discord, frame the innocent, and turn allies against the heroes. It will always have an escape plan and will only fight directly if cornered.

**Weaknesses:**

* **Canine Phobia:** The presence of a dog forces the *Huli Jing* to make an immediate Essence roll. On a failure, it is overcome with fear and will attempt to flee, possibly reverting to its true fox form.1
* **True Reflection:** While a *Huli Jing* does not fear mirrors, its true fox form is always visible in its reflection.
* **Hidden Tail:** In human form, a less experienced *Huli Jing* may have trouble perfectly concealing its fox tail, which might be spotted with a successful Perception check.

#### **Oni**

*Classification: Yao (Demon)*

**Description:** An Oni is a hulking, brutish demon, often with red or blue skin, a single or multiple horns, and a wild mane of hair. They are the archetypal ogres of Japanese folklore, possessed of immense strength and a savage temperament. Oni are the enforcers and shock troops of Diyu, wielding massive iron clubs (*kanabō*) and reveling in destruction.33

**Statistics:**

* **Attributes:** Body 9, Agility 4, Mind 3, Spirit 6, Essence 4
* **Derived Stats:** Stamina 45, Wounds 6, Qi Pool 8, Defense 8, AP 10
* **Skills:** Athletics 6, Intimidation 7
* **Attacks:**
* ***Kanabō* (Iron Club, 4 AP):** Body + Melee Weapons (Pool: 15d10), deals 6 Stamina damage and 1 Wound damage. On a Critical Success, the target is knocked prone.
* **Terrifying Roar (3 AP):** The Oni unleashes a deafening roar. All enemies within 10 squares must make a contested Spirit roll vs. the Oni's Spirit + Intimidation. Those who fail are Frightened for 1d3 rounds, suffering a -2 penalty to all dice pools.

**Special Abilities:**

* **Demonic Resilience:** The Oni has a natural Armor value of 2 against all damage.
* **Superhuman Strength:** The Oni's attacks can destroy Hard Cover on a Critical Success.

**Storyteller's Notes:** The Oni is a straightforward and terrifying combatant. It is not subtle. It smashes, roars, and destroys. It should be used to create a sense of overwhelming physical threat, forcing heroes to use tactics and exploit weaknesses rather than engage in a direct test of strength.

**Weaknesses:**

* **Roasted Soybeans:** According to legend, roasted soybeans thrown at an Oni can cause it pain and drive it away. Mechanically, a successful ranged attack to throw soybeans at an Oni inflicts 1 Wound (bypassing armor) and forces it to use its next turn to move away from the thrower.33
* **Arrogance:** An Oni is prideful and can be goaded. A character who succeeds on a contested Mind + Persuasion roll against the Oni's Spirit can trick it into focusing all its attacks on them for the next round, ignoring other threats.

### **5.3. Mortal Adversaries**

Not all threats come from beyond the Veil. The mundane world has its own dangers, and some mortals are foolish enough to meddle with powers they do not understand.

* **Triad Enforcer:** A skilled but mundane martial artist and gunman. They are dangerous in numbers but deal primarily Stamina damage, making them a good contrast to supernatural foes.
* **Cultist of the Sundered Veil:** A mortal who worships a powerful *Yaoguai* or seeks to hasten the Veil's collapse. They may know minor rituals or have been granted a small portion of their patron's power, making them unpredictable.
* **Rival Practitioner:** Another martial artist or sorcerer who is not necessarily evil but whose goals conflict with the heroes'. These encounters should be treated as duels between equals, focusing on skill and strategy.

### **5.4. Creating Yaoguai**

The Storyteller is encouraged to create their own *Yaoguai*, drawing from the vast well of Asian folklore or inventing new horrors. When designing a new creature, follow these steps, adapting the monster creation guidelines from established systems 1:

1. **Concept and Lore:** Start with a core concept from folklore. What is its story? What does it represent?
2. **Classification:** Assign it to one of the four categories: *Gui*, *Yao*, *Jing*, or *Xian*. This will inform its general nature and vulnerabilities.
3. **Statistics:** Assign attributes and calculate derived stats based on its intended role (brute, skirmisher, manipulator, etc.).
4. **Abilities and Attacks:** Design special abilities and attacks that reflect its lore.
5. **Weaknesses:** This is the most crucial step. Every *Yaoguai* must have at least one specific, exploitable weakness. This weakness should be rooted in folklore and have a clear mechanical effect.

The following table serves as a quick reference for the weaknesses of the creatures presented in this bestiary, as well as a tool for adventure design.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Creature | Classification | Common Weaknesses | Relevant Skills/Items |
| **Jiangshi** | Gui (Undead) | Peach Wood, Glutinous Rice, Mirrors, Rooster Crow, Talismans | Lore (Yaoguai), Calligraphy, Blessed Weapons |
| **Huli Jing** | Jing (Spirit) | Canine Phobia, True Reflection, Hidden Tail | Animal Handling, Perception, Investigation |
| **Oni** | Yao (Demon) | Roasted Soybeans, Arrogance | Lore (Diyu), Persuasion |
| **Gashadokuro** | Gui (Undead) | Shinto Charms (to negate invisibility), Pacification of Souls | Lore (Yaoguai), Religion, Rituals |
| **Nue** | Jing (Spirit) | Discordant Sounds, Specific Animal Part Vulnerability | Performance, Lore (Spirits), Investigation |
| **Yuki-onna** | Gui/Jing (Spirit) | Heat/Fire, Pledges/Promises | Survival, Lore (Spirits), Diplomacy |
| **Tengu** | Jing (Spirit) | Pride, Dislike of Braggarts, Specific Rituals | Persuasion, Lore (Spirits), Performance |