

Chapter 1: Introduction

The System

This system is based on the world of the xianxia novel Reverend Insanity (aka Master of Gu) by Gu Zhen Ren. In short, it is a high-magic system where most characters and all players are spellcasters called Gu Masters. Spells are contained within creatures called Gu, which can be stored inside a Gu Master's body. Each Gu has a specific function, and the way your character will play is going to constantly change as your personal collection of Gu changes. If you specialize in fire path and later decide you'd rather beat your enemies to death with strength path, you can sell your Gu and buy, find, or create new ones to fulfill that purpose, or dual cultivate the paths for a unique playstyle.

The Aperture

The aperture is a sort of extra-dimensional space located in a Gu Master's stomach. Around the age of puberty, people can awaken their aperture by coming into contact with Hope Gu. Not everyone is lucky enough to be able to awaken their aperture, but those that do are henceforth called Gu Masters. People without an awakened aperture are called mortals, and are just regular people.

The aperture is a simple sphere bounded by walls and filled with a sea of primeval essence, a resource used to activate Gu as well as to cultivate. Cultivation consists of attacking your aperture walls with this primeval essence, eventually breaking them and moving on to a new realm. Gu Masters begin at rank 1 and can cultivate to rank 5. Each rank is considered a large realm, and are subdivided into 4 small realms: initial stage, middle stage, upper stage, and peak stage. After rank 5, there are still ranks 6 through 9, but that is the realm of Gu Immortals and the rules change massively. In this system, the maximum rank attainable is rank 5 peak stage.

You can store Gu in your aperture no matter their size, and there is no limit to the number of Gu that can be stored in your aperture. The aperture is accessible to its owner at any time through their thoughts, but other creatures can only access someone else's aperture after they are dead or through the use of special Gu.

Primeval Essence

Primeval essence is the main resource used by Gu masters to activate and refine Gu as well as cultivate to increase their strength. The representation of primeval essence you see here is an approximation, as the resource quickly becomes quite complex when factoring in the rank and realm of the user alongside the rank of the Gu.

A Gu Master's aperture has a maximum amount of primeval essence, determined by their aptitude. At the initial stage of each rank, a Gu Master has a number of portions of primeval essence equal to their aptitude. A Gu Master at rank 2 initial stage with a 30% aptitude (D-Grade) has a maximum of 30 portions of primeval essence.

When out of combat, the recovery rate is 10% of the Gu Master's maximum primeval essence every hour. Each small realm above initial stage doubles the maximum number of portions available.

At higher ranks, your primeval essence is significantly more potent than even peak stage of the rank below you. For simplicity, activating any Gu of a rank below your own costs a single portion of primeval essence.

As a bonus action, you may leak the aura of your primeval essence. Any creature within 10 meters of you can sense this aura and immediately identify the rank and stage of your primeval essence.

Primeval Stones



Small, smooth stones naturally formed from primeval essence, primeval stones are the main currency in the Gu world. On your turn, you can absorb the essence of a number of primeval stones equal to the number of hands you have as a **Combat Action**. You must have one hand free for each stone being absorbed.

For each primeval stone being absorbed, you gain {5, 4, 3, 2, 1}¹ portion(s) of primeval essence, and the stone is destroyed in the process, crumbling into dust.

You can carry up to 250 primeval stones on your person, but many storage type Gu exist to hold additional stones.

¹ When you see curly brace notation, it represents your rank, or the rank of the Gu if it appears in a Gu's description. In this case, it means expending a primeval stone restores 5 primeval essence if you are rank 1, 4 if you are rank 2, and so on.

Refinement

Gu can be created out of materials and other Gu in a process called refinement. See the *Gu* chapter for more details.

The World

The Gu world is a massive, flat disc, consisting of 5 regions. The source material is pretty inconsistent with size, but it is safe to say each region is at least 6 or 7 times the surface area of the Earth. The 5 regions are as follows:

- Northern Plains: Flat grassland dotted with nomadic tribes of various sizes. Conflict is commonplace and the Gu Masters here are the most adept at fighting.
- Western Desert: A dry wasteland with cities gathered around its oases. Lone cultivators are very uncommon.
- Southern Border: An uneven, mountainous region with familial clans settling on mountainsides. The setting of this system.
- Eastern Sea: Vast ocean dotted with archipelagos. Conflict is less common due to difficulty in reaching other settlements, allowing its inhabitants to focus on cultivation and gaining wealth. Many lone cultivators.
- Central Continent: The most powerful of the five regions and home to the Heavenly Court. Has a mix of the other four regions' geography (i.e. a normal continent).

Since the world is a disc, Southern Border does not border Northern Plains, but it does border the other regions. The same goes for the other outer regions, with only Central Continent connecting to all of them.

Mortals

People without an awakened aperture cannot use Gu. Their status is very low, and in most places a Gu Master can outright kill any mortals that disrespect them. Despite that, mortals do a great deal of work to provide food and resources to the clan, and cannot be wantonly murdered without reproach from righteous path forces.

Righteous and Demonic

Gu Masters identify as part of either the demonic path or righteous path. Demonic does not necessarily mean evil, just that the Gu Master does not follow the rigid systems of community. Of course, many demonic path Gu Masters ARE evil and more than willing to hurt the innocent to further their own goals. Similarly, righteous path Gu Masters are not necessarily good, they just follow the rules of society. While many have ideals of justice and virtue, the more powerful righteous path Gu Masters exploit this societal responsibility for their own gain, and are often willing to commit evil deeds to further their goals, just in more subtle ways than the demonic path.

Inheritances

Inheritances are a common aspect of the Gu World's culture; a Gu Master's ideals can live on long after their death by leaving an inheritance of Gu, refinement recipes, and information to be found in the future. Some inheritances are fraught with difficulty, fully capable of killing those that seek to claim them. Others are safe but with measures to ensure the inheritor is someone worthy of the prize. Sometimes a Gu Master just leaves some Gu in a cave with food and hopes for the best.

Setting

Given the size of the world and the fact that each region has its own local gu, flora, and fauna, I've chosen to localize this system to the Southern Border. You can certainly design a campaign in one of the other regions using this system as a framework though.

Chapter 5 is dedicated to Southern Border, its clans, and geography. It is heavily recommended for the Game Master to read it.

The Dice Mechanic

Skill Tests

Skill tests are rolled when a character would like to do an action that:

- has a chance of failure
- has a chance of success

The GM should be able to determine if an action is possible for your character to do, as well as if the action should be an automatic success.

Dice

Dice are notated d[sides]; a d4 is a four sided die. The td10 is a 10 sided die where each value is a tens place (10, 20, 30, etc). If instead of the number of dice, the die is annotated with an R (Rd12), then the number of dice is equal to the rank of the Gu. This system uses d4, d6, d8, d10, td10, d12, and d20.

The d100 Skill tests are rolled on a d100; to roll a d100, roll a d10 and a td10. The td10 represents the tens place while the d10 represents the ones place. So if you roll an 80 and a 5, your roll is 85. Rolling a 10 on the d10 is just a zero, so rolling 90 and 10 would just be 90. Finally, rolling 00 on the td10 and a 10 on the d10 is 100.

Penalties and Bonuses

Penalties and bonuses are a number added or subtracted from the number you roll on the die during a skill test. The GM can add either to represent the difficulty of the check, using the table below as a guideline. Penalties and bonuses do not have to be round multiples of 10, but they typically are.

Penalty/Bonus	Difficulty
+80	Nearly Impossible (Traveling against the Reverse Flow River)
+60	Extreme Difficulty (Refining an Immortal Gu)
+40	High Difficulty (Convincing a Wisdom Path master to change their plans)
+20	Difficult (Cultivating with minor distractions)
0	Challenging (Cultivating in a secret room)
-20	Slightly Challenging (Refining a common Gu)
-40	Simple (Identifying poisonous plants around your clan's walls)
-60	Trivial (Haggling a merchant to take a few primeval stones off a large price)

Advantage and Disadvantage

If you have advantage on a test, roll an additional td10 and take the lower of the two. You can stack advantages as long as they come from different sources. Disadvantage works the same way, but you take the higher of the td10 rolls.

Degrees of Success/Failure

A success automatically has 1 degree of success, and a failure has 1 degree of failure. For every 10 you roll below/above your skill value, you gain an additional degree of success/failure, respectively. Some skill tests, such as an opposed Deception/Insight roll, do not take degrees of success into account; they're either deceived or they aren't. Many tests, however, will have different effects based on the degrees of success or failure.

Critical

When you roll at or under 1/10 of your skill's value (rounded down, minimum 1) on the die, you've landed a critical. Criticals are automatic successes, though degrees of success are still calculated like normal with a minimum of 1. Some skills have a critical success effect built into them, though the GM can always add a special additional success to any test you critically succeed.

If you score a critical with an attack roll, the attack deals double the damage it normally would.

Fumble

Fumbles occur when 99-100 is rolled on the die for a skill test. If your skill value is above 99, you only fumble on a roll of 100 for that skill. Fumbles are an automatic failure, though degrees of failure are still calculated like normal with a minimum of 1.

Opposed Tests

When competing with your skills against another creature, the two of you may be called to make an Opposed Test. You both roll a skill test, which can be for the same or different skills, and compare results. Critical successes beat any non-critical roll, and fumbles lose to any non-fumble roll. Then, the player with the most degrees of success or least degrees of failure wins. If they're tied for degrees of success/failure, then the lower number on the die wins. If they're still tied, the Opposed Test ends in a tie if possible. If the Opposed Test can't be tied, then the involved parties make the test again until they do not tie.

Running the Game

“Today I step on grass; later I shall step on mountains and rivers!”

Materials

To run the game, you will need a full set of dice including a d4, d6, d8, d10, td10, d12, and d20. Additionally, each player will need a character sheet and something to write with. This game is intended to be played with miniatures on a grid.

The Game Master

Your role as GM is difficult, but ultimately rewarding. Your most important job is making sure everyone at the table is having fun, but that includes yourself. Come to an agreement with your players before running the game to see what you and them want to get out of the game. Also, remember that it is not you against the players. You’re playing the antagonists and will certainly try to kill them. But you’re also creating a challenge for the players to surmount, and you have the right to be excited when they do.

You will be switching quickly between the roles of storyteller, roleplayer, and rulemaker.

Storyteller

You are the story. If your players are staying in the clan’s walls and quietly cultivating, it’s your fault if they grow bored and don’t know what to do. Maybe an overbearing elder puts his hand on the scale, improving one player’s cultivation and suppressing another’s. A beast tide could put their cultivation on hold as they struggle to defend the clan and gain battle merits. And it’s worth knowing where each event fits into your larger campaign. The Gu World is massive and dangerous, so what are the villains doing in the meantime?

Rulemaker

There are lots of edge cases where a rule just doesn’t work. When that happens, you make a ruling on how it should work. Listen to your player’s input if they don’t agree, but you have the final say as GM.

Awarding Experience

There are two avenues of progression in this game: Experience and cultivation.

Experience is used to purchase talents and increase attributes, while cultivation improves a player’s raw power by increasing their pool of primeval essence and allowing the use of higher rank Gu. Experience is awarded for overcoming challenges such as by fighting beasts and other Gu Masters, but can also be awarded for engaging in intrigue. The amount of experience awarded should be reflective of the overall difficulty of the encounter.

Encounter Difficulty

Combat encounters can be judged by the **Challenge Rating** (CR) of all creatures in the encounter. The lowest CR a creature can have is 0, representing mortal threats like common wolves and humans without any Gu. CR then jumps to 11. The first digit represents the rank of the threat, and the 2nd digit represents the estimated strength of the threat from 1-5. 1 represents initial stage, 2 middle stage, 3 upper stage, and 4 peak stage. A 5 means the threat is especially strong for its rank and may even be able to challenge weaker threats in the rank above it. CR caps at 54, for no mortal Gu Master could ever pose a threat to a Gu Immortal.

Character Creation

In this game, you will create and play a Gu Master. Gu Masters are human beings who have awakened their aperture, a kind of extradimensional space within the stomach that can contain Gu and primeval essence. The first thing you ought to mark down is your starting rank. For first-time players, it is recommended to start at rank 1 initial stage. You, your group, and the game master should also determine if you want to follow the righteous path, living and working with a clan, or if you'd like to tread the demonic path, living free in the world with no masters. Your path can always be changed later on, as demonic Gu Masters seek safety and resources, and righteous Gu Masters grow disillusioned and yearn for freedom.

Experience

You start with 500 experience to spend on character creation. Any experience left over afterwards is removed from the game, so that you start your first session with 0 experience. Experience can be spent to increase your Attributes and Skills, as well as to purchase talents (though talents cannot be purchased at character creation). At character creation, attributes cannot be raised above 50 and skills cannot be increased above 80.

- 1 point in any attribute costs 10 experience to increase up to 50, and 15 experience thereafter.
- 1 point in any skill (except Knowledge) costs 2 experience to increase.
- 5 points in Strength or any single Knowledge skill costs 6 experience.

Primary Attributes

Primary attributes are a generalized measure of your body and mind. The base values of each of your skills are derived from these attributes. All Attribute scores start at 20 before you spend any experience to improve them. Improving an attribute also increases the value of all derived skills and secondary attributes.

Agility - Agility is used to dodge attacks, fight in close quarters, and to maneuver in the air.

Fortitude - Fortitude determines your Hit Points, Perseverance, and Strength.

Cognition - Your intelligence and reasoning skills. Used to create refinement recipes, remember information, and to fight in both close and ranged combat.

Wisdom - Wisdom increases your speed of cultivation, how often you succeed when refining Gu, and awareness of your surroundings.

Attitude - Attitude represents your understanding of human nature, relationships, and emotions. A higher attitude makes it easier to deceive and persuade others, and to know when others are deceiving you. It also is a minor factor in your Perseverance.

Secondary Attributes

Secondary attributes either have a flat base value or are derived from your primary attributes.

Health

You have a pool of Hit Points equal to your Fortitude. You can read about how damage, dying, and injury works in the combat chapter.

Movement

Your Movement is the number of meters you can move in a turn. Your Movement is 6 meters.

Strength

Your body's physical power. Strength is often overlooked by Gu Masters, as even rank 1 Gu can overpower the strongest of mortals. But battles are unpredictable, and when primeval essence runs dry Gu Masters may resort to a fistfight. Though this statistic is more relevant at rank 1, some Gu Masters choose to use Gu to enhance their strength and rely on their own muscles to pound their enemies into meat paste. Your Strength score begins equal to your Fortitude and affects the amount of damage you deal with attacks where your physical strength is a factor.

Perseverance

Your Perseverance is your ability to endure great pain and stress, and is equal to the sum of your Fortitude and 1/2 of your Attitude, rounded down. Perseverance is rolled when you hit 0 Hit Points.

Soul

Your Soul score is a literal representation of the strength of your soul. Your starting Soul value is 10. Refining Gu, cultivating, and controlling beast groups all drain the strength of your soul, while sleeping restores it. Many Soul Path Gu also use the strength of your soul to determine their strength when activated. If your current soul ever hits 0 points, you die. When you sleep, your soul recovers 10% of its maximum (rounded down) for every hour spent sleeping. Sleeping for at least 10 hours fully rejuvenates your soul, regardless of rounding.

Your soul begins at 10, the single-man soul. Many Soul Path Gu can strengthen your soul and increase this value. Whenever your soul takes 1/2 or more of its maximum value in soul damage (rounded down) on a single turn, roll 1d6 and reduce the maximum value of your soul by that amount.

When your soul reaches strength 100, you have the ten-man soul. It has the proper strength to sustain damage; you no longer lose maximum soul when you take more than 1/2 of your souls maximum in soul damage.

When your soul reaches strength 1,000, you have the hundred-man soul. If you have not refined your soul using Gu, this is the maximum strength achievable. If your soul increases in strength above 1009 without being refined, your soul explodes and you die, with resurrection being impossible.

When your soul reaches strength 10,000, you have the thousand-man soul. This is the limit for mortal Gu Masters and cannot be raised higher.

If your current soul is less than half of its maximum, you have the *fatigued* condition.

Luck

Players begin with 1 maximum luck point. Luck can be spent to force you or another creature to reroll a skill test directly after the roll, or to add a -50 bonus to a skill test you're making, before the roll. If you've expended a luck point on a skill test, you cannot spend another on the same skill test. You regain luck points up to your maximum at the start of each session.

Activations

When you take the **Activate Gu** combat action, you can activate a number of Gu equal to your Activations. You have a number of Activations equal to 5% of (Wisdom + Cognition), rounding down to a minimum of 1. To make this calculation easier, consider that for every 20 score you have in both attributes, this number will increase by 1. *Shang Liu has a Cognition of 46 and a Wisdom of 37. With a total of 83 and every 20 combined score giving 1 Activation, brings his total Activations to 4.*

Aptitude

Your Gu Master's aptitude is incredibly important to their cultivation and battle strength. A higher aptitude means greater primeval essence, meaning your Gu Master can fight for longer and cultivate quicker. Aptitude is mostly immutable, but some Gu exist to raise or even lower a Gu Master's aptitude.

Choosing your Gu Master's aptitude is a decision that will significantly shape their journey. Higher aptitudes offer undeniable advantages in cultivation speed, primeval essence, and clan support, but they come with the heavy burdens of increased clan expectations, heightened scrutiny, and potential danger. Lower aptitudes, while slower in cultivation, afford your Gu Master greater freedom, fewer obligations, and opportunities to forge their own path.

It is also worth considering the other players in your group. If one player is an A-grade aptitude and another is D-grade, your ranks will most likely diverge dramatically in the early to mid stages. This difference is not insurmountable, but it may not be enjoyable for the weaker Gu Master. It's recommended for the group to decide on 2 adjacent grades and have each player pick one of the two.

Aptitude is just an arbitrary grading of the amount of primeval essence a Gu Master's aperture can store. After choosing your aptitude, roll a d20, subtract 1 from the result, and add it to the minimum essence percentage of your grade to determine your personal maximum primeval essence.

For example, Shang Liu chooses A-grade aptitude and rolls a 4 on his d20. Subtract 1 to get 3 and add that to the minimum of 80%. Shang Liu therefore has 83% as his maximum.

Grade - A: 80%-99% **Grade - B:** 60%-79% **Grade - C:** 40%-59% **Grade - D:** 20%-39%

Attainment

Attainment is your understanding of the different Gu paths. That includes your knowledge of refining, using, and identifying Gu of the same path. You can find the different attainments in the Talents section (Chapter 2. Progression), and your character begins the game with *Fundamental* attainment in a single path.

Starting Items

All characters start with a Gu Master robe, a Vital Gu of rank 1, and 25 primeval stones. At the GM's discretion (for price and availability) you may trade your starting primeval stones for additional rank 1 Gu.

Lifespan

If your character reaches age 100 without using *Lifespan Gu*, they die.

Skills

Your character's Skills represent their learned abilities and proficiencies, whether that be in combat, dialogue, or cultivation. The base value of the skill is dependent on what attribute(s) it is derived from, shown in the parenthesis. Remember to increase your skill values whenever you purchase points in the corresponding attribute.

Close Combat (1/2 Agi + 1/2 Cog) - Close Combat does not only include fighting hand-to-hand, it relates to any fighting that occurs within 3 meters of you. Many attack Gu can be used at range or in close combat, and this skill represents your ability to make attacks at a close range. Melee attacks are always made with your close combat skill.

Ranged Attack (Cog) - If an enemy is further than 3 meters from you, your non-melee attacks will be made with the Ranged Attack skill.

Athletics (1/2 Str + 1/2 Agi) - Athletics is used for strength related actions such as pushing a boulder, climbing a steep cliff, or swimming.

Pushing, Pulling, and Lifting You can push or pull any weight under 100kg without making a test, halving your movement (rounded down) if the weight is over 50kg. Above 100kg you must make an **Athletics** skill test with a -40 bonus, increased by +10 for every 50kg over 100.

Dodge (Agi) - Dodge is used as a reaction to avoid attacks made against you, either melee or ranged.

When you succeed a Dodge test, you MUST move at least 1 meter and at most 1/2 your movement (rounded down) in any direction.

Flying (Agi) - A Gu Master may live his entire life without taking to the skies, but to those that do, this skill is a necessity. Without a decent flying skill, a Gu Master can be easier to hit in the air than they would be on the ground.

The source of your flight tells you how many meters you can move per turn.

Refinement (Wis)

Even with a complete recipe, refining Gu is an arduous process, requiring precision and constant vigilance. When refinement fails it triggers a backlash which can hurt or even kill you and your Gu. Your refinement skill determines how complex of recipes you can follow, and how often your refinement fails.

Deduction (Cog)

Deduction is used to create and refine Gu recipes as well as to develop killer moves; the combination of multiple Gu used simultaneously to deliver a very potent effect. It can also be used to investigate your surroundings for clues.

Some Gu have the [Deductive] keyword. When activated, these Gu unlock a special **Deduction** action. To take it, you must spend an hour deducing a specific subject and make a **Deduction** skill test. Penalties and Bonuses are determined by the amount of supporting information available to you. The subject can be something that occurred in the past, such as who might have committed a murder, or something happening in the present or future, like why a rival clan purchased a huge amount of an unusual refinement material. Deductions cannot create information out of thin air, and a success does not necessarily mean your deduction is correct if you lack a key piece of evidence. For every degree of success on the check, however, you gain one additional conclusion about the subject.

Persuasion (Att)

Persuasion can only be used on non-player characters. Persuasion tests are used to sway a character through your words.

Deception (Att)

Deception can only be used on non-player characters. Your ability to manipulate and deceive others.

Intimidation (Att)

Intimidation can only be used on non-player characters.

Haggle (Att)

Haggle can only be used on non-player characters. Difficulty is based on the target's feelings towards you, and grants a discount on a purchase of 5% for every degree of success on the test. A critical counts as an additional degree of success.

Insight (Wis)

Used to judge a character's body language and intonation. A successful insight test involves learning a character's intention and scrutinizing their body language, and in most cases will not straight up say whether a character is lying or not.

Awareness (Wis)

Your ability to notice hidden objects. If you're meticulously searching an area, use deduction, but to notice an out of place detail while walking past a building you would use awareness.

Cultivation (Wis)

The higher your cultivation skill, the less damage you will take to your soul during cultivation, and the quicker your cultivation will increase.

Knowledge (Cog)

Knowledge is separated into a few categories:

- Gu - There are an uncountable number of different Gu in the world, and this skill helps to identify them. In a fight, it can mean life or death.
- Southern Border - Your understanding of the geography, flora, and fauna of Southern Border. It can be assumed that all characters will have knowledge of the areas surrounding their clan, but when journeying beyond familiarity this skill can be used to identify beasts, plants, and natural formations.
- Clans - Small, medium, large, and super-sized clans dot the mountains and valleys of Southern Border. This skill represents your knowledge of their names, power structures, specialties, and commerce.

Chapter 2 - Progression

Cultivating

The process of increasing your rank in small and large realms is called cultivating. To cultivate, you must meditate and will the primeval essence in your aperture to attack and weaken the aperture walls. To do so, first figure out how many portions of primeval essence will be required to break through the realm. For small realms, the amount is given by the table below. For large realms, the amount is $(1000 * \text{target rank})$ portions.

Stage	Name	Aperture Wall	Wall Hit Points
1	Initial	Light membrane	$1000 * \text{rank}$
2	Middle	Water membrane	$2000 * \text{rank}$
3	Upper	Stone membrane	$4000 * \text{rank}$
4	Peak	Crystal membrane	None

When you're attempting to break through a small realm, the walls retain any damage done by your primeval essence, thus you can slowly break through over time. For every hour you spend cultivating, you can expend up to 20% of your maximum primeval essence (rounded down), reducing the health of the aperture walls by an equivalent amount.

When you're trying to break through from peak stage of a rank to the next rank, first take your primeval essence recovery rate and subtract $(15 * \text{target rank})$ to represent the natural recovery rate of your aperture walls. If the number you calculated is 0 or greater, you can move on to the next step. If it is negative, you'll have to increase your recovery rate via consuming primeval stones or use a Gu that assists in cultivation to break through to the next stage.

You must cultivate for 15 hours straight with no breaks in order to break through to the next rank. For every 15 essence per hour you recover greater than the natural recovery rate of your aperture walls, this time is reduced by 1 hour, to a minimum of 5 hours.

For each hour spent cultivating, whether breaking through a small or large realm, make a **Cultivation** skill test with a bonus/penalty according to the table below. If you fail, your soul takes damage equal to the degrees of failure (minimum of 1).

Target Rank	Modifier
1	-20
2	-10
3	none
4	+10
5	+20

If you're cultivating for longer than 12 hours at a time, make a **Perseverance** attribute test every hour after the initial 12. On a failure, you fall asleep.

Consuming Primeval Stones

You can expend primeval stones while cultivating to make up for not having a high enough recovery rate, and you may do so to assist in breaking through both small and large realms. You may expend any number of primeval stones per hour spent cultivating, increasing your recovery rate for that hour by $\{5, 4, 3, 2, \text{N/A}\}$ for each stone consumed when breaking through large realms, or dealing $\{5, 4, 3, 2, 1\}$ damage to the aperture walls for each stone consumed when breaking through small realms. This depends on your current rank, not the target rank. Primeval stone expenditure must remain constant each hour when breaking through large realms; you cannot use 5 stones the first hour and 2 the second as the math would quickly get very difficult to track.

Spending Experience

In addition to progressing through cultivation, you also get more skilled as a Gu Master as time passes. The GM will award experience at the end of each session, recommended to be between 8-12 experience. Experience earned in this way can be stockpiled, and a few Gu are even be able to consume it as a resource. At the GM's discretion, the players will be allowed to spend their accrued experience at a particular time. Typical situations to allow spending of experience are either when the party is safe and able to rest, or whenever they increase their cultivation.

Talents

Charger

Cost: 20 experience

When you take the *Sprint* combat action, you may make a single punching attack or activate a Gu with a range of *Touch* at some point during your turn. If you make a punching attack and it hits, the target is thrown backward a number of meters equal to 1% of your Strength attribute (rounded down), to a minimum of 0. Making the attack or activating a Gu with a range of *Touch* expends the remainder of your movement.

Combat Absorption

Cost: 30 experience

You can multitask on absorbing primeval stones in the heat of combat. Absorbing the essence of primeval stones now costs a bonus action instead of a combat action.

Flurry

Cost: 20 experience

Requires Fundamental Strength Path Attainment

You gain access to the **Flurry** combat action.

Flurry: For every arm you have, make two punching attacks against a creature within 1 meter. You gain a +20 penalty to **Dodge** skill tests and **Close Combat** skill tests made to parry attacks until the start of your next turn.

Flying Master

Cost: 45 experience

Taking flight no longer expends one of your Maneuvers per turn. Your **Flying** skill is permanently increased by 20 points.

Glib

Cost: 60 experience

Your Attitude attribute is permanently increased by 5. You roll **Haggle** and **Persuasion** skill tests with advantage.

Martial Artist

Cost: 20 experience

Can be purchased up to 3 times

You gain a -10 bonus to **Close Combat** and **Dodge** skill tests while not wielding any weapons.

Multitasker

Cost: 40 experience

Can be purchased up to 3 times

You can sustain an additional Gu every turn without incurring damage to your soul.

Multi-Weapon Fighting

Cost: 20 experience

You can make a number of melee attacks as part of a melee attack combat action as you have wielded weapons, with a +10 penalty to each attack. When wielding only 2 weapons, this penalty is removed.

Natural Muscle Training

Cost: 15 experience

Can be purchased up to 5 times

Your Strength attribute is permanently increased by 10 and your Fortitude attribute is permanently increased by 1.

Not So Fast

Cost: 25 experience

You may make the *Grapple* combat action as an attack of opportunity. You still have disadvantage on the **Close Combat** skill test if the target triggered your attack of opportunity with a **Dodge** skill test.

Pain Tolerance

Cost: 10 experience

Requires Intermediate Strength Path Attainment

Can be purchased up to 3 times

Your maximum hit points are increased by 5, and you gain a -10 bonus to all **Perseverance** attribute tests.

Partial Artist

Cost: 80 experience

You've had an epiphany and internalized the idea of Painting Path. Choose a single Gu with the **[Dao]** keyword (whether you own it or not). You may be under the effects of that Gu even if its path is not compatible with the paths of your other **[Dao]** Gu. Whenever you break through a small or large realm, you may replace your chosen Gu with a different one.

[Path] Scholar

Cost: 15 experience

Requires Fundamental [Path] Attainment

You gain a -20 bonus to **Knowledge (Gu)** skill tests made to identify [Path] Gu.

Sentinel

Cost: 20 experience

Whenever a creature within your melee range makes a melee attack against your ally, you may use the *Parry* reaction against it. You gain a -10 bonus to all **Close Combat** skill tests made as part of the *Parry* reaction (including the follow-up attack).

Tough

Cost: 60 experience

Your base hit points are equal to twice your Fortitude.

Reactive Flight

Cost: 15 experience

Refinement Techniques

Refinement techniques are used to improve the Gu refinement process in many different ways, such as reducing the difficulty, duration, or even material cost of a refinement recipe. Only one refinement technique can be used on a recipe at a time.

Dice Falling Waterfall

Cost: 10 experience

Requires Fundamental Luck Path Attainment

You gain access to the Dice Falling Waterfall refinement technique. When you use the Dice Falling Waterfall refinement technique, you must roll the failure die twice and take the lower result. Upon successfully refining a Gu with this technique, you gain a luck point.

Hairy Man Heaven and Earth

Condenses Gu from Heaven and Earth, opposed to Human Isolation Style. This technique is normally known only to Hairy Men, and takes great practice to perform.

Requires Master Refinement Path Attainment

Cost: 50 experience

You gain access to the Hairy Man Heaven and Earth refinement technique. When you use the Hairy Man Heaven and Earth refinement technique, you gain a -10 bonus to

As a reaction to being sent *airborne*, you can activate a Gu that grants a flying speed and immediately execute a maneuver for free.

Weapon Training

Cost: 15 experience

Can be purchased up to 3 times

When you purchase this talent, pick a class of mundane weapons (swords, spears, bows) or a single Gu.

You gain a -10 bonus on close combat and ranged attack rolls made with the chosen weapon for each time you've purchased this talent and selected that weapon. If a Gu is very close in form to the chosen weapon, you still get this bonus. This usually includes higher ranked versions of the same Gu.

Wrestling Techniques

Cost: 20 Experience

Requires Fundamental Strength Path Attainment

You gain a -10 bonus to **Athletics** skill tests resulting from a *Grapple* combat action. When you successfully grapple a creature, you may make a single punching attack against them as part of the *Grapple* combat action.

Refinement skill tests, and their failure die is increased by 2 stages ($d4 \rightarrow d8$, $d6 \rightarrow d10\dots$).

Shower

Cost: 20 experience

Requires Fundamental Water Path Attainment

You gain access to the Shower refinement technique. When you use the Shower refinement technique, you gain a -10 bonus to **Refinement** skill tests, and the duration of the recipe is reduced by 1/3 (rounded down to the nearest hour).

Starfall

Cost: 10 experience

Requires Fundamental Fire Path Attainment

You gain access to the Starfall refinement technique. When you use the Starfall refinement technique, you gain a -10 bonus to **Refinement** skill tests, increased to -20 when refining Fire Path Gu. This technique cannot be used to refine Water Path or Ice Path Gu.

Path Attainments

It's difficult to use Gu of a path you aren't familiar with. Every character starts with *Fundamental* attainment in a single path. Oftentimes, a Gu Master that achieves master level attainment in any path gains great fame for their accomplishment, and may be contacted by other forces to refine Gu or complete difficult tasks related to the path.

You cannot purchase a path attainment unless you have purchased all previous attainments in the same path. So you cannot purchase master attainment in a path unless you also have purchased fundamental and intermediate attainment.

[Path] Attainment

Fundamental

Cost: 30 experience

You gain an additional bonus action that can only be used to activate a single [Path] Gu on your turn.

Intermediate

Cost: 50 experience

Your understanding of [Path] has reached a qualitative change, and you gain the following benefits:

- You gain a -20 bonus to all **Refinement** and **Knowledge (Gu)** skill tests to refine or identify [Path] Gu.
- **Deduction** skill tests made to develop killer moves gain a -10 bonus if they have a [Path] Gu in its core.

Master

Cost: 100 experience

Your understanding of [Path] reaches the apex of mortal comprehension. You gain the following benefits:

- You automatically succeed all **Refinement** and **Deduction** skill tests to refine or improve the recipe of [Path] Gu, so long as the Gu is of a lower rank than you. You still have to roll the failure die after a successful refinement.
- You gain a -30 bonus to all **Refinement** and **Knowledge (Gu)** skill tests to refine or identify [Path] Gu.
- You gain a -30 bonus to **Deduction** skill tests made to improve or create refinement recipes for [Path] Gu.

Chapter 3 - Gu

Humans are the spirit of all living beings and Gu are the essence of heaven and earth. Mortal Gu represent fragments of the great Dao, or laws of Heaven, and are ranked from 1 to 5, just like mortal Gu Masters. Gu come in many different forms, with bugs being a common motif, but there are just as many that take the forms of beasts and objects. Gu can be either wild or refined; wild Gu usually refers to those birthed from natural primeval essence. These can come into being in any manner of places as long as the conditions are right. Sometimes they are carried by beasts, or roaming the earth alone, or staying sedentary in the place they were born. Refined Gu are those under the direct control of a Gu Master. They obey the user's commands without fail, even destroying themselves with a single thought. The Gu Master can acquire refined Gu by refining wild Gu, creating them themselves using their Refinement skill, or acquiring them from others. Refined Gu may become wild Gu if their master is killed, but this process takes some time.

Gu are separated into different categories based on the effect created when they are activated. These categories have minimal mechanical importance but give a good idea of the Gu's purpose.

Attack - Shooting a blade, controlling someone's mind, or softening a person's bones are all attacks. If the primary use of the Gu is to kill or apply negative effects to a person against their will, it is an attack.

Manifestation - Creates an object under the user's control. Can be permanent or temporary.

Guard - Forms a defensive barrier with the primary focus being blocking attacks.

Celerity - Enhances speed or maneuverability.

Divination - Gathers information, whether from a short distance or across the continent. Investigative Gu that increase a user's perception are included, as well as those that surveil areas or probe into people's minds.

Concealment - Hides the user's presence in any number of ways.

Tonic - Gu with a restorative effect. There exist tonic Gu for humans, beasts, and even other Gu.

Container - If objects can be placed inside, the Gu is typically a container. They can store objects, gu, and sometimes even people. Convenient for storing items and resources safely within your aperture.

Catalyst - A catch-all category for Gu that can be used to supplement other Gu and actions. Gu that increase the likelihood of refinement success, improve cultivation speed, or amplify the effects of other Gu are all catalysts.

Carver - Carves dao semi-permanently into the recipient. The most common carvers belong to strength and information path, used to increase a user's strength and create binding agreements, respectively.

Below is a sample statblock for the rank 1 *Moonlight Gu*. This is the signature Gu of the Gu Yue clan, and cannot be found anywhere else in Southern Border.

Moonlight Gu

Rank 1 Attack (This signifies that the Gu is of Rank 1, and is an Attack-type Gu)

Cost: 5 portions (This Gu costs 5 portions to activate for a rank 1 Gu Master. Rank 2 and above Gu Masters instead only spend 1 portion)

Range: 10 meters

Health: 10 (This Gu has 10 health. If it hits 0, it dies)

Food: Moon orchid petals (3 primeval stones) (This gu eats moon orchid petals. Since it is a rank 1 Gu, it eats every 3 days. When you have access to a market, you can substitute the materials with 3 primeval stones.)

Effect: You hurl a flat, crescent-shaped beam of light. Make an attack roll with a -10 bonus. On a hit, deal 6 rending damage.

Vital Gu

The first Gu you refine gains the [Vital] keyword and becomes your Vital Gu. Yours and your Vital Gu's lifeforces are connected, and if your Vital Gu should die, you would as well. The Vital Gu has a major advantage, however; It cannot die due to backlash during refinement, instead dropping to 1 hp and being unusable in refinement until its hit points are

restored to their maximum. This makes your Vital Gu a very important choice for progression, as you can attempt to refine it to a higher rank many times without worrying about its death.

To change your Vital Gu, you must spend a day in closed cultivation with the new Gu. When you change your Vital Gu, your current hit points are reduced to 1 as you suffer backlash. Your Vital Gu can be of any rank.

Rank

Mortal Gu have a rank of 1-5. Some Gu exist only at a single rank, others are found at several ranks, and others can only be raised in rank through refinement. For example, the rank 1 Dog Enslavement Gu can enslave a single dog. Rank 2 dog enslavement Gu can enslave a Hundred Beast King dog, rank 3 can enslave a Thousand Beast King dog, and so on, with each being found on increasingly strong dogs. The higher the rank of the Gu, the rarer it is, and their strength increases exponentially.

Gu above rank 5 are called Immortal Gu. Most can only be activated with Immortal Essence, though a few have other costs that can be paid by mortals. Forgetting mortal Gu Masters, even Rank 6 Gu Masters may live their entire life without owning an Immortal Gu. Each one is unique, and for however long it exists in the world, nobody else can refine a copy. When one appears, many Gu Immortals will fight to the death to get their hands on it, and when they fight, many tens of thousands of mortals can and do die in the crossfire.

Series

Some Gu belong to a series that spans multiple ranks. Some have additional effects based on their rank and will be listed separately. Others just scale up in numbers and will be under the same listing. If several values are inside curly braces, they represent the value at different ranks. If a Gu exists at ranks 3-5 and creates {1, 10, 100} fireballs, then it creates 1 fireball at rank 3, 10 at rank 4, and 100 at rank 5.

Price

Price is largely dependent on the rank of the Gu in question, but the market also needs to be considered. Relic Gu, for example, are quite rare and of an enormous help to a Gu Master's cultivation, which makes them significantly more expensive than other Gu of the same rank. Smelly Fart Gu, on the other hand, is practically worthless except as a refinement material, and thus would be cheaper than other Gu of the same rank. Use the prices below as a starting point.

Rank	Price
1	500
2	2,000
3	10,000
4	100,000
5	250,000+

Rank 4 and rank 5 Gu are significantly rarer than Gu of rank 1 to 3. It may be difficult to find a seller, and you may even encounter schemes and resistances from your opposition when trying to buy them.

Primeval Essence Costs

Gu statblocks will have a number of portions it costs to activate. This assumes you are of the same rank as the Gu. If your rank is lower than the Gu, your primeval essence is too weak, and the Gu costs 4 times as many portions to activate for every rank above you the Gu is. If you are Rank 2 and try to activate a Rank 4 Gu that costs 10 portions, instead it will cost you 160 portions. If the Gu is below your rank, it only costs a single portion of your primeval essence to activate.

Wild Gu

Wild Gu are found in the wilderness, typically in an environment rich with Dao of the Gu's path. Wild Gu have a speed of 8 meters (except [Steed] Gu with their own movement statistic) and will attempt to evade capture, including by activating themselves using natural primeval essence. Wild Gu can see through *concealments* of a lower rank than itself, and have an Awareness skill of $10 * \text{rank}$.

Refining Gu

Refining Gu can refer to two processes; the first is turning a wild Gu or a Gu refined by someone else into your own. The second is the act of following a recipe to create a new Gu. You cannot activate a Gu that is wild or belongs to someone else, unless the owner is willing.

Refining Existing Gu

When refining a wild Gu, the Gu must be subdued first. For smaller Gu this usually just involves catching it, but larger or more aggressive Gu may require you to weaken it in battle or through other means. If the Gu is owned by someone else, they can weaken their will to allow you to refine the Gu for free. Otherwise, your will is pitted against theirs. Make an opposed Wisdom test against the owner of the Gu, with the higher ranked Gu Master gaining a -30 bonus for each rank they are above their opponent. If you win the test, the owner's will is driven out and you gain ownership of the Gu. If you lose, they retain control of the Gu, you take 1d4 damage to your soul, and you gain a stacking -10 bonus on subsequent rolls made to refine the Gu.

Once a wild Gu is subdued, you must be touching it to refine it into your own. To do so, you must spend 50 portions of primeval essence. If the Gu is of a higher rank than you, it costs 4 times more portions to refine for each rank above you. If the Gu is below your rank, it costs a single portion of primeval essence to refine.

If you do not have enough primeval essence to do so in one sitting, you may have to refine the Gu for a longer period, using your natural recovery and/or primeval stones to supply the rest of the required portions. Taking a break from the refinement causes it to fail, and the primeval essence used in the process is lost.

Following a Recipe

Refinement recipes will have many required materials. Common materials are included in the recipe's primeval stone cost, assuming you have access to a market to purchase the materials. Rarer materials will be specified, and you may have to seek out a seller or go find these materials yourself. Some recipes will also have an associated ritual which will have to be completed for the refinement to succeed.

To begin refinement, you must have all the necessary materials on hand. If you know any refinement techniques (see ch.2 - Talents) you may select one. Make a **Refinement** skill test with a penalty or bonus according to the recipe's difficulty. If you've already successfully refined the Gu before, you gain a -20 bonus on the test. On a success, roll the failure die. If the number rolled is anything except a 1, you have succeeded in creating the Gu. If you do roll a 1, the refinement fails, representing the flat chance of failure all refinement recipes have. If you succeeded, however, cut the duration in half for every degree of success on the refinement test (barring any rituals involved that take a set amount of time).

On a failure, you and all Gu being used in the refinement process take a backlash. If you failed the roll by less than 10, or if the failure was caused by a 1 on the failure die, the backlash is negated. Otherwise, you take damage to your soul equal to the degrees of failure multiplied by the rank of the Gu you're attempting to refine. Every Gu being used in the refinement takes the same amount of damage to their health. If your Vital Gu would be killed in this manner, instead it drops to 1 hit point.

For every 8 hours you spend refining Gu without a rest, take 1d6 damage to your soul.

Sample Recipe: Four Flavors Liquor Worm *Four Flavors Liquor Worm*

Rank: 2

Cost: 25 primeval stones, 2 Rank 1 Liquor Worm Gu, Spicy wine, sweet wine, bitter wine, sour wine

Additional Gu: none

Duration: 4 hours

Difficulty: -10 bonus

Failure Die: d10

Market Value: 20,000 primeval stones

Improving a Recipe

You can leverage your **Refinement** skill to reduce the cost, duration, difficulty, or failure rate of any Gu recipe. To do so, you must have a **Refinement** skill of $(20 * \text{recipe rank})$ as well as *intermediate* attainment in the path of the Gu in question to attempt the refinement. If you do, start by paying 4 times the total cost of the recipe, to represent the materials needed to practice and attempt to improve the recipe. You must also spend an amount of time equal to 4 times the duration of the recipe in refinement. This time does not need to be sequential, and you can break as long as you need and however often you need. Then, make a **Refinement** skill test with a penalty of +10 multiplied by the rank of the recipe. On a fumble, you do not succeed in improving the recipe and take damage to your soul equal to the degrees of failure multiplied by the rank of the recipe. On a failure, you do not succeed in improving the recipe, but don't face a backlash. On a success, you make a breakthrough and gain a new recipe for the Gu, with one of the following improvements:

- The failure die is increased by one step; d2 -> d4 -> d6 -> d8 -> d10 -> d12 -> d20 -> d100
- The difficulty is reduced by 5
- The primeval stone cost is reduced by 25% OR remove one additional cost (you cannot remove a Gu from the cost if the recipe is to advance that Gu up a rank)
- The duration is reduced by 50%

The recipe you've created is different from the previous one, and both can still be used and sold. The market value of the new recipe is worth double that of the original. You can improve a recipe a number of times equal to 5% of your refinement skill, rounded down.

Creating a Recipe

Creating a recipe is a collaborative effort between the player and GM. The player should first approach the GM with the Gu they want to create a recipe for. This can be a Gu from the Gu Index or a unique Gu that the GM has approved. It is up to the GM's judgement as to how expensive and difficult the recipe will be, but a recommended primeval stone cost range is listed in the table below.

Rank	Price
1	5 - 500
2	500 - 1,500
3	2,000 - 5,000
4	10,000 - 75,000
5	100,000 - 1,000,000

Feeding Gu

Gu are living beings and need to be fed. What they eat is determined by the Gu, while how often they eat is determined by the rank. Some Gu will have a number of primeval stones in parenthesis next to their food. If you have access to a market, you can spend that number of primeval stones for a feeding. Gu also cannot be fed during combat.

Rank	Interval
1	3 days
2	7 days
3	30 days
4	250 days
5	10 years

If the food does not have a primeval stone cost next to it, that does not mean it is impossible to purchase, just that it is a rarer material. You can find your own out in the Southern Border, or seek out a seller of rare items.

To track food, mark the Gu's feeding interval in days inside the "Days Until Feeding" column on your Gu sheet. Every time a day passes in game, subtract 1 from the number. When the Gu eats, set it back to the original feeding interval. If it hits -1, the Gu starves to death. You can feed a Gu outside of combat whenever you wish as long as you have the materials.

Detonating Gu

As a reaction or at any time during their turn, a Gu Master can self-detonate any Gu owned and refined by them with a single thought. The Gu Master must be conscious to do so, and can detonate as many or as few Gu as they want, from any distance. If the Gu is being suppressed, such as by the land spirit of a blessed land, the Gu Master cannot self-detonate it. Otherwise, the chosen Gu instantly die, with no other effects. If the Gu has a self-detonation ability, it does not trigger, since the Gu was not activated.

Healing Gu

Gu have a pool of hit points, and thus need to be healed when damaged. Most Gu heal back to full health when they are fed. Some Gu can only be healed by other Gu or an obscure process.

Stacking Effects

In most cases, the effects of different Gu will stack, whereas the effects of the same Gu will not. Even if a Gu Master owns multiple Golden Breeze Gu, they cannot sustain both at the same time to double the healing effect.

Gu against Gu

Sometimes the effects of Gu will be pit against one another. In most circumstances, the higher rank Gu's effect takes precedence. If both are the same rank, the defending Gu should block the effect. For example, if a Gu Master is attacked by Rank 2 Vein Burst Gu, but has strengthened his blood vessels with Rank 2 Iron Artery Gu, then he would be unaffected, despite neither Gu explicitly mentioning the interaction. Concealments are considered the defender when pit against Divinations.

The Gu system has a lot of moving parts, and it would be unfun and tedious if every effect listed every possible counter and use case. When there's uncertainty about whether a Gu would affect a target, use common sense, and if that fails the GM will have to make a ruling.

Gu Keywords

Deductive

When activated, [Deductive] Gu unlock a special *Deduction* action. To take it, you must spend an hour deducing a specific subject and make a **Deduction** skill test. Penalties and Bonuses are determined by the amount of supporting information available to you. The subject can be something that occurred in the past, such as who might have committed a murder, or something happening in the present or future, like why a rival clan may have purchased a huge amount of an unusual refinement material. Deductions cannot create information out of thin air, and a success does not necessarily mean your deduction is correct if you lack a key piece of evidence. For every degree of success beyond 1 on the check, however, you gain one additional conclusion about the subject.

Dao

Gu with the [Dao] keyword contain much higher traces of dao than most mortal Gu. Dao of different paths naturally conflict, and a Gu Master cannot gain the effect from a [Dao] Gu if they are already under the effect of a [Dao] Gu of a non-compatible path. If a Gu belonging to Transformation Path has the [Dao] keyword, it belongs wholly to transformation path and is compatible with all other paths. Transformation Path Gu may instead have the [Dao: [Path]] keyword, indicating that the Dao belongs to a different path and inherits that path's compatibilities. For example, Earth Chief Zombie Gu, which has the [Dao: Earth] keyword, can only be combined with [Dao] Gu of Metal, Transformation, or Wood Path.

Using the same [Dao] Gu multiple times does not stack the effect.

Compatible Paths

Blood Path: Enslavement Path - Transformation Path - Water Path - Wood Path

Dark Path: Poison Path - Space Path - Theft Path - Transformation Path

Earth Path: Metal Path - Transformation Path - Wood Path

Enslavement Path: Blood Path - Soul Path - Theft Path - Transformation Path

Fire Path: Light Path - Lightning Path - Metal Path - Transformation Path - Wind Path

Ice Path: Transformation Path - Water Path - Wind Path

Information Path: Rule Path - Transformation Path - Wisdom Path

Light Path: Fire Path - Lightning Path - Sound Path - Transformation Path

Lightning Path: Fire Path - Light Path - Transformation Path - Wind Path

Luck Path: Rule Path - Transformation Path

Metal Path: Earth Path - Fire Path - Strength Path - Sword Path - Transformation Path

Poison Path: Dark Path - Transformation Path - Wind Path - Wood Path

Refinement Path: Soul Path - Transformation Path - Wisdom Path

Rule Path: Information Path - Luck Path - Transformation Path

Soul Path: Refinement Path - Transformation Path - Wisdom Path

Sound Path: Light Path - Sword Path - Transformation Path

Space Path: Dark Path - Time Path - Transformation Path

Strength Path: Metal Path - Soul Path - Transformation Path

Sword Path: Metal Path - Sound Path - Transformation Path

Theft Path: Dark Path - Enslavement Path - Transformation Path

Time Path: Space Path - Transformation Path - Wisdom Path

Transformation Path: Compatible with all paths

Water Path: Blood Path - Ice Path - Transformation Path - Wood Path

Wind Path: Fire Path - Ice Path - Lightning Path - Poison Path - Transformation Path

Wisdom Path: Information Path - Refinement Path - Soul Path - Time Path - Transformation Path

Wood Path: Blood Path - Earth Path - Transformation Path - Poison Path - Water Path

Defensive

[**Defensive**] Gu can be activated as a reaction to any event.

Fast

[**Fast**] Gu have a movement of 12 meters instead of 8.

Expendable X

[**Expendable**] Gu are destroyed after X uses. If there is no number, the Gu can only be used a single time before it is destroyed.

Low Vitality

[**Low Vitality**] Gu do not regenerate hit points when they are fed. Most will clarify the necessary Gu or process used to recover their health instead.

Piercing

[**Piercing**] Gu can pierce through any material that lacks dao. The only barriers with dao would be either immortal refinement materials or barriers created by Gu. Mundane armor worn by a creature struck by a [**Piercing**] attack does not reduce the damage of the attack, and the armor takes damage equal to the damage of the attack to its hit points.

[**Piercing**] Gu can also make attacks against targets fully obscured by cover with a +20 penalty. If the target is only partially obscured by cover, attacks made with a [**Piercing**] Gu against them do not have the usual penalty.

Shield

When you take damage, that damage is first assigned to any active Gu with the [**Shield**] keyword so long as the Gu can block that damage type. If you have multiple [**Shield**] Gu active and it isn't immediately clear which one would block the attack first, you may decide in what order damage is assigned. If you use a [**Shield**] Gu to reduce damage, the Gu takes that damage to its hitpoints.

If a [**Shield**] Gu would die from sustaining an attack while active, you may use a reaction to deactivate the Gu at 1 hit point, taking the remaining damage to your hit points or another [**Shield**] Gu.

Size

If size is not listed, the Gu is the most common size, [**Tiny**]; that of a large insect. If the Gu is [**Small**] it is the size of a child, and [**Medium**] is the size of a man. [**Large**] Gu take up 4 squares when outside of your aperture, and [**Huge**] Gu take up any area greater than 9 squares.

Size	Modifier to Hit
Tiny	+40
Small	+20
Medium	0
Large	-20
Huge	-40

Steed

A [**Steed**] Gu can be ridden while outside your aperture. While mounted, your movement is replaced with the [**Steed**] Gu's movement statistics.

Supplementary

Supplementary Gu can change the properties of your subsequent activations. When used outside of killer moves, [**Supplementary**] Gu have no effect on Gu of a higher rank than itself. When used as supplementary Gu in a killer move, you will require a number of the same [**Supplementary**] Gu to properly apply the effect equal to $2^{\text{(killer move rank - [Supplementary] Gu rank)}}$.

Supplementary Gu inherit the [**Sustained**] keyword when used to augment [**Sustained**] Gu.

Sustained

You must pay the cost of [**Sustained**] Gu at the start of each of your turns as long as you keep the effect active. Paying the cost does not use one of your activations. While a Gu is being sustained, it cannot be activated (because it is already active). If you are sustaining more than 1 Gu at the same time, take 1 damage to your soul for every Gu being sustained above your **Activations** attribute at the start of each of your turns.

You may stop sustaining a Gu at any time, whether or not it is your turn. If you fall unconscious or are *stunned*, you automatically stop sustaining all Gu. When you stop sustaining a Gu, you cannot activate that Gu again until after the end of your current turn.

Transformation

Gu and, more commonly, killer moves with the [Transformation] keyword completely change the body of the user, granting it different attributes. The most common attribute changed is hit points, though some change other attributes like movement and strength. If your hit point or soul maximums are changed by a [Transformation] Gu, keep track of how much health or soul you had before the transformation. When the transformation ends, either by being reduced to 0 hit points/soul or by deactivating the Gu, Your attributes return to their state before the transformation, including current hit points/soul. You may only ever be under the effect of one [Transformation] Gu or killer move at a time.

If your transformation is reduced to 0 hit points, all Gu involved deactivate and any remaining damage from the attack is dealt to your hit points. If the transformation was permanent and is reduced to 0 hit points, you remain in the transformation and roll to see if you enter *Final Stand* (see Ch. 4, Combat).

Undodgeable

[Undodgeable] attacks cannot be avoided by moving, such as with the **Dodge** reaction. A creature can still take the **Dodge** reaction against an [Undodgeable] attack, but it will only move them and not avoid the attack.

Unreactable

Attacks made with [Unreactable] Gu are too fast for the defender to react in time. When a creature uses a reaction in response to the activation or effect of an [Unreactable] Gu, their reaction is delayed until after the Gu's successful activation and application of its effect.

Vital

A Gu Master can only have 1 [Vital] Gu at a time. If a Gu with the [Vital] keyword dies, the owner of the Gu dies as well. When taking damage from refinement backlash, a [Vital] Gu cannot be brought below 1 hit point. The [Vital] keyword is applied automatically to the first Gu a Gu Master refines, but you can spend a day in closed cultivation with a new Gu to transfer the [Vital] keyword to the new Gu, removing it from your old Vital Gu. When you change your Vital Gu, your current hit points are reduced to 1 as you suffer backlash.

Creating Unique Gu

While I've made an expansive list of many of the Gu paths, in reality there is a basically unlimited number of Gu. Once you're more familiar with the system and balance, you're encouraged to make your own Gu. Here are some guidelines;

- Gu type (attack, guard, celerity, etc.) has no mechanical effect and only exists for easier categorization.
- Rank 5 Gu are at the peak of the mortal realm, and have the power to clear sections of a battlefield single handedly, while rank 1 Gu are sometimes strong enough to kill a person. Keep in mind that a Gu of higher rank should have an advantage over lower ranked Gu.
- The rules already account for the differing primeval essence quality between ranks. Costs are proportional to the power of the Gu within its rank. A rank 1 Gu with a high cost can be similar in strength to a rank 2 Gu with low cost.
- Health is usually only relevant to Gu with the [Shield] or [Steed] keywords or for refinement. Gu with higher health are more likely to survive backlash from refinement and are thus more viable for improvement.
- Range can be Self (an area of effect centered on yourself or an effect that only applies to the user), Touch, or a distance in meters.
- Duration can be permanent or have a specified duration. Duration can be in the form of time (minutes/hours/days/years) or with respect to the turn. If the Gu applies an effect for 1 turn, it's typically better to say "until the end of your/their next turn." This is because the number of turns remaining on an effect ticks down at the end of the creature's turn; if you buff yourself on your turn, and the duration of the effect is 1 turn, it would disappear at the end of your turn and not be active when you take any of your reactions outside your turn.
- Overall, the strength of the Gu should be relative to all these factors. If it is more expensive in primeval essence, has a short range, eats expensive food, and/or has major drawbacks to its use, the power of the Gu should be increased relatively. This can mean more damage, more health (for [Shield] Gu), making the Gu harder to counter, and so on. A Gu that costs 2 portions, eats dirt, and affects 1km better have a much weaker effect than other Gu in its rank. Adding the [Expendable] or [Low Vitality] keywords can also be used to balance a Gu that's on the stronger side.

Most importantly, be creative! There is a Gu for any purpose you can think of. There are Gu suited to cure any affliction, make any attack, cause any event that you can think of. Some Gu might seem practically useless, but they can always be used to improve some killer move or refine a new Gu.

Enslavement Path

Enslavement path Gu Masters are a huge asset to a clan. In battle, a single enslavement path Gu Master can be worth many other Gu Masters of the same rank, as they use Enslavement Gu to dominate the minds of beasts and even other Gu Masters to be used as a personal army. Enslavement path is an uncommon one to follow, however, as it costs a great deal of resources to maintain an army of beasts.

The unorthodox nature of enslavement path requires its own section in this book; this section will cover using Enslavement Gu, maintaining an army, and directing them on the battlefield. To follow the enslavement path, a Gu Master must have a strong soul foundation or else their results will be very limited.

Enslavement Gu

There are two different Enslavement Gu (not to be confused with Gu of Enslavement Path): - [Beast] Enslavement Gu exist for pretty much all wild beasts; in the Southern Border, wolves and boars are a common target, but some Gu Masters create armies of horses, monkeys, goats, and even birds. [Beast] Enslavement Gu usually cover a specific animal type; Wolf Enslavement Gu can enslave wolves, vermillion flame wolves, shark fin wolves, etc., but they cannot enslave dogs, which are of course enslaved with a Dog Enslavement Gu. - Slavery Gu is used to enslave other humans and variant-humans.

Controlling Your Army

Individuals Commanding individual beasts is tedious and quickly drains the soul. When you individually control a creature, you take its turn for it, and take 1 damage to your soul at the end of its turn. You can choose to individually control any beast that is not part of a horde (beast kings must be individually controlled while part of a horde). If you do not take an enslaved beast's turn, it acts like a wild beast and is under the GM's command, but will usually follow what the horde is doing and never attack friendly creatures.

Hordes If you have at least 100 beasts under your control, they must be separated into *Hordes*. A Horde of beasts has no minimum amount, but each must be led by the proper beast king, enslaved by you. The beast king leading the horde is the *Commander*. The maximum number of ordinary beasts in a horde is listed below:

Hundred Beast King: 100 Thousand Beast King: 1,000 Myriad Beast King: 10,000 Beast Emperor: 100,000 Mutated Beast King: 100 Mutated Beasts of the same type as the *Commander*

- Beast kings of a lower classification can be included in the horde of a greater beast king, but can only be controlled individually.
- Beasts that aren't part of a horde can only be controlled individually.
- In combat, creatures enslaved by you act directly after your turn.

As long as you have at least one beast or Gu Master under your control and within control range, you gain access to the **Direct Combat Action**. ### Direct (*Combat Action*) You give up to one order to each of your hordes. At the end of your turn, you take 1d12 damage to your soul for every order given this way.

Orders

Defend The horde stays in its current position, attacking any creatures that enter their square or an adjacent square.

Attack

Killer Moves

When multiple Gu are combined into a single effect it is colloquially known as a killer move. Killer moves have a core of 1 or more same-ranked Gu as well as any number of supplemental Gu.

Blood Vision *Rank 4 Divination Killer Move* Core Gu: Rank 4 Blood Sense Gu, Rank 4 Blood Brother Gu Supplementary Gu: Rank 3 Hundred Meter Gu x 2, Total Activations: 4 Activation Cost: 49 portions Keywords: [Sustained]

Effect: Any creatures within 100 meters have their blood tainted with yours. For 24 hours, these creatures are considered your siblings by blood path methods. While this killer move is sustained, you can sense the exact location of any of your blood relatives within 100 meters.

Components of a Killer Move

Core Gu Core Gu are the most important part of a killer move, and determine the main paths, rank, and general effect of the killer move. Looking at the Rank 4 killer move Blood Vision, shown above, It uses Rank 4 Blood Sense Gu and Rank 4 Blood Brother Gu as its core. Blood Brother Gu can turn a creature into your blood relative, and Blood Sense Gu senses the location of blood relatives nearby, so a natural effect would be to both transmute the blood of and sense nearby creatures. These are also both Blood Path Gu, and thus the killer move belongs to Blood Path as well. Finally, the Rank of the killer move is equal to the highest ranked Gu among the killer move's core.

Supplementary Gu Supplementary Gu are used to amplify or mutate the effects of the core Gu. Supplementary Gu can be of a different path and even a higher rank than the core Gu, but do not change the overall rank of the killer move. A Gu with the [Supplementary] keyword has a specific effect when used as a supplementary Gu for a killer move. That being said, any Gu can be used as a supplementary Gu as long as you can justify its use and detail its effect on the killer move. These effects should be minor changes to the killer move; If you want to add a Gu that would completely change the nature of the killer move it should go into the Core Gu.

Activations The activations stat is simply the number of Gu in the Killer Move. More complicated killer moves use many Gu and are more taxing on the user's soul. For each Gu over your Activations attribute, your soul takes 1 damage upon activation. Every Gu in the killer move counts towards your number of currently sustained Gu if the killer move has the [Sustained] keyword.

Activation Cost The combined primeval essence cost of all Gu in the recipe. This number assumes the user is of the same rank as the killer move. If the user is of a higher or lower rank, adjust the cost accordingly.

Deducing a Killer Move

To deduce a killer move, you must have the *Fundamental [Path] Attainment* talent in the paths of all Core Gu. You should prepare the killer move with the gamemaster first, making sure both of you agree on the Gu used and the final effect. Once you have the killer move prepared, your character has to then spend time experimenting to create the killer move. This takes 8 hours for each Gu in the killer move, whether it is core or supplementary. After spending the requisite time practicing, in a single session or multiple, make a **Deduction** test with a +10 penalty for each unique Gu in the killer move beyond 2.

Activating a Killer Move

Killer moves can be activated with the **Activate a Killer Move** combat action, but can be quite taxing on the soul depending on their complexity. Pick a killer move for which you have all the Gu and enough primeval essence for all activations. For every activation in the killer move over your **Activations** attribute, take 1 damage to your soul. The killer move activates, applying its effect. If the killer move has the [Sustained] keyword, you take 1 damage to your soul any time you activate a Gu while sustaining the killer move.

Chapter 4: Combat

Initiative

At the beginning of combat, an initiative is rolled. If an enemy is within 3 meters of you, roll **Close Combat**. If not, roll **Ranged Attack**. The player with the most degrees of success goes first. In the case of ties, the lower number on the die goes first. If this is still tied, creatures controlled by a player go before non player characters. If the tied creatures are all player characters, they decide amongst themselves who goes first; if all are NPCs, the GM chooses. Continue this process for the rest of the combatants.

Surprise

Surprised creatures have a +20 penalty to their initiative roll and cannot take reactions until the start of their first turn.

Stealth

There is no stealth skill in the game. Many Gu render your personal sneaking skills worthless, and so most Gu Masters that wish to walk unobserved will use concealment Gu to do so. In the case either party is not using these Gu, the creature you are trying to sneak past makes an awareness check with a penalty or bonus determined by the GM for the circumstance, including the stealthing party's measures to hide themselves.

The Turn

One turn lasts 10 seconds. Gu Masters recover primeval essence at the beginning of each of their turns.

Start and End of Turn Effects

If you have multiple start or end of turn effects, you choose in what order they resolve. If an effect is applied to a creature for a specified duration, say 3 turns, the number of turns remaining ticks down at the end of the creature's turns, with the effect ending if it hits 0.

Action Economy

Gu Masters can take a **Combat Action**, two **Reactions**, a bonus action, and a movement on each of their turns.

Movement

You can move a number of meters on your turn equal to your movement. 1 meter of movement corresponds to moving 1 adjacent square, including corners. If you have a flying speed, you may forego this movement to execute a number of *Maneuvers* dependent on the flying Gu being used. If you are under the effect of multiple Gu that grant a flying speed, you must choose one Gu and use the flying speed and number of Maneuvers granted by that Gu.

You can move through a [**Small**] or larger hostile creature's square with a successful **Dodge** skill test, but cannot end your turn inside another creature's square (unless they are [**Tiny**]). Failing a **Dodge** skill test made to move through a hostile creature's square expends your remaining movement.

Jumping

Jumping costs half of your movement in meters, rounded up. If your movement is 0, you cannot jump.

Standing Jump From rest, you can jump a maximum of 10% of your athletics skill (rounded down to a minimum of 1) in meters upwards, or 2 meters forwards.

Long Jump If you move at least 1 meter in the direction of your jump before jumping, your forward jumping distance is equal to half your movement, rounded up.

Maneuvers

You may only execute a Maneuver if you have a flying speed. With the exception of *Take Flight*, you must be *airborne* to execute a maneuver. While *airborne*, you make **Dodge** skill tests with your **Flying** skill until you return to the ground, and use your flying speed when dodging.

Take Flight Taking flight can only be done when on the ground. You rise a number of meters into the air equal to half your flying speed, rounded down, and are now *airborne*.

Fly You move a number of meters equal to your flying speed in a straight line in any direction.

Dive You must be at least 5 meters above the ground to perform a *Dive*. Make a **Flying** skill test. On a success, you dive down a distance of up to triple your flying speed, and can move up to your flying speed in meters forward. When you finish a *Dive*, you may make a single melee attack or activate a Gu with a range of touch targeting a creature within your melee range. Whether you do or not, you can try to execute a *Land* maneuver or else rise 1 meter directly upward at the end of the dive.

If you fail the test, you dive directly downward a number of meters equal to your flying speed before regaining control. If this would cause you to hit the ground, you do so, are no longer *airborne*, and take 4 force damage for every meter you dove.

Evade Make a **Flying** skill test. On a success, all skill tests made to hit you with an attack are made with a penalty equal to +(your flying skill, rounded down to the nearest ten) until the start of your next turn. You can only make one Evade Maneuver each turn.

Land You land on solid ground. If executed at the end of a dive or atop *Difficult Terrain*, you must succeed a **Flying** skill test or else land *prone*.

Climbing

When climbing a surface, your movement is halved, rounded down to a minimum of 1 meter. If the surface does not have easy handholds like a ladder the GM may call you to make an **Athletics** skill test or else fall.

Swimming

Non-aquatic creatures consider water to be difficult terrain. A creature can hold its breath for a number of minutes equal to 10% of their Fortitude attribute (rounded down) before falling unconscious. If the creature remains unable to breath for the same period of time after passing out, they die.

Difficult Terrain

If a creature is standing in difficult terrain, it costs 2 meters of movement instead of 1 to move to another square.

Combat Actions

Activate Gu

Your Activations can be used to activate Gu as well as to utilize the lingering effects of many Gu, such as directing manifestations. You may activate a number of Gu equal to your **Activations** attribute. You may activate each at any time during your turn, including in the middle of movement, but you cannot activate a Gu when it is not your turn. You may activate the same Gu multiple times, unless you are sustaining it. Using up your activations does not prevent you from activating Gu using your reactions.

Activate a Killer Move

Pick a killer move for which you have all the Gu and enough primeval essence for all activations. For every activation in the killer move over your **Activations** attribute, take 1 damage to your soul. The killer move activates, applying its effect. If the killer move has the [Sustained] keyword, you take 1 damage to your soul any time you activate a Gu while sustaining the killer move.

Melee Attack

Melee attacks made against a target incapable of moving automatically hit.

Weapon Attack Roll a **Close Combat** skill test against an enemy within your weapon's range. On a hit, deal the damage of the weapon, +1 damage for every 20 points you have in Strength.

Multi-Weapon Fighting When wielding more than 1 weapon, you can make a number of melee attacks equal to the number of wielded weapons instead of just 1. If you elect to do so, all melee attacks made have a penalty equal to +(number of attacks * 10). You cannot wield more weapons than you have arms and hands.

Unarmed Strike When you take an unarmed strike combat action, you may make a punch attack for each arm you have, or a single kick attack or bite attack.

Punch: Roll a **Close Combat** skill test against an enemy within 1 meter. On a hit, deal 1 force damage, +1 damage for every 10 points you have in Strength. For every 5 damage dealt, even if it is reduced, you take 1 force damage directly to your hit points. Gu such as Metal Skin Gu and Copper Tendons Gu are typically used to prevent your own strikes from hurting you.

Kick: Roll a **Close Combat** skill test against an enemy within 1 meter. On a hit, deal 1 force damage, +1 damage for every 5 points you have in Strength. If the target is [Large] or smaller, it is knocked backwards a number of meters equal to 1% of your Strength attribute (rounded down, minimum 1) and lands *prone*.

Bite: You viciously bite the target. Roll a **Close Combat** skill test against an enemy within 1 meter. On a hit, deal 2 rending damage, +1 damage for every 5 points you have in Strength. The target is inflicted with *bleeding X*, where X is equal to 20% of the rending damage dealt to their hit points, rounded down (to a minimum of 0).

Called Shot

When you make an attack roll against a creature, you can choose to pick a particular body part, worn or carried item, or manifested body parts like wings as the target of your attack. A called attack roll is made with a penalty based on the size of the target; for an average person, their hands would be tiny, arms and the head are small, and the torso is medium.

Size	Modifier to Hit
Tiny	+40
Small	+20
Medium	0
Large	-20
Huge	-40

Grapple

Select an enemy of equal or lesser size in an adjacent square. Roll an opposed **Athletics** skill test against them. If you win, The creature is *restrained* and now occupies the same square as you while *restrained* in this way. While you are grappling a creature, you may not make kicking attacks and the number of free hands you can make punching attacks with using the **Melee Attack** action is reduced by 1.

You may expend your movement to make an **Athletics** skill test, with a +10 penalty for every 50 kilograms the grappled target weighs. On a success, you can move up to half your movement (rounded down).

As a bonus action, you can throw a target grappled by you as long as your Strength attribute is greater than their weight in kilograms. The distance you can throw them is a number of meters equal to 5% of the difference between your Strength attribute and their weight in kilograms, rounded down to a minimum of 1 meter. If the creature strikes another creature or object besides the ground, both take force damage equal to $3 + 10\%$ of your Strength attribute (rounded down).

As a combat action, a grappled creature can attempt to break free, making an opposed **Athletics** skill test against the grappler. On a success, they break free.

Absorb Primeval Stones

On your turn, you can absorb the essence of a number of primeval stones equal to the number of hands you have. You must have one hand free for each stone being absorbed.

For each primeval stone being absorbed, you gain 5 portions of primeval essence, and the stone is destroyed in the process, crumbling into dust.

Hold an Action

You can choose to hold your Combat Action, specifying an action and a trigger for it to occur. When the trigger happens, you may use a reaction to take that Combat Action. If you are reacting to an opponent's actions, you must make an opposed skill test to see whose action occurs first, with the skill in question being **Close Combat** if within 3 meters of each other, or **Ranged Attack** if not. If you hold the **Activate Gu** action, you may only specify a single activation.

Triggers can be specific or broad, ranging from "when the opponent uses Fire Pellet Gu" to "when a creature makes any hostile moves".

Sprint

Taking the sprint action triples your non-flying movement until the end of your turn.

Reactions

You can react to most actions around you at any time other than during your turn. An exception is that you cannot react to someone activating a Gu, but you can react to them making an attack with one, manifesting an object with it, or applying any other effect. If a Gu has the [**Unreactable**] keyword, you cannot use a reaction in response to its effect. You cannot use multiple reactions to the same trigger, for example, dodging and activating a shield Gu when an attack hits you.

Activate a Shield Gu

Unless specified otherwise by the Gu, shield Gu can be activated as a reaction, including after its determined an attack has hit you, but only before the damage has been rolled.

Dodge

The dodge reaction can be taken when its determined an attack has hit you and before the damage has been rolled. Make a **Dodge** skill test, opposing the opponent's attack roll if the attack required one. If you succeed, you successfully dodge the attack and take no damage. If you fail, you are hit and take the full damage of the attack.

When you succeed a Dodge test, you MUST move at least 1 meter and at most 1/2 your movement (rounded down) in any direction. If you are unable to move, you are also unable to take the dodge reaction. If 1/2 of your movement is insufficient to escape an area of effect attack, you are struck by the attack regardless.

If you use a reaction to dodge for any trigger except an attack hitting you, you immediately move at least 1 meter and at most 1/2 your movement in any direction.

Dodging provokes attacks of opportunity, but they are made with disadvantage.

Parry

The parry reaction can only be taken when its determined a melee attack has hit you and before the damage has been rolled. Make a **Close Combat** skill test with a +10 penalty, opposing the opponent's attack roll. If you win, you take no damage from the attack and can make your own melee attack against the opponent in turn as long as they are within your melee range. You can parry attacks made as part of the parry reaction.

Make an Attack of Opportunity

When a creature moves from inside your melee range to a square outside your melee range, you may make a melee attack as an attack of opportunity. If you make an unarmed attack, it cannot be a kicking attack.

Flying out of a creature's melee range still provokes attacks of opportunity.

Trigger a Held Action

When the trigger you specified upon holding a combat action occurs, you may take this reaction to use said action.

Detonate Gu Worms

As a reaction or for free at any time during their turn, a Gu Master can self-detonate any Gu owned and refined by them with a single thought. The Gu Master must be conscious to do so, and can detonate as many or as few Gu as they want, from any distance. If the Gu is being suppressed, for example by the land spirit of a blessed land, the Gu Master cannot self-detonate it. Otherwise, the chosen Gu instantly die, with no other effects. If the Gu has a self-detonation ability, it does not trigger, since the Gu was not activated.

Bonus Actions

Bonus actions are generally fast and low-effort, such as giving a creature a Gu from your aperture, opening an unlocked door, or pulling a lever.

Damage

When you take damage, subtract that amount from your current Hit Points, to a minimum of 0. When you hit 0 Hit Points, make a **Perseverance** attribute test. On a failure, you are *Dying*. On a success, you enter *Final Stand*.

Damage Types

- Force: Being struck with an object or force, such as Qi; piercing attacks are included but generally have the [**Piercing**] keyword
- Rending: Being cut or slashed.
- Cold: Low temperature attacks
- Heat: Fire and heat
- Poison: Damage taken as long as you are *poisoned* by a source; reduce all poison damage dealt to a creatures hit points by 10% of their Fortitude, rounding down.
- Shock: Electricity damage.
- Sonic: Sound-based attacks that bypass many shield Gu but are quite rare and typically weak
- Direct: Direct damage can be of any damage type and, as the name suggests, deals that damage directly to a creature's hit points. If a source says it deals damage directly to a creature's hit points, the damage cannot be assigned to any active [**Shield**] Gu, but some effects may still reduce it. Damage from bleeding is always direct.

If a source says you take damage to your soul, that number is subtracted from your current soul value; you take no damage to your hit points.

Damage Reduction

Many defensive Gu reduce the amount of damage taken from attacks. When damage is reduced by a flat number, the damage can be reduced to 0 unless the source of the damage is of greater rank than the source of the damage reduction. If

the source of the damage is of greater rank than the source of the damage reduction, the damage can be reduced to a minimum of 1.

Vulnerability

If a creature or object is vulnerable to a damage type, multiply any damage of that type dealt to their hit points by 2. If they have resistance, halve the damage dealt to their hit points, rounding down. If they are invulnerable to a damage type, they do not take the damage at all.

Resistance and invulnerability granted by a Gu can be reduced by Gu of higher ranks. When you take damage of that type from a Gu of higher rank than the one granting invulnerability, you instead are treated as if you had resistance. Similarly, if you only had resistance, you now do not reduce the damage dealt at all.

Immunity

If a creature is immune to a condition, it cannot be applied to them regardless of the rank of the source.

Instant Death

If you take an amount of damage equal to double your maximum hit points from a single source, you instantly die, and do not get to roll to see if you enter *Final Stand*.

Final Stand

While you have the *Final Stand* condition, you cannot move or take combat actions or reactions other than to activate Gu or hold your action to do so. If you take any amount of damage to your hit points while in *Final Stand*, you enter the *Dying* state and fall unconscious. If you gain any hit points while in *Final Stand*, you are no longer in *Final Stand* and can act as normal.

Dying

If you are *Dying*, you are unconscious. At the end of each of your turns, roll a **Perseverance** attribute test. On a success, you gain a **Perseverance Token**. On a failure, you gain a **Predicament Token**. Critical successes and fumbles grant 2 of the respective token. When you have 3 **Perseverance Tokens**, you are no longer *Dying* and instead enter *Final Stand*, and your **Perseverance** token count resets to 0. If you ever have 5 **Predicament Tokens**, you die.

Fall Damage

When falling from a height of more than 2 meters, you take 3 force damage for every meter you fell. If a creature has a flying speed when it becomes *airborne* from anything other than the *Take Flight* Maneuver, it may immediately move up to half its flying speed. If a creature does not have a flying speed when it becomes *airborne*, it immediately falls up to 500 meters. If the creature is still falling, it falls 500 meters at the end of each of its turns until it hits the ground.

Injury

When a creature takes damage to their hit points greater than or equal to half their maximum (rounded down), some damage types apply a special effect.

- Force:

d4	Effect
1 - Broken Arm	Unusable limb
2 - Broken Leg	-4 movement. -4 movement. If both legs are broken, your movement is reduced to 0.
3 - Internal Bleeding	<i>Bleeding 1</i>
4 - Concussion	<i>Dazed</i> . Cognition reduced by 15 for 3 days.

- Rending: *Bleeding 1*

- Cold: *Fatigued*
- Heat: *Burning*
- Shock: *Dazed*

Called Shot Injuries When you make a called shot and successfully hit a specific body part, if damage is dealt to the creature's hit points they take a corresponding injury.

- Hand: Broken Hand; disarmed and unusable
- Arm: Crippled Limb; Unusable
- Torso: Internal Bleeding; *Bleeding 1*.
- Leg: Crippled; -4 movement. If both legs are crippled, your movement is reduced to 0.
- Head | d4 | Effect | | — | — | | 1 - Brain Damage | Maximum Soul permanently reduced by 50% (rounded down) | | 2 - Blinded | *Blinded* until the end of their next turn | | 3 - Hemorrhage | *Bleeding 5* | | 4 - Concussion | *Dazed*. Cognition reduced by 15 for 3 days. |

Natural Recovery

When you sleep, you regain 1 hit point for every hour spent sleeping.

Status Effects

Ablaze

A creature with the *ablaze* condition is completely engulfed in flames. An *ablaze* creature cannot have or gain the *burning* condition. If a creature with the *burning* condition gains the *ablaze* condition, the *burning* condition is removed. At the start of each of their turns, the creature takes 30 heat damage. If a creature takes heat damage to their hit points on a turn from the *ablaze* condition, at the end of the turn they must succeed a **Perseverance** attribute test or else fall unconscious. For creatures and Gu invulnerable or resistant to heat damage, consider damage dealt by the *ablaze* condition to be of the rank of the Gu that applied the *ablaze* condition, or rank 1 if the fire was natural. Being submerged in water removes the *ablaze* condition.

Bleeding X

Bleeding creatures take 1 damage directly to their hit points at the start of each of their turns for every stack of *bleeding*. This damage has no type and cannot be reduced by Gu. Levels of *bleeding* can stack additively from the same or different sources. For every hit point a *bleeding* creature restores, reduce the number of *bleeding* stacks they have by 1.

Blinded

Blinded creatures cannot see, have a +50 penalty to **Close Combat** and **Ranged Attack** skill tests, and cannot make **Awareness** tests that rely on sight. Gu that rely on vision, including divinations that augment their sight, cannot be used by a *blinded* creature.

Burning

Burning creatures take 10 heat damage at the start of each of their turns. For creatures and Gu invulnerable or resistant to heat damage, consider damage dealt by the *burning* condition to be of the rank of the Gu that applied the *burning* condition, or rank 1 if the fire was natural. Being submerged in water removes the *burning* condition. A creature can use their combat action to roll around on the ground, removing the *burning* condition.

Dazed

A *dazed* creature's activations stat is reduced by 2. At the end of their turn, they lose the *dazed* condition.

Deafened

A *deafened* creature cannot hear, has resistance to sonic damage regardless of rank, and cannot make **Awareness** tests that rely on hearing. Gu that rely on hearing, including divinations that augment their hearing, cannot be used by a *deafened* creature.

Fatigued

A *fatigued* creature's movement is reduced by 3 meters and makes all **Dodge** and **Athletics** skill tests with a +20 penalty. The *fatigued* condition lasts until the creature rests for at least an hour.

Poisoned

Poison can have any number of effects, and a creature can gain multiple instances of the *poisoned* condition so long as each is unique.

Prone

A *prone* creature has a +30 penalty to all skill tests and automatically fails all **Dodge** skill tests. **Close Combat** skill tests made to hit a *prone* creature are made with a -10 bonus. **Ranged Attack** skill tests made to hit a *prone* creature are made with a +10 penalty. A creature can expend half their movement to stand up.

Restrained

A *restrained* creature's movement is 0. A *restrained* creature automatically fails all **Dodge** and **Flying** skill tests.

Stunned

A *stunned* creature cannot move or take any actions or reactions. At the end of their turn, they lose the *stunned* condition and gain the *dazed* condition.

Attacks

High Ground

Ranged Attack skill tests are made with a -10 bonus if the target is at least 5 meters lower than you in elevation.

Cover

If a creature is completely hidden behind cover from the attacker, they have full cover and typically are not a viable target for attacks. If the attacker uses a Gu with the [**Piercing**] keyword, however, they can make an attack against an obscured target with a +20 penalty. Divinations that reveal the exact location of a target remove this penalty.

If a creature is only partially obscured by cover, they have partial cover; they are a viable target, but attacks made against them are made with a +10 penalty. If the attacker uses a Gu with the [**Piercing**] keyword, however, there is no penalty to the attack roll.

Touch

You must be within 1 meter of a creature to hit them with an attack with a range of *touch*. Touch attacks can be reacted to, but [**Shield**] Gu do not block touch attacks unless noted in the Gu's description, such as Jelly Bubble Gu.

Area of Effect Attacks

When a creature is caught in an area of effect, they can dodge as a reaction, escaping the area of effect if they succeed and can move outside the area of effect.

Line

Lines have a height, width, and length. If the height is not specified, it is the same as the width. Usually, lines originate from a square adjacent to the Gu Master creating it, but some Gu such as Fire Curtain Gu allow the user to choose a source square. In that case, the source and end of the line must both be within the range of the Gu.

Radius

Circular area of effects will originate from a source square and have a radius. If an area of effect has a radius of 5 meters, it will effect the source square and any square that could be reached using 5 meters of movement from the source square. This means that the real shape on the board will be more like a four pointed star, with the radius reaching further diagonally.

Chapter 5 - Southern Border

Culture

Geography

Notable Mountains

Wan Cheng Peak Wan Cheng Peak is less than 10 kilometers from Tie Clan, and atop it is built the Demon Suppression Tower. Demon Suppression Tower is a prison hundreds of meters tall and houses thousands of demonic path Gu Masters. It has metal path Gu formations protecting it from attacks. Most prisoners are subdued with the rank 3 Aperture Lock Gu, but rank 4 and even rank 5 Gu Masters are suppressed through an assortment of different methods.

San Cha Mountain San Cha Mountain is a collection of 3 peaks that rise into the sky like a pitchfork, with the middle mountain being the tallest. The area has some resources, and is often fought over by the Zuo and Che Clans. Unbeknownst to anyone, it is also the site of a combined inheritance belonging to three rank 5 Gu Masters, the Three Kings Inheritance. When the inheritance activates, pillars of light visible from across Southern Border shoot into the sky periodically from each peak, transporting potential inheritors from the peaks into the inheritance.

The Three Rivers

Jade Dragon River

Red Dragon River

Yellow Dragon River

Super Clans

Ba Clan

Chi Clan

Fei Clan

Shang Clan

Tie Clan

“Our Tie clan, since it was established, had been world-renowned for our bravery, unswerving determination and our iron-cold justice. For many generations, Tie clansmen had been upholding justice and striking down on criminals, in this course, countless people have shed blood and sacrificed their lives. The youths that have died here won’t be the first and also won’t be the last.” - Tie Mu Bai, Ch. 370

Tie Clan stands as a central pillar to the Southern Border righteous path. Their investigators are deployed to solve crimes across the entire continent, and thousands of demonic path Gu Masters guilty of vicious crimes are locked up in Tie Clan’s **Demon Suppression Tower** atop Wan Cheng Peak.

Wu Clan

Wu clan is known as the top force in Southern Border, led by rank 5 Strength Path Gu Master Empress Wu Ji.

Goods

Commerce

The marketplace breathes life into a continent dotted with tens of thousands of isolationist clans. Caravans owned by Shang Clan's many vassals travel millions of miles across Southern Border like a system of blood vessels, visiting a vast majority of the continent's clans. The caravan system disperses newly discovered Gu, beasts, and recipes into the economy, and great importance is placed on it by all Southern Border's righteous path. Robbing caravans is dangerous, and even the successful thieves are often hunted down by heroes or bounty hunters.

Makeup of a Caravan

Caravans vary greatly in size, but the smallest generally have 200 people. Shang Clan regulations require at least one rank 3 Gu Master on every caravan, but larger caravans are guarded by a rank 4. More Gu Masters are hired, split into teams, and assigned to sections of the caravan. The rest of the caravan's population is made up of mortals and slaves, used for menial labor. Rank 1 Gu Masters are given auxillary roles, as the dangers posed to a caravan are often more than they can handle.

Refinement Recipes

Refinement recipes have a listed market value, but that doesn't necessarily mean the recipe is worth that amount. The market value assumes that this recipe is not available anywhere and there are no extenuating circumstances. But if you have a new recipe for Dog Enslavement Gu when the Three Kings Inheritance opens, the actual selling price will shoot up. Once you sell it the first time, however, the price will naturally go down somewhat. You can sell the same recipe as many times as you want, after all. Generally, the selling price is reduced by 75% every time it is sold.

Refinement Materials

Areas attuned with the natural Dao generate plants, animals, stones, and other materials infused with a miniscule amount of Dao. These materials can be used to feed or refine Gu, and the areas that produce these materials are coveted by organizations and individuals. There also exist immortal refinement materials with higher amounts of Dao, but these materials are priceless compared to mortal materials and significantly rarer.

Blood Path:

Refinement Material	Cost (PS)	Unit
Crimson Willow Bark		
Hemorrhage Soil		
Hundred Beast King Blood		
Thousand Beast King Blood		
Myriad Beast King Blood		
Beast Emperor Blood		

Dark Path:

Refinement Material	Cost (PS)	Unit
Deep Onyx		

Refinement Material	Cost (PS)	Unit
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Earth Path:

Refinement Material	Cost (PS)	Unit
Gruel Mud		
Soft Purple Clay		

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Enslavement Path:

Refinement Material	Cost (PS)	Unit
Luring Spruce Pheremone Gland		

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Fire Path:

Refinement Material	Cost (PS)	Unit
Smoldering Stones	10	kg

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Ice Path:

Refinement Material	Cost (PS)	Unit
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Information Path:

Refinement Material	Cost (PS)	Unit
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Light Path:

Refinement Material	Cost (PS)	Unit
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Lightning Path:

Refinement Material	Cost (PS)	Unit
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Refinement Material	Cost (PS)	Unit
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Luck Path:

Refinement Material	Cost (PS)	Unit
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Metal Path:

Refinement Material	Cost (PS)	Unit
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Poison Path:

Refinement Material	Cost (PS)	Unit
Golden Centipede Toxin	30	mL
Flower of Paradise Earth	400	flower

Refinement Path:

Refinement Material	Cost (PS)	Unit
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Rule Path:

Refinement Material	Cost (PS)	Unit
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Soul Path:

Refinement Material	Cost (PS)	Unit
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Sound Path:

Refinement Material	Cost (PS)	Unit
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Refinement Material	Cost (PS)	Unit

Space Path:

Refinement Material	Cost (PS)	Unit

Strength Path:

Refinement Material	Cost (PS)	Unit

Sword Path:

Refinement Material	Cost (PS)	Unit
Cutting Edge Grass	30	blade

Theft Path:

Refinement Material	Cost (PS)	Unit
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Time Path:

Refinement Material	Cost (PS)	Unit
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Transformation Path:

Refinement Material	Cost (PS)	Unit
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Water Path:

Refinement Material	Cost (PS)	Unit
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Refinement Material	Cost (PS)	Unit
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Wind Path:

Refinement Material	Cost (PS)	Unit
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Wisdom Path:

Refinement Material	Cost (PS)	Unit
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Wood Path:

Refinement Material	Cost (PS)	Unit
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Gear

Armor

Armor is seldom seen in the Gu world, except when used by mortals. Armor is heavy and lacks the defensive strength of even some Rank 1 Gu, and thus has little demand. Still, some Gu Masters will use the effects of Gu to augment their armor for better protection.

When wearing armor, you gain a penalty to your **Dodge** rolls, but can soak up a bit more damage. Armor has a damage threshold and health statistic. Any force or rending damage dealt to you is reduced by the armor's damage threshold. Any force or rending damage dealt in excess of the damage threshold is dealt both to your hit points and to the armor's hit points. If the armor reaches 0 hit points, it breaks and becomes unusable.

	DT	HP	Dodge Penalty	Movement Penalty
Leather Armor	4	20	+10	—
Iron Armor	8	32	+30	-1

Refinement Materials

Beasts

There are an uncountable number of different beast species across Southern Border. Some of the more common ones are listed below. Beast statblocks are somewhat different than Gu Master statblocks. Beasts are missing several skills and attributes that they are incapable of using. As they do not have a Perseverance, when beasts reach 0 hit points they immediately die. They also do not have luck points, nor an aperture, and as such cannot activate Gu. Stronger beasts will have wild Gu worms living on or inside of them, however, and these Gu act independently, usually to assist the beast they live within. When the beast is in dire straits, however, most wild Gu will simply leave and try to escape.

Wild Gu on a beast king can choose to activate one time at any point on the beast's turn, or in reaction to a trigger if the Gu could ordinarily be activated as a reaction to the triggering effect.

Iron Beak Crane Swarm

Swarm of Ordinary Beasts

CR: 11

Immune to: *prone, restrained*

Attributes	
HP	60
Soul	20
Movement	4, 10 Flying
Strength	20
Agility	55
Fortitude	25
Cognition	5
Wisdom	30
Attitude	5

Skills	
Close Combat	40
Ranged Attack	10
Athletics	44
Dodge	55
Awareness	30

Combat Actions |

Multiattack. *Melee Attack, 1 meter* The Iron Beak Crane Swarm attacks 2 creatures within range (reduced to 1 if the Iron Beak Crane Swarm is below half its maximum hit points or soul). On a hit, deal 12 force damage. | Bonus Actions | **Swarm.** The Iron Beak Crane Swarm mobs a 2 meter radius (reduced to 1 if the Iron Beak Crane Swarm is below half its maximum hit points or soul) until the start of its next turn. All creatures in the area have the *blinded* condition and take 4 force damage at the start of each of their turns.

Iron Beak Crane (Hundred Beast King)

CR: 11

Attributes	
HP	45
Soul	6
Movement	5, 12 Flying

Attributes	
Strength	20
Agility	55
Fortitude	25
Cognition	25
Wisdom	40
Attitude	5

Skills	
Close Combat	60
Ranged Attack	10
Athletics	44
Dodge	55
Awareness	30

Combat Actions |

Beak. *Melee Attack, 1 meter* The Iron Beak Crane drills a target with its beak. On a hit, deal 12 force damage.

Wild Gu Roll 2d6 (rerolling duplicates) 1 - None

2 - Rank 1 Bullet Gu

3 - Rank 1 Copper Tendons Gu

4 - Rank 1 Golden Bell Gu

5 - Rank 1 Iron Needle Gu

6 - Rank 1 Silver Lining Gu

Iron Beak Crane (Thousand Beast King)

CR: 14

Attributes	
HP	80
Soul	10
Movement	5, 12 Flying
Strength	20
Agility	60
Fortitude	25
Cognition	40
Wisdom	40
Attitude	10

Skills	
Close Combat	75
Ranged Attack	10
Athletics	40
Dodge	60
Awareness	30

Combat Actions |

Beak. *Melee Attack, 1 meter* The Iron Beak Crane drills a target with its beak. On a hit, deal 20 force damage.

Wild Gu Roll 2d6 (rerolling duplicates) 1 - None

2 -

3 -

4 - Rank 2 Golden Bell Gu

5 -

6 -

Lightning Wolf

Ordinary Beast

CR: 0

Attributes	
HP	50
Soul	2
Movement	8
Strength	20
Agility	55
Fortitude	35
Cognition	5
Wisdom	30
Attitude	5

Skills	
Close Combat	45
Ranged Attack	10
Athletics	44
Dodge	55
Awareness	30

Combat Actions

Bite. *Melee Attack, 1 meter*

The lightning wolf bites a target. On a hit, deal 4 rending damage.

Lightning Wolf (Hundred Beast King)

CR: 11

Attributes	
HP	50
Soul	9
Movement	10
Strength	35
Agility	65

Attributes	
Fortitude	50
Cognition	5
Wisdom	30
Attitude	5

Skills	
Close Combat	45
Ranged Attack	10
Athletics	44
Dodge	55
Awareness	30

Combat Actions

- **Bite.** *Melee Attack, 1 meter* The lightning wolf bites a target. On a hit, deal 10 rending damage.

Wild Gu Roll 2d4 (rerolling duplicates)

1 - No wild Gu

2 -

3 -

4 -