



KICK BACK.

WELCOME

Final Stand is a game where you play a group of martial artists fighting for their lives. It is meant to be light, action-packed, and fun. Final Stand isn't heavy on setting. It's about cool characters and kick-ass action.

BIG CITY

Big City is the hub of a sprawling empire. It's an oriental melting pot of martial artists and merchants, priests and peasants, nobles and ne'er-do-wells. It is here that your character calls home. Somewhere in the hustle and bustle, your character trains earnestly.

When picturing scenes of Big City, imagine stereotypical medieval Asia. Elegant tiered buildings, awe-inspiring pagodas, forests of bamboo, noisy slums, a magnificent Imperial palace, and so on.

However, Big City also blends in some modern day features. You can expect to see fast-food restaurants, the occasional gun, maybe a train or two, a few items of modern fashion, glass windows, billboards; whatever you want.

The martial arts are very popular throughout the empire, and particularly in Big City. There are hundreds of dojo, each devoted to a particular Way.

SELECTING YOUR CHARACTER

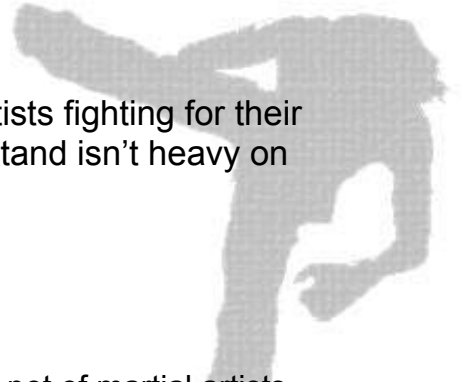
First - decide your stereotype. This is the role to which your character conforms. Just pick one from the list below that you like the sound of, and then find the specifics in the next chapter. There can be only one of any stereotype in a group. Seriously.

You may have noticed there's no 'hero' stereotype. This is because such a person invariably becomes the main character, and that devalues the others. Instead, you may find it interesting to see which of these weirdos makes the best hero when no clear heroic character is present.

Stereotypes

- the street bum
- the snooty aristocrat
- the quiet mystic
- the old master
- the simple peasant
- the grizzled soldier
- the cheeky siblings
- the towering ox
- the smooth operator
- the laughing joker
- the mysterious stranger
- the cocky perfectionist
- the good-at-heart rogue
- the reformed villain

Now, you need to choose your Way. This is a combination of 'style' and 'form'. Pick a style and a form from the lists below, and then find the specifics in the next chapter.



Style

drunken
gentle
burning
storm
flowing
stone
empty
shadow
street
iron
lethal
hunting

Form

dragon
phoenix
monkey
cobra
mantis
tiger
leopard
crane
fist
fighter
eagle
panda



Look up the specifics of your Way and Stereotype. Write down your techniques, your quirks, your total action and energy, and any other relevant information. Energy is your endurance, how long you can stay conscious. Action is your speed, how many attacks you can keep up.

Divide your action points amongst punches, kicks, and throws.

Write down your skills. These are taken from style, form, and stereotype.

Choose a name (a couple of tables are provided if you're stuck).

Finally describe your clothing and general appearance. You must include at least these three things:

- something that points to your Stereotype.
- something that points to your Style
- something that points to your Form

Oh, and characters can gain Chi and Standing, but start with zero of each.

	Male first names	Female first names	Last names
1	Danny	Emma	Wong
2	Hammer	Mei	Yen
3	Ricky	Lotus	Yuan
4	Te	Yuka	Teishi
5	Fai	Akiko	Sung
6	Lightning	Cherry	Wai

I'm going to make myself a character. I pick the Smooth Operator stereotype and the Way of Hunting Tiger (hey, it sounds cool). Looking up the style and the form, I see I have a total of 22 energy and 10 action. I make a list of the techniques I gain from the Style and Form, and then write down my stereotype's quirks and ability.

I have four unique punch techniques, 1 kick technique, and 1 throw technique. With that in mind, I distribute my actions; 6 punch actions, 2 kick actions, and 2 throw actions. I can easily change this during the game if I don't like it.

I work out my skills. I have persuasion (2), acrobatics (2), independence, and intrusion.

I choose the name Lightning Feng and write down my appearance:

- unbuttoned white shirt, shoulder-length black hair, jeans, no shoes.
- reflective silver sunglasses obscuring eyes (indicates Smooth Operator)
- necklace and bracelet made of various animal teeth & claws (indicates Hunting)
- torso covered in an intricate tattoo of a tiger (indicates Tiger)

THE BASICS

To play Final Stand you'll need some paper, pens, and a bunch of six-sided dice. Whenever the game refers to "dice", it refers to six-sided dice. It's also handy to have a big pile of counters (beads, poker chips, stones, or whatever), but not strictly necessary.

Outside of combat, actions are resolved more or less with common sense. Each stereotype, style, and form has a list of skills it can use to overcome obstacles:

If you wish to overcome an obstacle or perform a certain action, and your style, form, and stereotype all have relevant skills, then you get a Master success. It goes perfectly; you are amazing at doing this kind of action.

If any two of your style, form, and stereotype have relevant skills, you get a Student success. You know what you're doing, but you're not perfect at it. You succeed, with some small flaw.

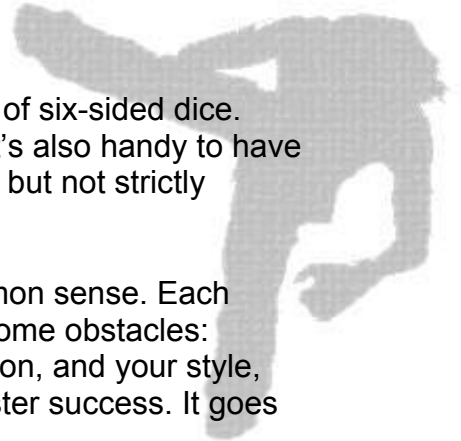
If any one of your style, form, or stereotype has a relevant skill, you get an Amateur success. You succeed, but are far from perfect; there are big flaws in your execution.

If neither your style, form, or stereotype has a relevant skill, you get a failure. You cannot succeed at this action.

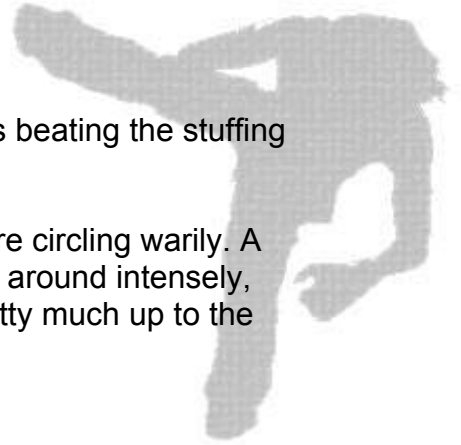
For example, suppose you wanted to get over the walls of the palace. The GM decides this is covered by both the acrobatics and intrusion skills. Here's how some characters would fare:

- *Shadow Cobra Mysterious Stranger: has the intrusion skill three times over. A Master success. He gets over, is unseen, and makes no noise.*
- *Iron Monkey Reformed Villain: only two apply (the monkey and the villain). A Student success. He gets over and is unseen, but makes some noise.*
- *Stone Tiger Towering Ox: only one applies (Tiger). An Amateur success. He gets over, but not quietly and he'll be seen.*
- *Drunken Panda Street Bum: he's got nothing. He could get in, however, if he wanders up to the front gates and tried to persuade the guards (somehow) to let him in.*

Combat works in rounds. You roll a dice pool each round, using successes to attack and defend against the opponent.



FIGHTING



Fighting is what Final Stand is all about. Two fictional characters beating the stuffing out of each other for the players' amusement. Good times.

A fight is divided into "rounds". In between rounds the fighters are circling warily. A round is the time when the fighters to rush in, smack each other around intensely, and then back off for more circling. When a round begins is pretty much up to the GM. It should be obvious, anyway.

To fight a round:

- 1) Roll your punch, kick, and throw dice (in separate piles). Any dice which roll over the relevant target number become "moves" (kick moves, punch moves, and so on). Discard failures.
- 2) The fighter with the highest total of moves (action successes) is the attacker. Roll off for ties.
- 3) The attacker declares a technique available to him, and discards the required number of moves. Special techniques (those techniques gained from styles and forms) can only be used **once per fight**. Basic techniques can be used as much as you can afford.
- 4) The defender chooses whether to defend or not. If defense technique(s) are used, the defender rolls the required number of moves. Keep any successes (those moves may then be used for offensive techniques), and discard failures.
- 5) If any of the defense techniques succeed, the attacker's technique is negated. The defender narrates the results. The defender now becomes the attacker, and should choose a technique as above.
- 6) If defense fails, or if the defender chose not to defend, the requisite amount of damage is subtracted from the defender's energy (and side effects are incurred). The attacker narrates the results. Choose another technique and repeat.
- 7) When the attacker is out of moves, or chooses to pass their go, the defender becomes the attacker (and vice versa). When both participants are out of moves, the round is over (though another may be started, if necessary).

Lightning Feng has got into a fight with Boom Takashi, a formidable Burning Mantis master. Feng and the GM roll their action dice. Feng has six punch actions, and rolls these first. He sees that punch actions succeed on a 2+. He rolls his six dice and gets five successes (five of the dice come up 2 or better). He then rolls his two kick dice and two throw dice, repeating the procedure (this time needing 3+). He gets two throw successes and zero kick successes. After discarding the failures, he has five punch moves and two throw moves. As he was doing this, the GM was rolling her own dice.

Now the actual fight starts. Feng has a total of seven moves, and Takashi ended up with eight moves; Takashi has more moves and so starts as the attacker.

The GM decides to throw a light punch first. It costs her one punch move, which she takes away from the pile in front of her. Feng does not want to risk too many of his moves on such a weak technique, so decides to try only one block. He takes one of his punch moves and rolls it. He gets a 5: a success. Feng narrates: "Takashi darts forwards and throws out a jab, but I easily deflect it with my forearm". Feng gets to keep the move he risked, and now becomes the attacker. He takes no damage.

Feng declares the special Tiger technique of "Gouging Fingers". He discards two of his five punch moves to pay for it. The GM, getting a little worried now, decides to try two blocks. She rolls two punch dice, but gets a 1 and a 3; two failures. Feng narrates: "I lunge at Takashi with my right hand, my hooked fingers driving into a key nerve point on his torso. He loses his breath and staggers back". Takashi loses the two punch dice the GM risked on blocking, takes one damage (loses one energy) for the technique, and, as a special condition of that particular technique, must discard one move of the GM's choice. The GM tosses out a throw move. Feng is still the attacker, and will now choose another technique. If, at the end of the round, they both still have energy left, they will probably fight another round. At the start of that round, they roll their original action dice allotments again.

Consequences

When reduced to zero energy, you're knocked out (KO'd). Most fights will go until one person is KO'd. There's no death in Final Stand, as such. At least, not for the main characters.

Other characters, (non-player ones), die if the player who knocks them out wants that to happen. But really, it doesn't matter. Don't worry about it.

Options

Fighters, particularly the highly skilled ones (like the player characters), have a reserve of Chi, from which they can draw intense power. Chi (and energy) can be burned in between techniques (or even at the start of a round) for various effects.

Characters start with zero Chi, and must earn it through play. The methods for gaining Chi are presented later. It is possible to earn Chi during a round and then use it straight away. Likewise, it is possible to turn Chi into energy and then burn that energy straight away.

USES OF CHI

power up

In between techniques, you gain 1 energy for every 1 Chi you spend. This must be accompanied by the player's description of the power up; muscles tensed, veins sticking out like ropes, and special effects relevant to the game's volume-setting.

improvise

When announcing a technique (offensive or defensive), that technique does 1 extra damage for each point of Chi you spend. You cannot spend more than 2 Chi in this way on a technique. This must accompanied by a description of using a weapon (improvised or not) to aid your attack; kicking a chair into them, throwing them into a table, grabbing a sword off the wall and slicing them up, whipping out your nunchuks, and so on.

ultimate stance

After rolling your action dice at the beginning of a round, you can turn 1 failure into a success for every 2 Chi you spend. This is accompanied by you shouting something dramatic (preferably you, the player) and striking your ultimate pose.

realign self

During a level, in between rounds and/or fights, you can spend 2 Chi to change your allocation of action dice. Spend the 2 points, and redistribute your punch, kick, and throw dice. Wipe your brow, splash some cold water on your face, throw out a couple of practice punches and kicks, and get back in there!

recharge

Pay 2 Chi to be able to use a special technique a second time during a fight. Pay this cost when you declare the technique the second time. To use a special technique a third time costs 3 chi, a fourth time costs 4 chi, and so on. When you use a recharged technique, you must shout its name dramatically.

USES OF ENERGY

energy burn

Before rolling your action dice at the beginning of a round, you can burn some energy. For every 2 energy points you discard, you can allocate 2 extra, temporary (for this round only), action dice where ever you wish. This is must be accompanied by a description of you pushing yourself over the limit, drawing on your deepest pools of power (much like Power Up above). You cannot spend more than 4 energy in this way per round.

charged technique

Like a smaller, more specific version of energy burn. Spend 1 energy point when declaring a technique, and that technique does 1 extra damage. This is accompanied by fierce concentration, and localized special effects for the attack (depending, again, on the volume-setting). You cannot spend more than 2 energy points in this way on a technique.

Feng and Takashi are still brawling. By this point, Feng is down to 2 energy, and Takashi is going strong. Takashi is just about to declare another technique, so Feng's player says, "Wait, wait, I'm going to do a power up". Feng crosses out 6 Chi on his character sheet and puts his energy up 6 points, for a total of 8 energy. Keeping in mind the game's volume-setting ('cranked'), Feng's player narrates: "I pick myself up off the ground and stand firmly, fists clenched. I grit my teeth and tense my body. Growling, my body shakes as tiny sparks of electricity crackle over it. I then relax and assume my Hunting Tiger fighting stance, electricity still flashing in small arcs around me".

MANY OPPONENTS, FEW CHARACTERS

If you wish to have the characters lay the smack-down on hordes of faceless goons, you can use gangs.

All members of the gang must have the same techniques at their disposal, so work those out first.

Decide on the total energy and action of the gang (the energy must always be twice the action; go for something around 20 energy and 10 actions). The gang fights like any other opponent; roll the total action dice, declare a technique, and so on. However, for every 2 energy the gang loses, one member gets knocked out. The gang's action goes down 1 point. This won't have an effect until the following bout (if they survive that long), when you roll action dice.

I want to have a horde of black-belts attack the player characters as they enter a dojo. I work out the techniques first, taking a couple from the Style and Form list below and changing the names. I then decide that there are a "handful" (the exact number doesn't matter) of black-belts in each group (each character will fight one

group). The group will, for all intents and purposes be like a single opponent with 16 energy and 8 actions (not much of a challenge, but a good work out). However, the more energy the group loses, the less effectively it will fight in future rounds. Suppose they are down to 4 energy; at the start of a round (if they survive that long) I will only roll 2 action dice for them. In the narrations, the player and I will have shown the individual black-belts getting knocked out/killed/incapacitated, so by this point it is clear there are only a couple left in the group.

NORMAL FIGHTS

In a normal fight, each character fights one opponent. An 'opponent' is either a gang or a single fighter. At the start of the fight, all players roll a d6. Roll off for ties. The winner (rolled the highest number) chooses which of the opponents they wish to fight (there will always be an equal number of opponents and player characters). The person to their left then chooses their opponent, and so on around the group.

The player who won the initial dice roll fights one round with their opponent. Then the next player fights a round, and so on.

If an opponent is KO'd, the player who defeated them must wait patiently until the end of the round, or for another opponent to become available (by defeating their assigned player character). When all the opponents are KO'd, the fight is over.

If a player character is knocked out, the opponent must wait for another player character to be available to fight them. If all the player characters are knocked out, the fight is over.

MAJOR FIGHTS

In a major fight, all the player characters are fighting one opponent. At the start of the fight, the players and the GM all roll a d6. Roll off for ties. If the GM wins, she gets to decide who the opponent will fight first. If a player wins, that player gets to decide who the opponent will fight first. In any case, the opponent fights one round with the character, and then, if they are not KO'd, they fight the next player character (in a clockwise direction) all the way around the group until the opponent is KO'd or all the player characters are KO'd. A player may, if they wish, pass their turn.

DUELS

Duels are fought like any other combat; a number of a rounds between two characters until one is KO'd or concedes. Chi can be used and earned as usual.

Because each character can only challenge another character to a duel once per game, you'll only have a number of official duels equal to the number of characters. You can also have characters fight in any number of 'casual' duels, which are just like normal except no Standing is gained or lost.

Another option is 'free sparring', which is fought just like a normal duel, but for the purposes of the game it did not take place; afterwards the participants are returned to whatever condition they were in originally. The same energy, the same Chi, and so on.

HEALING

After each fight (normal or major), you gain all your energy back. That doesn't mean you *look* perfect, but you'll still kick ass in the next fight. This is story convention more than anything

(If you're looking for something more edgy, player characters gain, say, 6 energy in between fights, and full energy in between levels. Tailor to your tastes)

REWARDS

There are two types of reward in Final Stand: Chi and Standing. Chi is a spiritual energy you can use to kick even more ass than normal. Standing is your prestige and status as a martial artist.

CHI

There are number of ways to gain Chi, none of which are mechanical. Simply include them amongst your descriptions and narrations and then claim your Chi. You can't gain Chi any more times than is listed with that particular method. Of course, you can use that method more times, you just don't gain the Chi any more. Chi can be kept track of on a scrap piece of paper, but it's easier to use poker chips or stones or some such.

Remember, don't just say "I use a flashing shot, gimme the chi". You have to actually *describe* the flashing shot, and then say "ok, that was a flashing shot, **now** gimme the chi".

snappy dialogue (2 points) - twice per game

An witty remark, an ultimatum, a cutting insult. Essentially, any piece of quotable dialogue. It doesn't even have to be clever or original. Try choosing a one-liner before the game begins, and then you only have to wait for a reasonable opportunity to use it. Hear a great line in a movie? Use it next session!

visible reaction (1 point) - twice per game

The player must physically emote the character's over-the-top reaction to something; joy, awe, fear, satisfaction, sadness, and so on. The more obvious, the better.

challenge (2 points) - once per game

Once per game, at an appropriate moment, you can challenge another player to a duel.

moment of tension (1 point) - once per game

Close ups on narrowed eyes. Shots of the two fighters standing rigid in their stances, waiting. Beads of sweat rolling off brows. The deadly silence before the fight.

slow mo' (1 point) - twice per game

Describe an attack in slow motion, paying attention to all the little details.

flashing shot (1 point) - twice per game

One of your attacks has an intense strobing background.

strike a pose (1 point) - twice per game

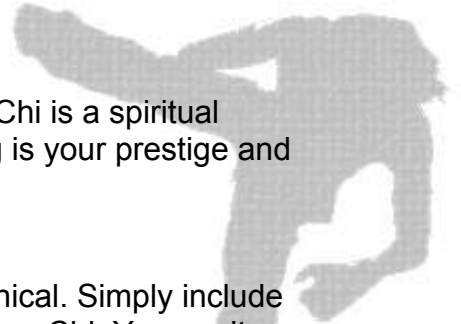
Again, this must be done physically (as in, the player does it). It's at the start of a round, when your fighter enters a stance with sweeping gestures and intense concentration.

stand exhausted (1 point) - once per game

When you've taken a bit of a beating, describe your character hauling herself to her feet. The weary, shaking stance. The multiple cuts and bruises on her body. The heavy breathing. The look of deadly determination on her face.

mass destruction (1 point) - twice per game

Describe things get destroyed during your fight! Tables wrecked, chairs broken, windows smashed, walls demolished, and so on. Keep the game's volume-setting in mind, but otherwise go nuts.



STANDING

If you have more standing than the other characters, you get the best reward. Basically, standing is how you beat the other players. It's given out by the GM, according to the following rules, (but feel free to point out when you've earned standing, in case the GM missed it).

Victory

If you knock out an opponent during a bout, you get standing according to their energy value:

5 (or less energy) = 0 points

10 energy = 2 points

15 energy = 3 points

20 energy = 4 points

25 energy = 5 points

30 energy = 6 points

40 energy = 8 points

You get the idea. Every 5 points of energy the opponent has, gain 1 standing.

Flair

If you describe unnecessary acrobatics and shenanigans in your attacks, you can claim Flair. When you declare the technique, announce how many moves you wish to throw away for Flair. If the technique succeeds, include the flair in your narration and gain 1 standing for each move you discarded. If the technique fails, you lose the moves anyway but don't gain the standing.

Confidence

At the start of a fight, you can impose a handicap on yourself to gain standing. Discard any amount of energy at the start of a fight before any dice are rolled. If you win the fight, you gain that amount of standing. For some characters, this may represent them actually handicapping themselves (fighting with one hand behind their back, for instance), while for others it might represent their bored and dismissive attitude. The player must declare the nature of the handicap at the start of the fight. Note that the handicap doesn't have to be self-imposed by the character; a player could declare that their character trips up at the start of the fight and will have a bucket stuck on one foot for the duration.

Accept duel

If someone challenges you to a duel and you accept, gain 2 standing.

Refuse duel

If someone challenges you to a duel and you decline, lose 2 standing.

Win duel

If you take part in a duel and win, gain 5 standing.

Lose duel

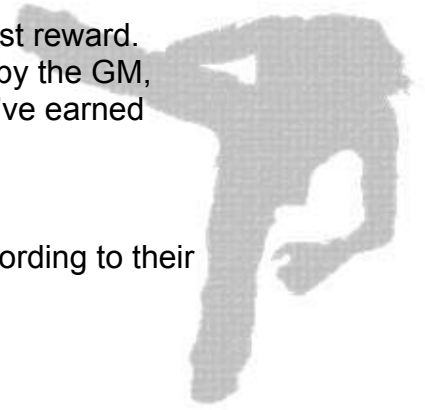
If you take part in a duel and lose, lose 2 standing.

KO'd

If you are ever KO'd, lose 5 standing.

Flawless

If you KO an opponent without any of their techniques succeeding (you take no damage and lose no moves), you gain twice as much standing as you normally would for someone of that energy level.



BASIC TECHNIQUES

All characters have access to the basic techniques. Your action allocation is decided at character creation, but can be changed in play (as described previously). Note that all techniques are broad, and should be described creatively in play; a punch could be anything from a jab to a round-house to a karate chop to a palm attack.

PUNCH ACTIONS SUCCEED ON 2+

basic punch techniques:

light - 1 punch move, 1 damage

heavy - 2 punch moves, 3 damage

block (defense) - 1 punch move, stops any punch (4+)

jab (defense) - 1 punch move, does 1 damage and stops any throw (5+)

KICK ACTIONS SUCCEED ON 3+

basic kick techniques:

light - 1 kick move, 2 damage

heavy - 2 kick moves, 5 damage

dodge (defense) - 1 kick move, stops any technique (5+)

THROW ACTIONS SUCCEED 3+

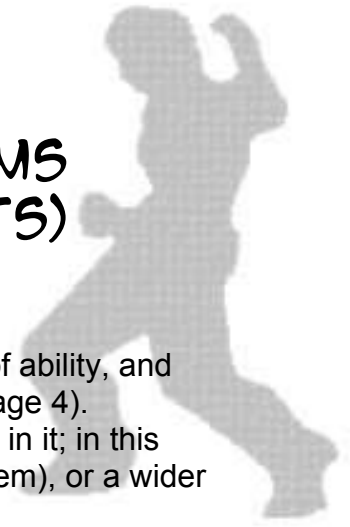
basic throw techniques:

take-down - 1 throw move, 1 damage, and opponent loses 1 move of their choice

fling - 2 throw moves, 3 damage, and opponent loses 2 moves of their choice



STEREOTYPES, STYLES, AND FORMS (OR LISTS, LISTS, AND MORE LISTS)



SKILLS

Each stereotype, style, and form has two skills. These are broad areas of ability, and are used to do challenging things outside of combat (see “the basics”, page 4). Remember that having a skill more than once over increases your ability in it; in this way, it can be good to both have a narrow range of skills (but excel in them), or a wider range (but with less ability).

Intrusion: breaking and entering. Picking locks. Sneaking past guard dogs. General ninja-type stuff.

Acrobatics: leaping across roof-tops, scaling walls, jumping out of burning buildings, hopping from one speeding wagon to the other, et cetera.

Persuasion: getting people to do what you want. The specific means differ depending on the stereotype, style, or form, but have the same end result. Persuasion includes intimidation, smooth talking, a commanding demeanor, a wise voice, and so on.

Raw Strength: smashing stuff, lifting stuff, crushing stuff, and... Well, you get the idea.

Perception: Being aware of your surroundings. Listening for danger. Sensing other people nearby. Finding what you are searching for. Having a good sense of direction.

Contacts: when you need something, you can get it (given enough time).

Transportation, information, food, shelter, anything.

Independence: you make do by yourself. You can get your own food, you can make your own shelter, and you can get through tough conditions. This also covers improvisation and quick learning. Working out how to operate the gate mechanism would be covered by independence, for example.

STEREOTYPES

All stereotypes have a short description, two ‘quirks’, and an ability.

Quirks are ways to get you Chi. If you include a quirk in your play you get 3 Chi. Each quirk can be included twice per game (well, you can include them as much as you want, but you only get the chi twice per game per quirk). After the quirk is a few examples to show you what sort of behaviour will net you the Chi. Play pretty loose with the Quirks; the examples given are only guidelines, and you should play the stereotype to your own vision. Use the quirk how you see fit, announce it to the group, and take your Chi.

If the way a Stereotype is presented doesn’t work for you, you can change one quirk to anything you want. For example, I might want to play a Towering Ox, (I like the Looming Presence quirk), but don’t want him to be a goof. I change the ‘goof’ quirk to ‘short temper’, and give a quick description of the quirk to my GM.

As mentioned, each Stereotype has an ability, which can be used **twice per game**. Remember, only one of any stereotype can be in the group.

the street bum - a dirty, uncouth bastard from the slums. You're street-wise, crude, and tough as nails.

- bad manners (quirk): fart, make an inappropriate comment, burp loudly, smell bad.
 - street smarts (quirk): find food and shelter, rustle up some illegal goods.
 - dogged tenacity (ability): when KO'd, you may growl and jump to your feet with 1 energy (you still count as having been KO'd, though). The round is over, but you may start another (if possible).
- Skills: contacts, perception

the snooty aristocrat - from a rich family, you look down your nose at poorer folk. You consider yourself, from sheer birthright, good at everything.

- snide comment (quirk): patronize someone's clothing, Way, manner, intelligence, and so on.
- aloof behaviour (quirk): refuse to dirty your hands, demand private sleeping quarters, eat only the finest food.
- confident manner (ability): you dispatch your foes with an arrogant calm, almost with *indifference*, ignoring their puny attacks. Announce after opponent's technique has succeeded to prevent 1 damage. If all damage from an attack is prevented (or if attack did 0 damage anyway), any other effects of the attack are ignored.

Skills: persuasion, contacts

the old master - the wizened martial arts expert. You pick flies out of the air with chopsticks, drink lots of tea, and are full with the wisdom of age.

- reprimand the young (quirk): lecture anyone else on where they're going wrong, and how much better things were in your day (this can be as simple as hitting someone on the head with your cane when they mess up)
- senile moment (quirk): forget something important or do something silly unintentionally.
- experienced technique (ability): you attack with skill honed through countless years of practice. Allows you to use a technique and pay one less move than usual. This may make the technique free. At the end of a round, the old master, (if not KO'd, and if this ability has not already been used twice), should be given the option to use a free 1 move technique.

Skills: perception, persuasion

the quiet mystic - a contemplative devotee of enlightenment. You meditate on mountains and are at peace with the universe.

- moment of contemplation (quirk): looking into the sunset, feeling the breeze ruffle your hair, having small animals perch on your serene body.
- cryptic comment (quirk): say something unintelligible but obviously very deep (it doesn't actually have to mean anything; "while the moon is full, the crying man finds no food", for instance).
- meditation (ability): take a step back from the fight and realign yourself with the cosmos. Use before or after a round to gain 2 energy (this may take you over your usual maximum).

Skills: perception, acrobatics

the simple peasant - a naive working-class joe. You're honest and hard-working, but a bit backward.

- naive wonder (quirk): drop your jaw and bulge your eyes when you see impressive buildings, make comments of awe.
- humble pie (quirk): eat simple food, sleep in spartan quarters, share what you can, be modest about your achievements, take compliments with quiet dignity.
- honest determination (ability): when things get tough, you grit your teeth and keep on pushing. When on 4 or less energy, announce this ability to have all your techniques do 1 extra damage until the fight is over (either you or your opponent is KO'd).

Skills: perception, independence

the mysterious stranger - no-one knows where you came from or why. Your face is covered in darkness and your motives are equally shadowy.

- strange behaviour (quirk): refusing to eat with the group, refusing to remove your hood, knowing the Emperor on first-name basis, and so on.
- shocking revelation (quirk; once per game, but gives 6 Chi): reveal your true identity and purpose. Don't worry about originality ("Liu, I am your father").
- hidden reserves (ability): you are able to draw upon sources of power deep within. Use after you have rolled your action dice at the beginning of a round to turn one failure into a success.

Skills: intrusion, perception

the grizzled soldier - forged in the battlefield, you're a veteran hard-ass. You don't take no crap from nobody.

- bitter and twisted (quirk): make a cynical comment, snap at someone, be surly.
- grudging respect (quirk): give a muttered compliment, nod sagely, smile slightly.
- gruff pride (ability): you may not care for praise or fame, but you still like winning. Announce when declaring a defence technique; that technique does one extra damage, if successful.

Skills: independence, intrusion

the cocky perfectionist - you live to be the best. You spend every waking moment training, and do not accept failure.

- taunt (quirk): talk up your own ability, insult your opponent, be sure of winning.
- frustration (quirk): get angry when you lose, dismiss the ability of anyone else, get frustrated when someone is obviously better than you.
- perfected stance (ability): you may be arrogant, but you have some reason to be. You have practised your stance to perfection. You may use this ability when an opponent's technique has forced you to lose a move (or more); you lose one less move.

Skills: acrobatics, independence

the towering ox - you're big as a mountain and just as nimble. You mean well, but you always seem to mess things up.

- goof (quirk): accidentally break something, spill something, or otherwise be clumsy.

- looming presence (quirk): block the sun, crush a rock with your bare hands, pick a person up off the ground by the scruff of their neck.

- heavy attack (ability): put all of your (considerable) weight into your strike. Announce this ability when declaring a technique; that technique does an extra 2 damage.

Skills: raw strength, persuasion

the good-at-heart rogue - you're a tainted soul. A rascal who lives by your own rules, deep down you feel compelled to do good.

- dishonest cheat (quirk): steal something, cheat someone, act selfishly or opportunistically.

- spontaneous kindness (quirk): save a drowning puppy, give money to a beggar, give your food to someone who needs it more.

- sucker-punch (ability): throw dirt in their face, kick them in the groin, trick them into turning their back. Use when on offence before declaring a technique; opponent must discard one move of their choice.

Skills: contacts, intrusion

the smooth operator - you like fine wine and fine loving in equal amounts. You're a laid-back socialite who spends more time in bars than in the dojo.

- perfectly groomed (quirk): run a comb through your hair, brush the dirt off your spotless clothing, put on a pair of shades.

- R&R (quirk): spend all night partying at a bar, drink a lot of wine, romance some ladies (or fellas, depending on your preference)

- keeping your cool (ability): you look Death straight in the face and give a wink and a grin. Almost nothing can ruffle your feathers. Announce this ability when declaring a defence technique.

That defence technique receives a +1 bonus.

Skills: persuasion, acrobatics

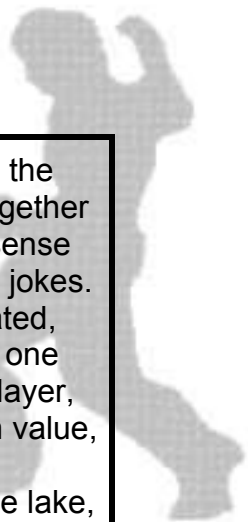
the reformed villain - you've given up your life of evil and decided to work with the good guys. You may be fighting for the right cause, but you're still a Bad-Ass with a capital B.A.

- scathing insult (quirk): insult your teammates' fighting ability, intelligence, and so on.

- complete asshole (quirk): don't share your food, spit in someone's face, refuse to save people in danger, be stubborn.

- no mercy (ability): allowing your enemy no respite, you relentlessly smash your opponent. Announce this ability when declaring a technique; any attempts to defend against that technique have a -1 penalty.

Skills: intrusion, acrobatics

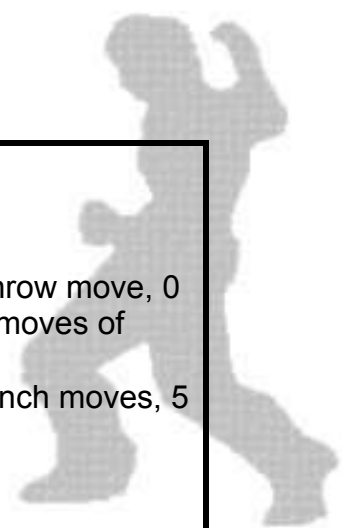


<p>the laughing joker - you never take life seriously and always have a grin on your face. You're a happy-go-lucky optimist who lifts everyone's spirits (or just really annoys them).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- <u>cracking wise (quirk)</u>: make a joke about someone else, yourself, or the situation, (don't worry about being particularly clever or witty, and feel free to steal a joke from a TV show, movie, or book)- <u>inappropriate laugh (quirk)</u>: laughing when the big bad guy reveals his true power, when your ass is kicked, when you find out some terrible news, and so on.- <u>tireless optimism (ability)</u>: your glass is always half full; you sing in the rain and dance to the tune of doom. Announce this ability when your opponent declares an offensive technique; you may not attempt to defend against it, but it does 2 less damage. If all damage is prevented, any side-effects are ignored. <p><u>Skills</u>: persuasion, acrobatics</p>	<p>the cheeky siblings - often twins, the siblings fight in unison and stick together like glue. You two have a wicked sense of humour and like to pull practical jokes. (Because they're so well co-ordinated, the siblings use the same rules as one character; they're played by one player, have one energy value, one action value, and so on)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- <u>act the fool (quirk)</u>: tumble into the lake, initiate a food-fight, have a race to the top of the temple steps.- <u>practical joke (quirk)</u>: dump a bucket of cold water on the old master's head, trip up the grizzled soldier, pour purple dye into the smooth operator's bath water, and so on.- <u>double team (ability)</u>: leap off your sibling's back into the fray; jump on their shoulders and become a 10 foot tall fighting duo; grab them by their wrists and swing them around in a circle of death. Announce before a round to receive two extra actions (allocated wherever you wish). <p><u>Skills</u>: intrusion, acrobatics</p>
--	---

STYLES

(Remember: special techniques can only be used once per fight)

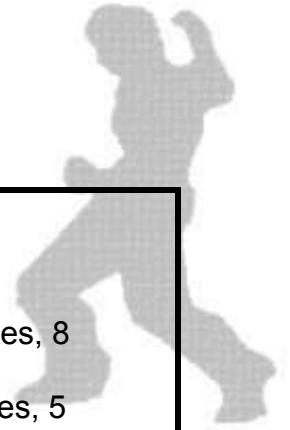
<p>drunken Energy 8 Action 6 <u>stumbling foot</u> - 2 kick moves, 4 damage, and opponent loses 2 moves of their choice. <u>staggering drop</u> - 2 throw moves, 4 damage, and opponent loses 1 move of their choice. (special rule: drunken haze) - if you use the Drunken style, you do not distribute actions in the usual way. Instead, your opponent allocates 3 of your actions at the start of each round, and you allocate the rest. <u>Skills</u>: persuasion, independence</p>	<p>empty Energy 8 Action 6 <u>no-thought no-concept strike</u> - 2 punch moves, 4 damage. <u>void attack</u> - 2 throw moves, 5 damage. <u>Skills</u>: acrobatics, intrusion</p>
---	---



<p>gentle Energy 6 Action 7 <u>autumn-leaf strike</u> - defence technique, 1 throw move (5+), stops any technique, does 1 damage. <u>swaying willow foot</u> - 1 kick move, 1 damage, opponent loses 1 move of their choice. <u>Skills:</u> persuasion, perception</p>	<p>shadow Energy 6 Action 8 <u>thrust of no substance</u> - 1 throw move, 0 damage, opponent loses 2 moves of their choice. <u>hand of darkest night</u> - 3 punch moves, 5 damage. <u>Skills:</u> intrusion, perception</p>
<p>burning Energy 4 Action 8 <u>scorching palm</u> - 2 punch moves, 4 damage. <u>raging fire kick</u> - 2 kick moves, 6 damage. <u>Skills:</u> acrobatics, persuasion</p>	<p>street Energy 6 Action 7 <u>touch of pain</u> - 1 punch move, 0 damage, and opponent loses 1 move of their choice. <u>death blow</u> - 3 punch moves, 6 damage. <u>Skills:</u> contacts, independence</p>
<p>storm Energy 4 Action 9 <u>whirlwind kick</u> - 3 kick moves, 8 damage. <u>tornado fist</u> - 2 punch moves, 2 damage, and opponent loses 1 move of their choice. <u>Skills:</u> acrobatics, perception</p>	<p>iron - practitioners tattoo, brand, or scar their bodies (or do all three, depending on the dojo). Energy 8 Action 6 <u>furious punches</u> - 3 punch moves, 6 damage. <u>cold foot</u> - 2 kick moves, 6 damage. <u>Skills:</u> raw strength, contacts</p>
<p>flowing Energy 8 Action 7 <u>tumbling river</u> - 3 punch moves, 5 damage. <u>crashing waterfall</u> - 2 throw moves, 4 damage. <u>Skills:</u> acrobatics, contacts</p>	<p>lethal Energy 6 Action 7 <u>assassin's strike</u> - 4 punch moves, 8 damage. <u>choke hold</u> - 1 throw move, 2 damage. <u>Skills:</u> intrusion, persuasion</p>
<p>stone Energy 8 Action 6 <u>boulder slam</u> - 3 punch moves, 6 damage. <u>two-handed smash</u> - 2 punch moves, 2 damage, and opponent loses 1 move of their choice. <u>Skills:</u> raw strength, independence</p>	<p>hunting Energy 6 Action 7 <u>feral fist</u> - 2 punch moves, 4 damage. <u>fell kick</u> - 1 kick move, 1 damage, cannot be dodged. <u>Skills:</u> independence, intrusion</p>

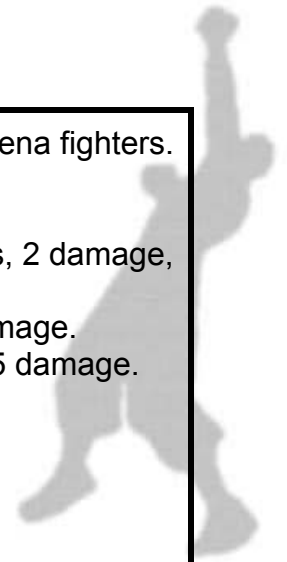
FORMS

(Remember: special techniques can only be used once per fight)



<p>dragon Energy 14 Action 3 <u>celestial claw</u> - 3 punch moves, 6 damage. <u>gracious strike</u> - 2 punch moves, 4 damage. <u>fierce embrace</u> - 3 throw moves, 6 damage, and opponent loses two moves of their choice. <u>Skills:</u> persuasion, contacts</p>	<p>tiger Energy 16 Action 3 <u>five claw strike</u> - 4 punch moves, 8 damage. <u>roaring pounce</u> - 3 throw moves, 5 damage, and opponent loses three moves of their choice. <u>gouging fingers</u> - 2 punch moves, 1 damage, and opponent loses one move of their choice. <u>Skills:</u> acrobatics, persuasion</p>
<p>phoenix Energy 14 Action 3 <u>inferno punch</u> - 3 punch moves, 6 damage. <u>blinding ash strike</u> - 1 punch move, 0 damage, opponent loses one move of their choice. <u>soaring talon</u> - 3 kick moves, 9 damage. <u>Skills:</u> acrobatics, contacts</p>	<p>leopard Energy 14 Action 4 <u>ferocious claw</u> - 2 punch moves, 4 damage. <u>lightning pounce</u> - 2 throw moves, 3 damage, and opponent loses 3 moves of their choice. <u>raking paw</u> - 2 kick moves, 6 damage. <u>Skills:</u> intrusion, perception</p>
<p>monkey Energy 12 Action 4 <u>monkey roll</u> - defence technique, 1 kick move (4+), stops any technique <u>screeching uppercut</u> - 1 punch move, 2 damage. <u>leaping throw</u> - 2 throw moves, 2 damage, and opponent loses 3 moves of their choice. <u>Skills:</u> acrobatics, perception</p>	<p>fist - a form using the power of the fist. Energy 14 Action 3 <u>searching fist</u> - 1 punch move, 1 damage. Opponent must use a minimum of 2 defence techniques if they wish to defend. <u>hand of destruction</u> - 2 punch moves, 2 damage, and opponent loses one move of their choice. <u>one inch punch</u> - 4 punch moves, 8 damage. <u>Skills:</u> raw strength, independence</p>

<p>cobra Energy 10 Action 4 <u>hissing jab</u> - 1 punch move, 2 damage. <u>venomous hook</u> - a powerful punch delivered to the temple, staggering the opponent. 3 punch moves, 5 damage, opponent loses one move of their choice. <u>recoiling serpent</u> - defence technique, 2 kick moves (one roll, 2+), stops any technique. <u>Skills:</u> intrusion, persuasion</p>	<p>fighter - the form used by arena fighters. Energy 18 Action 3 <u>one-two jab</u> - 2 punch moves, 2 damage, cannot be blocked. <u>ariat</u> - 3 punch moves, 5 damage. <u>pile-driver</u> - 2 throw moves, 5 damage. <u>Skills:</u> contacts, perception</p>
<p>mantis Energy 12 Action 3 <u>crippling hold</u> - 2 throw moves, 5 damage, and opponent loses one move of their choice. <u>praying hands</u> - 2 punch moves, 4 damage. <u>crushing grasp</u> - 1 throw move, 3 damage. <u>Skills:</u> intrusion, perception</p>	<p>eagle Energy 12 Action 3 <u>tearing beak</u> - 2 punch moves, 4 damage, and opponent loses one move of their choice. <u>raking talon</u> - 2 kick moves, 6 damage, and opponent loses one move of their choice. <u>flying kick</u> - 3 kick moves, 9 damage. <u>Skills:</u> acrobatics, perception</p>
<p>crane Energy 10 Action 4 <u>swooping kick</u> - 3 kick moves, 9 damage. <u>winged thrust</u> - 1 throw move, 0 damage, and opponent loses 2 moves of their choice. <u>spearing beak</u> - 3 punch moves, 6 damage. <u>Skills:</u> persuasion, contacts</p>	<p>panda Energy 18 Action 2 <u>panda press</u> - 1 throw move, 3 damage. <u>sweeping paw</u> - 1 punch move, 2 damage. <u>crouching claw</u> - 2 punch moves, 5 damage. <u>Skills:</u> raw strength, persuasion</p>



STRUCTURE

THE GAME

Before starting a game (a game being a one or more sessions of Final Stand connected by a central plot) of Final Stand, three things must be decided by the group:

The volume setting: the volume setting is how “loud” the action is. The level of special effects vs. realism, essentially. There are four volume settings. Pick one:

- **Quiet:** semi-realistic; the stunts are beyond realistic levels, but no flashing electricity or jumping 100 meters into the air. Bruce Lee kung-fu movie type stuff.
- **Cranked:** a little more extreme than normal. A bit of electricity crackling over bodies, the occasional extreme leaping, and other similar special effects. Somewhere around the video game *Tekken*.
- **To the max:** much more extreme than normal; lots of leaping, lots of crackling energy and glowing auras, even an occasional energy ball thrown. Think of the video game *Street Fighter*
- **Blow the amp:** insane levels of special effects; cities demolished, huge blasts of power thrown around, and so on. We’re talking Dragonball Z here.

I suggest Cranked for your first game of Final Stand.

The Doom: what threatens Big City, and perhaps the whole Empire? The Doom has two parts: what has already happened, and what will happen? Keep it vague and short, and bear in mind the volume-setting; a demonic invasion is good for ‘Blow the amp’, but a corrupt martial artist dealing in opium shipments is probably better for ‘Quiet’.

Feng and his group come up with the following doom: “someone has killed the Emperor, and someone evil is going to take the throne”

The Tie-Ins: obviously, the characters are working together to stop the doom. How did they get involved? Each player should announce their character’s tie-in to the story.

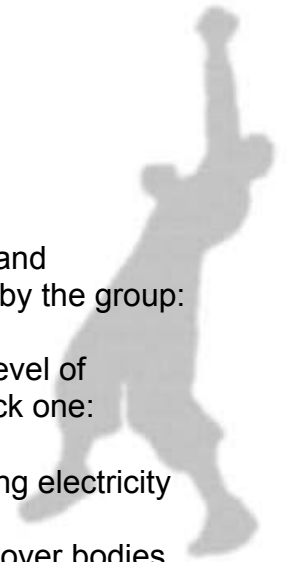
Feng’s tie-in to the story is that he is a member of the nobility, distantly related to the Emperor. He knows he is the only noble powerful enough to avenge the Emperor’s death.

THE SESSION

- **the rewards:** at the start of each session, the rewards must be decided. These are awarded to the player characters at the end of the session based on standing. The GM and each player announce one mechanical reward, which is written down in a list. A reward is something the player character wants (well, the reward the GM puts in may actually be negative). At the end of the session, rewards are chosen according to standing; so if you make a reward too powerful, you risk another player character getting it instead of you. If the GM thinks a reward is inappropriate for any reason (too powerful, perhaps), she can ask you to change it.

Feng is playing in a game with two other players. The players and the GM come up with the following rewards:

- +2 action
- +2 energy
- one technique of your choice does +1 damage
- gain any one technique of your choice from the style or form lists



- **fluff and levels:** there are two areas of play in Final Stand: levels and fluff. Levels are where the action is, fluff is the filling in between the levels. Every session must start with fluff, must end with fluff, and there must be fluff in between every level.

- **receive rewards:** at the end of the session, during the last fluff and plot wrap-up, you need to distribute the rewards. The player with the highest standing (roll off for ties) chooses a reward first. Then the next highest, and so on, until all the rewards have been dealt out. After the session, your standing goes back to zero.

If the GM won more levels (see below) than the players, she gets to cross one reward off the list before the players choose (because the GM declares a reward as well as all the players, there should be one more reward than there are characters to claim them).

After rewards are distributed, each player needs to justify the mechanical rewards during the last fluff. Something must have happened to your character to enable him to perform a Flying Bicycle Kick, and we want to know what.

After the session, it turns out the GM won more levels than the players. She crosses off the "+1 damage" reward. Feng has more standing than the other two players, and so chooses first. He chooses "+2 action", and in the following fluff he describes a scene in which he is meditating, when a tiger appears before him. The tiger leaps at him and rakes his chest. Feng wakes up days later with claw scars across his chest and a feeling of incredible power in his muscles.

THE FLUFF

At the start of the session, at the end of the session, and in between each level is Fluff. Fluff are scenes which develop the plot, explore the characters, and generally non-violent and short. Don't let the fact that it's "just filling" fool you; fluff can be very fun, and is important. Fluff must consist of at least one scene (you cannot go straight from one level to the next without at least a little fluff), but you may take longer if you wish. Fluff is much less structured than a level. Generally, the GM decides what the scenes will be, but the players should have heavy input.

Fluff is a great chance to role-play stereotype quirks, fill in holes in the plot, and create a logical path to the next level. It's a good time for duel challenges (though these can be issued inside a level, as well).

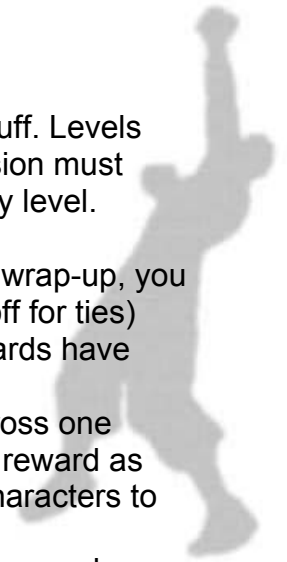
If you wish, you may have a training montage. You train earnestly for an appropriate amount of time (if the next level is months down the track in-game, then you train for months. If the next level is tomorrow, you train for a few hours). Then, you can redistribute your action dice.

Everyone must have a part in each fluff. That means every character must say at least one line and do at least one thing of note.

THE LEVELS

Levels are the meat of the game. A 'level' consists of a geographic area the characters enter, the fights they get into, and plot developments. Before starting a level, work out these three things:

- **the hook:** the hook is why the characters are entering this level. It is what they seek to gain, plot-wise in relation to the Doom, by being there. It sets out who the enemies will be, and other basic information. It is decided by the GM and players together.



The hook for the first level in the game is that the player characters are going to visit Wise Man Lau, the eccentric aide to the Emperor, who knows everything about court politics. They seek to ask him who he thinks killed the Emperor, and who is going to take the throne.

- **the structure:** the structure is decided by the GM. It is how many normal and major fights the level will consist of. It's a good idea to have one normal fight and one major fight for your first level. That will give you an idea of how long the levels will take you, and you can tailor future levels to your suiting.

- **the environment:** the environment is what the level looks like; physical features of note, the atmosphere of the place, and so on. The GM decides this, with player input.

In the first fluff, the player characters arbitrarily decided that they found out Wise Man Lau had been kidnaped. The first level takes place in a secluded fortress in the mountains, where Wise Man Lau is being kept prisoner. It is a Japanese-style castle, with crisp architecture. It surrounded by snow-covered pine trees and steaming hot springs.

Inside of a level, things progress much as you might expect. A bit of role-playing, a bit of exploring, lots of fighting.

After each fight the characters gain all their energy back for the next one. Keep track of which fights the characters won (all the opponents were KO'd) and which ones they lost (all the characters were KO'd). Oh, and all the fights *will* happen. Just because the characters are all knocked out in the first fight doesn't mean they can't have that big ruckus when they wake up; it'll just have to happen in the dungeons rather than the throne room.

At the end of a level, when the last fight has been fought, you have one more thing to take care of:

- **the twist:** remember the hook? Well, the twist is the resolution of the hook. It explains more of the plot, and sets up the next hook (if necessary). The size of the twist depends on how far into the session you are; if it's the final level, then the twist has to more or less wrap up the whole story.

If the players won more fights in the level than they lost, they decide what the twist is. The GM narrates it. Note down that the players won one level.

If the players lost more fights in the level than they won, the GM decides what the twist is. The players narrate it. Note down that the players lost one level.

If the players won and lost an equal amount of fights, the GM and players must work out the twist together (compromise). The GM narrates it. Don't note down anything.

The players lost one fight and won one fight in the first level. The GM and the players decide on the following twist to the hook: "Wise Man Lau, coughing up blood, says to look under the throne. Then everything will become clear. With that, he dies". This doesn't really advance the plot much, but it does give them a nice lead into the next level: the palace, obviously. Once they look under the throne (at the end of the next level), they can decide what has "become clear".

FINAL THOUGHTS AND USEFUL THINGS

RUNNING FIGHTS

The faster you can get fights going, the better. Let a player run an opponent once every now and then while you take a break. There's no point in you getting burnt out while your players sit in boredom waiting for their round.

And don't be afraid to win a fight or two; it won't kill the game or the characters. The players should probably win more than you, but feel free to kick their ass now then to show them that their victories aren't guaranteed.

GUNS

There shouldn't be many guns in Big City, but it is certainly possible (it *is* semi-modern). Guns (and things like them; a bow, for example) work like so:

- Inside a fight, they work through the 'improvise' rule.
- If it's outside a fight (shooting a sentry, for example), they work in relation to the context.

If you were sneaking into a military installation and wanted to take out a guard with your silenced pistol, it'd be covered by the 'intrusion' skill. If, later on, you were in a pitch black room and wanted to shoot the lock off the door, it'd be 'perception'. If you were standing out in the open operating a heavy machine gun, it'd be 'independence'. And so on.

OPPONENTS

The average player character has 20 energy and 10 action. With that in mind, the average opponent should have about the same (remember, it's ok to make it a good challenge; they regain all their energy in between fights anyway).

Choose two or three each of punch, kick, and throw techniques from the style and form lists. Write them down with generic names ("really big kick", and so on). When you have to make an opponent on the fly, give them one or two special techniques, rename them appropriately, and you're good to go. For an added challenge, give the opponent a bit of chi to play around with (8 chi is a good starting point for a Major Opponent).

Remember, in a normal fight there is always as many opponents as there are player characters. Also remember that a group counts as a single opponent.

For your first major fight, give the opponent about 50 energy, 25 actions, and 4 special techniques. Keep an eye on how the fight goes, and then tailor future major opponents to your requirements (if the fight was too easy, give the opponent more energy, and so on).

Now, go watch a kung fu movie, play some Tekken, and get playing. Ha-chaaa!

a l l m a t e r i a l c o p y r i g h t 2 0 0 2 t i m d e n e e

thanks to Kenway Yu, Rich Forest, Grant Giggie, Chris de la Rosa
and the great folks at the Forge for critical feedback
big thanks to Benjamin Baugh for the skill mechanics (and a lot of other great stuff)
kudos to OctaNe and Feng Shui

timdenee@paradise.net.nz
questions and comments welcome

made in new zealand