



THE NEW SYLLABUS



36 CHAMBERS of DOOM

by Antarah A. Crawley

First Quarter

1st Chamber

Once Upon a Time in Shaolin, long before the usurpation of the throne of Ceremonies and the Fall of the Great Year, before there was even any name by which these things were known, there was the Water. There was the water, and there were the waves. Yet the waves were without crest, without trough, and utterly without end. They were like as the mind without else to perceive, like as the lungs unbreathing; sentience in subsistence, existence without being, like as a tree as a seedling. Black was the body which carried the mind. Perceptless, silent, and soothing. Naught were the thoughts which filled it. Full was the belly unmoving. All was uniform and without differentiation, here in the waves which moved not.

When the wise speak on this timeless period in the history of Shaolin, it is with ironic humor, for there was verily nothing to say. No time was there to speak of. No breath was there to fill the lungs of the speaker to vibrate the waves of the ethers. Ye, let it be secured in the mind of the hearer of this tale just how empty and unchanging the timelessness was not in the nowhere-place. Yet the Wise doth consider it history still. This period they refer to as the Coldest Winter. It is also called the Warmest Womb of all the Mothers.

There is the Coldest Winter, which no one has ever known, and there is the Winter known to those who are living in the Great Year of Our Lord, which is referred to as Any Given Year. This is a great secret of the sages. All temporal states are temperate. All temperament is temporary. The temperature is the cause of all the tempests, yet it will resolve when all temptation is absolved. There are still and silent seas in the heart when these conditions are shed, like the skins from two molting snakes.

The cold of inert waves is unlike the cold experienced in the Winter of Any Year, but children do not know that. There are people of old age who are like children in that they perceive the coldness of any winter to be so unbearable as to call it the coldest winter. But they do not know what cold is. These people are deceased now. In a town by the eastern shore of the island, there are

mud huts thatched with straw with no one living in them. There are crucibles upon the furnaces in the kitchens with no one tending them. No fire has been lit for days.

A man walking upon this scene knows why the bodies are absent from their posts at the domestic scene, why there is no porridge on the table at this supping hour. And the sun sets over him, lilac descending upon the sulfuric oranges and the golden rays dimming into red. He looks down the soil avenue, the vacant eyes of the squat, square faces of the houses peering upon his lonely silhouette. The skirts of his immaculate white tunic rustle in the breeze. So does the tuft of tightly coiled black hair upon his otherwise shaven skull. No eyes see his darkened countenance, hollow eyes casting perpetual shadows over the windows into his mysterious soul. The chill of the early Spring again envelops his body, but it is not cold to him, neither is his body so dear. He has known what cold is. He has known life without the skin that's shed in the evening.

No one sees the wanderer enter the deserted town. Where there is grass it is yellow. The evening sky broods like high ceilings, hollow room. Ashen clouds streak over these small huts. Who once lived here? Where are they now? They have been forgotten. There was an illness among them which had seeped throughout the caste like blood gripping through the fibers of a cast. Pass homes, past aquifers and public power plants and places where people once congregated for market, the traveller came upon that most familiar scene.

In all these little towns in the provinces of Shaolin where the Wackness had claimed the lives of men, their women had mound them all up in masses, the babies tied in coarsely woven satchels upon their backs, pitiless and dry of eye after so many shovelfuls of men. They piled high the pull-carts mound up with the dead, prepared to take the yield out of the town over yonder, where the diseased deceased were mound up in a mountain. The women who were to drive the asses had climbed upon the mounds of the men and fell down to the same fates when no longer could their strength hulk the shovels full of their loves. The ass was dead. The little bundles bound to the women could be seen resting upon them like the belly. See the Mother there. She carries the son upon her back

when she goes down at night. The traveler looked upon this scene and was content to know the stories of these good people of the outer province of Shaolin.

2nd Chamber

The dry cold kept the bodies rigid in the dead earth, and the parents were never to rear up their children. The wanderer knelt before the mass, and he prayed upon the bodies, and he meditated upon the cycles. Lifeless eyes looked upon his closed, compassionate ones. Silence was in the early night. All throughout the land the dead were mound up as such, and as he prayed for this mass his compassion extended to all the masses. In his mind he went back to the place of waves, in the Water, before the land rose up and split in two. There, in the still and silent waters, all the dead and all the living subsisted without motion, without differentiation between one state or the other, and these deceased infirmed bodies whose souls are crying out in the aethers would not have had to suffer so, and would not be condemned to return to this scorched earth. And the wanderer, bowed in reverence, wrought a tear, and sacrificed the salt of the water upon the salt of the earth, and the moisture whetted the dry earth, and dissolved.

Far from the Three Mountains to the north of the island, this little province lay fetal upon the earth, in the Southern of the Two Lands.

And there was not a soul to be observed in this vicinity but the praying man.

And he was like a member of the very ground upon which he was planted. And his thoughts were as the breeze in the cool, vacant, and sublime night sky.

“....Ommm....” emerged the little voice, vibrating the highest waveforms. And the silent wanderer looked up to the mass of the dead from whence the word came, from the precipice of this pyramidal mound.

“....Ooommmaaaaa....” the voice came, like a little bud opening in spring sunlight.

“....Maa’amma’aa....”

The wanderer rose and advanced the mass. He let his eyes fall down the carcasses of the dead, the men and the women, and among them no one could have cast forth that cry, their mouths too full

with swarming flies. But the cry came again, yet the wanderer could not see the sign of life. He lay his hands gently upon the body of a woman and blessed her, and pulled her from the top of the mound and lay her upon her back on the ground. He straightened up from his position and looked there in her vacancy and saw more of her. Her body, some with bundle, some, like her, without. Bundles bound like baggage to these transient beings, none among them displaying the sign of life. Where, thought the wanderer, came that cry.

One bundle budged then before his eyes, and the wanderer placed his hand upon the cloth and pulled it back, and Lo there was a baby boy. The eyes of the little baby peered into the shadows of the depressions in the wanderer’s skull, and perceived there the glimmer of white light which was the evidence of his pure soul. The baby no longer cried, but looked with pleasure at this living human being.

“Patient,” said the wanderer with the softest tone. “Virtuous, fortunate.”

He unwrapped the baby from the satchel and delivered him from the mass of the dead. He cradled the bundle of life inside his arms and drew it near him and enveloped him in the folds of his gown. And the cool breeze blew. The baby did not shiver.

3rd Chamber

No one or thing but that to whom the waves belonged could fathom the event which moved the Waters; or perhaps, not even the mover knew from whence it came. It is said that there was a meeting. How long the waves remained still and unwavering is unknown and unfathomable, rest assured, but what may first be known is that they were moved. By whom and why, again, is for the silent meditation of the sages, who journey there in their most intensive trainings to ascertain the cause.

In their minds, they returned the waves of their thoughts to the likeness of the inert waves of the Water, yet how could they remain there? They were of the body, and of the Land of Shaolin, and knew in spite of their attainment of the likeness of silent waves the confinement of this condition, though they did desire to escape it. But desire not, and so it was that they were in it, and so it is that

they are of it, and evermore shall they be. Let it be so.

When it is said that the waves were moved, its cause is likened unto the appearance of a small seed in the midst of the water, emerging from its own potential to exist. This is the seed of the seed, which is not even perceived yet by the waves, and which does not move them. Yet there is the energy of it, imbued with probability, even in the impotence of still waters. The energy is moved through the waters in a spiral, like some scarab rolls its young along in a ball of dung, yet it does not beget distance. Spiraling in place, in place it grows, and as it grows its probability approaches 1. Its potential to exist ripples spheres of waves in all directions, and thus is the water first moved by the seed of thought. It is the seed which begets the vibration of the ripples in the Water. In the seed did the land first take root, and in the vibration was its name first spoken. Thus it was called Shaolin. It was when the water contracted its waves into the seed, bore forth the breath which spoke the name, and vibrated the breath which it cast forth, that the Land of Shaolin came into being.

It is said thus unto those who would hear the tale of the Beginning. When life flowed gaily through the avenues of Shaolin in the Spring of Our Year, the little children delighted in hearing of the Beginning time, and of the Ancestors who had first propagated upon the land. But the Griot of the city or the town where this tale was being told would have to remind the little children that they must hear the tale told in order, and so we shall not get too ahead of ourselves.

4th Chamber

Before the Ancestors were begotten upon the land, Shaolin was still a seed in the water. The ripples emanated from the center there, being rolled along by the scarab pushing its dung-ball along with a force of inherent momentum. Within this dung-ball now are many seeds of myriad things, for from the first seed was begotten the many, and they were increased by the rolling of the scarab. And so the ball increased in mass, and the emanations of the ripples of the water widened, and made known to the center the farthest reaches which had been moved by the newly begotten thing. And it was this

thing in the center which was called the Land. Its name was spoken in the vibrations of the waves and it was said in the word "Shaolin." And the waves of its vibrations were bound to the thing which spoke it, and conditioned it according to the nature of its frequency, and that is why the sages say that Word is Bond.

The dung-ball rolled along on its axis like moist clay on a potter's wheel. The potter's arms emerged to form of it a pyramidal mound, and the Land of Shaolin first emerged from the waters. Its peak rose into being and the mountain emerged as a termite hill. From the termite hill was borne forth the Son of all the Mothers. The Son rose into the morning. He was delivered by God his father into the bosom of the Mothers and he was suckled on their magnetic love. She made his belly full and he burst with light and grew. He looked back on the Land and loved it as his sister, and he loved his Mothers, too, for making him. So grateful was the Son for being born that he emanated his passions by shedding tears of joy upon the Land, and these tears ran down the mound of Land and vitalized the soil of the earth, and there grew vegetation, and the Land took root in the waters of the Mothers' womb.

The singular union of the love between the good Son and the Land was hot, fiery, and inflamed with passion. Yet this displeased the Word of God which had come forth from the seed's vibrations. The Word had decreed Shaolin to be the Land of God. This Son who cometh forth from the Great Land must be isolated from Her so as not to obliterate the fine work of the Lord with its volatile love; else the forms would incinerate and the soils would scorch. So the Word entered between the union of the Son and the Land whom he loved so much that he shed tears upon her, and the Word raised up the Son and his court, which the Wise call Heaven, from the Land and her court, which those who dwell thereon call Earth. Hereout the Unification of the Two Lands of Heaven and Earth who loved each other so dearly was severed by the scepter of the Lord. And the Lord placed a firmament in their midst; and the waters above the firmament were separated from the waters below, and above lived the court of the Son, and below rose up the pyramidal mound.

Out from the waters below the firmament

rose two more mounds behind the first, and these three crowns rose untoward the Son who they loved. The valley, and the planes, and distant lands followed them, and these were all one land. And the Land was called Shaolin by the One Who Had Made It, and he decreed it to be the Mother of all his children.

Mothers are a Spirit known to those who bear us. There are those who bear us in their bellies, and they know motherhood. There are those who bear us into the bosom of the knowledge of the Lord, and they are also mothers to those whom they deliver. Ye did the mysterious wanderer in the provinces of Shaolin in the Spring-After-the-Winter of Our Year know what mother was. The wanderer bound the baby to his body and went from the town to the place where he had taken shelter since the death of the Usurper of the Throne and the Reformation of the Empire.

And grace was thus extended to eight little babies in the most deserted towns, and the wanderer gathered them among him and learned them.

One evening, when they had taken up rest below a vacant steeple, the wanderer looked upon the Orphans he had gathered in his travels. Having seen the rise and fall of his kingdom, he took to rearing these begotten and forgotten children, and spake thus unto them their History, in the hall of their abbey:

5th Chamber

The Son loved the earth such that he shed tears upon Her, and his tears seeped into the soil of Her womb. The tears conceived a conscious life inside the womb of the Land, and She furnished in her belly the bodies of a woman and man. They were borne out of the soil and delivered into the water, and they were called the first Ancestors, or the Fish. This first pair was born in tandem as the progeny of Heaven and Earth. They, in turn begot four pairs of twins. Before they left their children they passed on the tale of the Beginning time. Then they ascended into the Celestial Realm. These remaining eight descendants, four men and four women, four earths and four sons, were called the First Ancestors.

Thus commenced the glorious Spring of the

Year of the Lord. Hereout the Generations referred to their civilization on earth, bequeathed unto them by God the Word, as the Terrestrial Empire of Lower Shaolin; and they called the Heavens, from which Lord God communicated his message unto them, his children, as the Celestial Empire of Upper Shaolin.

The Terrestrial Empire was divided into five Kingdoms: The Kingdom of Kings was ruled by terrestrial fire. The Kingdom of Queens was ruled by terrestrial water. The Kingdom of Knights was ruled by terrestrial wood. The Kingdom of Pages was ruled by terrestrial metal. And the southern island of Shaolin was ruled by the terrestrial earth. It is in the South from whence all things come, yet it is said by the Wise to dwell in the middle. It is said among the sages that it is the earth that contains all of the other four elements. That is why it is the Holy Land and the first land born by God. It is the true intent of the Lord's purpose for humanity, as the wise say.

6th Chamber

Before the Fish-God Ancestors left the earth their Lord the Son of God requested them to teach, and they instructed their children, our Ancestors, with these words:

“Among thee shall be made a pact. Thou shalt not foster corruption among thee: thou shalt not make of thy body an idol, for thy father God has decreed thy life upon the earth.

“Thou shalt know and love the earth for thy Mother God hath decreed it from her own body.

“Therefore shalt thou love thy bodies, for thou art made in the images of thy parents.

“Let the love of thy father the Son of God fill thy consciousness, and let thy love be transmuted to the soil of which thou hast been made, for it was the passion of thy father for thy mother God which begot thee upon the earth, and it is his desire to unite with her in the Great Day whence thou shalt also unite again with thy father and mother God as one. Therefor let thou unite and beget the generations of thy desire like unto how thy father God hath begotten thee in the mother, which is like unto how the occult beetle hath begotten its dung-ball full of seed deep in the water of the warm womb.

“Let not any among you diminish the seed or the growth which hath been given thereunto, for it hath been the decree of the Lord to sow it and let it propagate upon the earth for the glory of thy father’s will.

“Let not these decrees of the one true King of both the Upper and Lower Empires be ignored, and let not the Empires be separated based on disobedience and failure to observe the Common Law. Let whoso speaketh the Law clearly and whoso maketh the Balance to equalize in the center be the ruler and measure of the land, and let there be a Judge of the weights to be made sure that it is good, and who will receive therefrom his establishment upon his throne in the House of the Lord.

“Let this Good Presider Who Sits At the Head of this Court which governs over these measures be stabilized and empowered by their righteous truth, and let any among you who dissent from him be cast down in the name of the Lord, for whoso transgresses so will be engaged in the undoing of the Union of the Two Lands.

“As it is the desire and decree of Our King the Son of God for the love of his Fair Lady the Earth to unite with her under the righteous establishment of the Laws which have been made silent in the primordial waters and spoken, vibrated, and cast forth in the manifested Word, let no man challenge the governance set up the One God upon the Two Poles of his Ruler, who are ourselves; thereby, we, the polarity of the Lord in representation of the Two Lands of Heaven and Earth doth preside over the dual axes, who art thyself. Let two on each axis be male and two on each axis be female; let you be numbered eight among you. Thy eight spokes are two squares which are all the cardinal points of Heaven and Earth. Now let there be centered among thy dual axes the One Who Rules and Centers the Two Lands. Therefore, let there be a Ninth centered among you. Let him represent the union of we, the Fish-Gods, binary of unity, and the unity of thy father and mother God.

“Let there be now an axis placed upon the center of each of your bodies, that thou shalt not vary from thy appointed round. Let there be within thee two females and two males a piece, and let there be a solstice and an equinox for each.

Thereby let thy order number thirty-six, and let not this number falter lest the wheel of Heaven and the orbit of Earth fall back into the abyss of the waters. Let thy Order be life unto those who hear it, and death unto those who are ignorant.”

Hereby was established, at the beginning of the history of Shaolin in the Spring of the Year of the Lord, The Order of the 36 Chambers of Life & Death governed by the Ancestral Sage-Warriors of the Wu-wei. The Eight high counselors reported to the Ninth, Abbot of the Clan.

7th Chamber

Before the beginning of Generations, as they were becoming accustomed to the terrestrial life, the Ancestors came upon a tree among a great entanglement of fruit and vegetation. Upon the tree coiled a boa-constrictor possessed with the great mind of the Celestial Court. From this messenger the members of the Order received the knowledge of The Black Arts of Shaolin Shadowboxing and the Wu-Tang Sword Style from the Seven Celestial Chancellors of King Son.

The snake said unto the young Order on this occasion, “Be weary of these Dark Arts which we reveal to thee. Let not the Way of volatility obscure the true Way of quiescence; yet let not quiescence allow for the volatility of the impure of heart to advance thee, for thou hast been commanded to keep thy seat. Therefore when thy enemy advanceth, let thee advance the golden raven. When thou hast cast down the swine, release the jade rabbit.”

The Nine sages practiced these holy forms. When they had given forth the impulses of Generation, and they had placed the Master upon the throne of the Ceremonies of Shaolin Island, and had made the proper measures to establish him, then they withdrew into the Mountain which birthed the Son in the primordial time, and they built a House for the Lord beside the river where the Son's tears ran up-hill, and they maintained peace over the Land through the transcendence of these Arts. There they resided in their Abbey at the top of the Mountain of Uphill-Running-River.

8th Chamber

The first Master of Shaolin Ceremonies was the Abbot. The harvest of grain and fruit sprung spontaneously from the stalks and vines of the loins of the mother and milk was given forth abundantly from her breast and these precious gifts gratified the bellies of the Order. The Abbot presided over the sowing of the seed in the bellies of the four women by those who were put there to tend and protect that earth, and from those bellies burst forth two sets of twins a-piece, two males and two females, and the Abbot was pleased with the work of generation, which so pleased the Lord. He learned the Order and their first generation of offspring in the sustenance of life without burden; and so they knew purity of consciousness, and bound themselves not to earthly things, revering only the Lord and that power which the Lord God had sown in the body to whom he had devoted all his love. And the Ancestors and the first Generation practiced love and increased their lot like unto how, in their Good Work, the Lord was thereby increasing his own.

The Abbott relinquished the throne of Ceremonies to the eldest of the Eight Ancestors, who was called Osirus the Old Dirty Bastard; and Osirus was established upon the throne by his wife and house, the Seventh Ancestor, The High Chieftess. Together they increased the second generation of men and women in the Land of Shaolin, and settled them into the Valley between the Primordial Mountains. It was during this reign that the construction of the Infrastructure began, and the Sons of Men were ordered by the Ancestors according to their ability and temperament, and were given charge over the elements of wood, metal, fire, earth, and water. And Osirus sent those who were cold and hard to the mines in the outskirts, and bade them extract the ores, and bade them build the smithy to practice the arts of the smelting of iron, lead, copper, silver, and gold. And Osirus sent those who were warm and nurturing to the fields to the south and showed them the sowing of grain, like unto how they had sown their seed in the belly, and about the cycles of the growth, like unto how their kin do grow below the phases of the moon. And Osirus sent yet others who were fluid and malleable to the river which

was formed in the farthest south of the island from the tears of God the Son, and which ran up north to the City among the Mountains, circled partly around it, and ran up the Mountain which had first risen up from the Primordial Waters. Therefore this Mountain was called the Mountain of Uphill-Running-River, and Osirus charged the Sons of Men who were bold and hard and warm of heart to query the stones from the cliffs in the west and bring them to the top of the Mountain of the Uphill-Running-River, and there was constructed the Abbey of the Order of Ceremonies.

The following Master of Ceremonies was The Rebel Inspectah, who was established upon his throne by the Woman With the Golden Arms. Seeing through the completion of the Abbey of Shaolin, the Inspectah perceived its great sanctity. He held council with his partner and the Order of Ancestors and the Order of the Descendants of Generations and said unto them,

“Looked I upon the House which we erected in the name of our father and for the glorification of our mother, and perceived I therein the Spirit of the Lord. Know I that my father bade me not let the Spirit be severed from the body; therefore let not the union of love be defiled by the affairs of the mundane, lest the Kingdoms of Heaven and Earth sever and falter. Yet knoweth we how decay entrophys the organic things among us. Doth our father know that earth returns to earth in due cycle? And that the light of God cannot dwell in such a body for all time, if the Spirit would be kept pure as the heart which bore it. Therefore I advance not to corrupt the Holy Place Where the Lord Dwelleth with the decrees which are to govern the mundane affairs of men. Let only that which is holy in the name of God be advanced from this House of Mass Upon the Mountain of Uphill-Running-River, and let the Ancestors’ Order of the 36 Chamber dwell therein. Therefore, let there be a house built upon the neighboring mountain and let the decrees of men’s mundane affairs be advanced therefrom, so that if men falter, the House of the Lord will not falter with them, and if they corrupt, then the sanctity of God in earth will not likewise corrupt.”

This advance was heard poorly by Osirus and the Abbot, who knew that their father Lord God would be displeased by the separation of

church and state in such a manner as this which would by its separate nature maintain little faith in the hearts of men. Yet they did not interfere, for their reigns had passed, and they allowed their brother member to exercise this decree.

The House was built by the specifications of the Inspectah by the masons of the Descendants of Men, and it was from here that all Ceremonies pertaining to the welfare of Shaolin would be advanced, and this House was thus called the Fortress of Ceremonies, and whosoever possessed the crown of Ceremonies would dwell therein, and the sides of the Mountain would be littered with the Houses of the Court and the dwellings of those who worked among these municipal offices.

9th Chamber

This Fortress of Ceremonies was received by Maximillion Zig-Zag Allah the Genius, who was established upon his throne by Shallah Rae K'won the Chef, who was named so because she improved the state of agriculture in the land and more suitably filled the bellies of the people. This was a reign of great power and integrity. The Genius knew that the Lord was perturbed by the building of a House separate from that which was consecrated to him, but the noble reparative efforts of the unification of the two Houses advanced by the Genius and the Chef so pleased the Lord, and the cauldrons which the Chef filled with the porridge of the earth to fill the bellies of generations pleased him, and the proliferation of his children upon the earth in his own name pleased him.

King Maximillion and the Chef Rae K'won left the Fortress in their good time and went to join the Abbot, Osirus the Old Dirty Bastard, the High Chieftess, the Rebel Inspectah, and the Golden Arms in the Abbey of the House of the Lord. They were succeeded by King Tony Starks the Wallabee Kingpin, who was established upon his throne by Blunt Master Shakwon the Iron Lung. In this reign the total generations of humen in Shaolin numbered seven, and the population numbered in excess of one-hundred-forty-four thousand men, women, and children.

King Tony observed that his Court members numbered approximately ten percent of

his entire Empire, and that they clustered themselves upon the sides of the Mountain of the Fortress of Ceremonies as if for dear life. He noticed from on high in the Fortress of Ceremonies that the vast majority of the generations of men fell into the Valley, and spilled out into the provinces of Shaolin. He perceived the deep and deadly fathoms which separated he and his Court from their people. These fathoms kept the Court members afloat in the sun, breeze, and pleasant waves while the people found themselves being submerged into less desirable circumstances.

He saw developing down in the Valley a discontent among the people, and a sense of jealousy, and a resulting sense of resent and spiteful idle; and they were becoming stagnant in the depression of the land and were envious of the activities on high. In time some of them began to abandon their posts, and sought activities of leisure which invariably led to their moral denigration. They began to complain that their needs were not being addressed by the Council and that their desires were being ignored, and they began to speak ill words against the King. And the King observed the favorable living conditions of those who dwelt upon the Mountain of the Fortress of Ceremonies, and the attachment with which those members of the Court sought to maintain their positions on the Mountain. "What soot clings to the hearts of men?" he asked in his Hall.

The Iron Lung responded, "The Lands are separating. There is differentiation between what is below and what is above. Those who have found favor on the side of the Mountain hoard it unto themselves. Those without favor below envy it, and seek such gratification elsewhere."

"Let not their hearts be deceived by the veils and smokes of false desire."

"You must counteract this growing seed of discontent, my Liege."

"I know," said the Kingpin, "I will build a House for the Masses upon the third Mountain. This will be a place of reprieve from the work which those in the Valley endure, that it may content their hearts and keep them from envying the Court."

So the Wallabee Kingpin decreed the construction of the House of Masses upon the third Mountain, and it was done by the masons of the

Valley, inspired by the appeal to their own happiness. It was finished under the reign of the succeeding Master of Ceremonies, who was established upon his throne by the Mistress of Ceremonies. On Dedication Day, the Master of Ceremonies christened the House of Masses with these words:

“Let there be a stage made upon the earth, for the play and the folly of the People. Let there be frivolity and joy among the Masses, and let entertainment be as bountiful as the flow of the river which runs uphill unto our Lord. Let the people wear masks and act out their fantasies. Let there be feats of strength, and let there be displays of talent, and, Oh, let there be that most precious of leisures, a most beautiful music. Let there be sixteen bars of rhythm playing from the mountain at all times.”

This advance by the Master of Ceremonies was perceived by the people to be a most benevolent event, and the population of the Valley and all the Provinces flocked to the exhibitions executed upon the world’s stage, which caused them the exaltation of all their worldly passions.

Second Quarter

10th Chamber

All the people of Shaolin had, since the dawn of generations, maintained a customary sacrifice which had been passed down from their Ancestors, in which the first portion of their meal and water was offered up to the Earth, to gratify the spirit of the Mother whom the Lord would have his children so honor. The Ancestors themselves did not consume the food of physical earth, but, as was customary, the people sacrificed the second portion of their meal and water to the Ancestors who dwelt at the peak of the first and most Holy Mountain; and they consumed the remainder of their food, which was plentiful, as because of this sacrifice, the earth did not short them in their harvests. The harvests were likewise sacrificed, and there was an altar set up in every borough of the Valley and in every Province of the Island for the giving of the local offerings. These offerings were burnt on the altar or given directly into the earth. On the same altar thereafter was another tax of 10% gross

harvest yield per family-farm laid; and after the community had amassed the grain and fruit there, it was divided among the family-farms whose yields had been compromised for the season. If there was no one without, then the collective tax was logged and reserved with the monk in the civil altar or worship house for emergency disbursement upon such an occasion. The Court and the Master of Ceremonies performed identical sacrifices on the altar of the Ceremonial Abbey on the Mountain of the Fortress of Ceremonies, and their tax was likewise logged with the clerk of the Fortress for the purpose of the Social Welfare; and they did not, nor were they inclined, to take any further portion of the peoples' harvests or civil reserves as tax. Neither did they exercise any power over the Land than pure infrastructural oversight, Ceremonial affairs, and maintenance of the borders of defense. As the Law had come from God through the Ancestors in the Beginning Time, the Court of Ceremonies passed no legislation.

The Fortress and the Court of Ceremonies maintained a custom to sow and harvest the farms which were so delegated as Royal Fields, which are called among the wise-asses “The Elysian Fields.” When the Ancestors reigned over the Land of Shaolin, these fields were like unto all other fields farmed by the people. However, when the Rebel Inspectah decided to separate the Ceremonies of Shaolin from the Order of the 36 Chambers, then the clerks of the Court, who oversaw the farmhands, began to take liberties regarding their plot, and thereout the conditions maintained in the fields which would feed the clerks of Ceremonies were superior to those which the people tended to feed themselves.

11th Chamber

It became known in the Court of King Tony that refugees from the northlands of the Kingdom of Kings had entered the Land of Shaolin after a great fire had scorched throughout their provinces. They had come to the shores of the Island by boat. King Tone, with good and honest intent, welcomed them, and proceeded to pay them no mind.

The Chief of Defense counseled with him. “My Liege, the Land of Shaolin has not had to confront the defense of her borders until now. We

do now know the nature of these who come among us? It is likely that we may have to come to a sound and considered civil agreement with them, if they are not utter devils!”

The King said unto his counselor, “Are these people not born of God like we?”

“It is unknown,” said the Defense Chief.

“Well, would God breed whom he hates upon the Earth he loves so dearly?”

“He would not if he had a say. Yet it is known than men even in the Land of Shaolin have degenerated from the moral ranks occupied by your noble Majesty and thy kinsmen the Ancestors of all our Generations. Through the generations, men have fallen from thy nobility of mind. What of these strangers, whose temperaments are wholly unknown to us, and whose ancestors may be of any unsuitable, incompatible, and unholy admixture.”

“Well,” said the King, “I see you have to assume the extreme worst of human souls--”

“If they were human!”

“Very well. Take thy army to the shore and appraise them. If they be good men, set them up in a vacant plane and bring their leader to the City for contract. If they be—devils!—what say ye?”

“What the Ancestors would...,” said the Defense Chief, “slay them in the name of the Lord.”

While the newly formed Committee of Foreign Relations ventured to the north shore to apprehend this intrusion, the people in those provinces of Shaolin had already engaged with the refugees and become thoroughly perturbed by the temperament of these peoples, who had come among them and attempted to integrate. Their assimilation managed poorly. They carried with them blades of wrought iron, and their complexion was ashen by the scorching fires of their land. Such as they appeared they instilled fear in the rich, fertile, earth-complexioned people of Shaolin, and the babes cried out at the sight of them, and the youths proclaimed that ghouls had come up from the smithy of the core of the earth. The men of the Shaolin provinces dominated over the visitors and withdrew their blades from them. One Shaolin man said, “What brings you here here in such a condition like from the depths of the sulfurous inner earth where iron is molten and the mountains are formed.”

“We come from desolate lands,” said a foreigner. “We are quite disadvantaged. We lack sustenance and health. We have been sailing the seas for much time in search of a suitable land to trade with, so that we might bring back nutriment to our families.”

“Well,” said the Shaolin man, “You seem ill enough; and were you not so sickly in complexion you might be our kin. But your withered bodies, narrowed features, and diseased appearance makes uneasy our women and children. We must consult among ourselves and with our Court before we know what to make of you. Take up residence in field yonder, for now, until word comes from the City.”

The men of these hoards agreed to the contract but for a short time. The army of Ceremonies was still some miles out, while the foreigners had increased their numbers by boatloads and had begun to wander among the provinces. The men from Fire had a habit of dominating over the women in their own land; and they exercised this dreadful vice upon the women of Shaolin where they found them reaping in the fields.

The men of the Shaolin provinces—seeing the devilish nature of the foreigners and slow ineffectuality of King Tony of Ceremonies in the City of the Triplex Mountains which was at such a distance from them—resolved to end these hoards by their own hands. When the army of Ceremonies arrived in the area, the men of the provinces informed the Court and soldiers of the unnaturalness of these invaders, and the decree was passed to slay any foreigner wherever one found them.

When the devils were slain, the men nursed their women in the aftermath of their trauma; and after a time it was observed that some of them were with child. These were the first generations of men which the people believed were conceived by sin, and when the seeds sprouted from their lots, they were promptly uprooted. Yet it is said among the provinces that their women were of such nurturing hearts and gentle natures that some of them were likely to have saved the lives of their ill-conceived seed, casting them down the River of Heaven toward the City.

12th Chamber

The abandoned basket-babies, tawny in color, floated down the river into the City and found refuge in the welfare houses of the monks of the 36 Chambers. They were reared as orphans and sent to labor when they had come of age. The Shaolin men worked orphans long and hard, day by day. Despite their inferior position, the nature of the orphans' employment permitted them some degree of mobility within the structure of whatever task they were charged to, so that in time a laborer who heeded all the decrees of their Master and withstood all his blows would be allowed to oversee other orphans in the work and inflict blows upon them.

Such was the career of one orphan, who grew into a scornful young iron-miner. So miserly was he that in his transition into the position of Overseer of the mine he exercised the most resent-fueled brutality upon his dusty underlings, which habit much amused the men of Shaolin. The boy iron-miner was given measure over the proceedings of the mine, and even to the purpose of the ores which it produced. The men of Shaolin, seeing that he despised both himself and the underlings who looked like him, saw no fault in allowing him to staff his own smithy to produce tools for the various trades of the land; but they maintained close watch over him to ensure that he would forge no weapons.

13th Chamber

The enterprises of this young man flourished in his young adulthood, and he became both the first admired half-breed in the land, and the most notable manufacturer.

When, some time later, the first Master of Ceremonies completed the House of Masses and that stadium began to attract the men of Shaolin from all throughout the land, the former iron-miner, who was now nearly autonomous in his enterprises, felt his long-harbored resentment against the land of Shaolin turn to ambition, and his ambitious mind perceived the fortune allotted by the great spectacle within the House.

"Why should I work alongside the people who humiliated me," he said to himself in the

private depths of his underground smithy. Therein he set his men to work upon massive gates.

When his gates were complete he took them to the House of the Masses and presented them as a gift to the Ceremonial Overseer of the House of the Masses, claiming that the gates would maintain order among the peoples' comings and goings. The Overseer of the House of the Masses saw the profit in this, and allowed the manufacturer to install them. The manufacturer put his gates up at the entrance to the House of the Masses; and the people coming and going were perturbed by the slow pace of entry to which they were now subject. The flow of men eager to partake in the festivities within was now curtailed by these new obstructions, and the masses within the House could now be controlled and manipulated in sizes more manageable by the Ceremony's custodians therein. This pleased the manufacturer and the Overseer. The Overseer was so pleased, in fact, that he bestowed upon the manufacturer the title and autonomy of Overseer of the Gate of the House of the Masses.

With his newfound power, the Overseer of the Gate returned to his smithy and began the construction of many more gates which he installed in various public works under the same premise, and his enterprises flourished. He began to charge a fee for the use of his gates which men transacted whenever they passed through them, and a portion of this revenue he presented as tribute to the Overseers of the facilities which entrance the gates now barred, and these taxes granted him immense favor in the Court of Ceremonies.

He was granted two more smithies by the Court of Ceremonies, and the Overseer of the Gates began to fire his furnaces to turn out many more ingenious tools. He came up with the idea of keys for gates, and began to offer elite access to certain now-gated places. He forged iron doors with locks for his gates and designated them private entrances for key-holders, while those without keys must continue to enter through the constricted Main Entrance. This appealed so much to those with favor that they exchanged many of their own fine possessions to obtain keys; and the revenue extracted from varying types of fees increased the Overseer's purses. The former orphan-turned-iron-miner became the first and

most successful private merchant in the land, and inspiration to pure-blooded men of Shaolin and down-trodden mixed-breeds alike.

14th Chamber

The reign of the Master of Ceremonies saw the increase of the passions of the attendants of the House of the Masses and the proliferation of those who peddled to their passions. The scene outside of the Gate of the House of the Masses at any time was like as a bustling open-air market. The minions of the Merchant of Gates peddled small nick-naks, toiletries, snacks, and other extraneous things according to their trade; and the Merchant looked upon them and his heart was content. His children-merchants delivered to him tribute from the things they peddled, and his pockets were content. Yet there was not enough content in them to satisfy him for too long a time, and the need to acquire more of the valuables of the people drove the Merchant of Gates to inventing new desirable things. These things the Merchant consigned to the peddlers who stood outside the Gate to hawk for him, giving them a small percentage; hereby did the Merchant make his money twice and three times over.

One day the Merchant noticed that a sale between one of his peddlers and a man of Shaolin defaulted when the man reached the entrance to the Gate of the House. Despite the fact that it already took an unreasonable amount of time for anyone to get inside of the House, the Merchant decided to bar half the area of the entrance.

This caused great agitation among the attendants, and the crowds again fell into disorder.

“What has happened?” asked the Overseer of the House of the Masses, not knowing why the riots had erupted since he possessed a key to a private door.

“I don't know, but I will remedy it,” replied the Merchant of the Gate.

“I want to make it fun to wait outside the Gates,” the Merchant said to an attendant. “Then, they will not care if they can get inside the House or not.”

“Give them libations to empty their minds and dull their intentions and they will be elated all the time, and at a loss for dissentful convictions,” said the attendant.

So the Merchant turned his business to the cultivation of the plants which were familiar to the lore of the Kingdom of Kings. In such lore the plants grew poisonous from the earth, but could be cooked and transmuted into substances which produced strange and unnatural effects upon the mind. He began to import and sow these plants in a secluded field in the west of the Shaolin Island. This land he reaped from the hands of native Shaloin people by sanction of the Court of Ceremonies. To pacify the men and women, he employed them on his plantation as “laboratory assistants,” which meant that they would test the effects of the drugs which the Merchant's alchemists concocted, which concoction, he promised, would enhance the sensations of the tester. After a period of experimentation, wherein many of his test subjects died immediately upon ingestion, an elixir was formed which the Merchant observed in his subject to produce a most favorable effect on the senses—that is what he perceived in the rolling-back of the eyes and the salivation and the moaning which ensued shortly after ingestion. The Merchant then proclaimed, “Look, the man is sublimed—and he is not dead.” He checked the pulse, and, confirmed by the trickling of blood, turned to his alchemists and declared, “Produce en masse!”

Thus began the market for the “Ease,” as the drug was termed. “Take some of these Eases while you wait and time will fly by,” said the peddlers as a catch phrase. “You'll be inside the gates in no time.”

The men of Shaloin procured these Eases with great enthusiasm and immediately took to the sublimation of their senses. The riots and the discontent ceased among the population, and the profits of the Merchant increased manifold.

15th Chamber

The Summer waned in the time of the Master of Ceremonies. The generations were manifold and most disparate in this season. There were the Children of Men and Women in the Valley of the City between the Triplex Mountains of Shaolin, who were forged from the same earthen womb as their Ancestors. Although their bodies possessed the integrity of their mother's true intention, their

minds were weakened by the separation of the Two Lands and the distance which was increasing between them and their father God the Son, who never failed to weep eternally for them from on high in the Celestial Empire.

The northern lands of Kings was burning even now, and was forcing its pale and sickly population south with soiled hearts, soot-filled minds, and ashen faces. No amount of slaughtering could reduce the incoming population of these devils, and the people of the provinces of Shaolin became overrun by the hoards.

Not only was the integrity of men in the valley threatened by foreigners who knew not the civil and moral decrees of the Ancestors of Shaolin, but it was also corrupted by a less conspicuous force. The Merchant in the City had been wont to expand the market of his trade of elixir beyond the House of Masses. It was well known that his minions peddled vice and ease in the Valley, and thus maintained control over the hearts and minds of men therein. Yet it soon came to light that minions had been sent from the City to peddle ease in the provinces. Slowly, the addiction to ease became evident among the men, and they fell out of their work. The women took up their tools and fill their place in the land, the babies tied to their backs.

The good and righteous men of the provinces who were free from indulgence in the elixirs of the Merchant were perturbed by this; they thought how shameful it is for men to indulge in a substance which cripples their bodies and prevents them from fulfilling the work of the Lord. Not only that, but it forces the Earths to take up the place of the Gods, which earth it is the Gods' duty to till. And so women are now the ones to care for all at once their House which now contains their husbands, and the Seeds which their husbands had sown in the soil, being the very earth which their husbands are now unable to till.

The free and righteous masons gathered with the strong, working women in the Local Temple and said, "We cannot allow merchants to peddle ease to our people any longer. We must go to the Master of Ceremonies."

And the Women said, "The Merchants have too much power. It is the responsibility of our men to retain their integrity in the face of temptation."

"But they have failed," said the masons. "They are powerless now."

"Just as they have lost it may they gain it," said the women. "Maybe when they see we Women working in the field doing their work in place of them and just as good, that they will be shamed back into health."

"This is wishful thinking," said the masons. "It takes determination for a man to keep his integrity, and that the men have willingly forsaken it is testament to their poor character."

"Perhaps the solution is simply to kill the merchants," said a Woman among them.

"That would be the path of fire," said a mason. "Our Ancestors decreed unto us the fluid style of water and the firm style of earth. But never the consuming style of reckless flames."

"Perhaps your will has grown weak like your brethren's," said one Woman.

"Nay, have faith in our men," said another Woman. "Though they may falter in their action or inaction, with our guidance and the guidance of the Lord they may be set aright in their pursuits. Strong as they are, they suffer from confusion in this our time of the Separation of the Two Lands." This goodly woman then turned to the masons among her and said: "Go, my sons, to the Master and seek guidance unto the most proper and holy way to dispose of the evils among us."

The small band of righteous masons, full of integrity and true intent, free of addiction to worldly substances, and established and strengthened by the love and faith of their wives and women, left the province and went toward the City. In their stead, as it has always been, the women kept their House and Lands and Children, in short, their Lives; and it was their very Lives indeed which they left behind in the provinces as they went forth to bring life back to their ailing brethren.

16th Chamber

The free and righteous masons of the provinces came to the City and entered into the Court of the Master of Ceremonies and beseeched him to send his armies to ward off the invaders.

The masons proclaimed that these were not men but devils and that extending such faith in

them as one would extend faith to humanity would mean granting the spirit of evil and disorder providence over this orderly and righteous land and it would mean the end of good and truth-speaking men who had been spawned there upon the land by the Ancestors of generations who had decreed it unto them.

But as the masons looked about the Hall of the Master of Ceremonies they saw the mounds of gold which rung perpetually with the music and clamor which vibrated from the Mountain of the House of the drugged and depraved Masses governed by the extortive and miserly Merchant, which obscured their good and true speech in the ears of the Master and the Court. And they saw the ashes upon the gold, and knew that tribute had been made unto their Court by the very invaders who were impeding upon their lands. They realized that the air produced by their speech would only cause the knolls of gold to ring louder in the ears of the Court, and produce even more hypnotic music. They tried to speak above the deafening vibrations:

“Good Master,” they said, “Great wealth and gold has come into the Kingdom of Shaolin and this thy House of Ceremonies, but at the expanse of the generations. Men of weak mind need the model of the Gods to follow, yet among them they have found false gods in the model of the men who pedal vice in the House of Masses on the Mountain which plays the sixteen bars of music day in and day out. These mercantile men have obtained ownership over Masses, their passions, their entertainment, their example of living. Men no longer hold the decrees of our Ancestors in their hearts. They are tempted away by the attractive distractions of the world, and we, those who are left to maintain the decrees by which our Ancestral Order informed us to praise God and glorify the earth, must work double and triple to support to scores of citizens who no longer toil. Please, Master, may you reform this serious transgression unto the Law of Unification of the Two Lands.”

But the Master of Ceremonies could not hear the pleas of these virtuous people, for his ears were ringing with the vibrations which his mounds of gold transmitted from the waves of music coming from the Mountain with played it all day and all night long.

Seeing that the Master of Ceremonies and

the Clerks of his Court were deaf to their speech, the Commission of Righteous Masons of the Valley began to leave the Fortress of Ceremonies.

Before they were without the Master’s Hall, one good and noble clerk placed his hand upon the shoulder of one Mason. The Mason looked into the eyes of this clerk, which were pure, and the clerk said unto him, “I am a hearer of your speech, and mark mine: should the spell of this gold wear off from this Court, I will establish your words herein.”

The Mason and his train bowed to the young man of the Court, and the Mason said, “How good it is for a son to listen to his father.” And with these words, the Commission went out into the World.

The men walked in solemn procession down the hill past the stone homes of the clerks, down through the thatched mud-brick homes in the Valley, where women and children toiled in soot and handled the machinery on their own, their babes tied to their backs. One woman thus employed said unto them, “Good men, may the Lord bless you in your going forth to the Mountain of Uphill-Running-River. May you hold council with our Ancestors and inquire what may relieve the men of our Kingdom from indulgence in vice, carrying on in another’s house far away from their families. We are able to carry one here with the children and the works which they have abandoned, but it pains us so, that our loved ones would have the coldness of heart to abandon we who have made a home for them. They take up residence in harlots. Are we nothing here, tending to their lots when they are away on unholy duty? We know, by the grace of God, that the answer is no, we are not nothing, we are the very walls and space of the room in which man lives and breathes; but what that man chooses to do with his living and breathing is beyond us, even if, foolishly, that man decide to tear down his walls. The Lord hath made us in the image of the infinite and eternal waters who birthed the Son, our King over Earth; indeed, the Lord hath made us as the Earth so loved by that sovereign, deserving of nothing less than the full vigor of his devotion. But our kings and sons are not sovereign now. They are possessed by the elixirs and passions which merchants peddle them. O, deliver them from their slavers and oppressors.

O, good masons, being clarity to these lost souls, our lost men and sons.”

And the good and righteous masons bowed before these holy folk and professed their utmost intention to bring resolution to these transgressions; and they blessed the women, and broke bread with them, and the women then returned to toil their soil, their babes silent. The masons proceeded on to ascend the Mountain of the Uphill-Running-River to the Abbey of the Order of the Ancestors of Shaolin.

17th Chamber

The Commission of Free and Righteous Masons completed their steep and extensive trek up the rocky Mountain and came upon the alabaster Abbey. They prostrated themselves before it and entered therein. They passed through the foyer and into Hall where sat the Ancestors Maximillion Zig-Zag Allah the Genius, Shallah Rae K’won the Chef, the Abbot, Osirus the Old Dirty Bastard, the High Chieftess, the Rebel Inspectah, the Woman with the Golden Arms, Shakwon the Iron Lung, and Old Tony Stark the Wallabee Kingpin, all with crossed legs, silent hearts, and light spirits, black hoods and cloaks draped over them in memory of the primordial waters, here below the high ceiling in the House of the Lord. No sixteen bars of music could be heard at these heights on the Mountain. All was silent and still. And the Righteous Masons prostrated and sublimated themselves before their Ancestors.

Then said the Abbot unto them, “We know why you have come so far to appeal before us.”

And the delegate of the Righteous Masons rose and said unto him, “Why then, my Lord, hast thou not appealed to the Master of Ceremonies on behalf of the Lord God? It was thy duty to preserve the unity of the Land of Shaolin and all its people. Look now upon how they are being divided at the whim of the merchants.”

“Know we that the severance of the two lands takes place below,” said the Abbott.

“Advance I,” said the Rebel Inspectah, “that it was my decree for a separation of church and state that set these events into motion.”

And the good delegate inquired, “Why hast thou forsaken the decree of the Lord by tearing his

house in two?”

“Not have I forsaken my oath,” replied the Inspectah.

“Why dost thou not utilize the Wu-tang Sword Style against these enemies of God?”

“They are yet the Sons of Men.”

“They are diminishing the generations,” said the good delegate. “Art thou not bound to strike down those who diminish the mass of the Lord?”

“Let it suffice in thee,” said the Genius, “that our Lord the Son of God doth work hard to effect the union of the Two Lands, yet they remain as separate for the time. It is not the good season. Upon his chosen day will the Unification be effected.”

And with this, as if a candle had been blown out by a soft breath, the Order ceased their court. The Commission of the good and righteous Masons were charged to accept this verdict of the Order, that the Lord would reap penance from the House of Masses on his chosen Day. When would that be, they wondered as they trekked back down the Mountain of Uphill-Running-River. They knew that it was no matter for men to meddle in the seasons by which God has chosen to perform his good work. Contented they their hearts upon this matter.

No sooner did they relinquish all their faith to the Lord that they saw from their perch upon the Holy Mountain a great black fog descend from Heaven upon the apex of the Mountain Which Played Sixteen Bars of Music and spiral down from there and envelop all of the land of the incline. And the people who filled the House of Masses ran from there as that place was overcome by the dense and heavy fog, and they returned to the Valley and the provinces. So did the Commission of Righteous Men return to their lots, expecting to meet their fellow men ready to work again in the name of the Lord.

They despaired upon their arrival. Those who had returned from the Masses were deathly ill. The Righteous Men termed this disease The Wackness.

The Commission of Free and Righteous Masons found the Master of Ceremonies guilty of allowing the epidemic of the Wackness to proliferate among the citizenry and therefore

diminish the Masses of the Generations which the Lord bade men sow in the Earth. By justification of this Master's blatant and ignorant tyranny, the Commission turned the crown of Shaolin over to the noble clerk who had heard their appeal in the Court, and, with the blessing of the Order of their Ancestors, christened him the new and most Good Master II of Ceremonies.

18th Chamber

The Master II of Ceremonies established himself upon the foundation of free, righteous, and truth-speaking masonry, and aligned himself with those few members of the Court who possessed the integrity imbued in them by the flesh of their true mother, and reestablished the Court of Ceremonies in the name of the Good MC. This new Court invited all the able and right-minded men of the Valley and the provinces to come to the Fortress, and upon their assembly the Master II of Ceremonies redistributed all of the gold of the tributes of the merchants unto the people and bade them reform their temperament and reestablish their spiritual wealth. These able men went down from the Mountain of Ceremonies and reclaimed their land in the Valley. They forced the merchants and the overseers of the Masses out of the City and into the Provinces. Thereout the Valley became the haven of free and righteous descendants of the Generations of the Sons of Men and Women.

The Court of the Good MC exorcised the Merchant of Gates from the Mountain of the Fortress of Ceremonies to the outskirts of Shaolin, and the clerks who had held council with him were sent along beside him to the provinces where they continued to lord over the people there. Their tyranny in the countryside only compounded the present tyranny of the incoming devils of the north. Those Shaolin people who were thus subjected sought escape where and when they were able to journey to the free land in the City.

Upon their arrival in the provinces the Overseer of the Merchants held council with Merchants of Ironworks and the Merchants of Eases and the Overseers of the Masses and the former clerks of Ceremonies and he said unto them:

“This Good MC has foiled our enterprises

in the City. Yet fret not, for we will reclaim the hearts and souls of men in due time, and we will extend our influence thus from out here in the provinces. Let us yield the crops and manufacture new Eases for the masses in the Valley and the noble clerks in the new Court of Ceremonies. I have seen the way that they falter in their integrity. They follow the example which the good and righteous masons have set for them in this reformation, but they truly lack self-conviction. Many of these same men had frolicked in the House of the Masses when it suited their fickle heart to betray the decrees of their Ancestors. Therefore, we need only tempt them with new entertainments, cleverly disguised so as to appear integral to their consciousness. We shall find models for them in the men we have enslaved here in the provinces, whose appearances are dark with integrity like unto the good masons and the Ancestors, yet whose minds have been broken by our labor, and whose will we can conform to our desires like smelted iron. Let us form swords of these men, which we will use to attack their brethren with the elixir of these dis-Eases, and we will weaken the Kingdom of Shaolin once more.”

And those in attendance thought well of this, and they proceeded to increase the production of the raw diseases using the worn, earthen bodies of the men who would suffer them. And they bid the women cook up the crop in the crucible and advance the fires of the north within the furnace, and, alas, in ten-fold time the strong and potent elixir of disease was formed.

The Overseers of the enslaved men of the provinces enrolled them in the schools of the merchants where they were told that they would be freed, and that they were to be sent back to the City. The Overseers instructed the enslaved students in the methods of reintegration. At the root of this curriculum of reintegration was the art of commerce and salesmanship. The students were instructed of the various discreet methods by which they could convince their fellow man and woman to receive the diseases. Then vials of the disease were given to the students, and their instructors said unto them, “This is a new, safer, and more potent strain of the classical Ease which was so enjoyed among thy people in the good old times when music played from the House of Masses day

in and day out. This will bring about good times again and free your people from the boredom and the chains of the rules of your ancestors.”

The newly freed men of the provinces rejoiced in their graduation from the trade-school and their newfound career in salesmanship. As a gift for the successful completion of this course, the Overseers of the Masses bestowed upon these men the women of the north—three, four, and five women to each man—and the men were made blind with lust and gratification. These women, they were told, were not only for them, but for all the men of integrity in the City to enjoy freely. Upon their departure from the provinces the indoctrinated men of Shaolin left their own women and children behind under the domination of the Overseers, and went with satchels laden with elixir and minds fogged with visions of wealth and success to the Valley of the City of the Triplex Mountains.

Third Quarter

19th Chamber

The wise say amongst themselves at the highest place in the Land of Shaolin, looking down upon the ensuing war, “The Lord would have the unification of the Two Lands, but men would have the Two Land be severed. What is the cause of this confusion?”

The Women among them answer, for it is they who truly perceived the cause of things: “Men have deceived themselves and have come to disregard their mother. They shame their wives and heed not the feminine within them. Therefore they are misled by their imbalanced nature. The men must desire the severance of the Two Lands, like unto how their ambition drives them to fulfill some quota, for the Word which God decreed unto them has been severed from their mothers. Herefore men know only separation, and thus confusion, and thus pain, and they came to be perturbed by unity, never fully grasping the conception.”

“Men claim to love the decree of their father God unto the Unification of the Two Lands. Why, then, do they work in defiance against the Law?”

“They glorify their father, indeed,” reply

the Women, “Yet these men know not their mother; and though they perceive the words of their Ancestors, they dwell without the dominion of the Lord. Therefore war is waged among men against the will of God.”

“Yet we who dwell in the House of the Lord know that the decree of the Lord God unto the Unification of Heaven and Earth is imminent. Men know it not.”

“Let them think so. The Lord will make clear the Law when the time is nigh, and men will know their transgression.”

“And there will be Order. And the marrow of the jade rabbit will again be combined with the feather of the golden raven.”

“Yet it saddens the Heavens to see that men have forsaken the eternal law in the false light of the conditions of their lives. They have let the fires scorch their own earth. And they have failed to advance the waters. If they did not ignore their women, then they would not be so at fault.”

“Yet if women were as men upon the land, then their temperament would permit no variants of history, and tall tales of war and heroism would not tantalize the minds of humanity. And peace would be like unto the quiet of the womb on earth for all time. Where, then, would the glory of Unification be made, but in perpetuity, whence it would be undifferentiated, and thus unknown?”

20th Chamber

The men of the provinces of Shaolin who were formerly the express slaves of the Overseers of the Masses marched away from their lands and families with satchels full of trading goods, minds vacant of true intent and personal conviction, off toward the City of the Valley and the Court of the good MC.

“I am so excited to be headed back to the City after all these generations,” one said to another.

“And with so much capital with which to make our fortunes. So lucky we are to have been reared in the knowledge of the Merchant and his trade. Where would we be without him and his benevolence?”

“Why, we would be lowly and poor just like the dogs in Shaolin Valley. Though they be

our brothers of past, they have not acquired the skills necessary to lift them out of poverty, as we have. Pity for them. They must learn to pull themselves up by their bootstraps. No one will give them a handout.”

“Golly, what fortune we have! What a caring Master we have had in our Overseer. That even he, in all his success, feels for our low brethren, and has sent us to liberate them. Let us bring these Eases to our people, that the pain of their poverty may be alleviated, and they may set their sights anew upon worldly achievement.”

When the provincials arrived in the City with the pale, loose women of the north upon their arms they were looked upon with contempt and disgust, especially by the women, who knew wherefrom they'd come and what their vile business was. The provincials took pity on this skepticism which they were taught in their schools is known to breed among the poor, loathed, and depraved.

“The earthen women here are jealous of our hot, fiery women, how fair they are, how radiant the hair, like rays of sun,” said one of the provincial men.

“Yes,” said another, “Surely the men here will have enough sense of taste to see how delectable our women are.”

Thus the Earth-Women of the Valley saw to it that the men of the provinces took their ashen devil women far away from their homesteads and into the sullied, unseen places. The men of the Valley pretended not to look as this parade passed in their midst, for they knew that their own good wives looked on them and that they loved their families, yet they knew in their hearts that their virtue and integrity was being corrupted from the very center of their balance.

The provincials conducted their market in the sullied places which they made their whores' houses, wherein their transactions would not be publicly perceived. They peddled the eases in these nooks and in hidden alleys and under the concealment of darkness; and they drew unto them the creeping, secretive men of the Valley, who concealed their newly incited passions even from their wives and children, and their masons and their governors. And the Valley men who had known the House of Masses came to commune there, and in a

kind of wretched solidarity they transacted their transgressions against integrity. Such did the morale of the men of the Valley erode, all under each others' noses. Each thought on their brother without the whorehouse and considered him to be the stronger man, the one who would never go back to the passions of the House of Masses. But as each man relinquished his own responsibility upon the next man, so was there no man left to carry all the deferred weight, and thus did all men go down to their vices, and their women shouldered the burden.

It was not long after that these demoralized citizens influenced the lower members of the clerical government unto their own indulgence. The women knew the deceitfulness of their men, and attempted to hold consul with them.

“We are understanding of the ill which drives you men to indulgence,” said their women to them in their houses. “We care for thee and worry for thy stability. What of thy family and homestead, when thou art out in the public house taking ease? What of thy nation? Will you let it fall in your stead? You are strong, good, and righteous men, capable of holding the earth upon your shoulders, which earth we are, and thou art capable still of being pleased with the weight of it, knowing you are gods and that it is your duty and your wont to do so. Gods do not so falter before these eases. Gods are led not easily astray.”

In the presence of their good and virtuous women, the shame of the men boiled inside them and steamed into hatred of self, which whistled out their kettle-mouths violently, and compelled them to blows against their women.

Thus the Valley went down, and illness fell upon the men, and the clerics at the bottom of the Mountain of Ceremonies saw this, and were helpless against their own addictions. And the deceitful men of the provinces moved swiftly and stealthily among them amassing all their gold; and they crept up the Mountain of Ceremonies spilling the elixir of the true disease, seeping through the City like liquid through a cloth.

“What weak men” one provincial man said to another on his ascent up the Mountain. “They are so idle and lazy. They would rather take advantage of these eases than be like us and make their fortune.”

“Yes! Look upon all the gold I have acquired from them. They so easily part with it that I'd think they like their poverty. To them the condition is delectable. All the better to laden their plates with eases. It is clear that they have no appetite for labor.”

21st Chamber

As the provincials ascended the Mountain, the Ceremonial messengers among these parts sent word to the Fortress of Ceremonies that the Court of Free and Righteous Masons had been compromised by a new infiltration of diseases, and that the men of the Valley had become diseased by the Wackness, and that their families were broken, and that the Ceremonies of Shaolin should prepare for War.

But the good MC said unto them, “Fire in the north begets fire in the South, and scorches the earth. Let us not give increase to these flames. True earth controls true fire, and may channel the waters unto them. Let not we lose our flexibility and our compassion. For as long as our intent is true, then we shall dwell with the Lord in Heaven and in Earth.”

Among the masons was expressed admiration for these words spoken by a true and most good sage who was a hearer of the degrees of God by his Ancestors, and would not be deceived by the folly of the clamor of men. Here was a man close to his mother, and who looked back always toward the waters. And he would not perceive even that the Two Lands were in combat of opposition; only did he maintain their unity in his mind, with eyes closed to the impending storm, and his senses calm as the waters of all their birth. And the masons were led by this example of wisdom, tranquility, and control—ye, the sheer irreverence to the mounting conditions of the world; and they all resolved to take up meditation in the Fortress in silence, until the hoard of devils and their evils had come to pass.

Those who had succumb to the want of ease in the Valley went down to their sickness. The righteous among them called this plague D'evils. Their women, goodly and holy as the Lord had made them, unbending to the fickle winds which sway men, dawned the black robes of the monks

and the bird-shaped masks of doctors and tended to their men, hoping that, as before, the Wackness which consumed them would be exorcised away. And corruption of the morale of the land led this place to be called by the clerks who remained on high in their houses of ease, the Valley of Death.

Some clerks upon the Mountain looked down upon that harrowed place, repented for their own indulgence, and went north to the Fortress of Ceremonies and dwelt in silence among the remaining free and righteous masons and the good Master II of Ceremonies.

The provincials were among them and they had brought the women of the north; and they said unto the clerks who remained among the houses of the Court, “Why enter into the cowardice of your Master? He is an idle fool who sleeps all the day long and takes no pleasure in life. Look at us! We have gold and ease and bitches. These loose women will satisfy your every earthly desire.” And thus many of the clerks forsook their people and their government and went to bed with their own satisfactions.

Some of the clerks looked into the Valley and pitied the diseased, yet looked on high and scolded the MC for failing to take up arms against the merchants yonder, and instead of turning into a woman they turned within themselves and cursed their shame and their disobedience, and took up their own arm, and plunged the elixir within.

22nd Chamber

The Overseer of the Merchants sent his spy unto the City to survey the preparations made there, and the spy saw that the men of the City of the Valley of the Triplex Mountains had become diseased with the Wackness, and D'evils had laid its claim on the land. The women were laden with sorrow and overburdened with the work of their sick mates, and the children were therefore unattended and unfettered. The clerks had been corrupted by addiction to elixirs and communion with whores. The City's governance was thoroughly neglected, for the holy men remained permissive to the vices of their kinsmen, and had isolated themselves in the Fortress of Ceremonies. The Ancestors seemed to have abandoned all providence upon the Land of Shaolin; and the spy took this information back to

the Council of the Merchants of the Provinces, and they received the news and were glad to have heard it.

Upon the delivery of the espionage report the Overseer of the Merchants said, "Send for the Armies of the North from the Kingdom of Fire. Bid them come hither uniformed in their ghostly dress and ranked in their formation, for the City is vulnerable."

And those who would do so were thus dispatched to the North. The Overseer of the Merchants said unto his Council, "The passions of holy men have been provoked and their sinful appetites have been incited and they abandon the decrees of their Ancestors; therefore do their Ancestors abandon them, and revoke from them their goodly spirits; and therefore we shall have our day in the World, and obtain the fertile and exalted Lands of Shaolin, and no longer will we dwell upon scorched earth, but have infinite resources given unto us, both for our consumption and our sale to the Kingdoms of Metal and Wood and Water, and we shall maintain a market all across the Earth ripe for our commerce."

And the Merchants in Council were glad to hear these words.

Meanwhile, in the Fortress of Ceremonies, the Sovereign and the remainder of goodly clerks and Holy, Free, and Righteous Masons of the Valley were congregated in holy silence. The women of the Valley and the Lower Mountain of Ceremonies governed what few affairs were left in the City, and those in the high and holy place remained isolated from the populace.

The consciousness of one amongst these inert minds then stirred and he withdrew himself from the Inner Life and looked among the Court at the holy men who were no longer of the world, and asked unto them,

"What good is this to thy selves if thou doth maintain goodness at the expense of thy kin? Our people lie below in the Valley dying."

One among them also broke his meditation and answered, "Our brothers have forsaken the ways of our Ancestors. So we have forsaken them. Their poisoned minds will no longer receive the hearing of our good words."

And the one said unto him, "But we shall perish in solitude on these heights. Our land is

vulnerable and our brothers need us. Surely those devils who we have cast away plot their return upon us. They will kill our weak and diseased bothers below, and the women and children, and should we remain up here in our silence, so we shall be an accomplice to the destruction of our nation and we shall be slain down."

"But the law of our Ancestors says that we shall not kill," said the other.

"Our Ancestors have forsaken the Land of Shaloin," replied the one, "because their laws have been breeched by man; and we no longer maintain order, nay, we have not for scores of generations; and so spirits of disorder have multiplied among us, facilitating our demise and our disease. How could our Ancestors return among us in this state to administer order when no one follows law, and the people of the Land are no longer purely of their descendent? This is no longer the Land or populace over which our Ancestors have dominion, though it may have been. They reside on high, quite above we; nay, we are not so high, but of the earth, and the degenerated plane of man. We have wrought disease and allowed the perpetuation of disorder, and we have forsaken our women and our children. So no holy law governs here; nay, it shan't until man has righted his conscious and exalted his mother and child and has freed himself from the diseases and D'evils. So how are we to do it?"

The other brother thought well on this, and there were those among them who had broken their concentration on the inner world to take heed of these words. "Well, war is nigh upon us. What shall we do in face of that?"

"Ye, war is upon us. So we must respond. This is no time for law, for there are among us those who heed no law. The Land is forsaken. The Ancestors look down from on high and see the challenge that we face, and they bless us, for we have brought it upon ourselves. We have not weeded our gardens. Now we are entangled. We must take up the scythe. We are alone responsible, and must take up our arms."

There were brothers among him who heard him and did not stir; the good MC heard him and was proud and yet did not move from his noble and lawful position; and there were those among him who were moved by his words, and forthwith they rose and all went out of the hall.

23rd Chamber

The band of willful and determined clerks and masons went out of the Fortress of the Good MC and went into the armory and suited themselves to their purpose; and they dressed in the ceremonial black robes of Ceremonies, and they dawned their hoods and raised up the standard of Shaolin Island, Kingdom of Earth, and they marched down the Mountain of the Fortress of Ceremonies. As they passed the dwellings on the side of the Mountain wherein the corrupted clerks and the enabling intruders from the provinces indulged in the disease and sullied in the Wackness and despair of hope, they called unto them, “War is upon us, brothers; those who are in good mind to, come, we have ample arms, and need yours to carry them.”

The brothers heard these words and felt the call of their incarnate Ancestors marching to effect the remedy of all their woes, which violence they had incurred upon themselves in their disobedience and their patronization of unholy goods. And they were moved so; and some of them were well enough in body and in mind, not yet succumb to the fetters of the Wackness, and they went out and joined the cause; and some of them whose minds were thoroughly laden with poison remained behind in their sick-beds, yet knew true guilt.

The Order of the Knights of Shaolin marched through the Valley of Death calling out for the support of their able brothers. Yet the men here were thoroughly inhibited by disease. So it was that those who worked in the barren fields, heads cloaked in black hoods, faces and bodies unseen below the robes, figures androgynous to mere sight, took their hoe and scythe and tool from the reaping of the land and drew them up in arms and joined the marches—yes, many of these concealed women left their men behind in the houses of the sick with the dog-faced doctors who wrapped the decaying bodies of the dying in their bandages; and the young women and children and bird-faced doctors who also remained tended to their ill fathers.

The Knights of Shaolin marched out of the City of Ceremonies to confront their occupied provinces. Wheresoever they came upon the plantations of the merchants where their brothers

were shackled to labor in the field and their sisters were kept up in brothels, they slaughtered the overseers and the merchants and all the foreigners, and liberated their brothers and sisters, who gladly took up the available arms and went forward with their kinsfolk to the Cause. They traveled to the west.

The Devil's Armies docked on the Northern shores, with more fleets pouring in. The dispatchers of the Overseer of Merchants navigated the soldiers of Fire's Empire from the barren Kingdom of Kings, across the waters, and upon the Holy Country of Shaolin Island. So many dense formations came forth from the scorched land. This army was known in that land as the Invisible Empire. Its members were towering, ghostly ghouls whose white, ashen heads tapered at points on high like pyramids, and whose eyes were beady and black, and whose long, translucent, flowing, white gowns floated over the land without any human appendages as they went forth to siege the dark, rich, and fertile Land of God.

The Earth Army of the Knights from the City approached the Fire Army of the light, white devils in the plantation of the Overseer of Merchants and his Council at ninety-degrees. The Army of Shaolin was the first to seize the occupied land and they laid waste to the merchants there, and there was much blood running through the soil. The Overseer of the Merchants withdrew behind the advancing avant-garde of the Invisible Empire. As the noble and brave people of Shaolin were engaged in slaughtering the merchants of the province, the Invisible Empire advanced upon them and slew them all. So much blood stained the land that the river which flowed uphill to the Mountain of Shaolin Abbey ran red as cinnabar.

24th Chamber

The Ancestors in the Abbey on the Mountain of the Uphill-Running-River looked upon the evening redness coming from the west. The Abbot said amongst them, “War has come. Our descendants will perish at the hands of the very disorder which they have allowed to perpetuate upon our holy land. Will we allow this?” And it was put to a vote and deliberated.

Meanwhile, in the Valley below, the

Overseer of Merchants as Commander-General of the Invisible Empire had led his evil Army from the Western Provinces into the City. These hoards passed among the houses of the sick and diseased men and the nursing women and the doctors in their bird masks and dog masks, and the little children, all of whom looked on in awe, and they were spared from death, for they were weak, and the Wackness was soon to claim them.

And the Wackness retarded the actions of the clerks upon the base of the Mountain of Ceremonies, and they too allowed the ghostly armies of the Overseer-Merchant-General to pass upon their lands and toward the Fortress of their once-honorable Ceremonies.

And the holy men on high in the Fortress of Ceremonies heard the approach of the armies, and the feeble among them, newly made known of their discontent, forthwith abandoned all their meditation and cried, "Our brothers in arms have failed. If only we had listened!"

And others among them said, "Nay, if only we had slaughtered these foreigners when they had first come upon us, and had denied the consumption and sale of their diseases!"

But the good MC remained centered on his Inner Life and ignored the world, content to be an example of faith until the last.

The Merchant-General laid siege to the Fortress of Ceremonies. The good Master of Ceremonies was taken effortlessly out of the hall by the ghouls of the Invisible Empire, and the remaining clerks there trembled with fear and withheld from retaliation. Those who revolted were slain, and the General who had been Overseer of all the Merchants who had built all the Gates of the City and peddled all the diseases unto the people, who had come forth into the City as a foreign babe and put to work in the iron mines and the smithy, and who had made it his duty to cripple the people of the Holy Land and to extract from them all their worldly value, took up the Throne of Ceremonies in the Hall of the Fortress upon the Mountain of the Body-Politic of the Kingdom of Earth of Shaolin.

The Fortress fell to the conqueror, and he was known as the Wack Master of Ceremonies.

The vote on high yonder Mountain was passed and the Decree was delivered unto the Land of Shaolin: the Order of the 36 Chambers of Life

and Death descended upon the City and depleted the armies of the Invisible Empire. They moved like water over the scorched earth, washing away D'evils with their Swordstyle.

The Wack MC and his hoards proceeded to occupy their own unique channel: that of fire. The great, powerful, and consuming force of the Invisible Empire resurged and blinded and dissolved the Order of the 36 Chambers. Every Ancestor was cast from his and her peer to battle alone the terrors of the Wack Master in all the corners of Shaolin.

In the North, Maximillion employed all of his genius in his attack upon the Empire, zigging and zagging and zigging and zagging through the hoards of the ghouls, and he was most cunning with the Tiger Style, yet the Ghost Face Ghouls still slayed him;

In the West, Shallah Rae K'won the Chef destroyed the ghouls of the Empire with her flick-of-the-wrist style, and she dealt rocks-style and spit crack-stye, yet she was slain by them;

In the East, the High Chieftess killed so many of the ghostly soldiers that she was known as the Shaolin Master Killer, and she was relentless in her defense, yet at length she was slain;

In the South, the Rebel Inspectah, employed the rolling-fingers technique, and was valiant, yet he also was slain;

In the North-west, the Woman with the Golden Arms used her lucky-hands-style, and her quick-as-silver motions dazzled the Empire in the dark nights of many battles, and in time her endurance waned, and she was slain;

In the South-east, Shakwon the Iron Lung was a fearless young shadow-boxer with a blazing method, and she was victorious in many battles, and in her appointed season she was slain;

In the Center, Osirus the Old Dirty Bastard fought valiantly along-side the Abbot with great skill, employing the Wu-tang Swordstyle and the Shaolin Shadow Boxing with ease and harmony, but they were overcome, and they retreated; yet no one saw their blood run from them; their whereabouts were lost;

In the Round, Tony Stark the Wallabee Kingpin slayed the ghost-faced ghouls with all the vengeance of his people, so merciless, relentless, and passionate was his massacre of them.

Thus we entered into the Fall of Our Year.

25th Chamber

Before the siege of Ceremonies in the Fall of Our Year, a boy the color of pure lead ore was born in the Valley of Death. At this time, the House of the Masses had been consumed by the fog of the fury of the Lord, and the Merchant of Gates, as he was then known, had just been excommunicated from the City by the newly coronated good Master II of Ceremonies. The boy's father was a free and righteous mason who was firmly established upon his land by his goodly wife; and this family lived together in love and happiness, free from the tyranny of addiction to ease as was common among the men of the Valley. The man worked hard the day long so that his wife would be free to establish the House and Womb of their posterity.

Their son was born to them, and he was reared to be honest and hard-working by his mother, for he remained in admiration of his father, and he was dutiful in the field and in the kitchen. Ye did his father sow the seeds of a free-minded mason in his rich black soil, deep in the core of his heart; ye did his mother till his earth with the moral tools of Life and Death, faithfully as they were passed down from the Ancestors from generations passed, and she instilled within her son the reverence of them that dwelt on high. The boy was strengthened and established by these initiations. Said the Mother unto her son on many occasions after his work in the field was done and he was in the kitchen cooking for his father,

"You do not matter alone, but are equally in Spirit. Therefore let the content of thy heart be at peace with the soft white light of the Lord which burns all through thee, yet which consumes not, but enlivens and gladdens thy very being. Thy matter is not mere dust, nor is that to which you tend in the earth with your own fleshen father. Would mere matter alone, mechanical and altogether dead, void of energy and life, receive with such benevolence thy seeds, and offer up to thee in nine-fold good and patient time the fruit of thy offspring for the nourishment of thy belly and soul? Nay, nor any human woman. For which is greater, the labor which thou makest to tend the earth, or that labor which the earth expendeth to make thee? It is the

labor of thy mind which thou expendest to conceive of God, or the labor which the earth endured to conceive thee? Truly these are the scales which are set upon thy balance, and when their reciprocity is in harmony then thy order may be righteous. Tend with gentle care all earths in which ye dwell, for thou art the spirit of the Lord therein. Think it not the ground below, but the very flesh of thee gathered up around thy balanced center, wherein the spirit of the Lord doth take up house like fire in its place to warm and invigorate a space. Be ye the receptacle of the Lord; thou art his masculine seed as much as thou art thy mother's earth; in form you represent the latter, and in spirit the former. Clear may it be to ye that thy form is like the dust which is merely an emblem for the life it containeth, just as I am an emblem for thy own birth and life, and we are all but the fixed and visible emblems of the binary which is unified in heaven, which unification of these Two Lands the Lord would have, yet which diseased men thwart daily in their bodies; misguidance is a down-slope, my dear boy. Thwart not that which the Lord doth desire; therefore indulge not in thy passions that thou mayest instigate them; seek not ease through this flesh for in that thou shalt sow disease; and heed ye the words of thy Ancestors:

"Thou art kem and kin of God, solid light he made crystalize dense in color to keep the full spectrum of his pure white light's illumination intact when in the flesh of earth; to transmit to the granules of the dust of his pure spirit all the decrees he sought of thee. He did decree his sediments to live as he upon the earth and marry the Two Lands, he the one, the other the fair earth, which partner he doth adore and pour into all his vigor the day's length and again tomorrow. He hast sown thee in his maiden's flesh, and thou has risen up the land like bread and come forth from between thy goodly parents. Therefore let thy heart be content with his desires and the Law which the Ancestors have passed down to thee, O descendant one, that thou may'st truly matter and be forever in his favor."

26th Chamber

These good words of his Mother the son did heed, and he was fed upon them; perpetually was his belly full. He grew up large in stature and girth,

unusually distinctive of countenance, strong-featured and domineering of appearance—for his face and indeed all his flesh was so dense with dark granules of that lead which is known as the best container of heavenly light—yet all the same handsome and impressive to his own loving parents.

The youth took up apprenticeship with his father and other men of the Valley, for he was eager in his learning, being so inclined from early age, and he acquired the knowledge of iron smelting, woodworking, limestone quarrying, boat-building, and many other trades; yet his favorite among these was the art of acoustics and harmonics, which coupled with all transmutations of matter in which he was engaged; which skill of refinement he used when he hollowed wood, fashioned metal units and latches, and wound and tuned metal string to the adequate vibration. There began his habit of making all tools according to its proper frequency, that it would be most holy in its disposition. Long had men perceived innocent inanimate things put to evil use—as gates to section off the country and divide the Two Lands. Under the good MC, the son said to himself, admiring this principled demagogue, would instruments be repurposed for the revelation of the Lord on earth. Thus he fashioned instruments of both music and labor which rang out beautifully with the strikes of men and women in their respective employments; and due to his skill and diligence the Valley resonated at all times with a soothing melody.

He entered into his mother's kitchen one eve where his father was enjoying her company after a day of labor, and said unto them, “Parents, the goodly harmony of the spheres makes itself apparent to me and fills me with passionate ambition. Think I that the world needs tuning. Men are sick from disease, which illness is know to be alleviated by proper frequencies. Therefore I wish to bring the gift of harmony to the Land of Shaolin. May I enterer into the public service of the City under employment of the good Master of Ceremonies of this our Kingdom of Shaolin?”

These words rang out from the son to the sheer delight of his parents, and they blessed him on his sojourn and future apprenticeship.

The son walked up the Mountain of the Fortress of Ceremonies past the hillside homes of the clerks of the Ceremonies of Shaolin Island and into the Fortress itself. The clerks looked upon the son with astonishment, for in his stature and color he was in all point of fact utterly menacing in appearance, yet the grace of his gait and aura filled his observers with such awe.

He approached the Fortress of Ceremonies where the Gate had once been and was no longer, and he entered therein. Entered he through the grand foyer past the benevolent ministers and guards of the good MC who maintained receptivity in his court, and the son entered into the receiving hall and was among the clerks who were speechless when they perceived him, and he came upon the most noble and good Master II of Ceremonies and prostrated himself before his Majesty.

Said he unto the MC, “Come I as a poor boy from the Valley of Life and Death into thy presence. I am my Father's son. I am my Mother's Love perceived. Sublimate I and I before the favor of thy Majesty. Seek I entry into thy righteous employment. True of Speech am I. Harmony is my craft. Goodly music do I engineer. Ye do I wish to bring the sounds which ring in the heavenly spheres in the Celestial Empire down to this goodly earth.”

The ears of the good MC were made glad to hear this, and he received the boy into the Service of the Royal Musicianship of the DJ of Ceremonies. Two conditions did he make unto the son: The first was that the boy must construct a Royal Synthesizer and thereupon play his music only, for it was his duty to construct the proper instrument by which he could discern the resonance of the heavens and transmit them down to earth. The second was that he must conceal his very black face, for it had thus far instilled complete awe-filled retardation in his viewers, causing them to forgo their actions, and forget themselves and their posts altogether. It is like as the Lord must clothe himself in flesh when he walks among men on earth. Yet, his holy countenance notwithstanding, the good MC perceived great fortune in the boy's skill and

appearance, and found great favor in him. The son was exalted in the Court, and, indeed, it would have been unwise for the MC to allow him to wield his foreboding powers of harmony independently. Therefore the Master placed his son upon his center; thence from him all the truth of his voice may emanate in all even directions. Sound, as everyone in the Valley knows, is the prelude of material manifestation.

The son was given the Ceremonial garb of the heavy, draping, floor-length black cloak, ties knotted with golden tassels hanging from the waist, and he was given quarter in the highest tower. There the son constructed the Royal Synthesizer from the natural resources of the Valley and the Provinces, and it was most well engineered—each of the 72 iron strings tightly wound in copper coil and strung to its proper tone in the nine octaves, so that when struck by the mallet of a key it would resonate with the frequencies of all spheres of heaven and conduct the waves of the Celestial Source down to earth—and he practiced upon it day and night and evoked the most heavenly music, and in time he began to play for the Royal Guests at his Lord's bequest, and he was fulfilled.

Concealed within his black cloak, his hood shadowing his black dome, the son let his heavy fingers land on the ivory keys and beheld the most powerful vibration anyone had ever heard emanate from a man. It was truly a most awe-full sound. The MC perceived the opportunity in this great talent of the son to instil rapture in the hearers and onlookers of his personage and its effect upon the waves of the air.

The son became an adept Musician, and every New Phase the good MC held concerts to mark his continued reign. He would invite all of his countrymen, friends, and enemies from the Five Kingdoms of the Terrestrial Empire to the Island of Shaolin, and seat them in the Amphitheater of the Fortress of Ceremonies and allow the son to play for them the most impassioned and vigorous music anyone had ever endured on earth. The weight of the bass of the son's fingers on the ivory keys on the stone frame of the Royal Synthesizer made quake the very plates of the earth. These dark concerts were like listening to a star collapse upon itself, engulfing its own flames. This pleased the MC, and caused his illspeakers great anxiety. The

MC soon came to love the son as his own, and he fashioned a pair of metal fingers for the son to place over his real ones with the effect of producing an even more terrible music. The plan was a great success, and from that point on the son was known throughout the Five Kingdoms as Metalfingers.

Fourth Quarter

28th Chamber

In the appointed time of the revolution of the Wheel which spins in Heaven, the Wack MC usurped the throne of Ceremonies, and The Genius was slain; and Shallah Rae K'won the Chef was slain; and the High Chieftess was slain; and the Rebel Inspectah was slain; and the Golden Arms was slain; and the Iron Lung was slain; and the good MC was hung in the gallows; and this season was called the Fall of Our Year.

The Ancestor Tony Stark found himself alone at war against the Invisible Empire, yet he was not afraid. He used a sword of indestructible carbon which was forged in the smithy at the center of the Earth and he swung with great vigor in the midst of the Empire's pyramid-headed Ghost-faced Ghouls. He slay them at the foot of the Mountain of the Uphill-running River where they stood guard on the outskirts of the Valley. The Wack MC had appointed these Ghouls to police the Valley and slay any monk who resisted his Wack Power. The Ancestor Tony Stark avenged the many murdered citizens of the Valley and of the Kingdom, and the monks of the Valley were grateful to him. The monks watched him battle the Empire solo, and they sent forth their energies to strengthen him. The Ancestor prevailed over the white knights of the North, but not without resistance. At times, the blinding whiteness of the Ghost-faced Ghouls was too much for the eyes of the Ancestor to bear, and he would be forced to retreat up the Mountain until he had regained his strength. The monks of the Valley observed this inconvenience, which allowed the Ghouls to come upon the Valley and wreak havoc in the absence of the Warrior Ancestor. Therefore, the monks made for their Ancestor a mask of black diamonds to absorb and harmonize the blinding white light of the Ghost Face Ghouls.

They left it where the Ancestor was known to meditate when he was not engaged in war with the ghouls. In true time the Ancestor Tony Stark came upon it and received it graciously, and he dawned the mask, and thenceforth he was known as the Ghost Face Killer.

Under his cloak of darkness, his face concealed by his mask of night, the black Knight floated through the wood at the foot of Every Mountain and depleted the armies of the Invisible Empire in droves, and the Monks of the Valley were pleased, and the Ancestors who dwelt on high in the Court of the Lord God the Son were pleased. Yet the Old Dirty Bastard and the Abbot remained wholly unaccounted for.

Black-robed monks bore incense and sage through the mounds of the carnage of the sick, the diseased deceased. The monks wore black cloths on their faces to protect them from the toxic ethers, for the stench of the bodies of the decayed and dying men filled the Valley of Death. Plague Doctors walked among them, dressed in leather coats and bird-beaks filled with herbs. They called this plague D'evils. One contracted it from the corrupted fluid of disease, and one then turned to fluid slowly, such that decaying mounds of the sick slowly melted and molded into one Dead Body. Those who were not mound up in the Dead, but who were dying in their sick-beds, slowly dissolved from within, and the dog-faced doctors came unto them to wrap their bodies in bandages so that they would not fall apart; and the bandages were scented with precious oils to diminish the scent of the dying; and those who finally dissolved from their life were taken out into the Valley and piled up in the mounds to be taken out of the City. At the outlying planes of Shaolin Island, far from the City of the Mountains, there is a place where the bodies are piled, and it has reached the heights of the Triplex Mountains beyond. They call this mound The Dead. It is traveled in even cycles to take the yield of bodies out of the City.

The whereabouts of the Old Dirty Bastard had remained obscure during the Fall; then word emerged among the people that he suffered from the Wackness and was bedridden in a sick house in the Valley of Death. Coinciding with the spread of this news, the Abbot reappeared in the City, and he met the Ghost Face Killer in the house where the

Old Dirty Bastard was enduring the final stages of decomposition. They oversaw the dog-faced doctor as he wrapped Osirus's body in bandages; and the bird-faced plague doctor spoke the words of power to stabilize the condition of the dying Ancestor. A brotherhood of monks comprising an Order known as the Killa Bee Assassins presided beside the last two fully-living members of the 36 Chambers as they prayed over their kinsman. The monks harkened to a time when the Abbot ruled the Land as Master of Ceremonies, way back in the ancient times. Then, they would not have had to live so long in disease.

The Abbot responded that the Wack MC had effectively taken control of the Land and that the armies of the 36 Chambers had been badly damaged from the evils of disease and the Wackness.

The Monks replied unto how lamentable it was, and the Abbot said that they were living in the season for such degeneration, disorder, and corruption. In even time, he said, their savior would come, and this cycle would pass. The Ghost Face Killer was sullen and silent.

"What makes your heart so heavy that your mouth is kept silent?" asked the Abbot to the Killer.

Shaken from his hypnosis, the Ghost Face Killer said, "This War is most destructive and demoralizing. How I wish it were that the Wackness had not infiltrated our Kingdom. But, alas, created the conditions for its generation, and we have allowed it to proliferate. No more! We can no longer permit the Invisible Empire to wreak havoc on our lands. I will avenge the deaths of all all my brothers and sisters. The Shaolin Shadowboxing and the Wu-Tang Swordstyle will not falter in my hands. I will eradicate the ghost-faces!" The Ghost Face Killer became enraged and left the House and disappeared into the adjacent wood.

"All Empires Fall according to their season," said the Abbot. "The Meek will once again inherit the earth."

The spirit of the Old Dirty Bastard ascended into the House of the Lord that very evening. His body was not taken to the Dead like the rest of the deceased. The Abbot, instead, directed a committee of Killa Bees to dismember him and bury his

fourteen constituent parts in fourteen different locations on the Island of Shaolin, and to build shrines atop them, so that his power and wisdom would be sown in the Land during this dark Fall, to be generated in the fertile earth, and to burst forth anew with blossoming vigor at the season whence such things are known to occur.

29th Chamber

Metalfingers was in the employment of the good MC II when the Invisible Empire was advancing upon the Fortress of Ceremonies; and when the good MC withdrew from the world with his clerks in the Hall of the Fortress and the Knights went out to the war, Metalfingers grieved for Shaloin in his quarters, and played a melancholy melody which filled the City with sorrow; and when the Overseer of the Merchants usurped the throne of Ceremonies and took the good MC without the Fortress, Metalfingers knew not what to do, and remained within, bereaved.

Under the reign of the newly coronated Wack Master of Ceremonies, Metalfingers was left without a mentor, confused, and lonely. Where was the holiness and goodness which he had sought in the employ of the Good MC? Gone and eradicated under the strong arm of the Wack MC. The army of Ghost-faced Ghouls patrolled the halls of the Fortress of Ceremonies. All of the clerks of the old Order lived and worked in fear. Metalfingers kept himself to his room playing dark music on the Royal Synthesizer in silence. He was allowed the freedom to roam the Fortress when he so desired, for the Wack MC perceived the same profit in the ally of this boy, now a towering seven-foot-tall man, which appealed to the Late MC. Yet Metalfingers was not allowed to play his holy music, for it was an unbearable nuisance upon the consciousness of the Wack Council.

The Wack MC entered into confidence with the melancholy son, and presented himself as a friend to him when the son was in his most depressed states of mind. It came to transpire that Metalfingers held council with the Wack Master on every week of the Fall of Our Year.

Under Nightfall, Metalfingers left the Fortress and wandered the base of the Mountains in desolation and confusion. He knew that he was

supposed to despise the Wack MC for killing his Master and Ancestors, but he felt compelled to tell anyone at all who would hear him what he was feeling, for his agony was so great. His priests were all deceased and the practice of his faith was illegal. The only person in his vicinity whom he could impose his thoughts upon was the very man who had yolked from him his identity. And so oftener and oftener he forced himself to withhold his expression from council with his mortal adversary; yet this accumulating aggression grew inside him. He was constantly at odds with his memory while he remained in the House of his enemy, so at nights he passed therefrom into the darkness of his past.

He went in search of his parents but he was told that they were displaced during the Invisible Empire's occupation of the Valley. He was devastated. D'evils of his homeland and the fury in his heart for his loss stirred a tempest in him. He found himself in frequent fits of rage, in which he would strike out with his clinched metal fingers and obliterate whatever lay in their path.

During one of Metalfingers' wanderings he came upon a man at the foot of the Mountain of Uphill-Running-River. The stranger was dressed in a black robe with modest gold embroidery, and wore sandals on his uncalled feet. A tuft of nappy hair sat tied upon his otherwise shaven head. His countenance was marked by deep valleys and steep cliffs which cast off shadows running down his face. His expression was the most sublime in all the Kingdom. His hands were cupped behind him, and from his waist hung a length of twine attached to a sword in its sheath. The man looked into Metalfingers's soul for some period of silence.

Then the stranger spoke: "You have held frequent council with the enemy, young Metalfingers. You must amend your ways and avenge your One True Master. This alliance between you and the Wack MC is fated to fail. He will take advantage of you; it is in his nature as a ghost-faced merchant. Remain among your own, Killa Bee."

Metalfingers at once recognized the legendary personage which stood before him. He dropped to his knees and responded: "Teach me, O Abbot, as you taught your kin. Show me the Way of the Wu." Therefore, knowing that the practice of

the Dark Arts was forbidden under the reign of the Wack MC, Metalfingers held private council with the Abbot in the woods at the foot of the Mountain of Uphill-Running River in the Fall of Our Year, studying and practicing the Holy Black Arts for which he had longed ever since he was a youth.

Metalfingers indulged this secret mutiny all throughout the Fall of Our Year, absorbing the arts of Shaolin Shadowboxing and the Wu Tang Swordstyle. During their training, the Abbot mapped the rise and fall of empires, that the young Warrior may learn the trends of time and join with them in the Wu-Wei, and all of this built up the methodologies and mythologies and ideologies and pedagogies that Metalfingers used in his living. And his inner life indeed did flourish—while outside his people continued to perish from D'evils.

Metalfingers asked the Abbot one early morn before the Kingdom had awoken: “In my pursuit of Holy Living I have absorbed the beneficial Wei of the Wu, learned the fighting style of action without action, eternal being, and integrity; but what of my people, who cannot even settle for Holy Dying, but vulgar perishing at the hands of their enemies. Look--they are amassed in a carcass mountain. There's no nobility in that kind of burial. And the Wack MC flagrantly ignores our needs. Yet if I were to contest him then I would surely perish by his sword, or else be cast back into the Valley of Death where I would be of no help to my people and possibly perish as well from the Wackness. How do I help my people in their living from my post in the Fortress?”

And the Abbot said unto him: “Do not feel enclosed by your Fortress on the hill when your people lie below in the Valley dying. You are here now, are you not? You are fallen unto those you seek to save, and in Holy Dying you shall all ascend far above Any Mountain. Know that in the midst here on our solid ground D'evils will come in many forms and gain a footing, and it does not distinguish between the Valley and the Peak. But in our year of Holy Dying the ground will open up and swallow D'evils, and the Hunger will fill the Belly of the Sick and the Dead evermore with the carcass of Time, and, borne down then, into the waters below the firmament where we shall sink, we shall ascend again unto the waters above. And the Two Lands of Heaven and earth will again be

as one. And we shall be in the Way. We are out of the way now, here in our bodies under our Time, but in Holy Dying all will return to be in the Way.”

And Metalfingers said unto the Abbot: “But I want my people to know Holy Living. You have taught me how to be in the Way here in body, so that I do not have to wait for death to transcend. You yourself have lived in the Way in body for innumerable cycles of generations. How can I bring my people to a common state of consciousness?”

And the Abbot said unto him: “Learn your people well, young Metalfingers, but know that many cannot comprehend this Living of ours. You must not force understanding; you must sweat it and let your students, should they thirst so, lick your pores.”

With this knowledge Metalfingers spent more time in the Valley of Death when not employed by the Wack MC. He dawned a hooded black robe in solidarity with the Killa Bees whenever he was without the jurisdiction of the Fortress, and he commenced walking among the Dead, among the sick houses of his people, and he presided over the diseased and the doctors, and he conveyed his respect and reverence with his presence. The monks and Killa Bees of the Valley came to know the personage of this concealed man, for they understood that he represented the Order of Life and Death although he wielded no sword. When he lay his metal fingers on the shoulders of the plague doctors during the treatment of the Sick, and assisted the dog-faced doctors in the wrapping of the dying, all in attendance knew it to be a Holy Communion. Though as the monks did look so on his presence so did the Ghouls of the Invisible Empire notice the appearance of this new sage figure among the people. They observed how he moved across the lands with great effortlessness and led the people to a state of peace previously unheard of under D'evils. His influence was to be feared and his identity soon revealed.

On some nights in Our Year during the Late Fall, monks meditating on D'evils and the Wackness at the foot of the Mountain of the Sixteen Bars saw the dark Knight—his black cloak flowing behind him, his black-diamond face shimmering in the light of the Ghost-faces—glide as if on air through the wood with his sword in the

ready position, laying blade to any and all Ghost Faces on the Valley perimeter. He was the Ghost Face Killer and he made his people proud.

30th Chamber

A query arose in the mind of the Wack Master of Ceremonies one cold morning in the very late Fall of Our Year. He beckoned Metalfingers to his chamber and asked him, "To whom do you pledge your allegiances, Metalfingers?"

Metalfingers responded, "Long live the Wack Master..." He paused, knowing that he should say no more, but he was compelled by his heart to go on: "But ... I grieve for my people."

The Wack Master said unto him, "Grieve not for the sickly; Nature's course will bear them into Heaven in their Death, and that is not lamentable but indeed noble; generational squalor in the Valley of Death has only naturally yielded the slow ends of these people. Let them go and remain, yourself, among the highest, that at least one bloodline of this infected capillary system may run clean and into a new heart.

Sullen, Metalfingers said, "Yes, Master," and he departed the chamber.

The Wack MC was satisfied with this response for the moment, though he retained some distaste for the weakness which he perceived in Metalfingers' sense of empathy.

Metalfingers did not return to the Abbot that evening, fearing the suspicions of the Wack Master. Neither did he go down to the Valley of Death to console the sick. In his absence, a certain living persisted among the people of the Valley, and the monks and the Killa Bees set up shrines in his place in the sick houses where the dying awaited their fate. The Invisible Empire came upon the monks then with unprecedented haste in the absence of the mysterious sage, and the old men and women viewed this as an omen of the coming frost, that the cold whiteness was beginning to close in on the warm darkness of their eternal wombs. The elders of the Killa Bees beckoned forth the Abbot that night and asked him of this disturbance, what did the Invisible Empire seek among them, where had the mystery sage gone and when would he return to console them in their sickness and oppression?

The Abbot said unto them: "Fear not, for the Wack MC does not fear the diseased or the deceased, but the living, those imbued with the practice of Holy Living. For now, remain in squalor and unseen. Yet follow the silent words of your sage and, when his season comes, rise against the Powers and the Systems; but be weary, for the body will not survive the ascent."

The Killa Bees replied: "Our bodies are soon to perish; let their last act be a noble one. Let us act in our favor and stage our sovereignty from Systems."

And the Abbot said unto them: "Act not, but run with the current like the river up-mountain. And if you seek sovereignty, let it then be so willed and borne from the sea. I will tell your sage king."

31st Chamber

The next day in the Wack Master's chamber the Wizard of the Invisible Empire approached his Wack Master and spoke: "The ground is shifting and splitting beneath us; the sea seeks to sink us; O Master, the Dead are rising, the marks in the Valley are wizening up. Insurgency is imminent, and the presence of this new sage warrior is the catalyst. Our Ghouls have seen him in common with them, extending some gesture of grief or empathy. He moves under cloak and guise like those of the old Order. He must be stopped, his people put down, and his armies dismantled entirely."

The Wack Master replied: "What armies? They've organized?"

The Wizard said: "There is the one who rides on the wind in the woods laying sword to our soldiers in the moonlight."

"Yes," the Wack Master said, "The Ghost Face Killer, the last known Knight of the Order of the 36 Chambers of Death. We are aware of his presence, of course, though we dare not admit that we have been imprudent to slay him. Go and make it a priority, O Wizard. And the other terrorist, the sage in the Valley of Death, make his price known throughout the Kingdom. Decapitate this mutiny and bury the body."

The Wizard replied then: "But sir, we would merely be amputating the limbs of this beast."

The Wack MC inquired into his meaning, and the Wizard said: “We know the swordstyle of the Ghost Face Killer to be that of the Wu Tang. He moves with the grace of the Shadow. Yet still, Master, we see the same movement in the mysterious sage; he and the Ghost Face Killer have been learning in kind. This can only mean one thing, for the Ghost Face Killer has been preoccupied with the depletion of our armies long time; thus he has not had the time to train a pupil. The Abbot, then, must remain alive within our Kingdom, O Master, and he is rebuilding his army.”

The Wack MC mused sullenly on this, and he said: “If what you say is true, the Shaolin and the Wu Tang could become dangerous ... hah! do they think their Wu Tang sword can defeat me?”

The decree was thus passed down from the Mountain of the Fortress of Ceremonies that the Ghost Face Killer was to be captured by the Invisible Empire and hung in the river gallows where the water current runs up-mountain; the unknown sage in the Valley of Death had a bounty placed on his head to be paid to the most gruesome hunter; and the Abbot was to be captured and brought before the Wack Master. Furthermore, no Killa Bee could wield their black hood and cloak nor practice the Dark Arts in any way lest death befall them, and the Dead must now be buried without ceremony. All insubordination would be met with the swiftest persecution, and the numbers of the Invisible Empire would be increased to more oppressively oversee among the people. Thus marked the beginning of the Winter of Our Year.

32nd Chamber

The Wack Master’s Invisible Empire of Ghost-faced Ghouls commenced to occupy the homes of the monks and the Doctors and the sick in the Valley of Death. Those who followed the creed of the Killa Bees were stripped of their garments and relics and condemned to faithlessness lest no belief enter into them again. Scores of Bees who resisted and ignored the decree were hung in the river gallows by a *kuklos* at their necks. The scattered swarm was so weakened, that now the people of the Valley suffered spiritually as well as physically, and faltered in their observances of the

protocols of Holy Living and Holy Dying. The Ghouls closely surveilled the people. To each black body a white shadow followed.

In the wood, the Ghost Face Killer expanded his assault, but he proved to be only one man, and the numbers of the Ghost-faces increased among him. He withdrew further and further up the Mountain of the Sixteen Bars away from the advance of the Ghost Face army.

The Abbot eluded the grasp of the Invisible Empire. On nights when the first chills of Winter blew in, he could be seen pacing along the dirt roads of the Valley, prostrating before the mounds of the frigid Dead, and raising his head to some sought-after savior—looking, in fact, toward the Mountain of the Fortress of Ceremonies; and his people looked upon him, weary.

Metalfingers had contained himself to his chamber since the apprehensions of the Wack MC came to surface. He feared for his safety after having heard the decrees, but he was bereaved in his heart that he could not go down to the Valley to be with his people. He sat at a desk in his room at which he had been, in his spare time, constructing a MIDI keyboard for his private use from the discarded remnants of royal instruments. There, he let his heavy fingers on the pads and beheld the somber samples of the voices of the void and the silence of the sea and the wind that rustles in dry leaves. He was comforted only slightly by this private performance.

He mused to himself at an open window, looking down upon the Valley of Death, “This silent apprenticeship is trying on a man of true compassion. My skill wastes away here in the upper chambers of Ceremonies. Truly, I wish to play the cosmic fugues for my people; their audience is infinitely more worthy, yet where are they now? In the Valley dying.”

One late night while at this post, the Abbot came unto Metalfingers through his open window in the Fortress of the Wack Master of Ceremonies. Metalfingers spun around hastily and in fear—not in fear of the coming of the sage unto him, but for the safety of both their persons should the Wack MC be made know of this council—and he said unto his teacher: “What has brought you here to the Capitol under the military occupation of our Kingdom which has labeled you a terrorist? How

could you come forth so willingly into hostile territory?”

And the Abbot said unto him: “Willing? What is that? What do I will? Nothing, young Metalfingers, nothing, have I taught you nothing? You ask of motives, I reply with nothing. I did not come here, I was borne. I did not come in folly to the house of my enemies but with the love of the natural yoniverse, the gravity which bears particles down into a dense center. Here is the center of the world, Metalfingers. Shan’t I then be drawn to you, body to body? You who hold the key to our peoples’ *Fekku Ragabe*, our Sovereignty. I am not come here of will but of the Way and the Way has borne me here. Here, to the center of the Earth.”

And Metalfingers said to the Abbot: “I am the center? What nonsense do you speak, my Abbot? I hold the key to our Sovereignty? But I am just a coward. Look at me, cowering in the Fortress of my enemy while my people lie below in the Valley dying.”

“Be not sullen in this. I have brought you the key to your Good Work,” said the Abbot, and he drew from behind the fold of his cloak an iron mask.

He extended it to Metalfingers who looked down at it with trembling fear. “Wha—,” he began to say, receiving the iron mask.

The Abbot said unto him: “My son, take this metal face to guide your metal fingers. Let it conceal you from the Empire, for you must go down; you must go down into the Valley. Your place is with your people. Go there in guise; use this mask to hide you from your enemies. Pray with your brethren and sisteren. Play the fugues for them with your new instrument. Return honor to lowly living and guide their Holy Dying. Let not your people die in dishonor. Heal them with the vibrations of your voice, spoken truly. It is your duty. Now put on your metal face and go!”

And Metalfingers did just so, dawning his black cloak knowing it to be an act of treason, putting on his metal face knowing it to be an act of terror, slinging his MIDI keyboard around his torso for he knew he had to bring the music to the silent perishing of his people, and he went down swiftly in the dark of the Mountain eluding the Ghost-face lookouts with peace in his heart.

33rd Chamber

The Abbot watched his protege descend the Mountain of the Fortress of Ceremonies. Now alone in Metalfingers’ room, he turned round and looked toward the door. He drew his sword from his sheath and passed through the door into the hall. Ghost-face Ghouls stationed at every corner in the vicinity turned to look upon him, and with swift justice the Abbot slay them. He moved throughout the hall of this floor laying sword to all in his path. Faintly, although growing progressively louder, the Abbot heard the fugue that Metalfingers played on the MIDI in the Valley for his people, and he heard the sounds of the people rising, and the Invisible Empire riling up. The Abbot was satisfied. He continued to kill. From Metalfingers’ quarters at the topmost level, the Abbot descended the floors of the Fortress. With each level the music in the Valley grew louder and the Fortress shook with the vibrations of the sounds and the Invisible Empire became unnerved. The Abbot was glad that his pupil remained safe, for as long as the music played he knew that Metalfingers remained alive. With this peace of mind, the Abbot moved throughout the Fortress slaying his enemies. The wack senators and clerks and Ghost-face Generals and Chief Advisors were soon heard to say: “What is this terrible music rising out of the Valley of Death? It sounds like impending Doom!” And almost immediately upon this statement they were slain.

Metalfingers, concealed by his metal face and black cloak, rode on the wind down the Mountain of the Fortress of Ceremonies playing his MIDI of Doom to instill fear in the Wack Empire. In the Valley, his music fell on the ears of righteous souls, and the monks and the dying perceived it to be the vibrations of the calm waves of the yoniverse like unto the waters of their eternal dark womb, a deep, soothing, warm sound that filled the spirits of the people of the Valley of Death, and they were pleased, and could die happy now. The Invisible Empire, on the other hand, faltered at the sound of the waves, and they could not apprehend Metalfingers through the pains they sustained from the sounds of the Doom. So Metalfingers knew that as long as he played the MIDI of Doom he would not be captured.

In the Fortress of the Master of Ceremonies, the Abbot had come into the Great Hall of Ceremonies in which the Wack Master and his councilors congressed, while, below, Metafingers approached his crescendo. The Abbot strode through the thick army of Ghost-faces laying them down one by one. Crowded by the oncoming Ghouls, the Abbot made war before the throne of the Wack Master of Ceremonies; and the Wack Master rose then from his seat and he said: "You think your Wu-Tang sword can defeat *me*!?!?"

The Abbot slew all of the Ghost-faces in his path and advanced toward the Wack Master with his sword positioned before him; and as the Abbot approached the throne and reared back his sword above the Devil, the Wack MC pulled from his gown two Tec-9 machine guns and emptied the clips into the Abbot's heart. The music stopped. Down in the Valley of Death, Metafingers felt a hole erode in his soul. He dropped to his knees and cried to the unholy skies, which broke then, and yielded a cold rain.

Metafingers hastily ascended the Mountain of the Fortress of Ceremonies and entered the castle and went into the Hall of the Wack Master and there he came upon his one true Master-Teacher, dead in a sprawling pool of his blood. And Metafingers looked upon the Wack Master and the Wack Master said unto him: "Whoso comes concealed in a metal face to the hall of the One Universal God of Shaolin Island. Whoso challenges the only Sovereign of this land? What black-cloaked follower of the 36 Chambers of Death seeks deliverance from my Power? You seek deliverance from the Invisible Empire? Ask for your deliverer now and find him ..." and the Wack Master gestured toward the bullet-riddled Abbot with one of his Tec-9's.

And the Wack Master continued: "Reveal yourself, you terror!"

Metafingers drew his MIDI from behind him and, revealing his metal fingers, played a chord of Doom which shook the very foundation of the Fortress. The Wack Master was taken aback when he was made known of the identity of this insurgent, and he startled at the shake of the earth; anger flared up in his eyes and he tossed his emptied 9's to the side; he drew out two 0.40 caliber pistols in each hand and fired at

Metafingers. With each shot, Metafingers deflected the bullet with a punch of his metal fists. He deflected the Wack MC's head shots with his metal face. The Wack Master and his Invisible Empire perceived the difficulty in this assault, and all the Ghost-faces in attendance drew their AK-47s and Thompson Machine Guns and fired. Metafingers cried to his Ancestors who dwelt in the Heavens and charged the firing squad, punching bullets and men out of the way with his heavy metal fists; he lunged toward the Wack MC; the Wack Master ducked from his path, and Metafingers, drawing his MIDI in front of him, played another powerful chord of Doom which dismantled the rear wall of the Fortress of Ceremonies and he jumped from there and plummeted to the ground below, shaking the earth.

"Kill that Metal-faced Doom!" yelled the Wack Master from the ground where he fell, and the Invisible Empire pursued him. Metafingers charged down the Mountain, clear across the Valley of Death, and into the thick, dark fog of the Mountain of the Sixteen Bars where the Ghost-Face Killer had disappeared some time before. There, the Invisible Empire stood guard on the foothills while the avant-guard advanced the two vigilantes in the black fog.

That very night, the Abbot was hung by his ribs in the gallows.

34th Chamber

The season progressed deep into the Winter and exerted the full force of its nature. During this time of Our Year, the citizens of the Kingdom of Shaolin Island beheld a strange phenomenon. Every day like clockwork the earth shook with sound. The disturbance was caused by a most beautiful and foreboding music. Among the Wack Council on the Mountain of the Fortress of Ceremonies this music was called Impending Doom, and in the early times it occurred only in solo instrumental arrangements. The instrument alternated from day to day, and came to be recognized as the Bass of Doom, the Treble of Doom, the Sax of Doom, the Samples of Doom, and so on. No one but the Wack Master of Ceremonies knew for sure the source of this music, and it filled him with great fear. To the ears of the

people of the Valley of Death, however, it was a most holy sound. They beheld through the vibrations of the airs the very fury in their hearts and the agony of their spirit. It moved them a great deal, such that spontaneous mutiny of inspired passion remained an imminent threat to the Wack Master, and each time the spirits of the people rose they were suppressed for the time. The Wack Master prayed that this sonic matter would eventually be silenced and resolved; and he cowered in his hall while his Ghost-faced army continued their pursuit.

Down in the Valley of Death the Order of the Killa Bees had all but been extinguished. The few monks remaining practiced their belief under extreme discretion. Ghost-faced Ghouls of the Invisible Empire occupied all of the homes of all of the people. The sick were condemned to die in their beds. The doctors were disrobed and they were no longer allowed to attend the diseased. The few healthy people went about their lives with heavy hearts, knowing their calling to be of Holy Living, but knowing the mere practice of this humble rite to constitute death. Silently did they rejoice when the songs of Doom rang down from the Mountain of the Sixteen Bars, and often, as it has been told, were their spirits moved to riot, but the Invisible Empire was swift to suppress any vocalization of celebration among them. Their spirits waned in the absence of their Abbot, whose body decayed in the Winter at the gallows among the other slain like some unholy garden of strange fruit. Above in the Fortress of the Wack Master of Ceremonies, the Wack Master brooded over his uncertain Kingdom. The existence of his enemies disturbed him, and every night before bed when the Imperial Wizard informed him that neither the Ghost Face Killer nor Metalfingers had been apprehended, he slept a little worse than the previous night. Well into the Winter he lost his taste for rest entirely, for his day's work remained perpetually unfinished, and he looked out of his window upon the fog-enclosed peak of the Mountain of the Sixteen Bars and brooded on the Valley below.

Upon the Mountain of the Sixteen Bars, under its eternal fog, one man waged his private war. Ever since the Fall, the Ghost Face Killer had been forced to recede further and further up the

treacherous Mountain, followed closely by the hoards of the Invisible Empire. As it has been told, he remained at the front of the army concealed in his black-diamond-encrusted mask slaying the Ghost Face Ghouls one by one, but he knew that he could not go down among them as he'd once done, for their numbers were too thick, too dense, and in the fog and the woods they would be difficult to see; surely then he would perish in their midst. He knew their numbers to be increasing, and was becoming greatly perturbed by the odds. Yet the Ghost Face Killer knew he must continue his mission no matter the obstacle, that one day all the Ghost Face Ghouls may lay deceased in place of his people. He would make his Abbot proud, he thought, wherever his sage king lay. Thoughts of his Master-Teacher inspired him, and the Ghost Face Killer was further ennobled in his cause, resolving again to fight unto the Death, and wished only that his Abbot were here to look proudly upon him.

A gang of Ghost Face Ghouls advanced him; the Killer lay them down with ease. Then a swarm of them stormed up the Mountain, with more cunning and more speed, and the Ghost Face Killer held his ground; the many Ghouls then gathered round him, closing in, looming over, and he held his sword at ready; *swung*; he sliced in all directions round him; he acted with unconscious stealth; effortless precision filled him and he lay the Ghost Faces down in mounds; but the white Ghouls kept advancing; the Killer, one small black point in a wide white cypher, ever growing larger; they had him all surrounded. He lay them down in bigger mounds, bleeding out their blinding light, cutting them in halves, yet he feared that they were closing in. He cut through to the north, up the mountain where the guard was thinnest, but the Ghouls kept pace all around him and The Ghost Face Killer began to sweat. He was losing the Way, becoming encumbered by fright and conscious action, and he felt his life force being drained by the light of the Ghost Faces enclosing. He swung on both his sides as he ascended further up the plane. He sought the peak of Sixteen Bars, that maybe from that vantage point he could kill 360-degrees around him and watch the Ghouls fall back down the Mountain and he could do so for all time — he, the Ghost Face Killer, guardian of the

Mountain. He had never seen the Mountain's peak; no one had, to his knowledge. It lay still off before him. He rode on wind as fast as possible, but the Ghost Faces put up better chase. He had to stop then and ward off the Ghouls that had gathered close around him. He employed his fatal Swordstyle but could not kill in equal pace. The Ghost Face Ghouls closed in around him. The Ghost Face Killer closed his eyes and acted effortlessly fluid. They say that no one is an enemy to water. If he were to perish, he resolved, then it would all be in the Way. The Ghost Face Dragon Ghouls approached then, extended his clawed hand in silence. The Ghost Face Killer was prepared to endure a most gruesome violence. He lowered his sword before the Dragon, whose white cloak was blindingly bright. The Ghost Face Killer could not fight; the Dragon Ghouls consumed his sight. From in the light he saw the light. The light enclosed and climbed inside him. For some small time the world was silent.

Then the Mountain quaked. The Dragon faltered, the spell dissolved, the Ghost Face Army could not take it: the Bass of Doom rang down upon them; it came from the most highest place. The Ghost Face Killer walked then from them quavering where they loomed; he summited toward the peak; he had a quandary about something. Who lives up on Six Bars' summit? Wherefrom comes that violent drumming? As he advanced upon the peak and the woods of the mountainside cleared away, the Ghost Face Killer, sword heavy in his hand, came upon the source of the bassline of Doom which continued to rain down upon the land and shake the earth: he looked upon a black stone pyramid; at its peak there was a single lighted window.

35th Chamber

The Ghost Face Killer entered into the pyramidal fortress, whose very foundation rumbled with the sounds of Doom. At last he was to come upon the source of all this sonic power, which he'd heard and felt for weeks now in the Winter but whose composer remained utterly unknown. He ascended a dark stone spiral staircase unto the topmost chamber of this structure, feeling the vibrations of Doom shaking his very core with greater vigor as

he neared it. The staircase seemed to go on endless. Who had built this building anyway? Who labored upon its holy form and stabilized foundation only to have abandoned it for era? And who had now come to occupy its topmost chamber, which, if it were not for the fog, would overlook all of Shaolin Island? From the great arched door of that apex chamber, which hung slightly ajar, a low light cast upon the Ghost Face Killer, the menacing fugue poured from there like a great wave from out a violent sea, the Warrior entered through the gate and came into the room.

As he pushed the door obtuse, the Ghost Face Killer beheld a square, nearly vacant room which tapered at the ceiling of the pyramidal fortress. Directly before him hunched a ginormous figure draped in a black-hooded cloak, concealing his entire form and visage, though he moved with steady rhythm to the sound of the menacing music which filled the room like the very airs. Before the figure there was a large stone table, and yonder in the wall that single window. The Ghost Face Killer could breathe in the spirit of the imposing music. The Bass of Doom's crescendoing drum-time replaced the beating of his heart. This music could only be composed by a holy man, he thought, and the terror of the drums tormented the Ghost Face Ghouls such that the Ghost Face Killer knew this musician must be a friend of the Valley of Death and an enemy of the Wack MC. He thus approached the hooded man.

The man turned his head then slowly round, and the Ghost Face Killer beheld beneath the hood of this figure a metal face. The Musician was compelled to stop. As the Ghost Face Killer's eyes fell down the figure he beheld a pair of metal fingers which the figure had been using to pound the pads of what appeared to be a hand-made MIDI keyboard.

The mysterious Musician looked upon the Ghost Face Killer, observed the mask of black diamonds he wore and the sword he carried at his side and said, "You are the one they call the Ghost Face Killer."

The Killer said, "I am, and who are you?"

The man turned fully round then and threw up the *W* and said, "I am called Metalfingers the Musician of Impending Doom."

The two sages bowed unto one another. The

Ghost Face Killer said, "You saved my life, brother sage. Down on the Mountain of the Sixteen Bars I had pledged to kill all of the Ghost Face Ghouls, but they of late have bested me, and if it weren't for your menacing bass I would surely have perished. Tell me, brother, what has brought you to this precipice? I had no knowledge that others had also traversed the fogs and steeples of the Sixteen Bars Mountain. Are you seeking refuge from the Wack Master?"

Metalfingers replied in the affirmative, saying, "I was the Royal DJ of Ceremonies to the late good MC the Second, and I remained in the employ of the Fortress even after the usurpation. I was lost and saw in the Wack Master a kind of confidant, or at the least, I saw in myself that I needed one. But alas I was blind and young. My one true Master soon enlightened me to the truth of Holy Living and Holy Dying. To His teachings I am eternally indebted. But like all holy things the Wack MC has destroyed His Order. For this I have pledged to avenge my Master. I have been composing upon this MIDI a dope beat of Doom which will shake the Kingdom so violently that it will crumble and the plates of the earth will shift and the ground will open up and swallow the D'evils and the Wackness which has caused my people so long to suffer. It is soon completed."

And the Ghost Face Killer said unto Metalfingers, "You speak with great ambition. I am reverent of you. And your Master, is he not in common with my own? The Great Abbot of the 36 Chambers?"

And Metalfingers said, "He was."

And the Ghost Face Killer inquired unto the use of the past tense and Metalfingers spoke upon the present condition of the Abbot and the other monks and Killa Bees of the Clan in the gallows and upon hearing this the Ghost Face Killer was stricken silent. A deep and sunken anger more profound than that which provoked him to slay the Invisible Empire festered in the Ghost Face Killer's breast. He readied his sword in the wake of no present enemy, and his hands trembled with great tumult.

Metalfingers turned back toward the MIDI of Doom and said, "Lower your weapon, Ghost Face Killer, your enemies lie without. The Ghost Face Killer went to the window and looked down

—the Ghost Face Ghouls had recovered from the Bass of Doom and in the silence they were advancing upon the pyramidal fortress.

And the Ghost Face Killer, with great vengeance in his heart, said, "And there they are. I must go down. I have sworn to our Ancestors that I would kill the Ghost Faces until the end of my days. I must go down there and continue my assault. They will not kill themselves."

And Metalfingers said to him, "If you go down you will at first waste your energies, and at last you'll surely perish."

The Ghost Face Killer said, "I am ready."

And Metalfingers said, "No. Do not go down upon the face of the Mountain of the Sixteen Bars and waste your Wu-Tang Swordstyle on the formidable Invisible Empire. It will prove futile. Their technology is too great and their spirits of disorder are too powerful. What did the Abbot say unto us? To act without action; to move without motion; to go through this world as if it were a thin wall of water; to flow along with the stream of the Wei. Shall we fight with the methods of music, which is born out from the inertia of primordial waves, and does not care if there are ears to fall upon, but persists in the world nonetheless in the vibrations of the waves of space and the duration of time; and it is known that all great arts aspire to music for this reason. Its influence will be made through pure effortless expression. This, Ghost Face Killer, is how we will defeat the Wack MC and the Empire."

The Ghost Face Killer thought well on this and replied, "What will I do? I am no musician, Metalfingers. Wherefrom shall my contribution come if I cannot employ my Wu-Tang Swordstyle?"

And Metalfingers said unto him, "The Abbot told me once that the sharpest sword lies inside you; drop the 's' and you have the word; the swiftest blade is your own tongue; your fatal blow is language, truth. Practice your lyrical swordstyle, Ghost Face Killer, and together, with my beat of Doom, we will bring down the house."

36th Chamber

Down in the Valley of Death, the last of the former monks and Killa Bees and the Doctors were lying

in their quarters ready to die, and Ghost Face Ghouls floated about the homes and among the congealed and forgotten mounds of the Dead without urgency or concern. The people in the Valley of Death were resolved in their final rests, for D'evils of disease and the Wackness had become too real; yet if publicly they could not ceremonialize their ends, then at least privately they would maintain the practices of Holy Dying and go with an expression of tranquility upon their faces. The time was imminent, and upon one Winter day they had all, as if via a collective consciousness, prepared to go down to eternity when a low rumble occurred in the ground below them.

The people of the Valley assumed this to be another routine sound of Doom from on high in the Mountain of the Sixteen Bars, and although it made them glad, healthier even, it was not enough to keep them from their deaths. If only the music was greater than they may have reason to live, they thought.

As if by the grace of their eternal Master listening down to their last wishes, the rumbling in the ground increased and the bass of Doom rang in with a thunderous quality previously unheard, and the people and the Ghouls took notice in common. There were melodic tones in the Doom which they'd never heard occurring all at one time. It was a most intriguing sound.

Then right on top of the bass the treble and the snare and the hi-hats of Doom rang down from the Mountain and the people were now entirely conscious in their beds where they had once prepared their deaths; and the entirety of the Wack Council on the Mountain of the Fortress of Ceremonies stopped their work and marveled at the sounds of the drumline. To them it was most hellish and most fearful.

The hearers were awe-filled, but further were they inspired when the improvised keys harmonized upon the looping drumline and the brass of Doom cried out to the night skies and with these horns the Dying in the Valley rose in their beds and smiled brightly and could do so without the scrutiny of the Ghost Face Ghouls because those apparitions were faltering wherever they floated. Someone in the Wack MC's congress proclaimed, "This is no mere sample! No single

instrumental! This is a Beat of Doom!"

The earth beneath them quaked with unholy vigor, threatening to split, and the Wack Master remained at his throne with a look of utter terror upon his face. The melodies and harmonies of Doom combined in the movements and into the breaks and the refrains of Doom, boasting a complexity that its composer had not before exhibited even under royal employment. Up at the precipice of the pyramidal fortress at the peak of the Mountain of the Sixteen Bars Metalfingers let his heavy metal fingers fall upon the pads of the MIDI of Doom with which, contrary to the common assumption, he played the drum and bass and key and brass lines manually and in time and with great speed and the resulting Beat of Doom was so dope that the people in the Valley of Death, who'd once resolved to dying, began to dance.

There was a winding down of the instrumentals then until there was a silence, and the Kingdom paused with bated breath ...

Then the beat dropped: the bassline kicked in again at maximum impact, and on top of the dopest beat anyone in the Kingdom had ever heard the Ghost Face Killer proceeded to spit sixteen of the hottest and illest bars in the history of the lyrical swordstyle: and the ground opened up and the Mountain of the Fortress of Ceremonies collapsed into the earth; and all of the Ghost Face Ghouls followed their Wack Master down to the center of the earth and rid the Valley of Death and the Mountain of the Sixteen Bars of their presence; and D'evils and the Wackness lifted from the Kingdom, and the dying in the Valley commenced to truly live and were allowed to rejoice and celebrate and believe and practice publicly evermore; and the Order of the Killa Bees was again ordained; and the Mountain of the Dead grew foliage and commenced to support a vibrant ecosystem; and in the Gallows the Beat of Doom shook the strange fruit from the trees and the once-murdered bloomed anew and the liquid words of the Ghost Face Killer resurrected the Abbot; and when all was done Metalfingers and the Ghost Face Killer descended the Mountain of the Sixteen Bars and ascended the Mountain of the Uphill-Running-River and presided dually over the Land of Shaolin evermore.