

FENG SHUI
Action Movie Roleplaying

THORNS OF THE LOTUS



ATLAS
GAMES

THE EATERS OF THE LOTUS SOURCEBOOK
by **RICH WARREN**

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Hoi Mao Qian, son of Hoi Zi Yun, stared at the rolling hills and wheat fields above him. His road cut through these hills. A thousand years of passing wagons ground out a trench deep enough to swallow his cart. He was a simple farmer, not particularly pious, but the Hoi ancestors smiled on him. They blessed him with many sons and many daughters. They brought the gentle rain, giving Zi Yun bountiful harvests.

What's more, misfortune seemed to avoid Zi Yun. Last summer's fire stopped short of his fields, and even the blood-drinking Hsiung-nu avoided his land – raiding neighboring villages instead.

Soon, Zi Yun's small farm grew into a sprawling estate. An estate that Mao Qian's brothers would someday inherit. They would raise families of their own, while his sisters married into other prosperous households.

But Mao would have nothing.

With each bump of the carriage, Mao could feel the dull throbbing between his legs – a wound more than one week old. He remembered his father's order, and the doctor's swift cut that changed him from man to eunuch. Now he traveled south to Lo-yang and the Imperial Palace. He had traveled for six days.

As they crested the hill, Mao saw the great walls of Lo-yang rising in the distance. The driver, an Imperial messenger, whipped the horses forward. More roads joined theirs, like rivers rushing toward the ocean. Soon, they reached the main gates – each large enough for three wagons to pass side-by-side.

Inside, storefronts and temples lined the wide streets. Crowds of finely-dressed people filled the roadways. The driver's shouts sent them scurrying as the coach rattled across the brick surface, but Mao hardly noticed. Anger simmered within him. Anger at his father, jealousy for his brothers. He had bowed to his father's will, like a dutiful son. Yet now he was no longer a man – no longer a son.

The coach shimmied to a stop inside a large courtyard. Mao could hear the messenger unfastening his chests and tossing them carelessly off the back of the carriage. He could see three plump men in finely-embroidered silk, walking out to greet him. His own cheeks burned, as he fingered the coarse woven hemp of his own clothing.

The door to the coach opened, and the first eunuch stepped in. The silk rustled around him, and the scent of lilac oil filled the air. He spoke in a high, shrill voice. "Can this frail urchin be our new arrival, Hoi Mao Qian?"

Mao rose and, keeping his gaze down at his feet, bowed dutifully. "This unworthy servant has traveled from the northern frontier to join the Emperor's household...at his father's request."

The eunuch giggled like a young girl. "Look at this boy. He is of no use to us, except maybe for scrubbing chamber pots. Ah, but he is ours now. I may as well show him his new quarters." The eunuch smiled viciously, then stepped out of the carriage.

Mao swallowed and bit his lower lip. He kept his head bowed, in a show of obedience, but his hands balled into tight fists. "I will remember this, Father." He whispered through clenched teeth. "Some day I will return."



CHAPTER 1

Introduction to the Empire

History

In the beginning there was neither heaven nor earth. Only chaos, sitting like a hen's egg. But all eggs carry the seed of life, and this seed soon grew into Pangu – the first man. Like a chick cracking its shell he burst into existence, separating the chaos. Heavy elements fell, becoming the earth, while pure ones flew, becoming the sky. These are Yin and Yang.

For eighteen thousand years, the sky and earth separated, growing ten feet farther apart each day. Pangu grew at the same rate, always filling the distance between. Then, upon his death, his body collapsed, becoming the world we know.

His breath formed the wind and clouds, his voice thunder and lightning. His left eye became the sun, his right the moon. The five great mountains grew from his body, while his blood and fluids filled the rivers and seas. His nervous and venous systems formed the layers of the earth. The fields and soil derived from his flesh. His hair and eyebrows became the stars and planets. His teeth and bones became metal and stone; his semen, pearls; his bone marrow, jade. His sweat now falls as rain, and his fleas grew into the human race.

I am Xia Tian Yu. Sit, impudent child, and listen. You have much to learn, if you wish to join the ranks of the Lotus. We have mastered the secrets of true power, seizing control of this world. You will either join us, or you will become our slave. It is your choice – a choice given to very few.

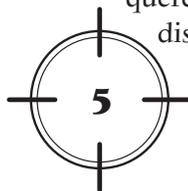
Since the day of creation, it has been the role of man to bring order from chaos.

In the ancient past, animals ruled the world. We were few and they were many. Then the Three Sovereigns and the Five Sage Emperors arrived. They taught our ancestors the first secrets and our prosperity followed. Fu Xi invented the eight trigrams, important to both sorcerers and seers. Shen Nong added agriculture and herbal medicine. The Yellow Emperor taught both writing and weapons. Yu the Great tamed the floods.

So it continued until the Virtuous Emperor Yao abdicated his throne in favor of the wise commoner Shun.

Shun, unwilling to place himself among the Sage Emperors, took the title of King and founded the Xia dynasty. Four hundred years of prosperity followed, but eventually the Xia kings grew corrupt and greedy. Heaven withdrew its support, savaging the lands with floods and disasters. Revolution spread, ending only after Tang killed Jie the Wicked and founded the Shang dynasty.

Though the Shang kings conquered much of the steppes, they too grew corrupt, and the mandate from heaven shifted to Zhou – a frontier chief. The Zhou dynasty lasted for seven hundred years and produced many great scholars, including Confucius and Lao Tzu. But the Zhou kings were weak. Invaders conquered their land, and eventually the empire dissolved into a tangle of warring states.



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