

HANGOVER CITY

A City Sourcebook for Dresden Files RPG

by Sue Wilson

Chapter six- China Town

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The Other Country Through The Gate

The small group stop at the top of Duke Street before the massive oriental Gate.

Cale looks at Ream and frowns. "I thought you said we were in a hurry?"

"Yes but I have no wish to be eaten either." He responds. He nods to the Foo Dog at the base of the gate. The statue has clearly shifted its head to gaze at them, its mouth caught in a half snarl.

Cale pales. "Oh Ok." He glances over to Angela. "You sure this is a good idea?"

"It is her defence, we would do a disservice to the court in not checking it out." Ream responds.

"But if she is a spy?" Cale whispers.

"Tu Di Gong will let us know." Ream responds firmly. He nods as a figure in red silks emerges from one of the narrow stone buildings inside the gate and walks up the street towards him.

"I'm not sure I'm the right person for this Boss." Cale hisses, "I mean I've not had much to do with that side of my family. What if..?"

"It is unlikely they will talk openly in front of one not of their blood." Ream snaps back under his breath. "Be still boy. Treat this as an opportunity. It is about time you learnt more of where you came from."

The Oriental pulls his coat straight and studies them all carefully before speaking. "Venerable Ream."

"Lord Shen." Ream responds.

"Tien Cale." Shen greets nodding at Cale.

The breed member manages a strangled "Sir" as he bows.

Shen turns his attention to the last member of the party "And Miss Hughes." His forehead shifts in a slight puzzlement. "You confused us when our guardians said you turned away from the gate. We were expecting you earlier."

"Oh." Angela says. She looks over to Ream and Cale.

"I hope the Sheriffs people were polite during your stay with them. It was unfortunate, but once you rejected our territories there was little we could do directly to guide you back."

"So You do know this woman then?" Ream asks.

"Of course. Grandfather has been in discussions with his counterpart in the port at the end of the river. We were asked to provide her with safe passage during her stay here, and to assist her research in so far as we are able."

Ream nods. "It may have been more expedient if you had informed the Council of this in advance." He chastises gently.

“Alas the communication arrived too late to take to the court, and it seemed such a little trifle to call an extraordinary meeting over.” Shen apologises. He looks at Angela and smiles. “Still a pretty trifle none the less.”

Ream watches him impassively. “The Council have rules that she be watched whilst she is in the city. I have assigned that duty to Cale here. Where She goes, He goes.”

Shen laughs. “Of course. I expect nothing less. She is a delicate flower and an ambassador from a distant shore. You need to assure yourselves that no harm befalls her. The arrangement is acceptable.” He looks between the two of them, his smile twists slightly. “And I foresee other benefits.”

“Quite.” Ream responds sharply, cutting down the speculation.

“Excellent. Well then.” Shen offers his arm to Angela. “If you will come this way, The community have put on a welcoming party. It is so rare we get visitors and we do like to be hospitable.”

Angela takes his arm nervously, and allows herself to be led through the gate. She glances over her shoulder to Ream as he watched them go, trying to work out if he is hiding his concern well, or if he really does not care.

Cale zips up his biker leathers, for once glad of the armour. His hand drops to the pouch of materials on his hip and the short knife, the longest he can legally carry.

“They are your people Cale.” Ream says gently.

“Yeah boss, but right now, “He glances at the still snarling Foo dog. “I’m not feeling the love.”

Lì wù pǔ táng rén jiē

Liverpool's China town is the oldest in Europe. There are estimated to be 7,500 people of pure chinese descent living in the city, and a lot more can claim some chinese heritage. The gate on Duke street is the largest multi arch gate out side China and the community are justly proud of it. The Mortal authorities have taken the claim on the area so seriously the street signs are Bilingual, with the chinese appearing in red beneath the black english name.

The chinese started to arrive in 1835 when the first direct trading vessel arrived form China delivering Silks and spices. Slowly more and more of the chinese arriving in the city stayed, using the city as a base of operations for their jobs on the liners and freighters plying in and out of the port. The families stayed behind, living in the narrow streets near the docks. By 1890 there were enough of them that there was a need for shops and businesses to provide for them, and the Chinese Businessmen's support society was born.

Their chinese brought their own beliefs and religions, and folklore, and as such their own supernatural. Unlike the clear distinction between 'believes and unbelievers' that occur in western culture. The lines have always been more blurred in China town. Most families have a personal shrine and a strong threshold. Also they will recognise the supernatural for the creatures they are, and have no qualms about going to their priests and authorities for assistance as they do not fear being thought insane for talking about such things. This alertness has helped keep the major dangers, such as the Jade Vampire, out of the city. The skill of the Taoist Priests and Alchemists serve the community well. Other Spirits, some considered beneficial by the community have arrived, most noticeably the Foo dogs who now live guarding the entrances to the community, a Baí Zé who advises on the supernaturals in the world around them and Qilin who dispenses justice

China town has always had a distant relationship with the Covenant. Their leader, Tu Di Gong has signed the covenant on behalf of all of his people, although there is nothing to prevent any individual from signing up on their own behalf if they choose too. For the most part they deal with any issues themselves. They will assist the Covenant when their skills are useful but all too often they claim they have no experience of the issue and stay safe in their virtual walls. Should a mission require a Breed member to enter China town they always take care to wait at the Foo dog until some one comes to accompany them.

The Chinese Businessmen support society

The Chinese Businessmen support society is a mortal organisation. Outside China Town it has something of a bad reputation. Many people seem to assume it is a cover for the Tong, or similar 'mafia like illegal entity'. In fact this is not the case. The CBSS genuinely exist to help protect the interests of the business in China town. Companies pay in their dues and in exchange are sure of legal support and physical protection should it become necessary. They can also get loans at preferential rates and are given favourable terms in bidding for contracts with their fellow members.

Of course this makes China Town something of a closed shop and western companies find it very hard to get a foot hold with in its street - this jealousy has led to the accusations.

There is another good reason China town is a closed shop. Most of the chinese living there are well aware of the Supernaturals that live amongst them. For example every one knows that to stop a Chiang Shi from entering your house, all you need do is mail a 15cm piece of wood nailed to the bottom of the door door frame so they can not hop over it. Ignorant westerners however are likely to make mistakes, and mistakes could be dangerous to the whole community.

Up to 11pm the place is a happy to welcome tourists and sell them trinkets that they seem to like to buy. However once the hour turns the shops shut up and tourists will find themselves guided away back to the brighter lights of the dock complexes before the spirits walk abroad.

Face: Shen Jun Meng

Jun acts as the public face of the China town, as Tu Di Gong prefers not to deal with unbelievers. He attends the Covenant meetings and speaks for the community when it is decided that it is needed. He works with the Knights of the Royal Court to sort out any assistance the chinese can give to defences and development of the city. He oversees any joint operations between the Taoist alchemists and the Guild of Liverpool Manipulators of Magic. He also acts as Translator for any member of China town who needs it.

'Officially' he works for the chinese Embassy, although there isn't one in Liverpool; the nearest official one is the Consulate in Manchester, and although Jun visits the city on a semi regular basis, he has never entered the building.

Jun is a chinese man in his late thirties, thin face and dark serious eyes. He dresses in conservative western clothes when not in the boundary of China town. At home, a new apartment on Seel Street, he prefers to relax in red silks. He is married to Shen Zhi Nuo and has three children Ai Ling, Bin Hui and Kai Shi.

Taoist Magic

Or A horribly brief introduction to Taoists Alchemy and it's applications in the Dresden-verse

First an apology: There is far more to Taoist alchemy than I can fit in this brief guide. After all it has a very long tradition, and some of the 'cultural beliefs' it has absorbed probably predate Taoism itself- in much the same way Catholicism adopted the Celtic gods and turned them into saints like St Bridget or claimed the 'Holy Wells'. All I hope to do here is present a flavour so that any one wanting to run a Taoist alchemist in this setting has some where to start.

I know all too well that many people with an understanding of the subject will cringe at the over simplifications in the following section. If this piques your interests there are a number of excellent books and website on the subject in the bibliography.

I also suggest any one wanting to run a Taoist lays their hands on a copy of the Tao Te Ching (translations are available freely on line, and there is even 'an app for that') and the I Ching. Pull out quotes from them to use as Aspects and to relate to your fellow PC's during the game. They are full of mysterious lines that will give the illusion of Yoda like wisdom.

Finally, to cover myself legally - under no account should you use the section on 'treating diseases' to diagnose and treat yourself. Go to a doctor. It's a role playing game not a medical text book.

Tao produces them

Virtue raises them

Things shape them

Forces perfect them

Chapter 51 of the Tao Te Ching

Whilst the western alchemists searched for the elixir to turn lead into gold and become rich and famous, the eastern alchemists were looking to the secret to eternal life. Some of them, known as The Eight immortals, met with some success if this and have moved off this world. They now hang out in part of the Never Never that is as close as taoists get to a heaven. They may be petitioned for aid by their followers in much the same way the desperate may turn to the Faerie Queens, though they are just as likely to tell them to sod off and work it out for themselves as they are to help.

Ultimately Taoist magic comes down to controlling the flow of Chi. Chi is life-process or flow of energy that sustains 'living' things. Living is a very open term here, Mountains and rivers also have a Chi about them. In Taoist practice you encourage the flow of chi to take the direction you want and create the effect you are after. Which makes it only a different 'flavour' from standard magic. However in Taoism the way you effect this flow can take a vast variety of different forms; Physical body movements as demonstrated in Tai Chi, or altering the environment as carried out in Feng Shui. The best effects are done by

little constant actions which accumulate to make great changes. Or as it is put in the Tao Te Ching 64.

A dam greater than a river can overflow starts with a clod of earth;

A journey of a thousand miles begins at the spot under one's feet.

Therefore deal with things before they happen;

Create order before there is confusion.

As a result Thaumatergy is preferred over Evocation, as it allows for the thoughtful collection of power and its redirection. That is not to say that Taoist Magicians don't throw around Chi balls when the need arises. Just that when they do it is probably a sign that they have messed up.

The way of effecting Chi is based around five interacting elements. The energy can be drained from one element to feed another, or destroy a different element to empower itself.

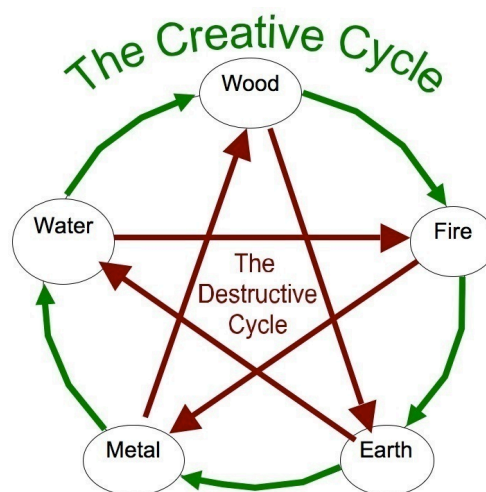
The generative cycle is

Wood feeds Fire; which creates Earth (ash); which bears Metal; which melts to flow like Water; which nourishes Wood.

The restraining or destructive cycle is

Wood draws strength from Earth (as it grows) which pollutes Water which quenches Fire; which melts Metal; which (as an axe) chops the Wood.

When put together this creates the following diagram, which may seem slightly familiar.



So when a Taoist wishes to create an effect around fire, for example throwing a fire ball, they would need to draw power from wood, or at a pinch metal. Some one trying to counter the effect could invoking water to directly destroy the energy, or less effectively earth to draw the energy off into a more controlled form.

It is worth noting that these elements should not be seen as too literal. Wood for example represents any growing plant matter. Additionally Metal has long been associated with Coinage and business, thus standing in a bank would be considered a metal environment (and possibly explain why all the pot plants are actually plastic in your local branch).

As a Taoist magician there are a number of conditions that influence you:

The influence of who you are: Astrology

Most people are familiar with the 12 earthly stems of Chinese astrology- those are the animals. But these are joined by 10 heavenly stems to give a 60 year cycle. This is even easier to determine, simply take the number at the end of your birth and cross reference with the chart below to determines your element. (Or, more likely, decide what you'd like your character to be good at and back calculate when they were born)

Year ends with	0/1	2/3	4/ 5	6/ 7	8/ 9
Heavenly Stem	Geng /Xin	Ren /Gui	Jia /Yi	Bing /Ding	Wu /Ji
Element	Metal	Water	Wood	Fire	Earth

Even years are Yang years, odd are Yin years

Yin is characterized as slow, soft, yielding, diffuse, cold, wet, and passive; and is associated with water, earth, the moon, femininity and nighttime.

Yang, by contrast, is fast, hard, solid, focused, hot, dry, and aggressive; and is associated with fire, sky, the sun, masculinity and daytime.

Thus a person born in 1978 would be celestial stem Wu - a yang earth person, and thus find it relatively easy to draw power from fire and water, but would find wood environments draining and never seems to be able to keep money in the bank. They are probably also a bit of a determined hot head and 'alpha male' even if they are biologically a woman. Incidentally they are also an earth branch horse, which will also throw its own flavour into the resulting personality. Your Horoscope is very influential when you are a Taoist.

The influence of where you are: Feng shui

The principle of Feng Shui is that environment you are in influences the flow of the Chi and pools elemental energy which can be either beneficial or detrimental depending on the type of person you are; or the type of magic you are trying to create.

The following is a chart showing the qualities that could effect the environment; all might be a suitable quality for aspects in scenes during play.

	Wood	Fire	Earth	Metal	Water
Colour	Green	Red	Yellow	Purple or white	Blue
Shape	Rectangular	Triangles e.g. spires	Square	Round, e.g. domes	Curve or irregular*
Material	Plants etc	Fire, Light	Clay, Stone	Any metal but Gold is preferred	Water also Mirrors
Direction	east	south	center	west	north

* Sidney opera house is a great water location! I bet there pot plants are like triffids.

The disease you are trying to cure or the effect you are trying to create

Taoists priest are often called upon to use their magical skills to help their community. Tasks like drawing up horoscopes for the newly born; fending of supernatural dangers and curing diseases. In Taoist medicine the regenerative and restraining cycle are still used but the terms are slightly different in that they talk about elements that will ; promotion, inhibition, Cheng (bullying), Wu (insult) they symptoms.

A taoist consultation usually starts with a long chat in the patients own home or work place. This allows the alchemist to determine the elements around their client that may be effecting. The consultation will cover things like when they were born (The astrology), where they live and spend their time (the Feng shui) and additional influences like the job they do (e.g. Handling money which would be a high metal environment) and the people around them. To a Taoist, lifestyle embalances are more likely to be the cause of the symptoms then any disease that may be recognised by western culture. Indeed to the taoist even the symptoms themselves are just an indication of the imbalance the patient is suffering from.

Once the problem has been identified the priest will prescribe a cure. Whilst this could be some kind of powder or tincture, it may also involves a list of

instructions of Tai Chi manoeuvres the patient should carry out at a particular time of day (periods of the day are also covered by the elements), or a change to their decor, such as moving their bed or repainting a wall.

So a Taoist alchemist who is asked by a patient to help cure her stomach problems and mouth ulcers might find her 'cure' involves replacing a pot plant in her cubical at work with the office water cooler. Which seems nonsensical to a western eye which would have expected anti-acids and a change of tooth paste, but is actually carried out to remove 'wood' influence in the environment and in introduce 'water', because that is what is needed to offset the horribly red (Fire) dividers the company insists on in the call centre and which have been promoting the (earth related) stomach problems and mouth ulcers the patient came to have cured.

Element	Wood	Fire	Earth	Metal	Water
Physical symptoms.					
Zang (yin organs)	liver	heart	spleen	lung	kidney
Fu (yang organs)	gall bladder	small intestine	stomach	large intestine	urinary bladder
Sensory organ	eyes	Touch	Mouth	nose	ears
Body Part	Tendons	Pulse	Muscle	Skin	Bones
Body Fluid	Tears	Sweat	Saliva	Mucus	Urine
Sense	sight	speech	taste	smell	hearing
Mental and emotional symptoms.					
Emotion	anger	happiness	love	grief, sadness	fear, terror
Mental Quality	Sensitivity	Creativity	Clarity	Intuition	Spontaneity
Notes for creating potions / treatments					
Taste	sour	bitter	sweet	pungent	salty
Smell	Rancid	Scorched/ burning	Fragrant	Rotten	Putrid
Time influences -					
Time (most effective time to take a treatment)	11pm-3am	7pm-11pm And 11am-3pm	7am-11am	3am-7am	3pm-7pm
Stage of Life	birth	youth	adulthood	old age	DEATH

Defeating the Unquiet dead when you are a Taoist.

Note in the table above how Death comes under water... That's the key. Earth pollutes water. Magic that builds earth element drains water. To a lesser extent the effect can also be achieved by wood as it draws power away from the 'Water' based Undead.

Which is why we put dead bodies in wooden coffins and bury them in earth.

Spells used to defeat the undead dead are typically written on squares of yellow rice paper and attached to the body of the creature in the priests own spit.

No really. Go watch "Mr Vampire."

The Buddhists

Buddhism is a complicated religion, with many different flavours as the basic premises have been adapted to cultures all over the world. But the fundamental principle is a cycle of lives in which the actions of ones life result in good or bad 'seeds' which will grow to fruition in the future - which may be in your current life or the next. The 'aim of the game' is to achieve enlightenment and escape the wheel of death and rebirth. You achieve this by becoming more conscious of the way you live and your actions, and thus gaining better control over them and thereby choosing better paths of behaviour which reduce both your suffering and the suffering of those around you.

There are a number of Buddhist communities, both in China town, and out amongst the Westerns; China town as a small temple staffed by 'Tibetan flavour' buddhists and their ex-Gurkha caretaker-cum-bodyguard, Havildar Thapa; There is a Buddhist meditation centre in one of the old houses over looking Sefton park, which offer weekend retreats and classes in yoga; and a groups claiming to be Buddhist, who are based in a farm out towards southport and are skirting dangerously close to being a cult. Ream is keeping an eye on the last lot, but so far they have not done anything 'supernatural' in their visits to the universities to recruit new members. As such his hands are tied and he is waiting for the mortal authorities to act.

Buddhism in Dresden-Verse.

As this is a religion the True Faith powers are the most applicable with Templates like True Believer and Emissary of Power being the most likely. Additionally the yogic self control may justify inhuman recovery, speed, strength or toughness powers and could be used as an excuse for wizards constitution. The temple may have items of power to assist the faith full , like payer wheels

that effectively create a threshold to keep the undead out of the range of their sound. Buddhists Masters may well have access to The Sight and Soul Gaze as a way of judging where a person lies on the 'good action' vs 'bad action' scale.

Lì wù pǔ Spirits

The boundary between the Never-Never and the 'real world' is relatively weak with in the borders of china town and just 'over the veil' is a large demesne which mimics the corner of the city and contains 'equivalents' of the buildings and streets. Conveniently these borders are marked by a combination of the Bilingual road signs and the Fou Dog statues on the roads, and most of the supernatural entities in Liverpool know better than to enter the area. At certain times of the night (the metal hours between 3am and 7am) it is all too easy to step across into this world; or indeed for the spirits that inhabit it to step out. The people of china town take care to patrol the streets at this time and redirect the unwary back to the safety of the city beyond the boundary to prevent accidents. The demesne is so potent that any use of the Sight in China town will reveal the spirit version of the city.

The structures in the Nevernever are not exact copies; far from it. The building are more often large beasts-like structures that reveal something of the activities that go on in the building. So the local Mah-Jong den appears as a lazy cat flicking its paws at passing spirits to tempt them in to play, whilst the day care centre is a large brooding hen sitting in watchful protection over her chicks. Additionally the appearance of the Demesne is far from static. For example the new apartment block on Seal street appear as a collection of small furry squares with large eyes. As families are moving in the 'fuzzy balls' are taking on the personalities of those inside; some becoming happy and friendly, others appearing as growling dogs. A few buildings are resistant to this effect. The Black-E, a formally congregational church and now art gallery and exhibition space, appears in the Nevernever exactly as it does in the 'real world' despite being right next to the Chinese gate. Additionally none of the spirits of China town have ever entered its space, and in the Nevernever the doors appear to be just painted on.

The demesne is inhabited by spirits, some of which appear to be fantastical and others of which look just like the mortal inhabitants of the city - mostly because they are in fact their ancestral spirits, and the mortals are descended from them. The more aware residents of china town will use rituals to call up these spirits to ask their advice at times of crisis, or in some cases just to catch up on the family gossip. Most residences have a shrine where the border is exceptionally weak and allows the spirits it is dedicated to, to come through.

There are also more fantastical inhabitants:

The Baí Zé can be found lurking at the site of a herbalist shop on Griffiths Street. He has a mostly human face, except for the 7 extra eyes which wander around his head and allow him to keep a constant look out for danger. Two large horns on his head, with another two protruding from his shoulder blades, the mane of a lion and the body of a bull. He is extremely intelligent and well read, finding all books fascinating and suitable payment for his advice. So far he has not encountered a human language he could not master in a few hours. His main area of interest is diseases and he has a 'boy' Ru (now 38) who he dispatches off to the School of Tropical Medicine every time there is an interesting case in, in the hope Ru will catch it and give him something to test his skills against. So far he has always been successful (a-testified by Ru's still living state) but it has been close a few times. As a spring board interest from the diseases Baí Zé has also built an extensive library on supernatural entities from around the world. This is mostly eye witness testimony he has collected himself from visitors to the port.

Qilin are a common site in china, those most consider them to be just bronze statues due to their habits of sitting motionless for decades. They are often thought to have evolved from a bad description of a giraffe recorded in the Ming dynasty. They have a tiger like body, but deer like antlers. Their 'fur' is actually tongues of living fire and their powerful legs end in cow like hooves. Qilin are very peaceful creatures who take care not to tread on any living thing. They are capable of passing over grass with out bending a blade and walking on water. They are said only to be active in places where the ruler is wise and benevolent so the existence of a small herd in China town is a great source of pride. Despite this 'laid back' nature it is possible to incur their wrath; They become fierce if a pure person is threatened by a sinner, spouting flames from their mouths and exercising other fearsome powers that vary from Qilin to Qilin, but mostly involve hunting the sinner and trampling him to death. Such outrage has taken them beyond the boundaries of China town on 3 occasions. But each time the Qilin sacrificed itself to complete its mission and was unable to return back to the safety of China town before its power dissipated and it dissolved.

Living near the Qilin is a single Kai Tsi. This cat like creature has a single unicorn like horn on its head. He has very intense eyes and is capable to detecting falsehood in humans. Those thought to be lying in the china town community will be asked to repeat their words before the Kai Tsi to prove their truth. Most back down faced with this, as the creature responds to such dishonesty by impaling the heart of the liar with its single horn. Murderers with in the community are tried by simply bringing them before the Kai Tsi and asking them to state their innocence. It is a very effective deterrent.

Additionally there are a pair of Feng-huang, or chinese Phoenix; a small

family of Huli jing, trickster fox spirits with multiple tails, who can take on the forms of beautiful humans; and a Ying-lung, a rain dragon with four wings who arrived in the box with the Chinese Gate when it was sent from Shanghai and is still exploring the city in a human form when ever the weather is conducive. Which is causing some confusion with local meteorologists who cant work out where the cold front keeps coming from and causing the unexpected night time showers.

Tu Di Gong spends most of his time in the Nevernever side of China town, but can pass so freely between the two he barely acknowledges that there is a difference. He resides in a structure that looks like a giant lucky cat, complete with waving paw in the Nevernever and is a flat above a chinese teahouse in the real world.

Tu Di Gong

In China every village had a shrine to Tu Di Gong. He is the deity in charge of administering the affairs of village under the Buddhist Bureaucracy. In a time when a village's survival was dependant on agricultural or weather-related concerns, he was a god that could be turned to at times of drought or famine by even the lowliest peasant. Today, he is still worshipped only now they make prayers to him for wealth and their well being. He is also traditionally worshipped before the burial of deceased persons to thank him for using his land to return their bodies to the earth. Commoners often called Tu Di Gong "Grandpa," which reflects his close relationship to the common people.

Tu Di Gong appears as an elderly man with a long white beard, a black hat and a yellow robe. He carries a wooden staff in his right hand and a golden coin in his left.

Some may think it is only coincidence that the leader of the supernaturals in China town is called Tu Di Gong; that he is an elderly man who tends to wear a black hat and a yellow robe and has a white beard. And of course it is only proper that his people approaches him with their day to day concerns about money, health issues and is asked to preside of the birth, deaths and marriages in the community.