

PARADISE MOUNTAIN



A martial arts micro setting by

Daniel Kwan

PARADISE MOUNTAIN

Narrative Design by

DANIEL KWAN

@danielhkwan

Art & Design by

WILL PARKS

@willdparks

Cover Illustration by

DOT VALLEDOR

@dotvalledor

Links:

danielhkwan.com

patreon.com/danielhkwan

willparks.ca

ADDITIONAL CREDITS

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INTRODUCTION

Paradise Mountain is a singular region within the Land of Blades. Ruled by the Yue Dynasty, it is the forge of heroes and scholars, and the home for those with an unbreakable spirit. This system agnostic supplement for tabletop roleplaying games is designed to be used as a stand-alone micro setting or a “plug-and-play” addition to a larger world.

Compatible supplements that I’ve designed include *Denizens of Mountains & Seas* (vol. 1 & 2) and *Blades of the Lunar Kingdom*. They are optional tools with creatures and weapons to help you flesh out your adventures within the Land of Blades. They can be found at danielhkwan.itch.io.

PARADISE MOUNTAIN



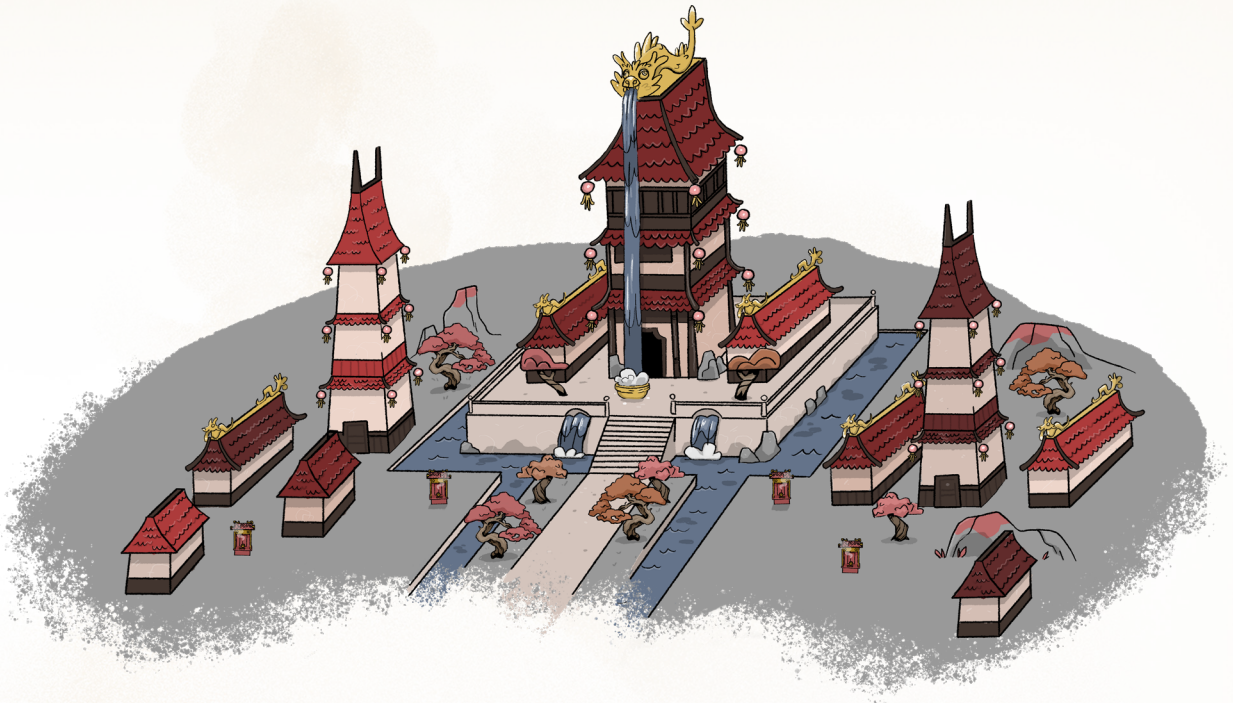
OVERVIEW

There are many paths that lead to the summit. None are right, yet none are wrong. There is only the path you travel.

Paradise Mountain is a mountain of immense spiritual importance located near the city of **Old Dragon's Nest**. This enormous mountain is located at the center of the Earthshield mountain chain that protects the western and northern borders of the Yue Dynasty. Central to the belief system of Yue, Paradise Mountain rises higher than any other peak in the Earthshield and is believed to have formed from the bones and teeth of the ancient creator of earth and the heavens.

There is only one known route leading to **Moon Sword Temple** at the summit of Paradise Mountain. From the foot of mountain to the temple, travelers must ascend ancient stone steps (**The Coiled Serpent**) that wind up and around the contours of the mountain. Despite the clear path to the temple at the summit, natural dangers like strong winds, fallen rocks, and heavy fog make the mountain a place for only the strong-willed. The long and treacherous staircase end with **Heaven's Gate**, a massive, natural stone archway that frames the **Sword of Heaven**.

The **Yuantian River** flows south from this range. It runs through the core of Yue into the Azure Expanse, passing two significant Yue cities - **Orchid Town** by Scholar's Lake and **Hekou** at its mouth. Numerous villages also thrive long its fertile banks.



OLD DRAGON'S NEST

No city in Yue can match the grandiosity of Old Dragon's Nest, nor the treasures contained within its vaults.

Old Dragon's Nest is a sprawling metropolis and capital of the Yue Dynasty. The city is strategically located along the westernmost reaches of the empire near the base of Paradise Mountain in the Earthshield range. From its origin in the sacred mountains, the Yuantian River flows through the heart of the city, bringing a constant supply of pure water. The city's name is rooted in the exploits of King Yuchang, the founder of the Yue Dynasty who many believed to have been a celestial dragon in human form. Given that an

uninterrupted line of Yuchang's descendants have presided over the city since the founding of the dynasty, it has truly become a nest for those tracing their bloodline to the "Moon Dragon". Old Dragon's Nest is ruled from Castle Haiyun; the current home of the King Yichen of Yue.

POINTS OF INTEREST:

Castle Haiyun - Castle Haiyun is an imposing fortification perched high above Old Dragon's Nest on a massive rocky outcrop located on the northern edge of the city. It is the seat of King Yichen of Yue. As such, its grandeur is unlike any other structure constructed by mortals in Yue with some calling it a paradise in the earthly realm. The castle features a central south-north running axis that is divided into the Star Hall (outer

court), Sun Hall (middle court), and the Moon Hall (inner court). Castle Haiyun is surrounded by a massive defensive wall with a single point of entry - the Celestial Gate. Even before entering, those who are lucky enough to approach the castle feel a sense of smallness and insignificance.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Notable People:

King Yichen - The current reigning monarch of Yue. Comes from a long line of nobles that forged order from the chaos that engulfed the Land of Blades centuries ago. He is a direct descendant of King Yuchang, the founder of the Yue Dynasty.

- ◆ Appearance: Regal
- ◆ Voice: Clear, light, and pleasant.
- ◆ Morality: Seen as a capable Monarch during times of peace and an unscrupulous leader in wartime.
- ◆ Motivations: The continuation of his dynasty.
- ◆ Secrets: King Yichen's health is in decline.

Gan Jiang - The finest bladesmith in Old Dragon's Nest. Within the Yue Dynasty's borders, Gan Jiang's skills are only surpassed by his master Ou Yezi the Divine Bladesmith. Gan Jiang is currently on retainer for King Yichen to exclusively crafts weapons for nobles and military officials.

Appearance: Long braided beard, rough hands, and always wearing a leather apron over his tunic.

- ◆ Voice: Soft-spoken.
- ◆ Morality: Humble and creative.
- ◆ Motivations: To forge a blade for a hero that will make an impact on the world.
- ◆ Secrets: Wishes to have the creative freedom that his master has achieved. Will secretly work on blade commissions that spark his creativity.

General Zhao - Commander-in-chief of the Moon Dragon Corps. He is a career soldier from a military family who has participated in many battles.

- ◆ Appearance: Well-kept attire. Fierce eyes and scarred face from countless battles.
- ◆ Voice: Gruff.

- ◆ Morality: Always on-guard.
- ◆ Motivations: Forthright and courageous.
- ◆ Secrets: General Zhao's sister is a once powerful warlord hiding in the south of Yue.

Minister Ke Xin - Minister of the Tranquil Silk Guard, Ke Xin was a retired and highly decorated Captain of the Moon Dragon Corps before being appointed to this post by King Yichen. Ke Xin works to protect the King's interests and wields Shengxie - an ornate jian (straight sword) symbolizing his authority.

- ◆ Appearance: Meticulously dressed in fine, silk clothing. Always wearing his sword.
- ◆ Voice: Low and gravelly.
- ◆ Morality: Loyal and committed to justice.
- ◆ Motivations: After retiring from the Moon Dragon Corps, Ke Xin felt like he was no longer able to serve the Yue Empire. He cherishes this new opportunity.
- ◆ Secrets: Ke Xin has no known vices or weaknesses that can be exploited.

Chief Shu - The current head of the Vagabond Sect and master of the Shadow Palm form. He was elected based on his martial arts prowess, moral integrity, and contributions to the wellbeing of the people of Yue.

- ◆ Appearance: Unknown to those who have never met him.
- ◆ Voice: Smooth, but often disguised with a flat tone.
- ◆ Morality: Cunning, yet empathetic.
- ◆ Motivations: To learn everything about the inner workings of the Yue bureaucracy.
- ◆ Secrets: Like other members of the martial arts sect, his location is always changing. As a head of a Virtuous Confederacy sect, Shu is the steward of an enchanted staff (disguised as a walking stick) that is a piece of an artifact connected to the sacred site of "Monkey Valley".

FACTIONS:

Moon Dragon Corps - The Moon Dragon Corps is the heavy infantry division of the Celestial Banner - the standing army of the Yue Dynasty. This force is under the direct command of the monarch of Yue, while the command of other forces fell to Minister-Commanders directly appointed by the King. They wear heavy iron lamellar armour and wield crossbows, dao, and dagger-axes.

Tranquil Silk Guard - The Tranquil Silk Guard is a imperial security force and military intelligence agency that serves the reigning monarch of Yue. Originating as a personal security service to the royal family, the guard developed into a highly regarded (and feared) police force responsible for collecting counter intelligence. To achieve their objectives, they have been granted the power of discretion in their application of the law and have the authority to overrule any judicial proceedings. Members of this elite guard have full autonomy to arrest and punish anyone within Yue's borders, including those of noble status. Because of this, they are highly feared by all levels of society and are often referred to as "wolves draped in silk". Members of the Tranquil Silk Guard wear light leather armour under dark blue silk overcoats featuring moon and cloud motifs. They carry specially crafted dao and zhanmadao (saber variations - see *Blades of the Lunar Kingdom*) alongside hand crossbows.

Vagabond Sect - The Vagabond Sect is the largest of the six orthodox martial arts sects of The Virtuous Confederacy. They are found throughout the Land of Blades but have a large contingent in Old Dragon's Nest. While their appearance suggests that all members are beggars, drifters, or rogues - people from all walks of life find their way to this sect. Members adhere to a strict code of conduct, conduct themselves virtuously, and will always try to protect common folk from corruption and abuses of power. Due to the low status associated with their image, the sect can maintain a complex communications network and are masters of tradecraft. Members of the Vagabond Sect do not carry items that would be identified as martial weapons. Instead of sword mastery, the Vagabond Sect emphasizes the mastery of unarmed and improvised weapon combat.



THE COILED SERPENT

Your journey to the summit of Paradise Mountain begins with the steps of the Coiled Serpent, which wind up and through the jagged cliffs that rise above you into the clouds.

The Four Sages of the Butterfly Pavilion say that, “conquering the coiled serpent is like reaching divinity”. Indeed, for most, the summit of Paradise Mountain can only be reached after an exhaustive and dangerous hike through the Coiled Serpent. While an exhaustive and at times dangerous journey, this is nothing compared to the dangers of the rough, natural mountainous terrain. The

Coiled Serpent is an ancient staircase built during the reign of the first monarch of Yue, King Yuchang, who sought to greet the gods from the top of Paradise Mountain but did not have the fortitude to traverse the dangerous natural terrain.

HEAVEN’S GATE

At the end of the Coiled Serpent is Heaven’s Gate - a spectacular natural stone archway in the mountain that marks the next step in one’s journey to witness the realm of the gods and learn about the order of the world. Sometimes called the “Portal into Heaven”, the gate frames the Sword of Heaven and Moon Sword Temple in a scene that brings many travelers to tears of joy.



THE CHIMING CLIFFS

You hear the soft sounds of ringing bells. Following the noise, you see a group of winged serpents gleefully basking in the glow of the sun.

The Chiming Cliffs is a site of great importance to the nobility of Yue. Rich in jade, gold, and other precious materials, this location serves as an important source of wealth and social power. **Mingshe** serpents (“chiming snakes” - see *Denizens of Mountains & Seas*) inhabit this part of Paradise Mountains. It is said that once their chiming ceases, the Yue dynasty will fall into economic ruin.

CHARACTERS:

Master Guo Weili - Known to many as the Serpent Speaker, resides in a small house built into the cliffs. For generations, his family has

cared for the winged serpents. As mandated by **King Yichen**, goods are sent to Master Guo on a weekly basis so that he may focus on his work.

- ◆ Appearance: Gentle, middle aged. Wears simple and functional clothing decorated with flying serpent motifs.
- ◆ Voice: Gravelly.
- ◆ Morality: Highly devoted to duty.
- ◆ Motivations: Master Guo has a young child who he is training as his successor.
- ◆ Secrets: He suffers from dizzy spells. Master Guo is quite ill and fears that he will not be able to complete training his successor.



MOON SWORD TEMPLE

The path to the summit treacherously winds through Paradise Mountain. Between biting winds and heavy cloud cover, death is but a single misplaced step away. As you climb beyond the top of the clouds, you are greeted by the sight of an immense sword protruding from the mountain. Constructed around it is an ancient temple complex tended to by monks clad in deep purple robes. As you draw closer, the smell of flowers fills the air.

Moon Sword Temple is a grand temple complex of great reverence - where heaven and earth meet within Yue's borders. Everything under the heavens and above the hills is subjected to the divine authority of the Sky Court - order and

peace exist when this authority is respected. But when ignored, those of the earth will incur their wrath. In the time before the establishment of the Yue Empire, the gods plunged a giant sword deep into Paradise Mountain. To the people of Yue, it became known as the Sword of Heaven, the most prominent symbol of the Sky Court's authority over the earthly realm. To honour their gift, the first monarch of Yue commissioned the construction of this sprawling building complex around the base of the colossal blade. To this day, it remains untouched by the conflicts that have ravaged the lands below.

THE MOUNTAIN ORCHID SECT:

"If the mountain doesn't defeat you, no one can. It shapes your resolve." - **Chi Sin, Master of the Mountain Orchid Sect**

Martial artists belonging to the Mountain Orchid Sect serve as stewards of Moon Sword Temple and the heavenly jian. Monks of the order aspire to understand the natural law of the world and the splendours of creation. Most notably, they are researchers and caretakers of mountain orchids, flowers of divine quality that resemble the crescent moon and sing in the moonlight.

CHARACTERS:

Master Chi Sin - Current Master of the Mountain Orchid Sect and one of the Six Grandmasters of martial arts in Yue. Chi Sin is a master of the Crescent Moon sword style.

- ◆ Appearance: Elegant, imposing, elderly.
- ◆ Voice: Soft, calming, gentle.
- ◆ Morality: Driven to learn and highly devoted to the gods of the Sky Court (heaven).
- ◆ Motivations: To protect the sanctity of Moon Sword Temple
- ◆ Secrets: In addition to her role as Master of the Mountain Orchid sect, Chi Sin wears a magical amulet that is a component of an artifact connected to the hidden location of the legendary "Monkey Valley".

Xiao Lan - A senior disciple of the Mountain Orchid who has spent her entire life living in the temple.

- ◆ Appearance: Brawny and towering. Xiao Lan keeps her hair short and cropped.
- ◆ Voice: Polite, booming.
- ◆ Morality: Humble and fiercely protective of her friends.
- ◆ Motivations: To find her parents. Xiao Lan has lived her entire life in the temple and hopes that her parents will one day ascend the mountain.
- ◆ Secrets: Xiao Lan has no recollection of her parentage. According to Chi Sin, Xiao Lan was carried to the peak of Paradise Mountain on a cloud when she was a baby.

Nianzhen - A recent initiate of the Mountain Orchid. Nianzhen is eager to earn his place at the temple.

- ◆ Appearance: Handsome with long, silky hair tied into a topknot.
- ◆ Voice: Formal, educated.
- ◆ Morality: Righteous to a fault.
- ◆ Motivations: To find a new family and become powerful enough to rid the Yue bureaucracy of corruption.
- ◆ Secrets: Nianzhen comes from a line of Yue nobles but was forced to discard his status and name after killing a powerful, but corrupt, noble.

NOTES & EVENTS:

* With its ornate pommel pointing to the heavens, locals say that it will one day be drawn from the mountain by the gods when they wage war against the demons of the prison beneath the earth.

* At night, when the temple is bathed in moonlight, the orchids gently sing. The monks view this as a sign of the gods singing a lullaby to all of the Land of Blades.

