



**YANLING**

**BOOK OF RITES**

# Yanling

*The Words of Power shape our reality. Speak these Words and the mountains and the rivers will bend. Write these Words and the ghosts and the spirits will be driven out. Even the unfathomable gods revere the Words of Power.*

**Yanling** are “Power Words”, ancient Chinese symbols that hold mystical power, able to influence the environment, the body, and the soul. Yanling have many uses, but perhaps most useful is the invocation of Yanling for a **Purification Ritual**. Such a ritual can break hexes and curses, provide guidance to lost souls, and bring peace to the restless dead.

This Book of Rites will teach you how to perform a Purification Ritual, a process will take **you and a friend roughly 2 hours** to complete. The Rites are designed to prepare novice Yanling practitioners - including you - for dangerous trials ahead. Study well; the powerful knowledge of Yanling contained within is the only thing standing between you and the darkness.

The first trial will take place in the **Fallen Flower Cave** of Hunan, China. **You must succeed.**

## First Trial: The Fallen Flower Cave

*The petals of the snowy tung tree lie still and silent on the forest floor. They know what rests inside the Cave; they know what happens when it is disturbed. The Wind doesn't blow here any more. It, too, is nervous.*

The beautiful rolling mountains of Western Hunan are pierced by labyrinthine cave systems. The Fallen Flower Cave is the biggest cave of them all. According to legends, this is a strange and mysterious place where the veil between worlds is frayed. Local residents believe that a powerful spirit dwells within, a phantasm that emerges once every year to abduct the souls of young maidens in the area. Without a soul, the women slide inevitably into uncontrollable madness and, eventually, perish, screaming hysterically with their final breaths.

Local women are encouraged to remain indoors after dark and to avoid the cave at all times. Not all people heed this advice and some fools stray too close.

Some days ago, the wealthy Zhu family - aloof, but held in high esteem by most - stopped visiting the marketplace. Rumour has it that the Zhus had been cursed by sinister Gu magic, and that their eldest daughter had been abducted to be made the latest Maiden of the Fallen Flower Cave. This strange disappearance has caused quite a stir among the townsfolk, who believe that the curse is spreading, flowing from unseen magical fissures...

## Objectives

- I. *Enter the house of the Zhu family,*
- II. *Purify the environs of any errant Ghosts or Spirits,*
- III. *Close the hole in the Veil Between Worlds.*



## Laying Out the Ritual

*The Sun and the Moon must not witness the Ritual. Draw the curtains and shut the blinds, work by candlelight only. It is safest to proceed dressed in purest white.*

Most cards - especially Event cards - have the name of the card written on the back so you can avoid spoiling the story by accidentally reading the card. Throughout setup and gameplay you will be tempted to read card text when you're not supposed to. You must fight this temptation!

1. Separate the cards into decks according to their type. Shuffle all the decks apart from Event cards and Hour cards. Keep these cards face down until directed to read them.
2. Each player chooses one of the four roles (*see page 7 for character stats and backstories*):
  - **Wen Feiran, The Narrator:** Responsible for reading out Site cards and Event cards.
  - **Bai Liuf, The Shamaness:** Responsible for creating the Fulu Scroll as Yanling cards are revealed, and for distributing Yanling card bonuses.
  - **Yongchun Yan, The Warrior:** Responsible for managing combat, and shouting the Power Word "Qi!" to intimidate Ghosts with their fearless fighting spirit.
  - **Luo Tianzhi, The Detective:** Responsible for revealing Yanling cards.
3. Each player takes their **Character card**, **effigy**, and 5 **Sanity tokens** (*clear gems*). Take a general (*white*) die and the character's die (*coloured*) for each player.
4. Ensure that the Hour cards are ordered sequentially with Hour I on the top of the deck and Hour XIII on the bottom. Hour XII is extremely dangerous; do try to hurry along.
5. You will now construct the house. Randomly place the 16 Site cards face down in a 4-by-4 square. Find the "**Entrance Hall**" card (*its name is on the back of the card*) and place it centre-left of the bottom row.
6. From the shuffled deck of Item cards, take one item for each player (*when drawing an item card you may immediately look at it*). Time will tell if these meagre tools are enough.
7. One-by-one, place the Yanling cards face down to construct an icon. You must replicate the menacing I-Ching ䷗ Gu from the *Ancient Chinese Book of Changes* (*see page 3*).
8. The **Shamaness** begins the sacred rite of completing the **Fulu Scroll**. Reveal the Qi Yanling card (*its name is on the back of the card*) and fill in the Qi word on the Fulu Scroll.
9. You will now enter the house. Place the character effigies on the "Entrance Hall" Site card, turn over the Entrance Hall card, and follow the instructions on the card.

You are locked in a fateful embrace with dangerous spirits. Your fate will be determined by your next actions. Proceed to the *Rules for Performing the Ritual*.

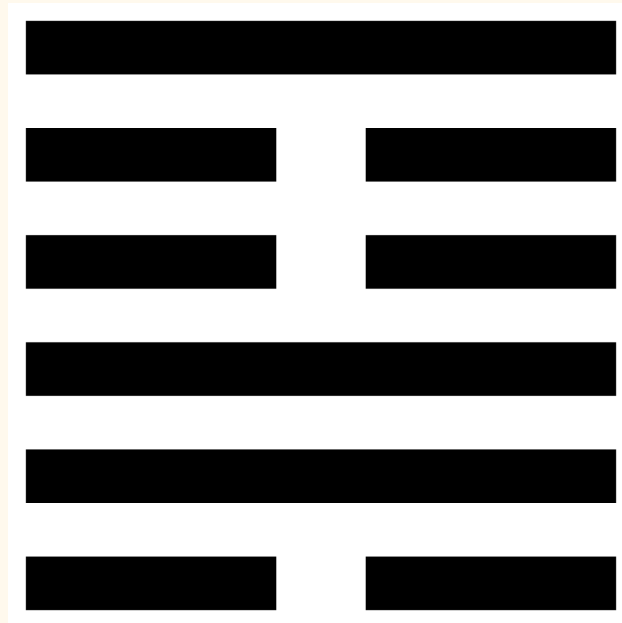


Fig 1. 蠱 Gu - *Corruption, Insanity, Poison*

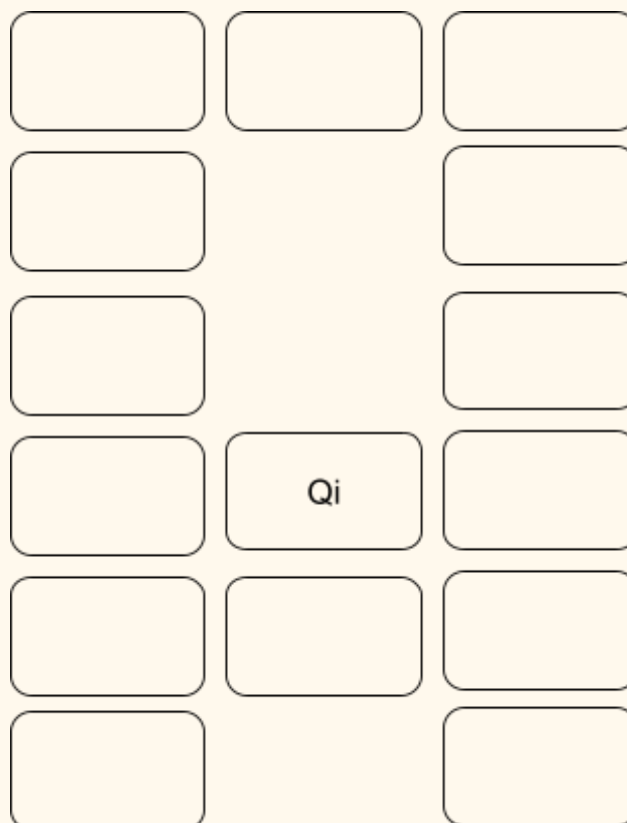


Fig 2. Yanling card layout for 蠱 Gu

# Rules for Performing the Ritual

*A Purification Ritual is a delicate force; faulty recollection can lead to disaster. Do not be afraid to consult these pages for guidance. There is strength in humility.*

## Round order

At the start of every round - including the first round - **flip over a Hour card and read it**. Read card I at the start of the game, card II on the second round, and so on. Follow each card's directions immediately. Hour cards affect gameplay and remain in play **permanently**.

Next, **give each conscious player two Action (white) tokens** - unconscious players cannot take any actions and receive no tokens. When taking an action, put one Action token to the side.

**Players alternately take actions** - player 1 takes one action, then player 2 takes one action, then player 1 takes their second action, and then player 2 takes their second action.

**An action can be used in one of five ways:**

1. Recover 1 Sanity token for yourself (*maximum of 5, plus any bonuses*)
2. Resuscitate an unconscious player in the same room; they restore 3 Sanity tokens
3. Move to any adjacent unexplored room (*up, down, left, or right*)
4. Move to any explored room anywhere in the house, regardless of distance
5. Read an Event card in the current room

Once both players have **spent all their Action tokens** (or have been knocked unconscious), a new round begins.

*Please continue reading for further specific rules.*

## Insights

Yanling words are discovered by gaining **Insights**. The **Detective** alone flips over the Yanling cards; it is the **Detective's** job to remember which card is which. Other players must not speak or gesture whilst the **Detective** is working lest it distract her.

When an Insight has been gained, the **Detective** chooses one face down Yanling card and turns it face up **permanently**.

They then choose an additional face down Yanling card and turn it face up. If the **second** Yanling card does not match any other face up cards then **flip it back over**.

If any face up Yanling cards form a matching pair with any other face up Yanling card then that word has been fully **revealed**.

The **Shamaness** must **find any revealed Yanling on the Fulu Scroll and fill them in with red ink**. Once completed, the Fulu Scroll will allow you to walk through the Veil Between Worlds - if you've found it - to face whatever abomination lies beyond.

Additionally, one of the pair of revealed Yanling cards will have a bonus written on it - **the Shamaness chooses a player and gives them this card**. The bonus comes into effect immediately. Discard the other (bonus-less) Yanling card.

## Sanity

Players begin with 5 Sanity tokens (*clear gems*) at the start of the game. Players can have a maximum of 5 Sanity tokens, plus any bonuses.

Sanity tokens can be lost due to certain Events or whilst exorcising Ghosts. Sanity tokens can be restored by taking an action (*see Round Order*), by being resuscitated by another player after falling unconscious, by using certain items, or by revealing certain Yanling.

If, at any point, a player loses all of their Sanity tokens, they fall unconscious and **their turn immediately ends**. They cannot participate in Exorcisms and they cannot read Event cards. They are unable to take any actions whatsoever until resuscitated.

**If both players are unconscious at the same time then the Ritual has failed. The players lose and the game ends.**

## Items

Items can be read as soon as they are drawn. The instructions for using an item card are written on the card itself. Items can be traded between players instantly for no cost if they are in the same room at any time. **Items can otherwise be used at any point during gameplay.**

N.B. Yanling bonuses are not cards and cannot be traded.

## Exploration

Any room that is face down is **unexplored**. When a player moves into an unexplored room, flip the Site card face up. The Narrator then reads the text on the card loudly and clearly. Follow any directions written on the card immediately.

Unless otherwise directed, **you cannot read an Event card in the same action as moving into a room**, whether it was previously explored or not.

When a player leaves a room, **retain** any Event cards that are unresolved by placing them on top of the Site card. Players may revisit rooms after they have been explored, and may read Event cards that were retained and left unresolved (*see Round Order*).

## Events

Event cards begin the game face down. When directed to find a particular Event card, use the names written on the backs of the cards. **To avoid spoiling the game's story do not read the front of Event cards until it is required.**

The Narrator should read out the text on Event cards when necessary. Each event has its own instructions written on it - follow these instructions immediately. **Once you have read an Event card, discard the card** (*unless the Event card explicitly says to retain the card in some way*).

Unless otherwise directed, **reading an Event card takes a full action.**

## Testing Skills

Some Event cards require a player to **test** a particular skill. Only one player's skill may be tested at a time. That player rolls their two dice and check what icons that have got - include any bonuses from Yanling and items.

If their total score is **equal to or greater than** the score on the Event card then the player has succeeded. Follow the instructions on the Event card accordingly.

## Exorcisms

There are occasions when a confrontation with sinister forces is inevitable. The **Warrior** is responsible for ensuring the rules for exorcisms are followed precisely, even if they're not doing the actual fighting.

When a ghost attacks a player, **all players in the same room as the ghost fight too.**

When a ghost attacks, place the Ghost card on the table face up so all the players can see it. The **Warrior** places Lore (*yellow*) and Might (*red*) tokens on the Ghost card according to its text, plus any bonuses.

All players exorcising the ghost roll their two personal dice. **Choose any two dice out of all that the dice were rolled.** (*If only one player is fighting the ghost, use the two dice they rolled.*)

For each Lore and Might icon shown on the chosen dice, the **Warrior** removes as many corresponding tokens from the ghost. If either player has any Yanling bonuses or items they may use them here. **Only chosen dice are counted for calculating bonuses.** All players fighting the ghost may apply any bonuses and items that they have.

*(To increase the chances of rolling well, the **Warrior** must shout "Qi!" whilst the dice are being rolled. If the dice are unfavourable, it is simply because the **Warrior** did not shout "Qi!" loudly enough.)*

**If the ghost has no Lore and no Might tokens remaining,** the ghost is banished to the spirit world and the exorcism ends. The players then **collect the reward** written on the Ghost card.

If the ghost survives, it savagely attacks the player in retaliation. The **Warrior** checks how much Sanity damage the ghost's attacks do (*written on the Ghost card*).

**If two or more Speed icons** were chosen (or gained from items or Yanling) then reduce the Sanity damage by 1 point.

The **Warrior** decides how to distribute the Sanity damage amongst the players exorcising the ghost, and removes Sanity tokens accordingly. The total number of tokens removed must equal the (adjusted) Sanity damage of the ghost.

**Repeat this process** of alternately rolling dice to damage the ghost, then taking Sanity damage from the ghost, until either the ghost is defeated or all the players exorcising the ghost lose all their Sanity tokens and fall unconscious. (*If a player and the ghost are both defeated at the same time, the reward is collected first then the player falls unconscious.*)

Once the exorcism has ended: **if it's a named Ghost** then discard the card, **if it's a Nameless Ghost** then shuffle it back into the Nameless Ghost deck.

## **The Veil Between Worlds**

*Your mother turned to look at you as you entered. The fire that she made before you arrived was burning low. She looked especially frail in this light. You sat close to her.*

*“Child, I am very proud of you. You’ve come so far.” The fire burnt a little brighter, a little higher. She still had power, even now. “Do you remember that business with the beetles when you were a girl?” You smiled. “Your mother’s daughter. You’ve come so far.”*

*“But my dear, there is something I must tell you.” She held out a strip of yellow paper in front of your face. “Between the Here-And-Now and the There-And-Then stretches a single thread. It ties together all of what we experience. I bet you can’t even see it yet.” She turned the paper edgeways. It was very thin, almost invisible from your perspective.*

*“But once you know how to see this thread from another direction,” she turned the paper to face you, its width obscuring your vision, “the thread is revealed to be just one edge of the veil between worlds.” She pressed the yellow paper into your hands.*

*“Behind that veil is...” The fire spat and hissed violently. She looked down at the paper. “I’m sorry I couldn’t stop it.” Her eyes rose to meet yours. “I’m sorry that you have to.”*

*Her gaze turned to the fire for a while, then she lay her head down on the bamboo mat. You wrapped around her to keep her warm, like you always did. She died that Winter.*






## Choosing a Character

*For every seed, there grows a tree. For every mouth, there exists a song. For every pair of feet, there lies a path. For all things - there is a purpose.*

### Wen Feiran 文斐然 - The Narrator

*A cursed narrative designer with a troubled past and a knack for creating horror games.*

Purple die:  Speed: 2  Lore: 2  Might: 2

A highly sought after narrative designer-writer, Wen had a troubled past and was haunted by terrible visions and nightmares. She sought escape, both by running away from home, and by turning her experience into games.

Seeking inspiration for her new game from the Miao Chinese group and their "Three Ancient Mysteries", Wen ventured into the mountainous regions of Hunan. As she sinks her teeth into research, weird incidents started to happen and the seemingly tranquil paradise gradually transformed into a sinister nightmare..

### Bai Liuf 白蝴蝶 - The Shamaness

*An eccentric shamaness who made extraordinary sacrifices in exchange for fearsome powers.*

Yellow die:  Speed: 1  Lore: 3  Might: 3

Feared for her power and often called a "Heretic Witch" for her controversial method of creating original Exorcist rituals by fusing elements across different spiritual practices (Daoism, Pure Land Buddhism and Gu Magic), Bai is the most multi-talented Shamaness that her tribe has known of this generation.

Studying under the guidance of the Old Liuf Shamanesses, Bai learned many of the ancient secrets and rich traditions of Miao Chinese lore, how to communicate with insects and how to purify the vengeful spirits that dwelt in dark places. Her bewitching beauty is a product of transformational magic which had been acquired through the ancient Butterfly Worship practices of the Liuf clan. After the head of the Liuf Clan revealed a horrifying prophecy of "The Darkening of the Light", Bai embarked on a dangerous journey to find the Fallen Flower Cave.

## Yongchun Yan 颜咏纯 - The Warrior

*A rebellious heiress and a rising star in the martial arts scene.*

Red die: ⚡ Speed: 2 ☯ Lore: 1 ★ Might: 3

The youngest child of the Yan Family, a wealthy family of land developers which capitalised on the rapid urbanisation of rural China. Recently they have set their eyes on an undeveloped piece of mountainous land in Hunan, despite the local dissent that this act will bring great misfortune.

Yongchun feels guilty about her background and couldn't care less about inheriting the family business - all she wanted was to be a professional fighter. She loved the adrenaline rush of overcoming tough challenges and hated the idea of having to deal with sociopathic businessmen in formal clothes.

Throughout much of her life, Yongchun has trained in various Neijia martial arts - a Chinese practice which utilises Yanling "Qi" to overcome opponents. Yongchun participated in many martial arts competitions as a child and continues the discipline into adulthood, much to the dismay of her parents. In the fighting ground, people often underestimate her because of her small stature and end up paying a heavy price for it.

## Luo Tianzhi 罗天织 - The Detective

*A forensic scientist suffering from heightened extrasensory perception.*

Green die: ⚡ Speed: 3 ☯ Lore: 2 ★ Might: 1

Being a well-known forensic scientist for the Regional Criminal Court, Luo takes her role very seriously. Unknown to many, Luo possesses an uncontrollable power of retrocognition. When she touches something, she triggers a flashback of memories or sensations which allows her to experience what has happened to it in the past. She used her skills to help bring some of the most infamous murderers to trial.

However, it has been difficult for her to cope with heightened extrasensory perception - experiencing violent flashbacks every single day has taken a toll on her wellbeing, but her hatred of injustice and her instinct to protect the vulnerable overwhelms everything in life.

Recently, Luo has been pulled into a series of strange incidents associated with the House of Zhu. The large family have vanished without a trace, and the local residents are reluctant to give information. However much the people of Hunan may distrust outsiders, they desperately need help against the horror that is manifesting itself on this beautiful land.

# Materials for the Ritual

*Before beginning the Ritual, preparations must be made. Seek out these items discreetly, lest the Ritual be disturbed.*

You will find the following materials in the game box:

- I. This book, The Book of Rites
- II. 15 Yanling cards
- III. 16 Site cards
- IV. 41 Event cards
- V. 14 Item cards
- VI. 6 nameless Ghost cards
- VII. 6 named Ghost cards
- VIII. 13 Hour cards
- IX. 4 Character cards
- X. 4 Zhizha (character effigies)
- XI. 4 character (*coloured*) dice
- XII. 2 general (*white*) dice
- XIII. 11 Sanity tokens (*clear gems*)
- XIV. 5 Lore (*yellow*) tokens
- XV. 5 Might (*red*) tokens
- XVI. 4 Action (*white*) tokens
- XVII. 1 incomplete Fulu Scroll & 1 red ink marker

*(Additionally we recommend getting a hold of a ceremonial bell and some candles.)*

## GAME LORE & STORY

“First Trial: The Fallen Flower Cave” is a scenario based on Chinese legend:

- "Maidens of the Fallen Flower Cave (落花洞女)"
- “Violet Lady: The Toilet Goddess”.

## CREDITS

- **Concept, Direction, Production, Art & Graphic Design:** Jing Tan
- **Game Design:** Jing Tan & Juju Adams
- **Editing:** Juju Adams

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