

# The Secret Arts Codex



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## ***Introduction***

Welcome to the **Secret Arts Codex**. This document is intended to increase the ease of access and use of the *Courtier* and *Scholar* Archetypes – both in seeing the costs of the Secret Arts, as well as how to think about using them in play! This is finished off by a Destiny Cost and Page Index for the chapter.

## ***Mastering The Secret Arts***

The Secret Arts were meant to model the chinese sensibility of magic in as playable form as possible... but it remains that there is a certain amount of mental adjustment involved to make easy use of the powers within! This section is designed to aid you in your quest to master your new powers, now that you are adventuring in the Land of the Gods.

## ***A Matter of Perception***

In many magic systems of western conception, say like, oh, D&D, the ancestor of all roleplaying games... Magic is a means for enforcing your will on the rest of the world – whether on a singular target or more. For example, you can say “My magician fires off a magic projectile!”, then roll some dice, or in some systems, spend magic points... and the missile zooms over and strikes the target, who then suffers the result, forced on them from without. When the Magician considers his ‘magic resources’, he only considers his spell list, either in his spell book or in his head... and how it will affect his target (and how many magic points it may cost, if it’s one of those systems).

The Secret Arts aren’t like this. Instead of consulting a spell book or thinking of a list of static spells, a Courtier or Scholar looks at the world for what it provides her – and tries to work with it to bring about the results she desires. Just like Warriors are always wary of a fight (or looking to start one, as the case may be), Courtiers and Scholars are always paying attention to the world for what it might offer them.

## ***Through the Challenge Lens***

The way to think of looking at the world for what it might offer is also to consider the **Challenge** of the Archetype involved. A Courtier is always looking for more *Influence*; looking into the relationships around them, and how intensely people feel about those relationships. This constant looking for more Influence is exactly how the player should think about the Secret Arts – their character should always be looking for more ways to work people, to work their Passions and Inspirations to their advantage. As a Courtier, you should master the Six Key Relationships and the Five Derivatives, as well – because knowing how to work them is crucial to the trade!

Scholars are no different; only their constant regard of the world around them is based on their quest for more *Knowledge*. After all, the warp and weft of the world’s fortunes, its luck and the flows of events... this is all knowledge the Scholar wants, whether to cast spells with or simply be aware of what’s going on around them! Knowing the Curses and Influences that are operating nearby, or their Passions and Inspirations, can lead to truly impressive knowledge of

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the world and everyone's place in it. To a Scholar, there is nothing more important than learning more about the world.

Here follow two examples of practicing this looking for what the world provides!

## *The Street of Brilliant Wonders*

**Story:** Zhu Chen, the illustrious courtier, strolls down the Street of Brilliant Wonders... and few are as brilliant as he is, dressed in his immaculate shimmering robes. Truly, he is a wonder as much as any! He stops here and there, greeting shopkeepers politely, who proffer their wares for his regard; as always, he simply smiles or offers a compliment... for he is here for the beauty of the day, not to buy. As he walks, his seeming serenity does not show his intense thoughtfulness – for he is considering the current plays at court. And even now, he estimates the lives and passions of those who stream politely past him and his retinue. That shopkeeper, so proud of his wares? His Joy in his shop is plain to see to the enlightened Chen; ah, that Passion could be made to serve, in a pinch.

That worthy reflects... *“Hm. Porcelain prices are stable at the moment, but if the court predictionists are right, there is a trade war with Eastern Liang in the offing. Should this man's business wax beyond the others and threaten to drive them out of business, I could easily use his Pride to fuel a Chan Inspiration to bring him down... they would bring pressure to bear on him, either forcing him to reduce his prices or destroy his business. Harsh, I know... but such is the price of order, sometimes.”* He puts down the proffered teacup, offers his thanks, and continues on, musing on how best to parry Shadow Jiang's latest maneuver at court.

**System:** Zhu Chen makes a point of walking around Thrashing Minister on a regular basis; not only is this good for his health, but he also gets to evaluate how things are going in the populace (nevermind that he can also spot useful relationships and situations that he might possibly take advantage of). On his earlier perambulations, he's noticed the happy and prosperous merchant – and hence, uses **Story of the Self**. Checking p.302, Zhu Chen's player sees the Difficulty for detecting a Passion that isn't overwhelming as being Moderate (20). Examining the Merchant's goods with exquisite manners and dressed in his finest court robes, he gets the +5 for Quality Tools and rolls his Awareness of six dice: 1,4,5,6,7,9 – or 19, +5 for a total of 24... just making it! He ascertains that the man's dominant Passion is Joy – pride in his business! He files the information away for later, just in case he might need it for the reasons mentioned above!

## *The Brothel of Last Hopes*

**Story:** Wu Zhao, the Yin-Yang Master of a thousand excellences, slips into the Lustrous Jade Brothel via a back door; for the Lady of the House is an old friend, and has called upon his services. His bodyguards (well, friends, really) relaxed somewhat, but it's sage wisdom to bring armed guards when venturing into Heaven-and-Earth City! Zhao reminds Liu Shao – “Remain nearby, my friend... I cannot afford to have you distracted while I am here! The Hell Clan might well choose this moment to try to remove this place as one of their worries, and I will need you alert.” Shao grumbles, but assents, and decides to circulate around – at least he can enjoy the beauty of the girls! Duan Jun, Zhao's apprentice, remains, for this will be part of his education! But here is Slender Willow, the current leader of the Lustrous Jade... indeed, she is one of the Jade Dragons herself! “At last you're here, Zhao! Come... I will show you our difficulty...” She leads them to the Common Room, which is closed and empty for the duration; no clients, no girls, no hushed conversation and quiet laughter.

Willow begins – “Zhao, lately whenever regular clients come into this room to meet with with their companion, things have been going wrong... upon the gift-giving, something horrid occurs... the gifts break, the stairs become slippery and the girl falls, the client, um, can't perform... it's crippling us. The Jade Dragon Society is helping, but there are limits to how much it can help, and for long... and our other work is suffering greatly, as we cannot help the women of this city if we are threatened by a complete loss of our income. It seems funny, that economics is a greater threat than the Semi-Devil and the Hell Clan...” Slender Willow smiled ruefully, the slight scar over one eye making her look wry.

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“When did it begin, Willow?” asked Zhao, face thoughtful. “Almost exactly two weeks ago,” She replied.

“Could you fetch me your records on your new clients for that time, and leave us undisturbed for a while?” She nodded and left. Wu Zhao busied himself with his divinations, carefully observing the results.

“Attend, Jun – this will be instructive. This is a powerful metal curse at work... no doubt created by someone’s sorrow. But it’s an unusual one; its effect is here, upon this room, rather than on an individual.”

“That’s possible?” The young scholar was amazed. “Oh, absolutely.” replied the scholar. “It does, however, make it a challenge – for I have no great facility with curses. But there are still actions we can take to remedy the situation, even so. My supposition is that the curse’s origin has to do with a specific client, as well as his attendance.” He then sent Jun to fetch Willow, who brought in the client listing books and they went to work.

Hours later, they had narrowed the field of possible clients of interest to three – but all three were wealthy... and therefore, problematic.

A week later, Willow visited the Wu Palace; it so happened that Duan Jun was visiting, being further educated in the Secret Arts. “It worked! The Talisman worked as you said it would – once we had the right husband in the Common Room, and the little disasters started happening... I put up the Talisman. But that’s not all... it didn’t stop until some time later, when the strangest thing happened.” She paused for breath, and Jun couldn’t restrain himself. “What happened then?” She smiled broadly – “The man’s wife showed up and asked for a job in the House – it was the strangest thing! She said that she felt that being sad her husband spent so much time there, she felt she should do something new and visit there herself – and she decided on the spur of the moment to ask if she could join!” Jun broke out laughing, but Zhao simply smiled...

**System:** Wu Zhao’s job of ensuring the Brothel’s continuance is a difficult one. Since the Brothel is an outpost of the benevolent Jade Dragon Society, it serves a righteous purpose under Heaven – it helps the cause of all women, who suffer under the rather harsh social mores of Shen Zhou. So Zhao would support it come what may, even if Slender Willow wasn’t a personal friend. The Lustrous Jade Brothel is already considerably at hazard (you may read more about it and its role in Thrashing Minister City in the upcoming *Weapons of the Gods Companion*), but being closed by a powerful curse could still end it anyway.

He sets to work, and uses **Story of Fortune** to ascertain the nature of the spell afflicting the brothel, performs I-Ching Divination and rolling his Learning of 6 dice, he gets 4,4,4,9,9,0 – scoring a 34, easily beating the 10 Difficulty (The GM had decided there was definitely a powerful spell on the place). As he thought, it’s a fairly potent **Metal Curse**, which brings troubles! The trigram *chien* indicates that the Father seeks out *tui* – pleasures, resulting in quarrels; the answer is in the trigram *k’un*, the wife, must find the solution in the trigram *sun*, to be flexible! His surmise – that it is a husband whose excessive use of the brothel is breaking his wife’s heart – seems to be confirmed. Zhao decides to follow the trigram’s advice: he will try and turn the curse back on its source, the grieving wife! He paces the constellations, while inscribing a talisman... and he spends 1 Destiny and uses the best materials to create a **Quality Talisman**, for a +10 to the roll! (The other reason to create a Talisman is that it is ideal for making spells that will invoke later.) He rolls his *Crafting (Curses)* of 5 dice for a 2,3,7,8,8 – a 28, +10 for a 38! Invoking the Yin-Yang Curse Technique, he beats the Recovery of the Curse (34) and enchants the Talisman with a powerful **Wood Influence**.

Later, when the Curse activates with the presence of the correct husband in the Common Room of the Brothel, Jun slaps the Talisman into place on the central support beam – activating the powerful Spell. Given that the Metal Curse inflicts a crippling Weakness Condition on activities in the House (an Action Penalty of –10... it’s a Major Curse), the Wood Influence will grant a powerful Hyperactive Condition; in this case a Destiny Bonus of 5 points when she does something new and different with her life!

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## Courtier Variants

### *Minor Courtier* 17 *Destiny*

#### Secret Arts (incl. Basics)

<b>Intrigue</b>	5
Passion & Inspiration Lores	0
<u>Controlling Passions</u>	5
Yin-Yang Passions	1
Inflame/Soothe Passions	1
Stealthy Work	1
<u>Extraordinary Courtier Techniques</u>	0
Anger-Inspiring	2
Exploitation of Sorrows	2

*Recommended Skill:*  
*Inspire (Trust) 3\**

### *Cunning Merchant* 17 *Destiny*

#### Secret Arts (incl. Basics)

<b>Intrigue</b>	5
Passion & Inspiration Lores	0
<u>Controlling Passions</u>	5
Elemental Passion Progression	3
Inflame/Soothe Passions	1
Stealthy Work	1
<u>Extraordinary Courtier Techniques</u>	0
Exploitation of Sorrows	2
<b>Predictionism</b>	0

*Recommended Skill:*  
*Inspire (Trust) 3\**

### *Local Matchmaker* 17 *Destiny*

#### Secret Arts (incl. Basics)

<b>Genius</b>	5
Advice Skills	0
<b>Intrigue</b>	5
Passion & Inspiration Lores	0
<u>Controlling Passions</u>	5
Inflame/Soothe Passions	1
<u>Extraordinary Courtier Techniques</u>	0
Lassitude, Joy & Love	1

*Recommended Skill:*  
*Inspire (Dutifulness) 3\**

### *Young Circuit Judge* 17 *Destiny*

#### Secret Arts (incl. Basics)

<b>Understanding</b>	0
Story of the Self	5
<b>Intrigue</b>	5
Passion & Inspiration Lores	0
<u>Manipulating Inspirations</u>	5
Inflame/Soothe Inspirations	1
<u>Extraordinary Courtier Techniques</u>	0
Lassitude, Joy & Love	1

*Recommended Skill:*  
*Persuade (to Speak Truth) 3\**

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## Scholar Variants

### *Roving Savant* 19 *Destiny*

#### Secret Arts (incl. Basics)

<b>Daoist Magic</b>	5
Curse & Influence Spells	0
<u>Crafting Curses</u>	5
Yin-Yang Curses	1
Inflame/Soothe Curses	1
Quick Work	5
<u>Extraordinary Daoist Technique</u>	0
Grievous Act of Metal	2

*Recommended Skill:*  
***Crafting (Curses) 3\****

### *Lowborn Strategist* 11 *Destiny*

#### Secret Arts (incl. Basics)

<b>Genius</b>	5
Advice Skills	0
Good Advice	3
Legendary Genius	3
<b>Predictionism</b>	0

*Recommended Skill:*  
***Tactics (Military) 3\****

### *Local Midwife* 10 *Destiny*

#### Secret Arts (incl. Basics)

<b>Medicine</b>	0
Secrets of Diagnosis	3
Physical Conditions	0
<b>Secrets of Treatment</b>	5
Elemental Physical Condition Progression	1
Inflame/Soothe Physical Conditions	1

*Recommended Skill:*  
***Medicine (Birthing) 3\****

### *Village Predictionist* 18 *Destiny*

#### Secret Arts (incl. Basics)

<b>Understanding</b>	0
Story of Fortune	5
<b>Predictionism</b>	0
Tools of Divination	5
<b>Daoist Magic</b>	5
<u>Extraordinary Daoist Technique</u>	0
Great Benison of Fire	1
Instant Influence	2

*Recommended Skill:*  
***Learning (Divination) 3\****

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<i>Basic Secret Arts</i>		
Secret Arts <i>[Required for All]</i>	0	273
Introduction to Medical Conditions	0	274
Health and Sickness	0	276
Changing Chi Conditions	0	279
<i>Secret Arts of Medicine</i>		
Medicine <i>[Any]</i>	0	285
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<u>Secrets of Treatment</u>	5	289
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Inflaming/Soothing of Physical Conditions	1	290
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<u>Secret Arts of Genius</u>		
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Legendary Genius	3	294
<u>Secret Arts of Prediction</u>		
Prediction Skills	0	294
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<u>Extraordinary Courtier Techniques</u>		
Passions	0	307
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<u>Controlling Passions</u>	5	312
<u>Manipulating Inspirations</u>	5	314
 <u>Extraordinary Courtier Techniques</u>		
Lassitude, Joy & Love	1	306
Anger-Inspiring	2	307
Instant Inspiration	2	307
Exploitation of Sorrows	2	307
Fear-Inspiring	3	307
Distracting Suggestion	5	307
 <u>Controlling Passions</u>		
Yin-Yang Passions	3	312
Elemental Passion Progression	3	312
Paired Passion Creation	5	313
Inflaming/Soothing of Passions	1	313
Stealthy Work / Quick Work	1/5	313
 <u>Manipulating Inspirations</u>		
Yin-Yang Inspirations	3	314
Elemental Inspiration Progression	3	314
Paired Influence Creation	5	314
Inflaming/Soothing of Inspirations	1	315
Stealthy Work / Quick Work	1/5	315

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<i>The Scholar's Art</i>		
Daoist Magic <i>[Scholars Only]</i>	5	316
<u>Extraordinary Daoist Techniques</u>		
Curse Spells	0	318
Influence Spells	0	321
<u>Crafting Curses</u>	5	323
<u>Manipulating Influences</u>	5	326
Manifesting Spirits	15	328
Animating Corpses		
<u>Extraordinary Daoist Techniques</u>		
Great Benison of Fire	1	317
Grievous Act of Metal	2	317
Instant Influence	2	318
Terrible Rising Water	3	318
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Swift Curse of Wood	5	318
Summoning the Earth's Folly	5	318
Dancing Metal Intercession	5	318
Rising Flame Intercession	5	318
<u>Crafting Curses</u>		
Internal/External Curse	3	323
Yin-Yang Curse	1	324
Elemental Curse Progression	1	324
Paired Curse Creation	5	325
Inflaming/Soothing of Curses	1	325
Stealthy Work	1	326
Quick Work (Very Quick Work)	5/10	326
<u>Manipulating Influences</u>		
Internal/External Influence	3	326
Yin-Yang Influence	1	326
Elemental Influence Progression	1	327
Inflaming/Soothing of Influences	1	327
Paired Influence Creation	5	327
Stealthy Work	1	328
Quick Work (Very Quick Work)	5/10	328