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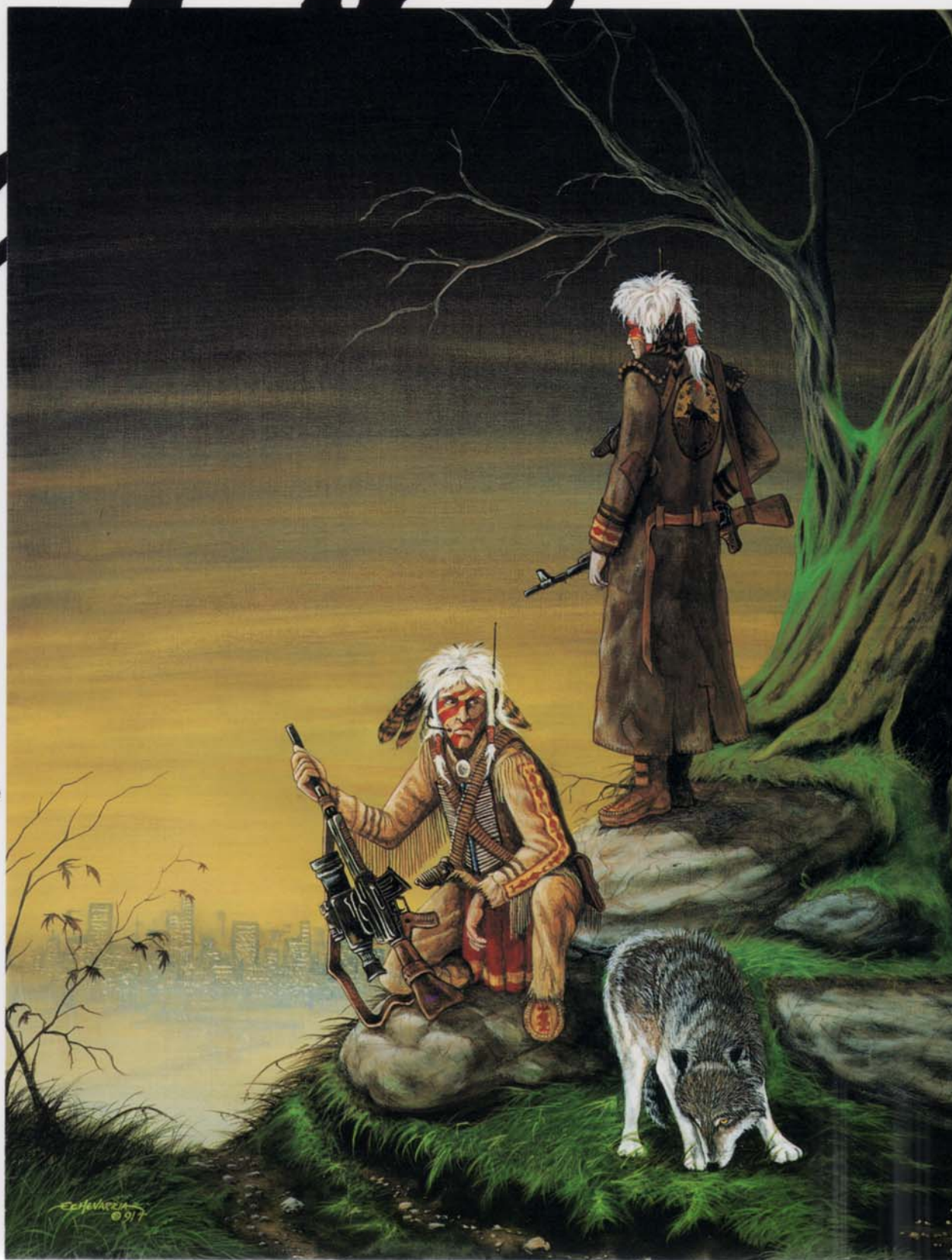
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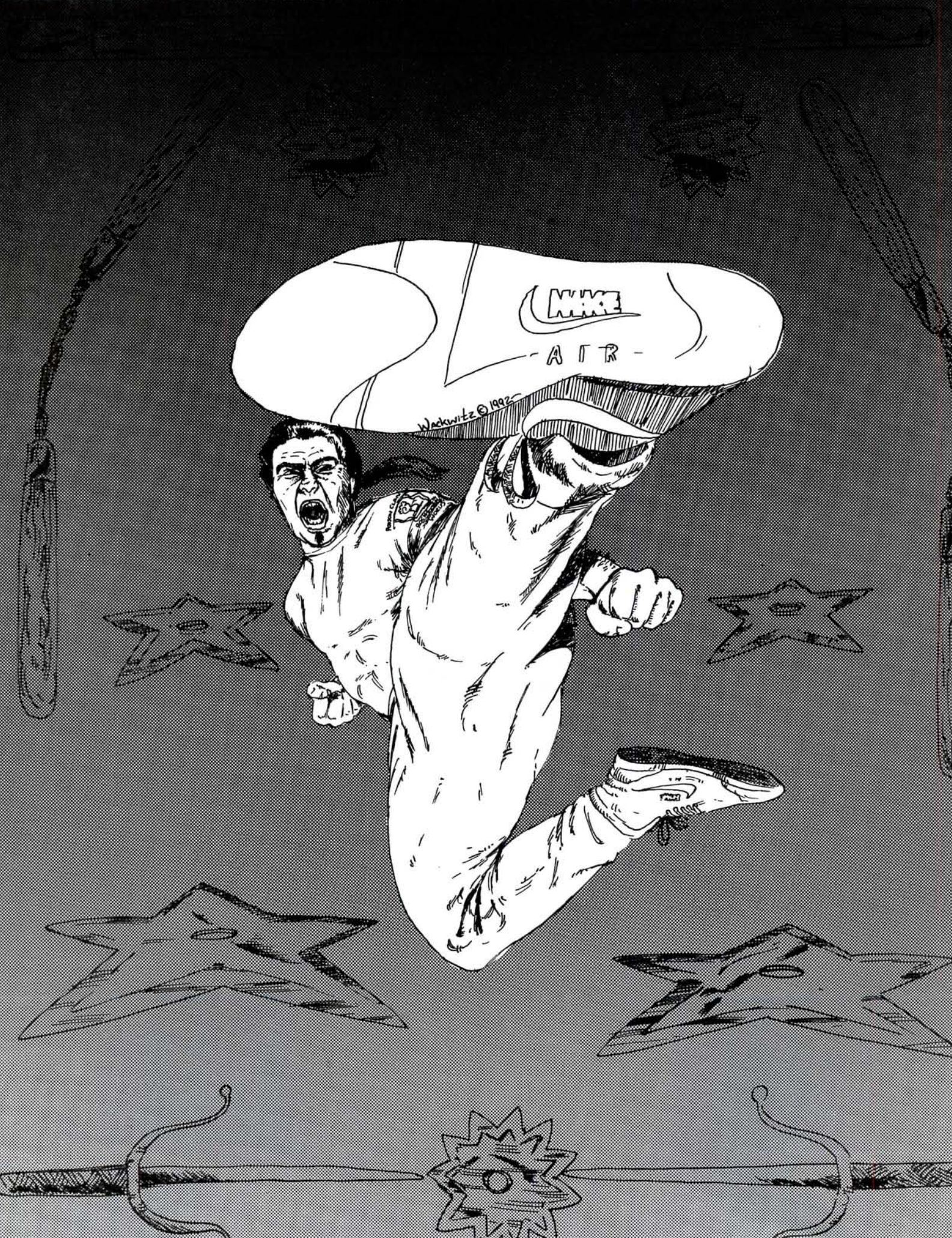
Dark Sun Review

Shadowrun Totems

CORPS Martial Arts

Age of Ruin Adventure





Pulling No Punches

by Greg Porter

CORPS is an extremely condensed system, compressing rule concepts down to the bare minimum to speed play and make it more affordable. As with many compression techniques, one of the things that you can lose in the process is fine detail. For GM's who actually have some martial arts experience, and try to incorporate this knowledge into their campaigns, **CORPS** may not have enough "flavor." Here are some advanced martial arts rules to correct this.

Rank

Generally, a **CORPS** character is assumed to be barely professional if they have a total skill of 6 in a given field, and professional if they have a primary skill of 6 or 7. Each martial art has certain proficiency levels that must be reached before advancement to the next level. The example below is Tae Kwon Do, or "the art/way of hands and feet," the Korean martial art. The level of skill must be reached as either an overall level, or by using 4 or more Secondary skills in addition to the Primary Skill. Tertiary skills may also be used, but only count as half a Secondary skill. The ranking system below is typical. Other arts may have different scales.

Example: If the required level is 6, you could either have a 6 in "Martial Arts," a 4 in "Martial Arts" and +2 in four Secondary skills, or +2 in three Secondary skills, +1 in another Secondary skill, and +1 in two Tertiary skills. In the latter case, the +1 in two Tertiary skills counts as an extra +1 in the lower Secondary skill.

Once you reach 1st gup, you are ready to advance to 1st rank, which is the basic "black belt." If you have a related

Rank	Skill required	Other requirements
Black belt (1st level)	7 in four areas	Philosophy-3, History-3, WIL-4, AWR-4, Pain tolerance
Black belt (2nd level)		
Black belt (3rd level)	8 in four areas	Philosophy-4, AGL-5
Black belt (4th level)		
Black belt (5th level)	9 in four areas	Philosophy-5, History-4, WIL-5, AWR-5, AGL-6

character background and a lenient GM that lets you acquire this level of skill in some informal sense, like a really tough childhood, some odd self-taught style, etc., a level of 6 is the maximum you could reasonably hope to achieve. Otherwise, the GM should assume the character received formal training somewhere, and this should be part of the character background.

Formal training also has certain other requirements or benefits. First, there is the basic skill structure in the rules. Second, to reach a level of 7 in Martial Arts, you have to have an AGL of at least 4, since Primary skills cannot exceed the level in the governing Attribute. There are other attribute

minimums, enforced not by the rules, but by the governing body of that martial art. Training also includes meditation and some history of the martial arts.

At a rank of 5th level, the character has reached the level of "Master," and in martial arts circles, can use that as a prefix on his name. A Master is qualified to teach and accredit other people up to the black belt level. Master level is also about the maximum level of human performance in the martial arts. It is possible to get higher levels of skill, but they are not

	Rank Skill required	SP for overall level	SP with secondary skills ^o
White belt (9th gup)	None	0SP	0SP
Yellow belt (8th gup)	2 in four areas	9SP - Aptitude bonus	8SP - Aptitude bonus*
Orange belt (7th gup)			
Green belt (6th gup)	3 in four areas	16SP - Aptitude bonus	13SP - Aptitude bonus
Purple belt (5th gup)			
Blue belt (4th gup)	4 in four areas	25SP - Aptitude bonus	20SP - Aptitude bonus
Brown belt (3rd gup)			
Red belt (2nd gup)	5 in four areas	36SP - Aptitude bonus	29SP - Aptitude bonus
Black stripe (1st gup)	6 in four areas	49SP - Aptitude bonus	40SP - Aptitude bonus
^o Optimized for minimum point cost, not including Tertiary skills			
*Only if your AGL is 5 or less			

Rank	Skill required	Other requirements
Black belt (6th level)	9 in four areas	WIL-6
Black belt (7th level)	9 in four areas	AWR-6
Black belt (8th level)	9 in four areas	WIL-7
Black belt (9th level)	9 in four areas	AWR-7

required for advancement to the most lofty levels. A character who is at this level has some degree of international recognition within their martial art, especially among those at their level or greater. Characters at this level who regularly win tournaments may be approached to endorse lines of martial arts equipment, be featured in magazines, or write books on the subject.

At the 8th level, a character is a "Grand Master," and is among an extremely elite circle within her art. She is qualified to train people as high as they can go. The 9th level is the highest level in this martial art. A person who makes martial arts a profession, but otherwise has a normal lifestyle, can not expect to reach this level until their late 30's, at *least*. Characters whose background lets them ignore things like education, making a living, or any semblance of a real personality (i.e., "trained from birth in the secret arts of the Ninja") might get there earlier.

Combination Maneuvers

Combination maneuvers are where you attempt to do two actions on the same Initiative segment. You simply declare what you are doing as the combination. This occurs on an Initiative of 1 point less than normal, and penalties based on sequence are *averaged*. For instance, you can declare a feint/attack. If you have a skill of 7, you normally act on Initiative 7 and 5, with the second action (the attack), taking a -2 modifier. Instead, with a combination maneuver, both actions occur (in sequence) on Initiative 6, and both take a -1 modifier. Multiple combinations can be done in a second, but each combination counts as a separate action. So, if you feint/attack twice, the first feint and attack takes a -1 modifier, and the second takes a -4 modifier (-1 for first combination, -2 more for second action, plus extra -1 for second combination). If you have a skill of 6, these occur on Initiative 5, and Initiative 2. You cannot do more attacks in combination than you can without them. A person with a skill of 4 gets 3 actions (Initiative 4,2,0). They cannot do two combination moves, as this would be a total of 4 actions.

The most natural use of the combination is to get in multiple actions on a slightly slower opponent, or to prevent any reaction moves an opponent might make. For instance, take a person with a skill of 7 vs. a skill of 5. The first person acts on Initiative 7, then both act on Initiative 5, order determined by a die roll. The person with a higher skill could guarantee himself two actions by doing a combination maneuver on Initiative 6, like a double punch, punch/block, or feint/called shot.

If the combination maneuver has moves which normally act on different Initiatives, the Initiative of the combination is based on the lower of the two. So, a move/punch combination acts on the movement Initiative of the person, minus 1. Again, against an opponent with a lower skill, this can be useful. If two people are out of reach of each other, the advantage is with the person who waits for the opponent to move within range since, on the Initiative phase in which the opponent moves, you can attack him. With a combination move/attack, who goes first is a die roll instead, since the attack occurs on the same Initiative as the movement.

Special Weapons

Certain weapons are associated with martial arts more than they are with more traditional combat forms. All these weapon skills or styles may be learned by anyone, but for flavor, assume that the maximum level that can be reached is the same as your best Martial Arts skill (Primary or Secondary, but not Tertiary).

Some US martial arts schools do not teach weapon forms, except the use of shonai. These skills would appear as follows on the CORPS skill chart:

Melee weapons

Bo staff
Shonai
Nunchaku

Thrown weapons

Shuriken

Martial arts

Martial punch
Sai

Bo staff: A longer than normal staff, usually between 2 and 2.5m long. It has an initiative modifier of -2, and does +2 combination damage. Used as a melee weapon, it has a few unusual attributes. First, it can reach up to 2 hexes away from the user. Attacks made at a range of 2 hexes take a -2. Attacks at a range of 1 hex are at +0, and attacks against an opponent in the same hex are at -2. It has an AV of 3, and any given location of the staff is counted as a Size 5 for purposes of breaking it. If there is insufficient room to wield it (2 hexes in all directions), the user takes a -1 to all use of the staff per hex per direction that is lacking, counting the six directions that a character can face, plus the vertical dimension. For use as a thrusting weapon, clear space is only required in the direction opposite the attack. The character takes an extra -1 if trying to block thrusts while so constrained.

Shonai: Bamboo practice swords, used in the sport of kendo. A person formally trained in this skill knows the proper etiquette and use of gear for kendo. The shonai has an initiative modifier of -1, does +0 combination damage, and kendo fighters generally wear AV1/1 armor over all parts of their bodies. In sport, injuries are uncommon unless someone strikes harder than is necessary. A shonai splinters if it delivers or absorbs 3 points of damage in a single hit.

Sai: Steel blocking and thrusting weapons. This skill may be learned as a Tertiary skill to Martial punch. As such, it allows use of martial punch to block or parry weapons without risk of losing your arm in the process. It has an initiative modifier of +0, and can also be used for +1 lethal thrusting damage if the tip is sharpened, and +0 combination thrusting damage otherwise.

Nunchaku: Colloquially known as “nunchucks,” or “chucks,” this is a pair of wood or metal bars connected by a short length of rope or chain (AV1 or AV3, respectively). Used in one hand, they have an initiative modifier of -1, can strike for +1 combination damage, and attempt blocks or parries with an extra -1 modifier. In both hands, they have a +0 initiative modifier, and can be used to block cutting attacks, or grab a weapon or hand.

Shuriken: Generally useless distraction weapons, seen mainly in the hands of delinquent minors and actors in bad martial arts movies. These have a range mod and initiative modifier of +0, and large ones can do -1 lethal damage if sharpened. Any hit except a graze on bare flesh, however, is sufficient to deliver a dose of a drug or poison.

Advanced Maneuvers

There are only a few Tertiary skills listed in **CORPS**. For martial arts, here is a sampling of the possible Tertiary skills:

Martial arts

Martial punch

- Elbow strike to rear
- Side arc punch
- Combination maneuver

Martial kick

- Back arc kick
- Side arc kick
- Combination maneuver

Martial hold

- Grab weapon hand
- Choke hold

Martial escape

- Combination maneuver
- Martial block
- Parry weapon hand
- Block with leg
- Parry with arm
- Parry kick attacks
- Combination maneuver

Martial dodge

- Combination maneuver

Martial throw

- Foot sweep
- Combination maneuver

Lethal blow

- Lethal punch
- Lethal kick
- Combination maneuver

These are extremely useful in a world where villains are stupid enough to get within arms length of a skilled martial artist. The maneuvers are fairly self-explanatory, but a few may require clarification.

Strikes to a particular facing are used to counter the minuses normally taken for that facing. For instance a +1 Tertiary skill in “Elbow strike to rear” will help offset the -3 modifier for rear arc attacks.

“Grab weapon hand” lets you grab the hand of anyone holding a weapon, and lets you point the weapon in a direction other than at yourself. With a high skill, the hold can be easily maintained. In addition, your STR Aptitude (counting martial arts) is a penalty to the other’s physical actions, making it very hard for him to evade when you punch his lights out. To actually aim the weapon in such circumstances uses a skill of the difference in STR Aptitudes. If this is 0, then neither side can aim the weapon at another target.

Example: Counting all Tertiary skills, you have a “Grab weapon hand” skill of 7. Added to your STR of 5 or 6, this gives you an effective STR of 12 or 13, for a STR “Aptitude” of 3. So, in combat you act on Initiative 7, and grab the weapon as a called shot. Your opponent automatically takes a -3 modifier (your STR Aptitude) on any shot she tries to take, and cannot shoot at you until she successfully completes a Brawling or STR task vs. your effective STR (which can be augmented by her skill “Martial hold” or “Martial escape”). In the movies, this maneuver is usually followed up by something vicious, like a called shot to break the arm holding the weapon, or something else to put the individual out of commission (easier because the opponent’s melee defense takes a -3 modifier as well).

“Parry weapon hand” is a way to “dodge” gunfire at point-blank range. You knock the weapon away (attacking vs. the opponent’s melee defense), so that a single shot/burst misses you if you succeed. If the person is holding a melee weapon instead of a gun, a +1 in this skill helps counter the penalty you take for attempting a parry, and makes it less likely that you end up blocking a knife thrust with your arm. This is similar to the “Grab weapon hand” maneuver, but is based on “Martial block” instead of “Martial hold.”

Combination maneuvers are as described earlier. A +1 Tertiary skill with a *particular* combination maneuver sort of lets you “bypass” the -1 Initiative and skill penalty, but a *separate* Tertiary skill is needed for *each* combination. A really good martial artist has a broad repertoire of these, allowing devastating first-strike efficiency.

Gathering “ki”

In prepared situations, a character may try to focus part of his energy and awareness into a blow, to do things like break boards, bricks or other materials. To let a character attempt this during play, you can do the following. For each point of Initiative and defense a character sacrifices, he can add 1 to his STR for damage purposes, with a maximum of his STR or total skill, whichever is lower. Obviously, you cannot sacrifice so much that you act on an Initiative of less than 0. Your Initiative is reduced to reflect that you are taking time to set up

the maneuver, and your defense is reduced to reflect that you are concentrating on offense, not defense. STR is increased only for the purpose of damage done on a single blow. The most likely use is as a *coup de grace* shot, ki combined with a lethal blow (i.e. the Heavy Metal punch).

Example: Characters with a STR of 5, AGL of 6, and skill of 7 gather ki. They normally have a DV of 3 with a punch (Aptitude of STR+Skill). If they gather 4 points of ki, their base defense drops from 2 to -2, and they act on Initiative 3 instead of 7. However, their punch now has a DV of 4, since their effective STR for damage purposes is now STR+Skill+ki.

This maneuver can be hazardous. In practice, it is seldom done without warm-up and stretching exercises. Attempting it as a combat option can be dangerous. If done, the character needs to complete a HLT task with a Difficulty of any extra STR gained from the attempt. Failing this roll means the character takes a combination impairment (half non-lethal/half lethal) of the amount failed by to the part of the body used.

Styles

Different countries have developed their own forms of martial arts, of varying usefulness and unknown parentage. Few of the "ancient" martial arts you hear about actually date back further than the early 20th century. They may use names of traditional forms, but may only guess at the techniques. This does not mean they aren't valid combat skills, just that claims of ancient and revered traditions are not always true. The skill specializations below are recommended for the four areas needed for advancement to a high belt level. The Tertiary skills listed are suggested if you choose that route instead. If you have training that suggests otherwise, feel free to modify them.

Karate (Japanese)

- Martial punch
 - Combination punch/punch
 - Combination feint/punch
- Martial kick
- Martial block
 - Parry weapon hand
 - Parry kicking attack
- Lethal blow
 - Lethal punch
 - Lethal kick

Tae Kwon Do (Korean)

- Martial punch
 - Combination punch/punch
 - Combination punch/block
- Martial kick
 - Back arc kick
 - Side arc kick
- Martial block
 - Block with leg
 - Parry with arm
- Martial dodge

Jujitsu (Japanese)

- Martial hold
 - Grab weapon hand
 - Break holds
- Martial block
- Martial dodge
- Martial throw
 - Foot sweep
 - Combination throw/hold
- Military training** (no belt system)
- Martial punch
- Martial kick
- Martial hold
 - Called shot - arm
 - Called shot - neck
- Lethal blow
 - Lethal punch
 - Lethal kick
- Savate** (France)
- Martial punch
- Martial kick
 - Back arc kick
 - Side arc kick
- Martial block
 - Block with leg
 - Parry kicking attacks
- Martial throw
 - Foot sweep
 - Combination kick/throw

Note that the Tertiary skills specialize in different ways. While there is no overall "Parry" Tertiary skill, you can buy parrying in different ways. One is to specialize in an attack type to be parried, and the other is to specialize in the part of the body used to parry with. For instance, "parry weapon hand" can be attempted with both the hands and feet, so if you are injured in one area, you can still use another. The other way is to specialize the part of the body used, like "parry with hands." This lets you parry *any* type of attack, but *only* with your hands. The same specialization applies to attack types as well. Most schools do not teach weapon parrying techniques until 1st gup or higher.

Paranormal Options

In campaigns where there is significant paranormal activity, the martial arts might be a way to develop psychic abilities. Certain secret groups, like the dreaded Ninja, are said to have powers that could normally be attributed to wizards. Assume a character has to be the equivalent of a 5th level black belt before she can even find out about these powers, much less find anyone to teach them. This would be an extremely significant part of a character's background.

Any person who is basically human, but who has developed psychic abilities through intense training in the martial arts, probably has these limitations on the powers:

Paranormal Modifiers

Ranged or Self (depending on power)

Conscious

Inherent

Invisible

Self or Others (depending on power)

Drain (vs. Power)

Character must complete a Difficulty 8 WIL task to use

Cost

5 or 2SP

2SP

5SP

5SP

5 or 2SP

2SP

-3SP

The cost for a given power therefore ranges from 15SP to 21SP. Only certain powers are likely to be applicable or reasonable through this sort of concentration and application of will:

Dominate (influence the actions of creatures through will alone, may require initial eye contact)

Microstat (applies vs. a foe's STR to weaken them (nerve strike))

Microstat (applies vs. a foe's AWR to help make yourself "invisible")

Superstat (an extreme version of gathering your "ki," to perform amazing feats of strength).

Protect (drop into suspended animation or feigned death, requiring little air, water or food).

Armor (a version of pain tolerance vs. lethal damage, should have a maximum allowed level of 1).

Each of these mimics some legendary Ninja ability, and are perhaps less paranormal powers than hypernormal levels in certain skills. The "Drain" limitation simply prevents the powers from being abused or overused, but in a hyperskill sense, this could be altered to "Constant."

Tactics

A good martial artist in **CORPS** can basically remain invulnerable to all melee attacks, except for being smothered under a mound of people. A Master has a base defense based on AGL Aptitude of 2, plus a possible +9 from a Martial dodge, and another +9 from Martial block, for a total defense of 20 (but you hit his block if your attack is successful vs. his dodge defense of 11). This means you need a skill of 10 to even stand a chance of a "long shot" solidly connecting. Even after the 5th block by the Master, he still has a defense total of 12, so he could hold off a small army of lesser martial artists. However, with a dodge of +9, he is unlikely to be able to successfully attack unless he uses less than the full dodge.

Example: If two martial artists with overall skills of 7 fight each other, and go full defensive, each has a defense of 9 for dodging, 16 for blocking, and a skill of 0 for attacking (skill of 7, minus 7 for the martial dodge). They have absolutely no chance of hitting each other.

There is a basic rule which applies both in the real world, and in **CORPS**. Between roughly equal opponents, if you want to hurt your foe, you have to risk slight injury. If you want to seriously hurt your foe, you have to risk injury, and if you want to kill your foe, you have risk serious injury. That is, in order to strike someone at your skill level, you have to drop your defenses enough to break through theirs.

Example: If these martial artists only dodge for 4 points, and block, they have a defense of 6 for dodging, 13 for blocking, and a skill of 3 for attacking (skill of 7, minus 4 for dodge). They can actually hit now, but always strike against their opponent's block (or parry). If they drop the dodge altogether, they have a basic defense of 2, with a defense of 9 for blocking, and a skill of 7 for attacking. By concentrating

more on offense, they leave themselves open to the point where they can actually be hit.

If you have plenty of time, or are fighting a holding action, sure, go defensive and keep yourself intact. If you have to defeat someone, however, you have to get an attack total high enough that you at least have a 1 in 10 chance of getting past a block or parry. This can be done by getting multiple attacks in before your opponent can defend against them all. For instance, with skill of 8 vs. a skill of 6 (even if the person with a skill of 6 has a saved block from the previous turn), you can do a combination double punch, only one of which can be blocked. The second goes against the defense of the person without the block added.

The other way to pierce your opponent's defenses is to wear her down by sheer number of attacks. If the person with the skill of 8 just keeps attacking, he gets a maximum of 5 attacks with a skill of 8 (on Initiative 8,6,4,2,0), and the skill 6 person only gets a maximum of 4 parries or blocks (Initiative 6,4,2,0). If there is a held block from the previous turn, the skill 6 person has a total of 5 block attempts, but on the next turn, the person with skill 8 goes first, and there are no unused blocks to apply against it.

The last way to penetrate defenses, which is the quickest and most highly recommended way, is to pull out a gun and shoot the bastard. As long as you aren't fighting the Master of Sinanju, this tactic stands a very good chance of having the desired effect.

Training notes

Characters who start the game with some level of skill have either completed training, or are still being instructed. With the busy schedule and frequent trips they may have to make, organized instruction is almost impossible. Very few

schools accept pupils who show up irregularly, or cannot make commitments for extended training. This leaves the options of private instruction, or instruction through some sort of patron. For instance, a well-financed organization is likely to have a training camp where characters are sent for several weeks per year to learn new skills and to brush up on old ones. This comes with the job, and the intensity and quality of the training is proportional to your Influence in that organization. Otherwise, characters have to find a very patient trainer, someone who is willing to put up with the irregular schedule characters have. This is almost certainly more expensive than the regular training rules.

For a character with an AGL Aptitude of 2 (AGL 6+), training takes the listed amounts of time.

spent in getting the character's level of proficiency at game start can provide useful background information, be a source of contacts, enemies and adventure ideas.

Adventure notes

There are a number of ways that martial arts can become part of an adventure. Many of these draw from movie plots. The most obvious is the "evil Ninja cult." Aside from the bad movie connotations, Ninja in a modern world face a number of challenges, the least of which is guns. If they survived, they undoubtedly have changed with the times. They wear armor, use guns, and are very good with them, in addition to being excellent unarmed fighters, actors, sneaks, programmers and

Advancement	Age experience only	Basic training	Advanced training
From Aptitude to a Primary skill of 3	3 yr./\$0	1 yr., 6 mo./\$1,200	1 yr./\$3,200
From Primary skill of 3 to 4	2 yr., 3 mo./\$0	1 yr., 1.5 mo./\$1,500	9 mo./\$3,600
Add a +1 Secondary skill	3 mo./\$0	1.5 mo./\$100	1 mo./\$100
Advance a +1 Secondary skill to +2	9 mo./\$0	4.5 mo./\$150	3 mo./\$400
Add a +1 Tertiary skill	3 mo./\$0	1.5 mo./\$100	1 mo./\$100
From Primary skill of 4 to 5	2 yr., 9 mo./\$0	1 yr., 4.5 mo./\$2,400	11 mo./\$6,400
From Primary skill of 5 to 6	3 yr., 3mo./\$0	1 yr., 7.5 mo./\$3,500	13 mo./\$10,000
Advance a +2 Secondary skill to +3	1 yr., 3 mo./\$0	7.5 mo./\$600	5 mo./\$1,600
From Primary skill of 6 to 7	3 yr., 9 mo./\$0	1 yr., 10.5 mo./\$4,800	15 mo./\$12,000
For minimum black belt (Primary of 5 and four +2 Secondaries)	12 yr./\$0	6yr./\$6,100	4yr./\$15,200

With the "Age experience only" category, virtually everything is self-taught, and you don't actually spend much time on it (2 hours a week), which is why it takes so long. This category is really only suitable for the "rough childhood" approach to training and character background. The "basic training" level is typical of lower-level group classes, and requires about 4 hours per week of effort (2 hours of class, 2 hours of practice). Actual rates vary, and are probably less costly (up to half so) due to group rates, incentives and local competition between schools. "Advanced training" is a more personalized form of group training, with smaller class sizes, and more intensity in training. This is about 4 hours of class per week, with an additional 4 hours of practice per week to keep from being left behind. Again, various economic factors can cut these rates by up to 50%. The maximum intensity training is not listed, but requires a total of 16 hours per week, possible with a normal job, if you lose all chance of a social life. Characters with exotic backgrounds may be able to provide reasons why they are training to that extent. The time

all-round assassins.

Another is the "old master who needs help/must be avenged," where the person who trained the character requires assistance, or is killed and requires vengeance. Who did it, why, and what can be done about the situation?

Last, since some of the martial arts go way back, and *might* have access to old historical records, or esoteric knowledge, it is quite possible that an adventure could be based on these records, legends, or potential abilities of some martial art. The classic example of this is the ancient art of Sinanju, as elaborated on in the Destroyer series of novels. A Master of Sinanju can dodge bullets, see in the dark, climb sheer walls, walk on water, shatter steel with bare hands, sense distant attackers and chew up dozens of normal Grand Masters as a light workout. While such fare is recommended as light conspiracy reading, the characters are not those a GM should pit their players against, since they've survived the plots of 80-odd pulp novels and have killed nearly everyone who has discovered their existence.