

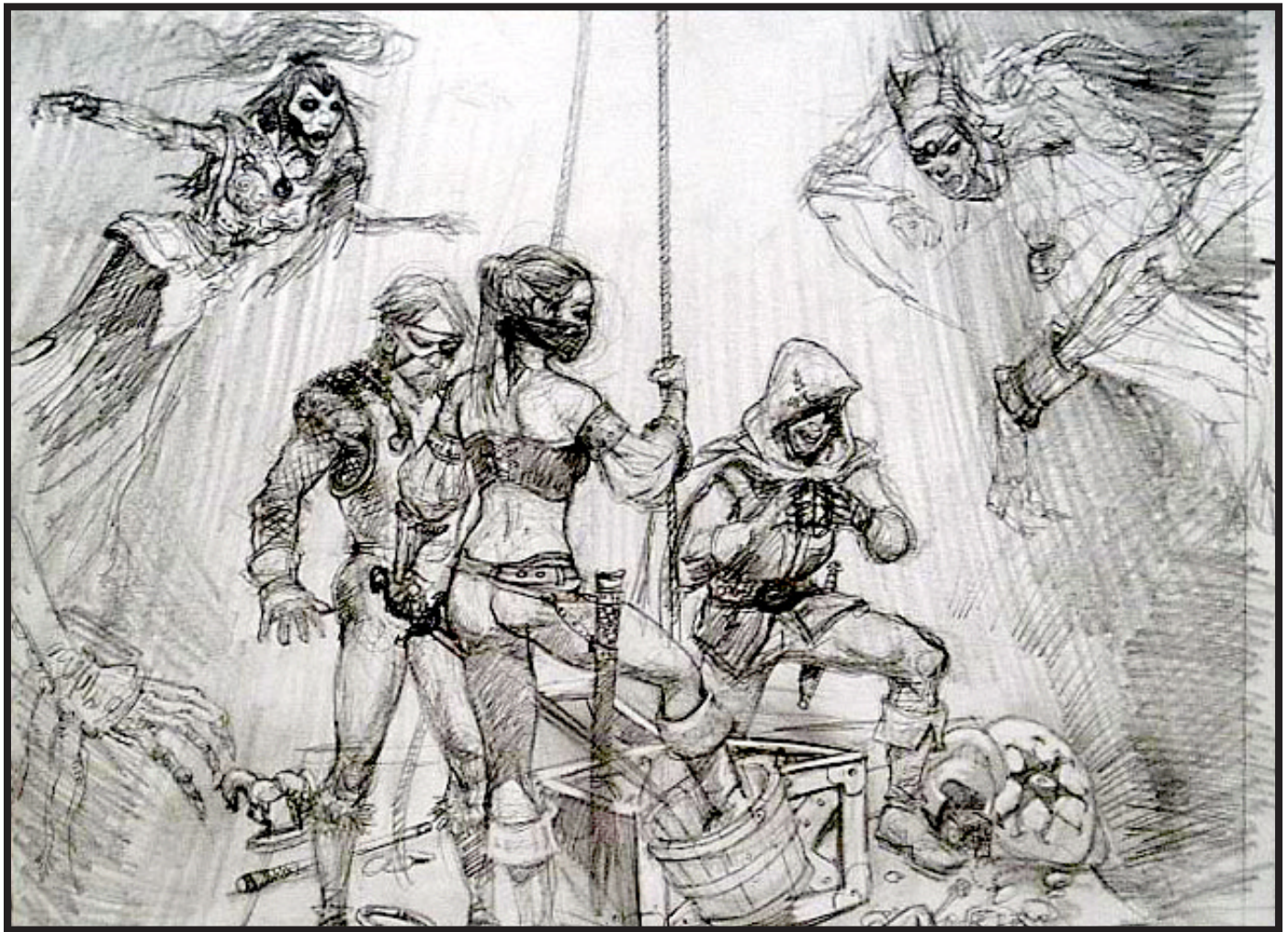
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Third Edition,
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The Book of Taverns

The Summer Orchid

by Chris Jones



*Most fantasy role-playing games are set in a fictional variation on medieval Europe where many of the most common meeting places for characters happen to be taverns. However, in Asian-style campaign settings the tavern (**jiu dian**) wasn't quite as common a gathering spot as the tea house (**cha yi guan**), which often doubled for the tavern in that it usually sold food and alcoholic beverages in addition to the teas on the menu. The tea house was often second only behind the local temple as the community center in medieval China. This article presents a typical, if slightly rural, tea house called the **Summer Orchid**, which can be inserted easily into any Asian-style campaign setting.*

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The Book of Taverns

The Summer Orchid

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Author

Chris Jones

Developer

Bill Webb

Producer

Clark Peterson

Editor

Kevin Walker

D20 Content Editor

Scott Greene

Managing Editor

Andrew Bates

Art Director

Richard Thomas

Layout and Typesetting

Charles A. Wright

Interior Art

Brian LeBlanc

Front Cover Art

Llyn Hunter

Cartography

Rich Oliver

Front & Back Cover Design

Mike Chaney

Playtesters

Michael "Legion" Babbitt,
Zhuang "Tweedledee" Yun-Jia,
Björn "GreenPiece" Strohecker

Special Thanks

The EnWorld Online Community,
Dean Karalekas, and
T.C. Lin (Lin Dao-Ming)

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PRINTED IN THE USA.



Most fantasy role-playing games are set in a fictional variation on medieval Europe where many of the most common meeting places for characters happen to be taverns. However, in Asian-style campaign settings the tavern (*jiu dian*) wasn't quite as common a gathering spot as the tea house (*cha yi guan*), which often doubled for the tavern in that it usually sold food and alcoholic beverages in addition to the teas on the menu. The tea house was often second only behind the local temple as the community center in medieval China. This article presents a typical, if slightly rural, tea house called the *Summer Orchid*, which can be inserted easily into any Asian-style campaign setting.

Background

A man named Bluetooth Song and his only child, Orchid, built the tea house almost a forty years ago. Once, he worked for the imperial government but retired early after his wife passed away and he found he could no longer do his job due to the grief he felt. So he took his daughter and moved to a small town not far from the capital and used some of his pension to build this tea house, named after his daughter: Summer Orchid. For years, their lives were simple and easy. Orchid grew into an elegant, well-mannered woman whose sense of propriety was unparalleled by anyone in the county while Bluetooth wiled away his twilight few years, drinking hot tea with his friends, commiserating about the ruling regime's incompetence.

Orchid learned much from her father about the imperial bureaucracy and the duties of the emperor as dictated to him by the Mandate of Heaven. Years spent running the tea house and listening to her father and his friends in conversation eventually soured her opinion of the imperial family; she hated every last one of them, so much so that she felt compelled to join one of the many rebel organizations peppering the social landscape like so many flies on a horse's flanks. *The Red Feather Society* adopted her.

With her intelligence and bureaucratic acumen, she rose quickly in their ranks. By the time she became the organization's leader, the society was using the Summer Orchid as their primary meeting place. The tea house began taking on a reputation as a haven for sedition. While Orchid's father was often critical of the imperial household and its policies, he was still, above all

else, loyal to it, and as soon as it became apparent to him that his daughter's youthful rebelliousness had given way to something decidedly more permanent – and treasonous – he gave her a choice: either abandon the Red Feathers, or he would disown her. Orchid had always loved and respected her father, but that was one decision she could not make. Instead, she and her rebel friends took to meeting in the woods. For a time, Bluetooth and his daughter's lives seemed to have returned to normal. The old man was happy again.

One day, however, while walking through the forest to meet with Old Yang for an afternoon of mushroom harvesting, he took a shortcut he had never used before. The sounds of the Red Feather gathering reached his ears before he saw them. His daughter's voice carried the loudest and farthest of them all. Her vitriol and hatred for the imperial household disappointed him deeply, but even more disturbing was that she and her friends were actively working to bring down the ruling regime. With eyes moist from sadness, Bluetooth forgot about Old Yang and returned to town. He knew from past experiences when Orchid 'went out' that her sojourns typically lasted until late night or early morning the next day. His heart heavy, he found the county magistrate and reported his daughter's sedition. In the chain of filial piety, the emperor always came first, and as much as it broke his heart to do to turn her in, he just could not abandon the duty instilled in him from a lifetime's conditioning.

Within hours, the magistrate had gathered a large militia, one big enough to deal with the task at hand. They rode hard to reach the Red Feathers' meeting spot before they disbanded. Bluetooth returned to the Summer Orchid to await the inevitable. The next day, the magistrate himself rode up to Bluetooth's door. When the old man answered, he tossed a blood soaked burlap sack at his feet: Orchid's head. According to imperial law and tradition, Bluetooth was supposed to be punished for her crimes as well, but the magistrate commuted the sentence. He understood just how difficult it had been for the man to turn in his own child like that and spoke no more of it.

That was 10 years ago. Since then, Bluetooth has continued to maintain the Summer Orchid though he certainly isn't the same man as he used to be. Instead, he's dour and depressed most of the time, content to let a string of work-for-hire employees help him manage the tea

house. The Summer Orchid has steadily fallen into disrepair over the last decade. Over the past year a beautiful young woman named Dou-Dou has brought the establishment back up to the former honor and prestige it once enjoyed. She hired a man named Stinky Liao to take over cooking duties and also handle other chores, such as rebuilding the pavilions and repairing some of the building's more egregious damage.

Personalities

Three people live at the Summer Orchid tea house: *Bluetooth Song*, *Dou-Dou* the serving girl and *Stinky Liao*, the cook. Stinky's best friend in the whole-wide-world, a soldier named *Lan Yuan-Long*, spends so much time at the tea house when he's not on duty that he might as well live there, in Bluetooth's estimation. The tea house receives many guests on a daily basis, mostly local merchants. Occasionally though, bureaucrats taking an afternoon respite from the crowded capital city as well as those serving under the county magistrate often stop here for rest. The magistrate himself never puts in an appearance, remaining away since the day he delivered Orchid's head to her father.

Bluetooth Song

Song Yi-Shen was born and raised in the capital city 80-some odd years ago. His father was a teacher at the university, preparing academic candidates for the imperial exam, while his mother cooked in the kitchens for a lesser nobleman. He received his nickname 'Bluetooth' after getting hit in the mouth with the pommel of a stray sword in a street brawl, the blow from which deadened and discolored his tooth.

He learned much from both of his parents, and when he came of age to take the imperial exam he passed with flying colors. Soon, he was on his way up the ladder of the hierarchy that controlled the Forbidden City and managed its day-to-day affairs. Almost a decade after joining the aristocracy of merit, he met and fell in love with Shu Lin-Rong, the beautiful daughter of a bean curd vendor in one of the capital's myriad of night markets. For many years they saw one another formally, chaperoned by her aging parents and younger brothers. Because of his high status and his genuinely good natured personality, her family liked him very much. It came as no surprise to anyone when he asked for her

hand in marriage, and after a brief negotiation, he and her parents sealed the deal. Bluetooth and Rong were married in her family's ancestral home in the south with great fanfare and much ado. In the capital city, however, they had a discreet ceremony, inviting only Bluetooth's closest friends. To their surprise, they received an expensive gift from the emperor himself – a gilt ceremonial sword worth more than Bluetooth earned in an entire year. While valuable, the sword carried an unspoken connotation: Bluetooth would no longer advance in the Forbidden City's internal hierarchy as he had taken a commoner girl for his first wife rather than the daughter of another aristocrat. This was never an official, codified rule but it was one that the current regime enforced nonetheless. Nevertheless, he didn't care for he had married the woman of his dreams.

Ten years passed and his friends moved on, receiving promotions never available to him. He and Rong lived a happy life. Within a year of being married, Rong gave birth to Orchid and life couldn't have been better for Bluetooth. Unfortunately, tragedy struck when his wife fell ill with *dog pox*. She died not long after. A deep depression overcame him, one which he could not seem to break. For almost two years after her death, he tried to the best of his ability to do his job but it was all for naught. The ranking bureaucrat above him requested obliquely that he retire early. The imperial government would pay his pension in full and cut him loose, a reward for decades of excellent service. Bluetooth gladly accepted. A week later, he and his daughter moved to an outlying town near the capital city. There, he built the Summer Orchid and retired.

In the ensuing decade since his daughter's death much has changed for Bluetooth. Once, he felt undying loyalty to his sovereign and the ruling government. Now, he only feels hatred. They took his loyalty for granted. Instead of killing his only child, the magistrate could have simply banished her or, as shameful as it would have been to the family, branded and imprisoned her. Thoughts like these have festered relentlessly inside him, distorting Bluetooth's sense of morality and even reality. Today all he wants to do is continue the rebellion his daughter began – for revenge; for justice; and for honor. The imperial government to which he gave his life owes him much for the head of his daughter. Last year, he discreetly made contact with the daughter of Orchid's co-leader from the Red

Feather Society. No one besides the magistrate knew he had turned in his own daughter, so the girl, named Dou-Dou or 'Little Bean', came to the Summer Orchid willingly but still with some reservation. He convinced her he had sponsored his daughter all those years ago, and that he felt it was time for the Red Feathers to rise again. He offered her the resources at his disposal, the benefit of his knowledge and wisdom and she in turn could be the overt leader of the resurrected group. She eagerly agreed and moved into the Summer Orchid the next day, assuming the role of his new serving girl.

Depression still dominates Bluetooth's outlook on life. Dou-Dou's presence has helped alleviate it, but it likely to be some time before he feels well enough to be more sociable. Senility is also starting to overcome him, with him frequently experiencing noticeable lapses in memory and reason and sometimes referring to Dou-Dou as his daughter or even long-dead wife.

Bluetooth Song, human male Ari12: CR 11; Size M (Humanoid); HD 12d8-12; hp 66; Init -2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 8 (-2 Dex); Attack +8/+3 melee, or +7/+2 ranged; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +11; AL CG; Str 8, Dex 7, Con 8, Int 17, Wis 17, Cha 18

Skills: Diplomacy +16, Gather Information +19, Innuendo +17, Intimidate +16, Knowledge (government) +20, Knowledge (history) +11, Listen +20, Read Lips +18, Spot +8; *Feats:* Alertness, Iron Will, Leadership, Skill Focus (gather information), Skill Focus (innuendo), Skill Focus (knowledge [government])

Languages: Common, plus 2 regional dialects

Possessions: None

Dou-Dou ('Little Bean')

Ten years ago, the county magistrate and his soldiers viciously murdered her father. All her life, Dou-Dou (born Gong Yun, but nicknamed 'Little Bean' when she was three for an incident involving red-bean soup) had been unaware that her father, Gong Bian, had been the co-leader of a rebel organization. It wasn't until soldiers delivered his head to her family's house and demanded that her mother and all children come out to receive their punishment that this became all too evident. Her mother was distraught. She told Dou-Dou, her youngest and most precious child, to flee while she and the girl's elder brothers created a distraction, determined not to

let the Gong name extinguish entirely. Within moments, a blazing fire erupted and the soldiers suddenly found themselves acting as the fire brigade in order to keep the flames from dangerously spreading to nearby houses. Dou-Dou fled in the chaos, hiding first behind the woodpile then ducking into the woods when no one was looking. Her mother and two brothers died in the fire, but they had died on their own terms and for that her family's honor remained intact.

A few days later, a cargo caravan's head guard (a mercenary working for the Eternal Fortune noble house, which specialized in providing reliable escort services between cities) adopted her after he found her lying in ditch, half-dead from dehydration. His name was Iron Hammer Li. He raised Dou-Dou as his own child for years, happy to finally have a family after trying to no avail for so long with his wife, Xiao-Ma. Yet, Dou-Dou never forgot her first family and the horror that the magistrates men had visited upon her. She prayed every night for the gods of vengeance to grant her the fortitude to bring down the magistrate one day, and later the emperor himself for putting men such as that in an official government post.

Two years ago she returned to the village from whence she lived as a child. No one knew her or remembered her. Having been a child at the time the magistrate's men killed her father, her name had been unimportant. She put out quiet inquiries in the seedier circles regarding the status of the Red Feather Society, quickly learning that it had expired 10 years ago with all its members. Dou-Dou, it seemed, was the rebellion's sole heir. With much subtlety, she began to slowly reform the group. Recruits came from all walks of life, initiated into the group using age-old Taoist ceremonies, blood-vows and oaths of fealty that extended for nine generations. Meetings took place in a silk seamstress' workshops, late at night. After two years, the Society had many members. Unfortunately, it was impotent to do actually anything, with no funding and even less training for its 'soldiers'. Then, fate sent her a most unexpected blessing: Bluetooth Song had heard about her covert endeavors through his own private channels and wanted to talk with her.

After he told her the truth about his daughter and how he had funded the original Society, he asked Dou-Dou if she would like the benefit of his patronage. Of course, she accepted. Moving into his tea house and running it is the ideal cover story, and since the magistrate never sus-

pected the old man's treason despite his daughter Orchid, she figured that he'd never suspect anything. She doesn't trust the old man; who would? He's much too clever and wily to let her have as much free reign as she does without expecting something in return. As of yet, though, whatever he wants from her hasn't been made clear. She is prepared for any eventuality.

Dou-Dou, human female Rog4/Com3: CR 6; Size M (Humanoid); HD 4d6+8 plus 3d4+6; hp 42; Init +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+2 Dex, +1 *amulet*); Atk +7 melee (1d4+3, +1 *dagger*, crit 19-20) or +6 ranged; SA sneak attack (+2d6); SA evasion, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL NG; SV Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +4; Str 16, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 14.

Skills: Appraise +6, Climb +7, Diplomacy +8, Disable Device +5, Forgery +5, Hide +8, Innuendo +8, Jump +10, Ride +5, Search +7, Sense Motive +6, Spot +10, Swim +12. *Feats:* Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Skill Focus (Hide), Skill Focus (Spot).

Languages: Common

Possessions: +1 *amulet of natural armor*, +1 *dagger*, 23 gp

Stinky Liao

Liao Jun-Fei, known more affectionately by his friends as "Stinky," has spent the majority of his life working in military forts and frontier encampments as the resident chef. He's surly and short-tempered, but those who know him well find him endearing all the same. His regrettable nickname stems from his propensity to cook stinky bean curd at least twice a week (when allowed), not because of personal hygiene issues. The pungent odor of his brand of stinky bean curd (*cho dofu*) drifts downwind almost two hundred feet from the kitchen, which means (depending on the patron) it is either some of the finest in the region or it is an extremely potent and cruel weapon of war.

Dou-Dou recruited him from the town night market, where she found him selling various grilled, stewed and steamed foodstuffs from a ramshackle stall. The pay at the Summer Orchid is excellent, the company is good, and they let cook more refined fare for those discerning patrons who possess epicurean palates. The one stipulation placed upon him is that he may only cook stinky bean curd up to twice a month and

no more. After all, Dou-Dou doesn't want to scare patrons away.

Stinky Liao, male human Com7: CR 6; SZ M; HD 7d4-11; hp 13; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +3 melee or +3 ranged; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 6, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 9.

Skills: Handle Animal +6, Jump +11, Listen +7, Profession (cook) +11, Spot +8. *Feats:* Improved Unarmed Strike, Skill Focus (Jump), Skill Focus (Profession [cook]), Toughness.

Languages: Common, plus 1 regional dialect

Possessions: 36 gp

Lan Yuan-Long

As the head of the county magistrate's militia, it is Lan Yuan-Long's duty to protect the people and ensure that no harm comes to them, especially from traitorous rebel groups. His favorite spot to do this is from a comfortable chair in the Butterfly Pavilion at the Summer Orchid tea house, where he spends the vast majority of his days. Ah-Long, as just about everyone in town calls him, is probably the region's most famous tea aficionado. No one, with the exception of Bluetooth Song, of course, knows as much about tea growing, harvesting and brewing as he does. In fact, younger patrons – the literati – who don't know the older soldier so well often call him "teacher" (*laoshi*) out of respect for his skill. They enjoy treating him to the establishment's less affordable teas, and listening to his tall tales of chivalry and daring.

Ah-Long isn't the most skillful or dedicated soldier around. The only reason he has his position in the county militia is because his sister is the magistrate's second wife. He enjoys the job – the pension is good, and he has more free time to sit in the tea house than he deserves. On the rare occasions the magistrate calls on him to perform his duty, he does so to the best of his ability though that's not saying much.

Lately, he has begun suspecting that Dou-Dou is not who she seems, based on vague comments she has made to her suspicious friends, who are increasingly spending more time in the tea house. He hopes he's wrong because he likes her a lot. If she is, in fact, the person Ah-Long thinks she is, then not only does she suffer but so too does his friend Stinky and the old guy, Bluetooth, who has suffered enough for one lifetime.

Lan Yuan-Long, human male War8: CR

7; SZ M; HD 6d8+18 plus 2d6+6; hp 71; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+2 Dex, +1 padded armor); Attack +12/+7 melee (1d10+4, +1 katana, crit 19-20) or +9/+4 ranged; AL LG; SV Fort +9, Ref +6, Will +3; Str 17, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 15, Wis 13, Cha 13.

Skills: Climb +6, Craft (tea brewing) +10, Hide +5, Knowledge (tea) +13, Move Silently +6, Open Lock +4, Ride +13, Swim +10; **Feats:** Ambidexterity, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (katana).

Languages: Common, plus 2 regional dialects

Possessions: Padded armor, iron helmet, +1 katana, handy haversack, 404 gp

The Establishment

The Summer Orchid is a traditional two-story structure made from cedar and pine wood and formerly stained with a natural darkening agents. During the last decade the stain has faded and chipped away, revealing the original wood beneath. The roof bows in the middle with the corners rising up slightly, as is common in the Middle Kingdom. It is also tiled and shingled with similar wood as the rest of the structure but stained darker. The windows are all shuttered, lockable from within. Except during inclement weather or during the Autumn and Winter months, Dou-Dou keeps the shutters open to let the breezes flow through the building.

An artificial stream connects a pond located near the front entrance to one built at the back of the building. Large gold fish and carp inhabit it. A constant underground feed from a nearby spring keeps the water here fresh and viable. Each pond supports an elegantly-decorated open-air pavilion.

The woodwork for much of the building's trim and other decorative elements is of masterwork quality, depicting scenes from classical literature (the story of the moon goddess and the hare, or the adventures of the monkey king, and so on.)

Unless otherwise noted, the Summer Orchid has the following stats:

Doors: 1 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 10; Break DC 15; Open Lock DC 18.

Walls (Outer): 1 ft. thick; Hardness 5; hp 120; Break DC 23.

Walls (Inner): 6 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 60; Break DC 16.

A. Pond

These two small bodies of water were dug at the time Bluetooth and his young daughter built the Summer Orchid. They are deep enough to support carp and goldfish, among a myriad host of other tiny creatures. Carefully planted bamboo reeds encircle the pond, and stones placed in careful accordance to the rules of *feng shui* jut from the water in mystically strategic placed guaranteed to maximize harmony and balance. A stream connects the two ponds.

B. Stream

Fed by a nearby spring by means of an underground channel, the stream keeps fresh water flowing into the ponds at a slow but steady pace. Not only does this ensure that the plant and aquatic life dependent on the ponds continues to thrive, but it also creates a pleasant ambiance with its gentle burbling.

I. Entrance

The entry foyer is spacious and uncluttered. Guests enter through a pair of ornately carved double doors (typically left wide open during the day.) Elegant but inexpensive vases with cultivated bamboo shoots growing from them sit in the corners, while shelves built into the staircase display antique tea sets or packets of especially prized (and expensive) tea leaves. The back walls of the foyer have painted scrolls hanging down their length. The first scroll depicts a cloud-embraced mountain landscape. The second shows a wild, frothing horse mounted by a general in armor.

A successful Appraise skill check (DC 25) implies both scrolls are worth about a hundred gold pieces each

2. Kitchen

Like most kitchens in the Middle Kingdom, Bluetooth built this one at the front of the tea house. Three large hearths supply heat and flame for cooking climb the south and west walls, while tables, shelves, empty steamers, clay pots and other cooking implements occupy the rest of the space. This is Stinky Liao's domain, and he lets no one forget that while they're in it. Stinky sleeps on a spare mat taken from the sitting rooms which he keeps rolled up and hidden beneath a shelf cabinet during the day.

Adventurers making a successful Search check (DC 20) in the kitchen find 2 gp in imperial currency left over from the last dynasty tucked away inside an ancient, mold-encrusted clay pot and, hidden behind jars of imported spices, fourteen letters poorly written by a woman named “Rong,” who is apparently the fourth daughter of Fong the Tea Merchant. The letters are quite intimate but chaste.

3. Ground Floor Common Rooms

The first floor has three “common” rooms – these are open spaces with tables and chairs for patrons who prefer not to sit on the mat-covered floors of the Sitting Rooms. The tables and chairs are in pretty ramshackle condition, left over from the days Orchid Song ran the establishment. Hanging on the walls are inexpensive scrolls painted with either landscapes or pithy sayings written in the artistic ‘grass’ style. Every four days or so, a *pipa* musician provides musical entertainment for the patrons.

Engraved in the center of the south-eastern common room (and usually covered by a table and chairs) is a long poem entitled “The Blood of Heroes.” The dialect used for the poem comes from the far western lands and is especially renowned amongst highly-educated literati because of the sheer difficulty in composing poems with it. Some famous scholars even go so far as to claim that poems written in that dialect are the most beautiful in the Middle Kingdom, if one can understand them.

Double-doors open out of the northeast common room on to a narrow, stone foot bridge that crosses over the stream. Dou-Dou usually keeps these doors locked.

A successful Decipher Script check (DC 30) lets an adventurer understand the poem, which the author dedicated to Orchid Song and her compatriots in the Red Feather society.

4. Butterfly Pavilion

This pavilion is the smaller of the two. The walls are open to the elements and a table with eight chairs around it sits the middle of the floor. Paper lanterns hang from the awnings, used at night to provide soft illumination for the patrons inside. Generally, the Bluetooth reserves this pavilion for special or important guests.

It is rumored that eating *zhuang yuan gao* – delicate almond-paste cakes – in the Butterfly

Pavilion ensures a high score for those who are about to take the imperial exam. Three years ago, a woman named Tang Xue-Han passed the exam on her first try after allegedly eating the cakes here returned and donated, in gratitude, a beautiful mahogany sculpture of the god of literature. It now sits in the northwest corner of the pavilion.

5. Sitting Rooms

The twelve sitting rooms take up the majority of the first floor. Each one is raised a foot off the ground. Soft but sturdy mats cover the floor, and a squat table in the center provides a space for patrons to brew tea and put food. The walls are porous, carved with fanciful images, but rice paper fills the gaps in order to allow a small modicum of visual privacy. The room’s doors, also made from wood and rice paper, slide open and shut. Before entering a sitting room, a patron must slip her shoes or sandals off and store them in the narrow gap below the raised floor.

Unlike the rest of the teahouse, translucent rice paper fills the gaps in the window frames, giving the patrons a decent (albeit foggy) view of the pond and stream outside. Patrons may open and close the windows as they see fit.

Patrons often spend hours in the sitting rooms, chatting and enjoying good tea and food. Some even wile away entire days here.

On any given day, at least one sitting room has a group of Red Feathers (**1d4 1st-6th level Commoners and 1d2 1st-6th level Warriors or Rogues.**)

6. Store Room

This is an open room connecting the northeast common room to the back hall. Boxes, crates, large and small clay vessels filled with dried (and some not-so dried) foodstuffs and teas take up most of the available space.

7. Private Room

Bluetooth and Dou-Dou reserve this room for their own use or for that of important people in need of privacy. The table in here is large enough to accommodate 12 chairs, and the dÉcor is expensive and elegant. At least 2 wall-hangings are worth a minimum of 500 gp, and the *dan-xing* tea-brewing paraphernalia worth nearly twice that all together.

An expensive lock keeps unwanted visitors



out, and sliding bars secure the window shutters when they're not open. Dou-Dou keeps the key in a hidden pocket on the inside of her left shirt-sleeve.

Reinforced Wooden Door: 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 20; Break DC 25; Open Lock DC 25.

8. Orchid Pavilion

The larger of the two pavilions, this one also sits above a pond. Its walls are open to the environment and it is in an excellent location for breezes. The view is also unparalleled by any other room in the tea house. The table here is wider and squatter than the one in the Butterfly Pavilion, and instead of chairs twelve short stools surround it.

9. Upstairs Common Rooms

Originally, this was a single room but Dou-Dou split it to make two separate but connected ones. Run-down and second-hand tables and chairs fill the space. The only time the room really ever sees patrons is on the nights when the ground floor fills to capacity, which happens very infrequently. Other times are when members of the Red Feather Society gather for impromptu meetings. Dou-Dou discourages this, but the enthusiasm and overall congeniality of her friends makes it hard to dissuade them entirely. A large wall-hanging scroll decorated with a scene pulled straight from *Journey through the Forbidden City* depicts courtiers and prostitutes socializing at the infamous *Peach Blossom* whorehouse. The scroll covers a secret door.

Engraved in the floor is a poem entitled "Mandate from the South." The author wrote it in the same dialect as the poem downstairs, although using a different meter.

A successful Search check (DC 20) uncovers the secret door in the north wall.

An adventurer must make a successful Decipher Script check (DC 30) to understand the poem, which describes Orchid Song's triumphant return at the head of an army of phoenix-riding warriors.

10. Bluetooth's Room

For most of the last forty years Orchid Song lived in this room, and then after her death simply left empty. That is until just recently. At Dou-Dou's insistence, Bluetooth moved in. She

wanted him to have the larger of the two living quarters, out of courtesy and respect; she also wanted unfettered access to the secret meeting room without having to constantly disturb him to gain it, or run around the tea house to the upstairs common rooms to enter from the other side.

Bluetooth doesn't keep many possessions here; since his daughter died, he has lost all sense of sentimentality. A wood-framed bed large enough for one person, a tall, narrow wardrobe filled with old clothes, and a couple of empty storage trunks are all that he owns. His dirty clothes form a small mountain in the corner, and the room is thick with the miasma of morning breath, stale farts and leftover food. If Bluetooth isn't sitting in the Orchid Pavilion with his old friends he is here, usually sleeping.

If an adventurer makes a successful Search check (DC 18) of the room, he finds a secret panel in the east wall containing a funeral urn filled with ashes and bits of blackened bone, a burlap sack containing a mummified head of a middle-aged woman (Orchid Song), and many scrolls written in the same dialect as the poems in the common rooms (Decipher Script skill check [DC 30] to translate) which contain the ramblings of a delusional mad-man obsessed with getting revenge on the government that murdered his precious, if misguided, daughter.

11. Dou-Dou's Room

A small room crowded with elegant rosewood furniture which once belonged to Orchid Song, richly embroidered silk clothes given to Dou-Dou by the seamstress whose house previously hosted Red Feather Society meetings, and expensive wall-hanging scrolls depicting scenes of the overthrow of the last dynasty by the great founding heroes of the current one. Sitting in one corner is a heavy iron hammer.

Dou-Dou spends much of her down time here, plotting her rebellion against the imperial government. She has an amateurish understanding of politics, strategy and warfare, but that doesn't keep her from writing down her plans and ideas. Hundreds of scrolls lay around the room filled with cryptic plots written in the Red Feather Society's own secret language. Other scrolls bought in town or in the capital contain famous treatises on warfare, Taoist musings on the Mandate of Heaven and the emperor's duty to the people, and letters from like-minded individuals in other parts of the country – letters thick with



innuendo and double-talk.

An adventurer may make a Decipher Script check (DC 35) in an attempt to understand the scrolls. If successful, he more or less understands them; they are nothing more than a collection of stream-of-consciousness 'plots' to overthrow the emperor. Most are decidedly impractical and ill-conceived.

A successful Search check (DC 20) reveals the secret door in the south wall.

12. Secret Storeroom

This used to be the tea house's main store room but since Dou-Dou moved in she has been using to hold meetings of the Red Feather society. The original door into the room is now a secret one, a second door connecting the store-room to her own has been added, and all but the biggest storage crates have been cleared out. During meetings, two society warriors sit outside at a table closest to the door keeping an eye out for imperial soldiers.

Aside from tea, the room contains nothing of value.

Goods & Services

The Summer Orchid has recently started serving the full compliment of snacks and drinks again, thanks to Stinky Liao's hard work and creativity.

Tea †

Blended, gui fei	3 sp
Blended, lu tian	2 sp
Flower, chrysanthemum	6 sp
Flower, rosehip	3 sp
Flower, lotus	8 sp
Flower, summer orchid	5 gp
Green, common	1 sp
Green, milk	1 sp
Green, lu tian	2 sp
Green, qing hai	1 gp
Oolong, common	7 cp
Oolong, milk	1 sp
Oolong, gui fei	1 sp
Oolong, qing hai	3 gp
Oolong, yu-shan	2 gp
Red, common	5 cp
Red, milk	8 cp
Red, lu tian	1 sp
Red, shui dao	6 sp
Red, yu shan	2 gp

Other Beverages

Plum wine	2 gp
Rice wine	1 gp

Food

Almond-paste cakes	6 sp
Boiled peanuts	3 cp
Braised chicken feet	4 sp
Dried pig ear	2 sp
Dried watermelon seeds	5 cp
Fried tofu	3 sp
Fried dough with tea leaves	8 cp
Fried water dumplings	1 sp
Green bean-paste cakes	5 sp
Grilled duck tongues	9 sp
Grilled hicken livers	8 sp
Grilled mushrooms	4 sp
Little-dragon dumplings	2 sp
Red bean-paste cakes	5 sp
Spiced hair beans	1 sp
Sticky rice balls	7 sp
Stinky tofu	3 sp

† The tea is served in small bamboo containers. Tea leaves are placed in a clay pot and steeped in boiling water for about 2 minutes, then poured into clay or porcelain cups for drinking. The prices here reflect a standard container of tea leaves, which serves 2 people

up to 5 times. Larger tubes are available for larger groups. For every two people in the party beyond the first pair, increase the listed price by half.

Story Hooks

The following ideas can be used as the basis for stories set in the Summer Orchid:

- Orchid Song's ghost appears the adventurers one evening while they discuss their plans in one of the sitting rooms. She begs them to help her claim revenge against the one whom she blames for her death: her father. Unfortunately for them, it's not as easy as just walking into his room and sticking him with a sword: He (carrying his daughter's head in his baggage), Dou-Dou and about half of the Red Feather Society are on a pilgrimage to a famous temple a week's journey away from the tea house. Not only must they find the temple, they must get past Dou-Dou and the Red Feather Society warriors, kill him, and then recover Orchid's head. Giving her head a proper burial satisfies the ghost.

- A traveling *fa shi* (arcane priest) takes offense at something said to him by Bluetooth in one of his more senile moments, so he lays a curse on the tea house: The carp and goldfish living in the ponds and stream begin to mutate, growing larger and crawling from their watery abode to attack patrons and staff. The adventurers are there the night the creatures threaten to overwhelm the Summer Orchid and, co-operating with others, must repel the "invasion." If they survive the encounter, Dou-Dou tries desperately to recruit them to her cause, impressed by their martial prowess.

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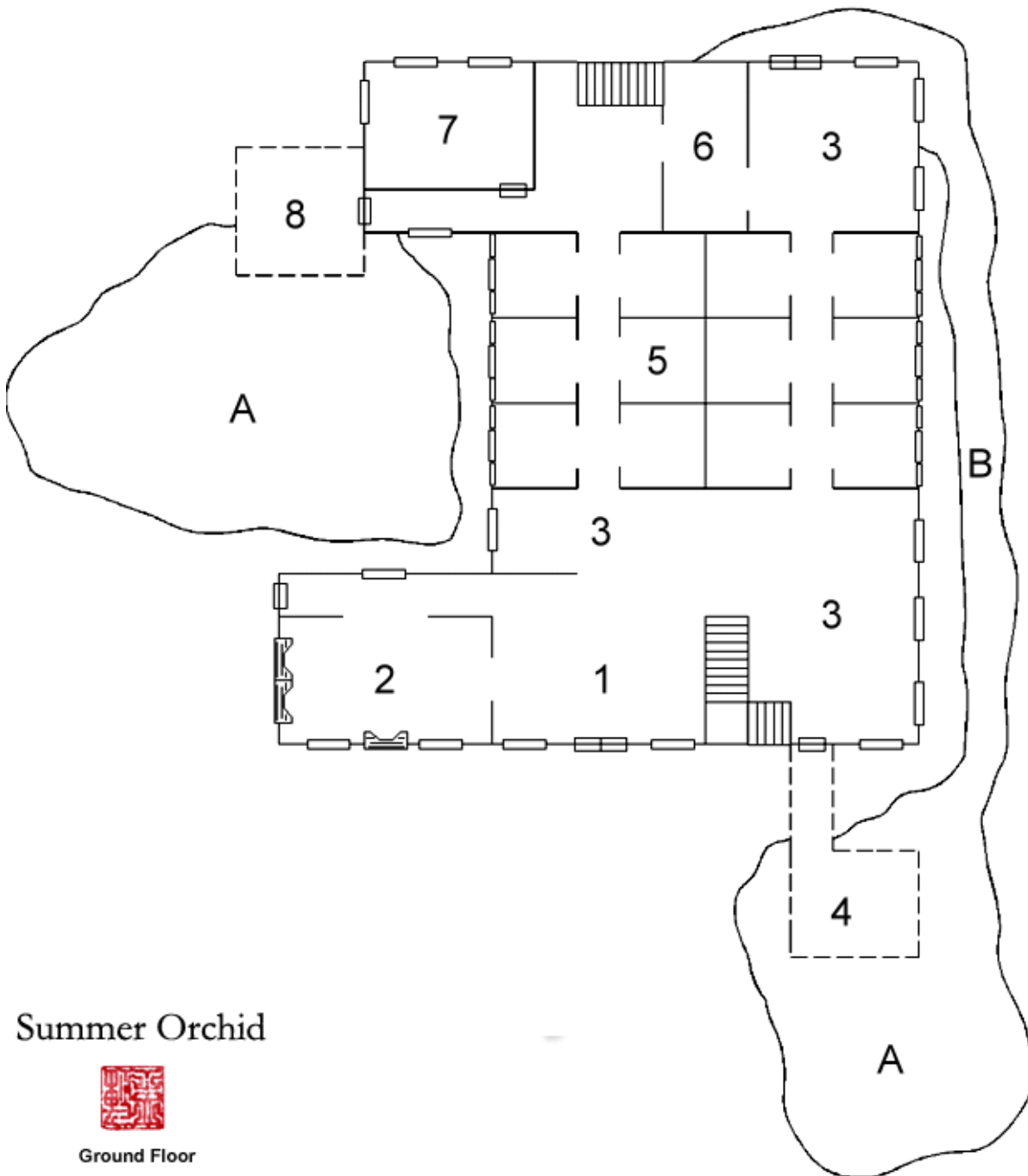
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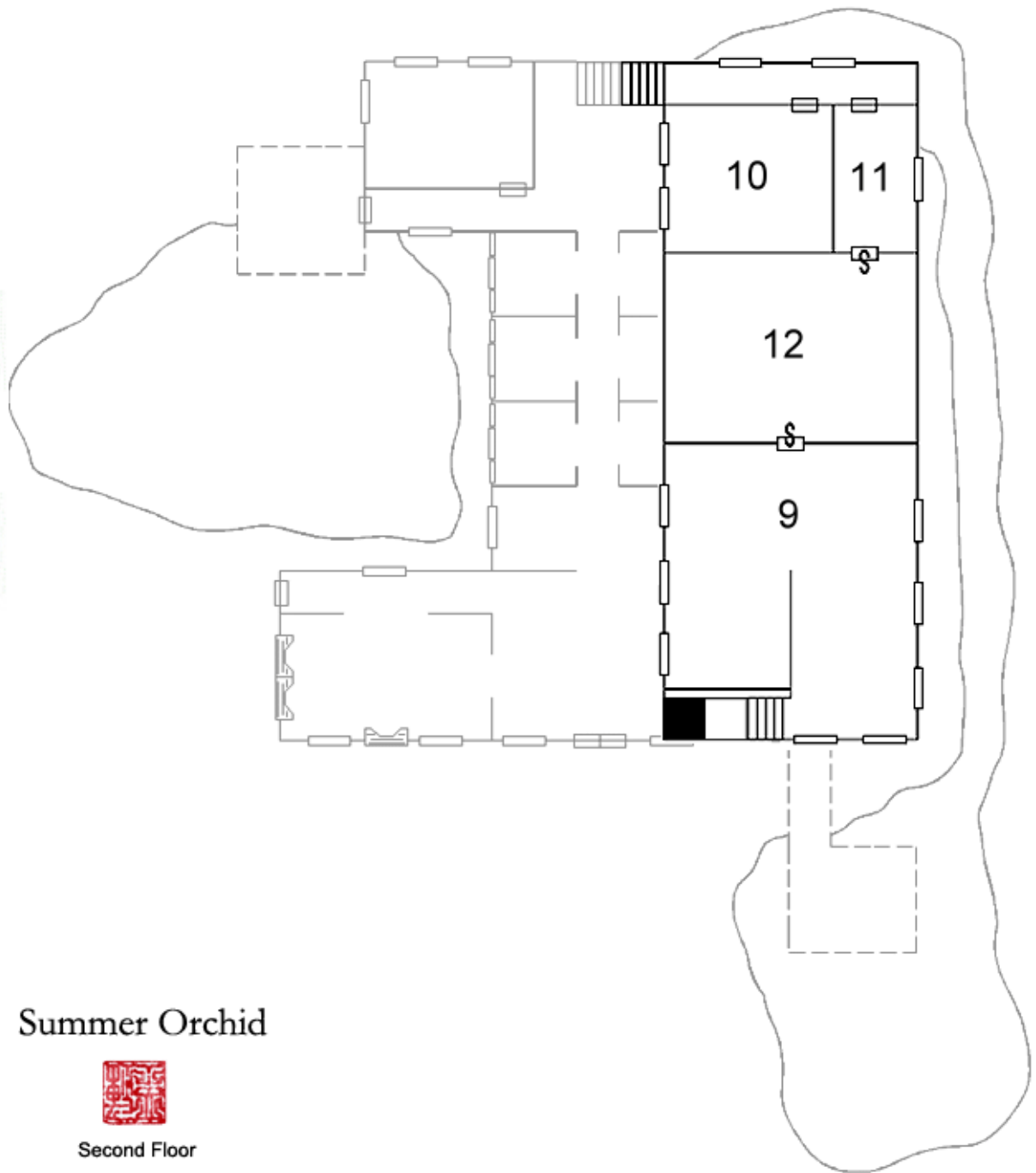


Summer Orchid



Ground Floor





Summer Orchid



Second Floor