

BATHFINDER

ROLEPLAYING



SHENYU

SHENHUA

Human commoner 1

N Medium humanoid

Init +2; Senses Perception +3

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 15, flat-footed 10

hp 6 (1d6)

Fort +0, Ref +5, Will -1

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee

STATISTICS

Str 8, Dex 20, Con 10, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 16

Base Atk +0; CMB +0; CMD 15

Feats Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot

Skills Diplomacy +4, Perform (Dance) +4, Perform (Strings) +4

Languages Common, Tian

I am not exactly certain how to make a commoner, having never done it before. I assume they get a feat for first level and another for their race.

I chose Shenhua's feats based on her potential to be a great sorceress rather than skills she currently has. As a mythic character, it is her potential, rather than her current situation, which will dominate the world.

Shenhua has been trained in the spear as part of tai chi and archery with her mother's daikyu (long composite bow). Both are traditional sports for young girls in China and Japan.



Higashiyama Kentaro sat impassively as his advisors argued among themselves. Such bickering was pointless, yet he let them get it out of their system. In another hour or so, he would agree with the faction supporting Hokuto, his position all along. By doing so, he focused the blame for this no-win situation squarely on them, rather than on himself.

Hokuto herself sat at the end of the room closest to the doors, looking at him with a crooked smile. She knew as well as he that to go against the mandate of heaven would leave him powerless, his clan at the mercy of anyone with the slightest amount of ambition. That this was unacceptable went without saying.

Emperor Shigure, sat not three leagues from this very room, a 'guest' of Kentaro himself. The Emperor had never hinted at the arrangement made by his ancestors, and if this foreign woman had not shown up, the Higashiyama would have broken the accord unknowingly. How fortunate that his guards had intercepted her here, rather than allowing her to travel on to his ancestral lands.

This woman, or one like her, arrived every generation in the Year of the Rabbit. Each time, she would take with her the imperial princess with the greatest arcane ability. Many attempts had been made in the last several hundred years to get around this agreement. Not only did they fail, but they invariably foretold the coming of a new Emperor. Should this happen today, it would be a disaster for the Higashiyama, for they would lose their hostage.

"Enough!" Despite his plan for delay, his patience finally wore thin. "Ichihara-sensei, will you know the girl you are to take? None of the princesses seem particularly gifted in the arcane arts but I have no desire to cross the mandate of heaven."

With her assent, the court withdrew to the Empress's quarters. Four guards stood at the doorway, their polearms blocking the mass of women huddled on the other side of the room. Loud wailing burst forth as he entered the room, grating on the last of his nerves. He waited but a moment before realizing that Ichihara had continued down the passage behind him. Embarrassed, he spun about, now following the foreign woman. His face turned red around gritted teeth as sweat broke out on his brow.

Without warning, Ichihara turned right and descended a flight of stairs, finally coming to a stop before the quarters of the courtesans. Quickly sliding open the door, she stepped inside, followed by his guards. Surprised, Kentaro followed, his fury reigned in by curiosity. Walking into the courtyard, the foreign woman approached a young courtesan sitting beside a still pond, her fourteen year old daughter beside her. "This is the one," spoke the seer. "She will come with me to the land of sand."

Smiling inwardly, Kentaro realized his problem was solved. Who cared that she took the daughter of a whore? Meeting Ichihara's gaze, he felt quite pleased with himself and it was only later that he would question his fortune. If he had won, why was she the one smiling?

After more than a thousand years of relative internal peace, Minkai is close to exploding into all-out civil war. Many of the smaller islands once controlled by the empire have recently declared their independence. The successor to the Sakura Throne, Emperor Shigure, was imprisoned in 4705 AR by the Higashiyama clan at their compound near the edge of the capital, supposedly to protect him. It is due to the clan's strength, that war has not broken out already, but there is a growing movement to release the Hagashiyama's hold on the emperor, either by freeing or by killing him.



The Emperor's courtesans live a somewhat leisurely life provided they pay deference to his wives and remember their place. Very few of them have children and then only girls as boys are taken from their mothers and disposed of while infants. As girls, the Emperor's daughters have no right of inheritance, be they legitimate or not. Tian Ja in general, and Minkai in particular, is a patriarchal society and while lineage is tracked maternally, it is inherited paternally.

Within this structured environment, Shenhua's life has been relatively easy if not more than a little boring. As a daughter of the Emperor, she is forbidden to mingle with the common folk. Ancient tradition gives the common folk of Minkai certain rights and the daughters are therefore kept inside the imperial compound.

Most courtesans eventually become courtesans themselves although this is not mandated. In reality, the girls are pretty much ignored and therefore taught the only skills possessed by the adults around them - their mothers. Tradition strictly forbids their selection as further imperial courtesans, and so usually find themselves to attention of young soldiers with rising stars as all but the five most prestigious families can gain face through the addition of imperial blood.

Shenhua is a not untypical for a girl of her station. She is quiet, with good manners well suited to formal occasions. She has impeccable manners and knows exactly how to behave whether meeting with foreigners, the common folk, or even the Emperor himself.

Shenhua is also skilled in the arts, skilled with the samisen, dancing and fluent in both Tian and the common language in the distant land of Taldan. She is proficient with the spear through her dance training but has no arcane training at this time.

Shenhua worships Shelyn in her Tian Ja aspect as the Mistress of Chrysanthemums and knows all of the Mistress's holy texts, actually little more than historical romances, by heart. Secretly, Shenhua has always longed to be a *holy geisha*, a travelling priestess of Shelyn but understands that this can never happen due to her birth.

Despite her easy demeanor and acceptance of fate, Shenhua is exquisitely aware of exactly where she stands in the hierarchy of world nobility. While she is extremely unlikely to use this as an opportunity to put others down, she would not accept another putting her below her station. While Avistani might look down on her as the illegitimate daughter of a courtesan, this position is not considered shameful in Tian Ja.

Lastly, Shenhua is not very materialistic, preferring to cultivate relationships rather than accumulate wealth. She is relatively mercenary in this regard, having been trained by her mother to utilize what skills and opportunities she has. While Shenhua may sometimes act willfully, she does not do so by being rude or burning bridges.

Shenhua was tattoo'd at the age of five at the direct order of the Emperor himself and was one of his last actions before being held hostage by the Higashiyama. The actual rite was carried out in secret by the Emperor, his favorite courtesan and a foreign half-tian woman.

The tattoo has changed as the young woman has grown older. Starting as a small dragon in the small of her back, it now covers both shoulderblades and down to her thighs. While there is no telling exactly when it will stop growing, it will most likely wrap down her right arm by adulthood.

The tattoo cannot be removed by anything short of a *Wish* spell. It has even been noticed by the monks of the Goddess Shizuru in spirit form although this information was not shared outside of their order.



So this was the City of Man? It was nothing as she'd imagined, but then she'd imagined something more like home but...different. The city was loud and boistrous and the people dressed in such variety. The heat, certainly oppressive, was not as bad as she'd expected nor was the sun as bright as it seemed at home.

Standing before the brightly striped tent, she tried to summon the courage to enter. Ordered by Ishihara-sensei to learn about the town and its residents before nightfall, she'd sought guidance in the only place familiar, the cards of a seer.

Lifting the flap, the cool, dark interior beckoned with quiet comfort. The pungent smell of incense made her head spin a little, yet with one step forward she entered another world.

"Come, enter. You seek answers, yes? Let Ba'at illuminate your path forward. All need guidance, especially those first stepping foot onto foreign lands."

A sigh of relief escaped Shenhua's lips as she saw the seers cards. While the art was different, the familiar forms of The Liar and The Bear provided comfort. At least she used the same cards as home.

Once she was seated, the foreign seer pulled the top card, laying it down for Shenhua to read. "The Dance. You draw comfort from the familiar and move within the confines of tradition with foresight and grace. You dislike being cast adrift, having to redefine your place in a new heirarchy, and yet still have you come to this far land. You hope to remain true to your ways and therefore cause the unknown to accomodate itself to you. Let us see how that will work out."

Following Shenhua's nod of understanding, the foreign fortune teller took up her card once again, quickly shuffling it into the stack. Laying out nine cards in a three by three pattern, the seer moved her finger from left to right and top to bottom, peering at them carefully. Tapping the top left card, she spoke in a dreamy voice, echoing as if coming from far away.

"The Tangled Briar. A figure from antiquity will dominate your future. Both a victim and a perpetrator of great wrongs, it will rest on your shoulders to put things right. Misaligned, this figure brings you great pain but also hope.

The Teamster. You are driven forward down a path you cannot avoid. The comfort of the familiar is no longer yours and to stop is to pass from this world to the next. Stick to the path and stay moving at all times lest what chases should catch you.

The Crows. Your past is controlled by those who have worked violence to achieve their ends. They have taken from you your protection and your shield, casting you out lost and alone. Whether you move forward or back, you will need find a way around them to accomplish your goals."

With a gasp, Shenhua stared in fear at the Avistani seer. How could she know of her past and the Higashyama? Did this woman possess the true sight and what would it portend for Shenhua, who had entered on a whim?

The Dance

Life in the Imperial Court of Tian Ja is structured in the extreme. Each person has their place and future happiness comes from finding it and then molding oneself around it. This concept forms the basis of Shenhua's personality and guides her actions in all that she does.

With that said, one's proper place changes with our environment and as we move into new situations, so too do we find proper new opportunities opening themselves to us.

Shenhua was the Emperor's daughter by way of a courtesan. This was a very limiting position in Tian Ja, but is not binding in Avistan. She is a student in Avistan and this position comes with many benefits not available in the Court. Namely, a student is transitioning from what they were to what they want to be.



"The Big Sky. The day of your arrival has finally come, the end of a journey you began some months ago. Freedom is yours for the taking for the first time in your life, yet it fills you with fear. You must pass through the unknown with boldness, but also caution.

The Desert represents not only where you find yourself now, but the great distance you have travelled to get here. Look to a teacher or physician to guide you and you will find treasure awaiting you.

The Empty Throne. The spirits of your ancestors stir, unable to sleep within their graves while those that slew them rest in their beds above. To you has it fallen to lay these specters to rest that your spirit may eventually lie with them in peace."

Shenhua became more uncomfortable with each card. The inner working of the Imperial Court seemed laid open to a foreign witch. The secrets of her people were not meant to be laid bare here, on the other side of the world.

"The Betrayal. The envy of the unworthy has cast aside the mandate of heaven. Only through self-sacrifice and restraint will your path forward succeed. You must turn from this material world to

the one that lies beyond to change that which has gone wrong here.

The Courtesan. Three women drive your fate - your mother, your mentor, and yourself. How you treat each will determine success or failure. Beware the capriciousness of others, but always remember that as one of these three, you are an integral part of your own future.

The Uprising. A force infinitely more powerful than yourself lies athwart your path, both ahead and behind. You have no better chance of defeating it than a child bearing the brunt of the storm, yet defeat it you must. It will not be enough to pass it by or sneak around. Only by overcoming it will your spirit be able to take its place with those of your ancestors."

With the Tian Ja girl now gone, the fortune teller slithered out from behind her table. Her long trip had been worth the effort and the girl once again set on a path of conflict. War would come to Mingya at the girl's hand - Ba'at would make certain of it.



Inspiration

I have compiled Shenhua from many different sources, based on hints you have given about the campaign. Naturally, my first inspiration was Cho Chang of Harry Potter. I aim to play a character of quiet strength and grace while also maintaining an air of mystery. I hope to make her motives difficult to discern while still having her come down on the side of Right.



Isumi Saginomiya of Hayate the Combat Butler is another source of inspiration. She maintains an air of traditional composure no matter what takes place around her. While the other characters are concerned about fashion and trends, Isumi is always present in her kimono and sandals,

allowing the crazy world to go by and showing that new is not always better.

No anime is complete without the mysterious transfer student. This trope is so ingrained that Haruhi Suzumiya doesn't consider her high school club complete until she has one, thus making one suddenly appear.



With all the ninja and samurai in Golarion, everyone expects everyone in Tian Ja to be based on the Japanese. My Shenhua is based on a Chinese princess and has a clearly Chinese character history. Chinese

characters are surprisingly rare in anime and even more rare in western roleplaying games, something I think will make it even more fun.



Shenhua's eidolon

I plan for her eidolon to transform from the tattoo on her back. It will be a bluish/purple Lung (Chinese dragon) like that pictured above.

I plan to build it with a serpentine base, focusing on grappling/crushing. At higher levels I hope to be able to afford four limbs and some magical abilities to give it more of a dragon, and less of a protean, flair.

Where most eidolons are based around "how many attacks can I squeeze in" I really want Shenhua's eidolon to represent her culture. I'd like her eidolon to be more of a companion and a voice of wisdom, representing traditional Tian Ja values and guidance.

As she becomes higher level, I'd like to have her tattoos begin to creep down her arms. I think this would be really cool as her eidolon could then partially manifest, giving her the effect of living tattoos.

I think this character will really be different from everyone else's, with less of a combat bent and more of a roleplaying flair.