



THE 108 BRAVOS OF MOUNT LIANG  
ULTRAMETAL PLAYTEST / QUICKSTART

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# THE ULTRAMETAL ORACLE

The oracle on the next page – *Three Military Instructors and an Unruly Monk* – is drawn from the first ten chapters of the *Water Margin*.

Each chapter of the original text has a title that is composed of two short sentences, describing two of the major events which occur in that chapter. In this oracle, each chapter title has been broken into its component sentences, leaving us with twenty oracle entries.

Unlike the oracle entries from *In a Wicked Age*, the entries in this oracle are not problems about to erupt, but tasks for the 108 bravos to accomplish, fragments of their destiny. Consequently, they are used somewhat differently in play.

## USING THIS ORACLE

1. **ASSIGN BRAVOS:** The three reoccurring bravos (❶ Shi Jin, ❷ Lu Da, and ❸ Lin Chong) have their presence marked in the oracle with a number referring to their bravo sheet. All of them will eventually figure prominently in play, so you should first figure out who

will play which bravo when they appear and pass out the bravo sheets accordingly.

2. **DETERMINE POTENTIAL DESTINIES:** Roll 4d20 and consult the oracle to select the destinies that the players will work to accomplish in the first chapter. Reroll duplicates so that you have four unique destinies and mark the dots next to them on the oracle, so you will know not to pick them again. You should also write the initial four destinies down on your campaign record.
3. **BRAINSTORM PRECEDING EVENTS:** Instead of using the oracle situations as a jumping off point, you should think of them as goals to drive the characters towards. Brainstorming, then, involves asking “What has to happen for these destinies to come true?” During the brainstorming stage, everything is up in the air, since it hasn’t happened yet, so it’s important that the group not plan out everything. Leave some fun for the spur of the moment!
4. **GM PICKS A PLACE TO BEGIN:** After a bit of group brainstorming, the GM should pick a moment before any of these destinies has been achieved

(and they will all ultimately come to pass), but right before some really interesting stuff is likely to happen. In the oral storytelling tradition of the *Water Margin*, the GM is responsible for skipping over the boring stuff and focusing the story on what the audience (the play group) is most interested in hearing about.

5. **USE BRAVOS IN MODERATION:** The *Water Margin* prominently features a great many characters who are not bravos or members of the robbers’ lair at Mount Liang. Furthermore, it is not until later in the chronicle that a large number of bravos are gathered together. Consequently, scenes should generally focus on one or, occasionally, two of the bravos. All three of them should rarely (if ever) be in the same scene. Additionally, at least a third of the scenes should have no bravos in them at all, focusing entirely on other characters.
6. **ASSIGN OTHER CHARACTERS AS NEEDED:** Since there will often only be one bravo (if any) in a scene, the GM should assign people to play other characters as needed. However, it is the GM’s job

# THREE MILITARY INSTRUCTORS AND AN UNRULY MONK

1	○	王教头私走延安府	Instructor Wang secretly departs for Yan'an Prefecture.
2	○	九纹龙大闹史家村	① The Nine Dragoned greatly disturbs Shi Family Village.
3	○	史大郎夜走华阴县	① The elder Shi son leaves Huayin County by night.
4	○	鲁提辖拳打镇关西	② Constable Lu pummels "the Lord of Guanxi" with his fists.
5	○	赵员外重修文殊院	Lord Zhao repairs Gently Glory Monastery.
6	○	鲁智深大闹五台山	② Discerning Lu greatly disturbs Five Peak Mountain.
7	○	小霸王醉入销金帐	The little baron drunkenly enters the gold-spangled curtains.
8	○	花和尚大闹桃花村	② The Flowery Monk greatly disturbs Peach Flower Village.
9	○	九纹龙翦径赤松林	① The Nine Dragoned severs all ties in Red Pine Forest.
10	○	鲁智深火烧瓦罐寺	② Discerning Lu burns down Earthen Jar Monastery.
11	○	花和尚倒拔垂杨柳	② The Flowery Monk pulls up the weeping willow.
12	○	豹子头误入白虎堂	③ Panther Chief mistakenly enters White Tiger Hall.
13	○	林教头刺配沧州道	③ Instructor Lin is branded a criminal and sent to Cangzhou.
14	○	鲁智深大闹野猪林	② Discerning Lu greatly disturbs Wild Boar Forest.
15	○	柴进门招天下客	Chai Jin welcomes guests to his door from everywhere under heaven.
16	○	林冲棒打洪教头	③ Lin Chong pummels Instructor Hong with his staff.
17	○	林教头风雪山神庙	③ Instructor Lin endures wind and snow at the mountain spirit's temple.
18	○	陆虞候火烧草料场	Guardsmen Lu burns down the granaries.
19	○	朱贵水亭施号箭	Zhu Gui shoots an arrow from The Water Pavilion.
20	○	林冲雪夜上梁山	③ Lin Chong ascends Mount Liang on a snowy night.

to consider which characters should be free-thinking protagonists, played by the other players, and which characters serve the GM's purposes and should be reserved as NPCs. There will be better guidelines to help figure this out in future drafts.

7. **ACCOMPLISH TWO OF THE FOUR DESTINIES:** Play proceeds until two of the original four destinies have been accomplished. Those two destinies, in the order in which they occurred, combine to become the actual title of the chapter, recorded in the campaign record.
8. **GM CREATES CLIFFHANGER ENDING:** Once the two destinies have been accomplished, the GM should guide play towards a cliffhanger ending. The cliffhanger should occur the next time 1) a conflict seems about to take place, 2) a character faces a thorny dilemma, or 3) some important information or character identity is about to be revealed. When any of those three things occurs, the GM should raise a hand to pause the action and intone a ritual phrase in the form: "Did [character] [overcome cliffhanger situation]? Pray hear it

told in the next chapter..."

9. **DETERMINE NEW DESTINIES:** When the chapter has been declared over by the ritual phrase, the two unfulfilled destinies from the previous chapter should be recorded as potential destinies for the next chapter and 2d20 should be rolled to determine two additional ones, making a total of four. As before, duplicates are re-rolled or (after a the first three chapters) players can simply pick interesting ones from the oracle, since you might have to make an increasingly large number of re-rolls.
10. **Play Up to Nine Chapters:** Play continues in the next eight chapters much like the previous one. Once a total of nine chapters have been played out, you will have fulfilled all but two of the destinies on this oracle, and two potential destinies is not enough to start a new chapter. Assuredly, by that point, I will have posted the next oracle and a set of bravos to go with it, so you can continue playing. If not, you should harass me over the internet.

## PLAYING BRAVOS

## PLAYING OTHER CHARACTERS

## PLAYING NPCs

## FRAMING SCENES

## EXAMPLE OF PLAY

1

## SHI JIN

THE NINE DRAGONED  
THE ELDER SHI SON

- The Nine Dragoned greatly disturbs Shi Family Village.
- The elder Shi son leaves Huayin County by night.
- The Nine Dragoned severs all ties in Red Pine Forest.

2

## LU DA

CONSTABLE LU  
DISCERNING LU (BUDDHIST NAME)  
THE FLOWERY MONK

- Constable Lu pummels "the Lord of Guanxi" with his fists.
- Discerning Lu greatly disturbs Five Peak Mountain..
- The Flowery Monk greatly disturbs Peach Flower Village.
- Discerning Lu burns down Earthen Jar Monastery.
- The Flowery Monk pulls up the weeping willow.
- Discerning Lu greatly disturbs Wild Boar Forest.

3

## LIN CHONG

INSTRUCTOR LIN  
PANTHER CHIEF

- Panther Chief mistakenly enters White Tiger Hall.
- Instructor Lin is branded a criminal and sent to Cangzhou.
- Lin Chong pummels Instructor Hong with his staff.
- Instructor Lin endures wind and snow at the mountain spirit's temple.
- Lin Chong ascends Mount Liang on a snowy night.

## IN A WICKED AGE ...

*...the 108 bravos of Mount Liang took to the greenwoods, the heather, and the marshes, for though the empire had grown corrupt and countrymen proved duplicitous, true brotherhood could always be found within a robbers' lair.*

Become a noble outlaw in this “oracle book” for D. Vincent Baker’s *In a Wicked Age*.

Based on the *Water Margin* (Shuihu Zhuan), *The 108 Bravos of Mount Liang* assists players from all backgrounds in recreating this classic of Chinese adventure literature...

...in their own unique fashion.

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