

I KNOW KUNG-FU

You may have noticed that Wushu is a remarkably freeform game. You can do quite literally *anything*. There are no predetermined feats or maneuvers to confine your imagination, but that also means you get very little in terms of guidance. If you don't know your kung-fu, it can be a hard game to play.

The best way to get up to speed is to match a lot of Wire-Fu movies. (See the "Introduction" for my recommendations.) However, I've also tried to boil down that vast wealth of inspired fight choreography into a few essentials. These are the kinds of things you should be using as Details in a Wire-Fu game.

FISTS OF FURY

The first step to knowing your kung-fu is to, you know, know some kung-fu! Even the most outrageous Wire-Fu stunts are based on real martial arts techniques. You don't have to take a class, just watch a few movies and remember the basics...

Kinetic Linking - Martial arts are all about channeling force through and around your body. Every strike has to have momentum or leverage behind it. Know where your power comes from (straining muscles, use of leverage, your attacker's own momentum) and use it add Details to your actions.

Improvisation - Even an unarmed man carries many weapons: fists, feet, knees, knuckles, elbows, forehead, thumbs, teeth, even hair. If that's not enough for you, pick up a random object and hit someone with it! Even a wet towel can become a

deadly weapon in the hands of a kung-fu master!

Holds & Locks - Smacking people around is only half the battle. You can incapacitate your enemies by bending their joints backwards, stretching their tendons, and eventually making them black out from the pain. It's also a great way to immobilize weapons, especially firearms. You can knock your victims out cold by putting pressure on their carotid arteries (on either side of the neck), thus cutting off bloodflow to the brain.

More Is Better - Wuxia movies are relentlessly over the top! If you can block one sword thrust, why not twelve? If you can take on one mook and win, why not twenty? Sometimes, turning a run of the mill role-playing session into a martial arts extravaganza is just a matter of scale.

WIRE WORK

Now that the plausible stuff is out of the way, it's time for the impossible! For one reason or another (see "Excuses to Kick Ass"), Wire-Fu characters can send their opponents flying with one punch, leap tall buildings in a single bound, and perform many other feats not normally allowed by physics. When you combine this kind of superhuman strength and agility with the martial arts, you get some truly amazing stunts...

Kiai!!! - When a guy hits you with the force of a wrecking ball, it's hard not to budge a little. In fact, you're more likely to fly into the air and do a couple of backflips before crashing back to earth. If you're lucky, you'll just slide backwards a few dozen feet. Throws shouldn't just knock people to the ground, they should...

PURGATORY

By 2050, virtual reality is as common as the wheel. Civilians use it for recreation, universities use it for instruction, and prisons use it for rehabilitation. Purgatory is a simulated city used by governments across the globe to turn convicts into productive members of society. It's as close to the real world as possible: you still need to eat and sleep, and you can still get sick or injured (you can't be killed, not without some serious hacking, but anything that trashes your avatar will disconnect you from the VR), and you gotta work for a living.

Every inmate is assigned a profession, something the community needs. Those who go along to get along can shave years off their sentences. After all, if they've learned to thrive as law-abiding citizens, what's the point of keeping them in prison? Those who return to lives of crime, or get caught hacking the system, are punished with "wake-up time:" the offender is removed from the simulation and forced to lie awake in their pod for days, weeks, or months!

For the most part, however, the inmates are allowed to govern themselves. Too much supervision would render the simulation useless, or so the theory goes. The government's only presence in the VR is also its only connection to the outside world: City Hall. This majestic building is the starting location for everyone who plugs into the system, whether they be Wardens, inmates, or visitors from outside.

The Wardens are prison guards whose job is to maintain the security of the system, not to protect the inmates. They

punish hackers, shut down connections to the outside, and investigate events that have been removed from the system logs. However, the fact that their job is to prevent hacking doesn't mean they can't do any hacking of their own. Warden avatars are ridiculously strong, nearly invulnerable, and can wear a different face every time they plug in.

They have total authority and unlimited power... if there's a better recipe for egomania, I don't want to try it! One of their favorite arrest tactics is simply to tear an inmate's avatar to shreds, which sends them straight into wake-up time and allows the Wardens to interrogate them at their leisure. Technically, the practice is illegal, but City Hall is happy to look the other way. Some even make the inmates refer to them as gods.

Even so, the real authorities in Purgatory are the Lifers. These ruthless men and women have amassed so much power and prestige in the virtual world that they'd rather not see the outside ever again. Most are adept hackers who've learned to exploit the system, giving themselves superhuman strength, speed, and resilience. They've established pirate links to the outside, through which they command criminal empires in the real world. Most importantly, they know how to hide things from the Wardens, masking their illegal activities and removing any traces from the system logs. Most Lifers are high-ups in one of three organizations...

The Outfit

Disciplined, professional criminals are recruited into this corporate cabal. Its cultural ancestors include the Mob and...

KICK-ASS

EXAMPLES OF PLAY

02 and 03 repel down on the vampire's flanks just as it puts its last synth attacker in a reverse headlock, / bends him backwards at the knees, / and snaps his neck with a quick upward yank. / Then, it kicks the corpse at 02, knocking the cyborg off his feet. (4) 03 whips out a man-catcher (a metal collar on a long pole) / and snaps the business end around the bloodsucker's throat. (2) With a look of mild annoyance on its fanged face, / the vampire takes hold of the man-catcher and flings 03 into the air... / straight into the blades of the helicopter above! (3) With speed borne of desperation, / 03 hacks into the helicopter's control system / and sends it into a tight starboard roll. / The blades still take a slice out of his midsection, / but only his skin and subdermal armor are damaged. (5)

Meanwhile, 02 has flipped back up to his feet / and drawn his laser-sharpened katana. / He buries his sword up to the hilt in the vampire's midsection, / lifts it off its feet, / and nails it to a concrete wall! (5) The vamp counters with a savage kick / that sends 02 sailing into a pick-up clear across the yard. / The camera zooms into the truck's engine, where we see the fuel line burst next to some sparking electronics. / The truck erupts in a geyser of flaming gasoline and tonka-tough shrapnel! (4)

The cyber-sams have to take on the vamp mono-a-mono.

The GM sets the dice pool limit at 12, which means each player can roll 6 dice. Note how the GM earns her first three dice by dispatching a nameless mook; it doesn't affect the player-characters directly, but those Details make the vamp look like a bad ass and that makes for a better fight. (If you need a more in-character rationale, say that getting rid of the mook improved the vamp's tactical position or intimidated the PCs. In any case, it's worth 3 dice.)

Again, the player-characters have 3 Chi each and the combat Trait "Killbot (5)." The vampire has 5 Chi, being a magically animated corpse, and "Urban Predator (5)." Since the GM has no need for the Nemesis to survive the night, she goes on the offensive again. She rolls 4 Yang dice against each cyber-sam (for a total of 8 Yang) and 3 Yin dice (2 against 02 and 1 against 03). Lets resolve them one at a time...

02 decides his actions were mostly defensive, so he rolls 4 Yin and 2 Yang. The GM rolls 3 Yang successes against him. All 4 of 02's Yin dice come up successes, so he loses no Chi despite having described taking damage to his subdermal armor. (Apparently, it's not enough to slow him down.) He also gets successes on both Yang dice, but it's not enough to penetrate the vamp's 2 Yin successes.

03 wants to take this bloodsucker down, so he rolls 4 Yang and 2 Yin dice. The GM rakes in another 3 Yang successes, while 03 only gets 1 Yin success, so the player tosses in 2 of his 3 Chi. He has better luck on his attacks, rolling all 4 Yang successes against the vamp's 1 Yin success. The GM has to fork over 3 of the vampire's 5 Chi, leaving her with 2.