



# The Moon over the Mountain

-A Role Poetry and Art Game for two players-

## Premise:

This game is based on the short story *Sangetsuki* by Atsushi Nakajima. The aim of this game is to live and stage this fantastic tale set in 7th century China, while creating some short poems and visual compositions.

## Preparation:

To play this game you need: two people; one hour of time; two six-sided dice of different colors; white sheets and pens; many photographs, illustrations or evocative images scattered on the playing table (cards from the board game *Dixit* are perfect for this purpose); two stones (the size of an apricot) of different shape; two plastic plates filled with tempera/acrylic color of your choice.

## Characters:

A player is *Li Zheng*. He is an administrative official of the Emperor who, after failing to become a famous poet, turns into a ferocious beast and spends his life in the jungle. Li Zheng is defined by two dice of different colours: **Poet die** and **Beast die**. The second player plays the *Travelers*. These are the people who enter the jungle and come across Li Zheng. Travellers are defined by the two stones.

## Gameplay:

The game takes place in 5 Scenes. Before these, one of the players will read the Prologue.

Each scene is then introduced by the player who plays the Travelers. He invents and narrates the journey of a Traveler in the jungle. It is important to keep narration engaging and full of descriptive details, but not excessively long. Each scene is resolved in the encounter between the Traveler and the voice of Li Zheng coming from the jungle and saying: "Still someone on the path ?!".

After pronouncing these words, the player who plays Li Zheng simultaneously rolls his two dice.

If the Beast die is the highest, then the feral animal inside Li Zheng prevails and the Traveler is likely to be killed. He can avoid this end by using one of his Stones.

Using a stone means being able to escape: The traveler will narrate that he has come out of the jungle alive, but the beast will haunt him in his/her dreams. What will appear as a nightmare will look like this: the player dips the stone used to escape in color and uses it like a stamp on one of the sheets of paper. The player will then add pen details such as eyes, fangs, horns, ... to the stain obtained.

If the Traveler has already used both stones, or does not want to use one in the current scene, he will be killed by the beast.

In both cases the Traveler never sees the true aspect of the beast.

If the Poet die is the highest, then Li Zheng's human part prevails.

He will ask the Traveler to write down one of his poems, so that it can be remembered and transmitted to posterity.

Li Zheng will invent a poem using photographs / images scattered on the table as cues. The only rules for poems creation are the following: they must talk about the inner world of Li Zheng and his condition as a man - beast; they must be composed of a number of verses equal to the result of the Poet die.

The Traveler will write down the composition on a white sheet, set it aside and move on to the next scene.

In case of tie, Poet die wins.

After the fifth scene, the Traveler will read the Epilogue.

## Prologue

*Li Zheng was a brilliant scholar and a ambitious man. Despite his young age he became an esteemed and praised public official. However, he could not bear*

*having to follow the instructions of his superiors and, bursting with a boundless confidence in his own abilities, he resigned himself to do something brilliant of his life. He devoted himself to what motivated him most: poetry. He did it with passion and constancy, but he never succeeded obtaining the fame and praise of the critics which he hoped to. Thus, after ten years of uncertain career as a poet, he had to surrender and return to his public employment. Finding himself dependent on those who ten years earlier were the most mediocre and less brilliant colleagues of him, plunged Li Zheng into a deep state of anguish. One night, caught by insomnia, he heard a voice calling him from the forest and followed it. He ran for an indefinite time, as if hypnotized, in search of the source of that call. When he finally stopped he realized that he had assumed the appearance of a wild beast. Since then, he lives in the forest. His human nature shows up from time to time but, for most of the time, he is possessed by the beast that has become and lives killing and terrorizing animals and people.*

## Epilogue

*When the Travelers had reached the top of the hill, they all turned towards the grove. Suddenly a tiger emerged from the bush, and with a leap got on the road. Looking toward the moon, whose pale light was about to dissolve, he emitted two, three deep roars, then leapt back to the forest from which he had come, and his figure disappeared from view.*



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## Alternative Rules

If you find yourself in trouble with the idea of composing poetry in a free way, guided only by the presence of images and photos as cues; or if you simply want to vary the game experience, you can play the character of *Li Zheng* with the Caviardage technique.

Caviardage is a creative writing method that makes poetry "emerge" from something already written. You will need a permanent black marker and an old book (preferably a novel), from which you can tear up some pages.

When the time comes for *Li Zheng* to dictate one of his poems, open the book on one random page (if you prefer, use the Poet dice and the Beast one as tens and units of a number, and go to the corresponding page).

Tear off the page and start reading it in silence, starting from the first word of the first line. As you proceed reading, begin to blacken the text with the permanent marker, covering each word with the same movement you would do if you had an Highlighter in your hand . Whenever you read a word which *resounds* in you, simply skip it; do not blacken it.

Leave a number of readable words equal to the sum of the two dice.

At the end of the the process you'll have a page of black lines with about ten words to form the composition.

Here is *Li Zheng's* poem.

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[redacted] naked  
 [redacted]  
 [redacted]  
 [redacted]  
 [redacted] dragoons,  
 [redacted]  
 [redacted] in  
 [redacted] wedding veil [redacted]  
 [redacted]  
 [redacted]  
 [redacted]  
 [redacted]  
 [redacted] men [redacted]  
 [redacted]  
 [redacted] beasts [redacted]  
 [redacted]  
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 [redacted]  
 [redacted] hilarious, [redacted]  
 [redacted]  
 [redacted]  
 [redacted]  
 [redacted]  
 beings [redacted]  
 wanders [redacted]

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