

Additional Scene-Framing Guidelines:

- * Make the set as viscerally real as possible. Show how large objects are with your hands. Don't just focus on the visual - include smells, sounds and temperature. But also include how the set is lit - brightly, dimly, sporadically, etc.
- * Describe how the characters are situated to begin. Think of it as a painting that suddenly comes alive like a film.
- * Describe what characters are doing at the beginning of the scene.
- * Don't hesitate to pre-script events a little - you can state that two characters begin in a scene and then a third enters later. You must state this at the beginning, however.
- * Note how the set has changed over the course of the story. Different times of day, set damage, etc. make for a well-developed background.
- * Choose characters that haven't been involved much in the storyline thus far. Those getting all the attention will get it again soon enough...

Playing the Scene Guide:

A good MRG game lives and dies (often literally) through negotiated play. If the purpose of scene-framing is to establish clear terms based on which the scene will unfold, the purpose of play is to extract pleasure from its very unfolding. Remembering that MRG is a *martial arts* movie only conjures half the dramatic tools you'll need to satisfactorily resolve a story. The other half lie in *melodrama*. See, as you might have noticed, all the characters in MRG are equally matched in combat. Period. So even though you may be the audience's favorite, you might lose anyway due to luck of the draw. Win or lose, that combat has to *mean* something, or is at least working through the playful and/or serious tension established in earlier scenes. Melodrama, or mutually inflicted emotional damage for an audience's enjoyment and catharsis, is about establishing tension in a scene *regardless of perceived plot content*. You may not always know what's going on, but you certainly know that your characters feel badly about it. Plots in MRG are fluid, the truth shifts from scene to scene and characters come and go, so what needs preservation throughout is the overwrought emotional significance attached to *any* event in the game.

What are these so-called melodrama tools, you ask? There are maybe too many to articulate, but here is a list of some starter techniques for you to use to play out a MRG scene to its bittersweet-but-pristine conclusion:

- * "Yes, and..."
- * Heighten and Explore
- * Delay and Obfuscate
- * Traumatic Flashback
- * Flagrant Repression
- * Naive Hope
- * Possibility Mining
- * Partner Reading

- * Opposites Attract
- * Perception Leading
- * Cognition Leading
- * Symbol Leading

To help explain and demonstrate said play techniques, let's look at our sample characters from the Wirework and Knife Ritual demonstrations:

Yu-Thai, Advisor to the Emperor

Color: Smoldering Orange

Weather: Flying Sparks

Quirk: Flaming Hairdo

Loyalties: Heaven, "No job's worth selling one's soul for."

Wai-Li, Rising Star

Color: Blood Red

Weather: Red Dawn

Quirk: Friends in High Places

Loyalties: Heaven, "My ambition will secure my position."

Ken-Sho, Refugee from Hell

Color: Pink

Weather: Reflected Light

Quirk: A Second Ahead in Time

Loyalty: Earth, "Hell will pay for what they did to me."

The Dull Way Out

You look over your Loyalties on your character sheet. You see Loyalties on your friends' character sheets. Fairly straightforward what your motivation is, right? Why can't you just act on those values - and those alone - without changing them? Let's see how that plays out:

Katie (playing Yu-Thai): Okay - last scene we established Wai-Li was actually in league with the Hell faction somehow and has switched her Loyalty appropriately. Now I'd like to see Ken-Sho encounter her in the Lotus Garden.

Matt (playing Ken-Sho): Ken-Sho storms into the garden in a rage.

Melissa (playing Wai-Li): Wai-Li looks up, startled.

Wai-Li: Ken-Sho?

Ken-Sho: Did you betray me to Hell?

Matt hands Melissa the Unsheathed Knife.

Wai-Li: I deny it!

Matt then stabs her character sheet, forcing wirework. They fight. Wai-Li dies.

Wai-Li (dying words): Tell the others I fought honorably!

Cut.

On the one hand, Ken-Sho is simply “making Hell pay” for what was done to him. Wai-Li’s changed Loyalty from Heaven to Hell means it technically makes sense for her to die for her true masters. On the other hand, such play is so bereft of emotional content as to put the audience to sleep. Loyalties should be seen not as hard fixtures until the *player* draws the line with the character, and such straightforward action leaves little room for character or story development anyway. Knife passes should be seen as opportunities to either agree to ridiculous demands - proving your character is more than meets the eye (and giving you an opportunity to change a Loyalty...) - or etch the line between the characters in stone, so that there can be no doubts about your relationship.

“Yes, And...”

The “Yes, And...” technique comes from basic improvisational theater and is the primary ingredient in driving creative production in a scene, whether you acknowledge it or not. You basically agree with whatever fact another character proposes - “You wore that scarf the day your master died” or “We trained at the same school, remember?” - and offer an additional fact to secure the first fact - “Sure, he’d loaned it to me for the day, I got it for a lifetime.” or “Yes - I still remember the beatings!” - while indicating your character’s attitude about it. Most of us do this all the time subconsciously, namely: agree on certain fictional “facts” as they arise and elaborate/act on them based on the very fact that they’re now established. Use this technique when the relationships between characters seem a bit flimsy and need an external fact to solidify them. It is unnecessary to actually say “Yes, and...” but agreeing and adding an emotionally laden fact will do nicely! Continuing our earlier scene:

Matt: Ken-Sho storms into the garden in a rage.

Wai-Li: Ken-Sho?

Ken-Sho: I have returned. From Hell.

Wai-Li: So I’ve heard. You used your relationship with me as leverage.

Ken-Sho: It was the only way I could see you again.

Whoa.

You see the difference that technique made already? Suddenly we've established that Ken-Sho's recently returned from Hell, had a past relationship with Wai-Li, used this illicit affair to bargain his way out and is seeking to renew this relationship at the moment. If we know Wai-Li's been exposed last scene as an agent of Hell, this unleashes a pleasurable flurry of speculation about conflicts of interest: does Ken-Sho already know? Is his love for Wai-Li in spite of his Loyalty to vengeance? Does Wai-Li already know that Ken-Sho knows and is trying to set the record straight? After this scene, Wai-Li and Ken-Sho will likely both possess new Loyalties regarding their relationship, such that it is given the same weight as their other motivations. Simple agreement and creative license will quickly generate the narrative backdrop needed for complex emotional play.

Heighten and Explore

Another basic improv theater technique is best suited for adding a mid-scene emotional twist. Having already established a relationship or situation, heightening and exploring means exactly that: either escalating a situation one degree of intensity beyond where it was - i.e., from affiliation to love, from anger to rage, from regret to sorrow, etc. - or providing further detail to the Set and characters - i.e., moving to a different part of the Set, introduce an object or prop that accents the scene, describe in detail some matter that is being discussed, etc. Such play fleshes out the characters' emotional presence and makes the characters' world more consequential and bound with their actions. Let's continue our scene from where we left off:

Wai-Li: See me again? I...

Ken-Sho: I wanted to know for sure if you still loved me.

Matt passes Melissa the Sheathed Knife.

Melissa (Exploring): Instead of answering, Wai-Li turns quietly away and plucks a single lotus blossom. She shuffles it carefully between her hands.

Melissa puts down the Sheathed Knife.

Ken-Sho (Heightening): Wai-Li, what are you thinking?

Matt unsheathes the Knife and hands it back to her.

Matt: Ken-Sho grabs her roughly by the shoulders.

Melissa: This causes her to drop the lotus blossom. It plops indelicately on the ground. A precious bloom discarded. Her eyes turn up, suddenly red with fury.

Wai-Li: I'm thinking I ought to send you back to Hell!

Melissa stabs Matt's character sheet. Wirework ensues.

The point is, as a result of heightening and exploring, we now care more about the outcome of the fight, as it appears to be the "working out" of an otherwise impossible relationship. If Wai-Li wins, she can tragically kill her former lover in a fit of passion. If Ken-Sho wins, there are a plethora of unanswered questions begging resolution. Either way, everyone wins.

Delay and Obfuscate

Sometimes saying "yes" isn't always the right answer. In fact, sometimes the "plot" may be moving forward too quickly for your tastes. The way you can slow things down without irritating your fellow players is to use the actual delay and obfuscate technique. This can be seen like alternating between yes and no (since saying "no" all the time will rapidly get you framed out of the story or killed) or saying "yes, but..." In essence, all your character's knowledge suddenly becomes either conditional or somewhat opaque. The easiest way of implementing this technique is to pregnantly pass the buck - "Yu-Thai would know. Or haven't you asked her already?" Another way is to answer questions with questions, drop character-related bits of business, and reference attributes from the other player's character sheet - "I notice you have a large axe." Remember to maintain the emotional tenor of the scene you're in and not be too obvious that you're, in fact, stalling.

Our favorite scene from the top:

Matt: Ken-Sho storms in, enraged.

Melissa: Wai-Li wakes from an apparent spell of daydreaming.

Wai-Li: Ken-Sho? How good of you to make it to the festivities.

Matt: Ken-Sho shakes his fist at Wai-Li.

Ken-Sho: I'm in no mood for pleasantries. Were you responsible for me being sent to Hell?

Matt unsheathes the Knife and hands it to Melissa.

Wai-Li: Pity. We have much catching up to do, you and I.

Melissa holds onto the knife.

Ken-Sho: What's between us is now past. Did you?

Melissa: Wai-Li sighs and crosses her arms. Her face is a portrait of exhaustion with a flicker of what may be regretful longing.

Wai-Li: May I tell you a story?

Notice how much scene-chewing Wai-Li performed? And Melissa continued to hold the Knife. Eventually she'll still have the choice of acquiescing to his demand, performing Wirework, etc. But for the moment Melissa is backpedaling in order to slow down the plot escalation, reestablishing a subtle tension while figuring out what her next move should be. Though MRG is a game of passions spun out of control, the players are within their rights to control that spin, so to speak.

Traumatic Flashback

Sometimes you're in a scene and would like to transport the players into your character's past life. MRG as a game does not tolerate a lot of pre-plot exposition, but used sparingly, such exposition can establish points of tension and fill gaping holes in the plot. Employing the flashback technique is as simple as saying "We see a flashback..." and describing what transpired in the past. You can even ask other players to play characters in the past, though any conflict will need to be resolved via freeform agreement or arbitration from the flashbacking player. Make sure to let the emotions raised by the flashback filter into the scene set in the present.

Our same scene, continued:

Wai-Li: There was once a young boy who stubbornly gazed into the sun until it burnt his eyes out. Blind but with a sense of the truth of the world, he became a wise man and traveled the Earth dispensing his knowledge. His brother, however, could not bring himself to do the same. In fact, he hated the sun, and his jealousy at his brother's easy serenity grew until he could bear it no longer.

Matt: Since Ken-Sho's Weather Display is "Reflected Light," I think it's only fair that he be the brother. We see a flashback of a blind man surrounded by his disciples on a tranquil hillside. A younger Ken-Sho draws his blade. It gleams deadly in the sunlight.

So even though we're in the middle of a discussion about why Ken-Sho was sent to Hell in the first place, we get a flashback that explains volumes about the root of the problem. The action wasn't resolved in the flashback, but it doesn't need to be: we can already guess at a number of possible outcomes, all of them exciting.

Flagrant Repression

The dramatic opposite to the traumatic flashback is flagrant repression, or openly letting quotidian social ritual in the present camouflage past events and the character's emotional state. We thereby get the pleasure of knowing some important part of the

character is being *held back*. This is best done through courtly formalities and gestures. It should be done preferably when the Knife is either covered or sheathed, and means to keep it that way without sacrificing tension.

Observe a different scene from the beginning:

Matt: Yu-Thai has agreed to give an official audience to Ken-Sho, as he wishes to make a legal accusation. It takes place in the Hall of a Thousand Clouds, and Wai-Li is hiding behind a mirror.

Katie: So Yu-Thai is sitting atop a raised dais, flanked by a dozen silk-clad servants. She is decked out in full court regalia with expressionist make-up to match. She nods her head ever so slightly as Ken-Sho enters.

Matt: Ken-Sho is wearing his black armor with pink highlights, his sword gripped tightly at his side. He bows twice to Yu-Thai.

Yu-Thai: The Court of the Heavens bids Thee welcome, Ken-Sho of Earth.

Ken-Sho: I humbly accept this welcome and your hospitality. You are too kind.

Melissa: Wai-Li has taken up position behind the giant mirror and seems intent on hearing what Ken-Sho has to say.

Yu-Thai: This audience has been called in response to informally spread accusations from yourself that Wai-Li, Third Consort to the Emperor of Heaven, is in fact in alliance with Hell. These are serious allegations, sir.

Ken-Sho: They are as serious as the injustice done to me, Your Grace.

Yu-Thai: Very well. You must now swear the Binding Oath of Truth to validate your subsequent testimony.

Katie hands Matt the Sheathed Knife. It is Sheathed because of the formal, passionless nature of the demand made.

Ken-Sho: With all due pleasure, Your Grace.

Matt puts the Knife down.

The stilted formal style fits the situation, namely justice proceedings standing in between Ken-Sho and his vengeance. Wai-Li's hidden presence merely enhances the tension found in the scene.

Naive Hope

The best tragedies emerge from ideals, hopes and dreams slowly torn apart. The naive hope technique is the open, sincere projection of these within a scene. Since most of the time a character will wind up dead or morally corrupted by the end, such hopes and dreams can easily turn into savory bits of irony. Glance at your Loyalties and tap into your character's inner urge to monologue:

The above scene, continued:

Matt: After taking the Binding Oath of Truth, Ken-Sho gets down on his knees.

Ken-Sho: I wish that the Great Yu-Thai would have the wisdom to see in my story not only a desire for justice but also the simple trials of a simple man trying to make his way in the world. I hope not to be the avenging spirit Wai-Li created, but simply one who kindly nudges history back into its truthful orbit.

Regardless of whether or not Ken-Sho is lying through his teeth, we get an alternative view of his otherwise fairly one-sided Loyalty. Hopes are also a good way of delaying and obfuscating, as well as communicating with other players about what direction your pathos flows.

Possibility Mining

To “mine possibility” is to take established facts, inconsistencies and plausible circumstances and form them into a solid story. Since MRG has no authority figure like a gamemaster whose job it is to keep all the details straight, follow the plot threads as they develop and foresee where the story will lead, it's up to the players to figure out when they should start closing some open doors and tying up loose threads. I call addressing this “possibility mining” because it implies that all which was said and done up to the present are resources to be exploited to join threads of different possibilities together. This is obviously a mid- to late-game technique, and requires a little note-taking or a foreknowledge of where everything stands. Possibility mining can produce the unexpected twist or the inevitable fate, the reduced pool of suspects or the hidden link that ties everyone together.

Let's start mid-scene, late in the game. The Lotus Garden, Ken-Sho and Wai-Li again:

Wai-Li: How could you?

Ken-Sho: What?

Wai-Li: After all you've suffered, you still want to re-endure what you've already put you and *your sister* through.

Matt: Ken-Sho reaches out to touch Wai-Li's arm.

Melissa: She bats it away.

Wai-Li: Our relationship could never hold. The laws of Heaven and Earth forbade it. A love affair between a Heavenite and Earthling, both half-breeds directly related by blood! Yet we pursued it with tenderness. But when the time came and Yu-Thai forced me to make a choice, I... chose. Against you. Hell's ambassador saw my selling you out as a favor, and I pulled those same strings to get you out once Heaven and Earth came together. But we cannot pretend we're not different people now.

And so forth. Melissa wisely picked up earlier mentioned strands and formed it into an incest story: Wai-Li and Ken-Sho were committing a double transgression (incest, inter-realm) and her guilt combined with ambition had her sell him down the fiery river. The player could not have accomplished this intricate and moving plot twist without seeing the possibilities opened up by earlier scenes.

Partner Reading

Playing off your fellow players is something you'll do unconsciously, but sometimes it's helpful to pay strict attention during scenes in which you don't necessarily know what the *players* want, let alone the characters. My gut reaction is to look for signs of vindictiveness or righteousness (meaning a fight, likely to the death, is on its way) or non-emotional concentration on conversation formalities (meaning the player is stalling and passing the narrative reins to you for the moment) or has their hand near the Knife (meaning demands or death). In many ways, a successful MRG game only comes about as a result of successful partner reading: knowing intuitively what each player wants out of any given scene and using characters, plot and system mechanics as a means to this end. In the scene below, Katie is feeling ambivalent, Melissa aggressive. Watch how they find some middle ground.

Melissa: Wai-Li is on the Rainbow Road down to Earth and Yu-Thai is chasing after her to win her back.

Katie already realizes that such an action doesn't coincide with her own conception of what Yu-Thai would do, so she holds back - not knowing what to do next.

Yu-Thai: Wai-Li! Wait!

Wai-Li: You cannot have me back. I will go with Ken-Sho to realms where not even the powers of Heaven, Earth and Hell can touch us.

Yu-Thai: You will be found, of course.

Wai-Li: I don't care! Just try and stop me!

Melissa hands the Unsheathed Knife to Katie.

Katie: Yu-Thai gently takes Wai-Li's hand and looks her in the eye.

Yu-Thai: Then I've come to say goodbye. You were a valuable companion these last years and I regret seeing you go.

Wai-Li: Tough decisions must be made.

Yu-Thai: Yes, but...

Katie: Yu-Thai lets go of her hand.

Yu-Thai: Wai-Li, if you flee Heaven, it will eventually become my duty to track you down. And whoever finds you shall show no quarter.

Katie puts down the Knife.

Wai-Li: Nor I to them.

The scene played out as a negotiation that worked well. Wai-Li seemed determined to fight, but Yu-Thai shifted the conflict down the road in favor of a scene of genuine tenderness. Both players got what they wanted just by reading each other.

Opposites Attract

Similar to the above technique, players who choose the odd way out rather than the obvious way out actually make scenes far more interesting. The best way of thinking about this is considering whether or not it'd make sense for your character to do the opposite of what's expected of them. If it's remotely plausible, chances are it's a more effective solution for the scene. Both comedy and tragedy function on this kind of logic. Flee instead of fight, betray your Loyalties rather than defend them, swap props with other players, forgive someone instead of twisting the knife in their back - just a few uses of this technique.

Matt: Ken-Sho waits for Yu-Thai outside the Palace with his sword drawn. Yu-Thai somberly strides up the stairs until she is halfway to him.

Ken-Sho: I've come for your head, Yu-Thai.

Yu-Thai: Funny, I was going to say the same thing to you.

Katie: Yu-Thai seizes a bit of her flaming hair in her palm and magically fashions it into a sword on fire.

Ken-Sho: What? No pleas for your life?

Yu-Thai: Oh, was that what you were expecting? I'm ready for you.

Katie hands Matt the Unsheathed Knife.

Matt: A long pause. Ken-Sho then sheathes his sword.

Matt puts down the Knife.

Ken-Sho: You know, on second thought, I don't really need to bother with you. Where did Wai-Li go?

Yu-Thai: To go find you on Earth. Why are you still here?

Ken-Sho: To find her in Heaven. And not find you.

What seemed like a pre-ordained fight instead turned out to be a strange conversation. They may even fight later in the scene, but it was at least suggested that their motives were more complex.

Perception Leading

The next three techniques clearly overlap with previously mentioned material, but are a bit more formally theorized. The first is *perception leading*, or focusing on sensory stimuli in the diegesis to stir subconscious feelings toward the material. MRG is intended to be a descriptive, sensuous game, and the more overwrought descriptions of the world, the better. Taking a moment to lovingly describe how something feels, smells, tastes, sounds or looks like will not be held against you.

Same scene, continued:

Katie: Both Ken-Sho and Yu-Thai begin to feel a cool breeze amidst the clouds around them, embracing their exposed skin in the slightest of chills. Goosebumps prickle forth. The faint rustling of the palace banners is all we hear.

Cognition Leading

The second technique is *cognition leading*, or focusing on sowing narrative seeds within any given scene. As human beings, we thirst for narrative and tend to ascribe causes and effects to phenomena in a story. One can exploit this logic. Just look at the television series *Lost*: characters are consistently discovering new mysteries, puzzles and epiphenomena within their already peculiar situation. Never mind if such narrative threads are actually *resolved* - the point is that adding a puzzling gesture or psychological trick or hidden item or pyrrhic gamble or a quest into the sewers helps enrich our attention to the main plot through an engaging sub-plot.

Later, same scene:

Matt: Ken-Sho throws his sheathed sword down the steps at Yu-Thai's feet.

Ken-Sho: Pick it up.

Yu-Thai: You wish for my head, but give me your weapon?

Ken-Sho: I haven't given it up yet. I am faster than any living being. If you attack me, I will surely take it from you ... and your head with it.

Alongside a display of overconfidence to the *n*th degree, Ken-Sho has effectively raised the stakes on the scenario by incorporating a kind of "game" into the showdown.

Symbol Leading

The third leading technique is *symbol leading*, or drawing from classic iconographies, stereotypes and cultural symbols already familiar to the players. MRG is, after all, a simulation of a certain type of story and already draws heavily on such symbols. But feel free to bring in more: the lone warrior wandering into town, the multi-level tower of death, the nightingale, wedding rings. The possibilities depend on your cultural knowledge.

Same scene, continued:

Katie: With the two swords in hand, Yu-Thai spins them in the air to leave a fiery yin-yang symbol hovering.

Yu-Thai: What you have created will now be your undoing!

Katie takes the Knife and stabs Matt's character sheet.

The fight continues in the Wirework Example.

ADD ANOTHER WIREWORK EXAMPLE -- NON-LETHAL!!!

Wirework Example:

Players Katie, Matt, Melissa, John, Terry, Emily and Julia are in the middle of a MRG game. Katie has just challenged Matt to resolve a life-or-death conflict through Wirework. Since Katie is the Aggressor, she takes 5 red tokens, Matt takes 5 white tokens as the Defender, and everyone else takes 1 red and 1 white each. The bag is placed in the center of the table.

The battle is to take place on the steps of the Heavenly Palace, a Set owned by John, so neither can claim a token for it. Katie's Prop is the Codex of Heaven, Matt's is his character Ken-Sho's personal suit of armor. In addition, Katie's character Yu-Thai has Ken-Sho's sword, although it isn't a Prop and not decisive for the battle.

Katie puts two red tokens in the bag and begins:

Katie: Yu-Thai nimbly charges up the steps toward her opponent, her flaming hair leaving a fiery trail behind her.

Katie puts another red token in the bag for citing her Quirk.

Matt's turn. He puts two white tokens in the bag.

Matt: Ken-Sho meets the charge with two hand mirrors he has pulled from somewhere on his person, reflecting blinding sunlight into Yu-Thai's eyes.

Matt drops another white token in the bag for citing his Weather.

Julia is a quick decider and secretly puts in a token of her choice into the bag, concealing the token she didn't vote with in her hand.

Katie: Surprised and blinded by Ken-Sho's light attack, Yu-Thai swings her flaming sword wildly, missing him but hitting the steps and raising a shower of sparks.

Katie drops another red token into the bag for citing her Weather Display.

Matt: Ken-Sho's armor shields him from the flying sparks. When Yu-Thai brings down Ken-Sho's sword as a follow-up move, he seems absolutely prepared to receive the blow. He claps the sword in his gauntlets and rips it from her grasp.

(Note that were the sword a Prop, he would need to ask the Prop's owner permission to take it.)

Matt puts a white token in for mentioning his Prop and another for his Quirk. Katie has 1 token left, Matt none.

Katie: Yu-Thai forces him on the defensive with a spinning thrust from the flaming sword. The air around the battle glows smoldering orange from the reckless flames.

Katie adds her last red token to the bag for citing her Color Display.

Matt: Ken-Sho parries with the blade still clapped between his hands. He then ascends two steps and flips the grip into his hand.

Terry and Emily cast their secret votes, leaving Melissa and John undecided. The fight continues.

Katie: Our blades meet.

Both players mime several flashy sword exchanges. The audience applauds. Melissa votes; John deliberates further. He wants to see more.

Matt: Ken-Sho, sensing a weakness in her attack pattern, precariously flips down several stairs to come up behind her.

Katie: Yu-Thai arches her back horizontally to cut a flaming arc behind her.

John puts one token in the bag. The fight is technically over after all have voted.

Katie, the Aggressor, shakes it up and blindly draws a token out. It's red. Yu-Thai wins, and can deal the fatal blow.

Katie: The arcing strike catches Ken-Sho off-guard, breaching the armor near his neck and sending him tumbling down the stairs.

End Wirework.

Knife Ritual Example:

Let's take the earlier example of stabbing from the Wirework scene. Katie has stuck the Knife in Matt's character sheet and has won the Wirework scene. His character's life is now in her hands... but hers is in Matt's as well! Matt now has two options - he can leave the Knife in his sheet, make a prediction or wish to come true and die, or pull the Knife from his sheet and touch it to the Katie's sheet, making a demand. If Yu-Thai refuses the demand, then she dies as well. Let's see all the possible outcomes in action.

Option 1:

Matt: Ken-Sho lies at the base of the steps, broken and bloodied. He removes the helmet from his armor and blinks at the light. His fading pupils meet Yu-Thai's eyes.

Ken-Sho: You may have gotten me, but you'll never have Wai-Li back in Heaven!

Ken-Sho has made his demand and dies.

In effect, it is now written into the scenario in stone that Wai-Li does not return to Heaven. Period.

Option 2a:

Matt removes the Knife from his sheet and touches it to Katie's sheet.

Matt: Ken-Sho lies at the based of the steps, broken and bloodied. His sword, however, is nowhere to be seen. Where could it have gone? As Yu-Thai descends toward him, he says:

Ken-Sho: I make only one request - since you're a disgrace to the so-called "justice" offered by the Court of Heaven, you must resign your position of authority in Heaven.

Yu-Thai: After your case, I don't even believe there is a thing called "justice."

Having acquiesced to the demand, Katie removes the knife from her sheet and records a new Loyalty on it: "I don't believe in justice anymore." She also crosses out her Loyalty to Heaven.

Option 2b:

Matt removes the Knife from his sheet and touches it to Katie's sheet.

Matt: Ken-Sho lies at the base of the steps, broken and bloodied. His sword, however, is nowhere to be seen. Where could it have gone? As Yu-Thai descends toward him, he says:

Ken-Sho: I make only one request - since you're a disgrace to the so-called "justice" offered by the Court of Heaven, you must resign your position of authority in Heaven.

Yu-Thai: I'm afraid that's not an option.

Ken-Sho: Neither's keeping your head.

Matt: Ken-Sho spits out a bloody laugh as the sword which he threw into the air moments ago comes whistling down and severs Yu-Thai's flaming head clean from her shoulders. Her severed head barely issues a surprised gasp before tumbling to the bottom of the stairs.

End Knife Ritual.