

# The Way of the Chocolate Ninja

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The Grey Shark is a leathery, old kung fu master whose family have owned Wei's Laundry for many generations. Once he was a famous fighter who won many tournaments. Nowadays he runs the Shark's Tooth Dojo in part one of the laundry buildings somewhere in a busy city. He gained the moniker of the Grey Shark when he returned to the city from a journey, all of his black hair had turned grey and he was dragging a dead shark.

The Chocolate Ninja is a secretive figure of murky legend. Rumoured to break into well protected premises and leave a box of rather good chocolates behind for a young lady on her pillow from her true love. Those in the know might tell you that the ninja plied his furtive trade for thirty years but his exploits ceased fifteen years ago. Many thought he must have been killed or captured by an over protective farther but recently he has begun to strike again.

## **The Grey Shark**

The Grey Shark married his childhood sweetheart in his prime as a fighter. She died, mysteriously, many years ago. After his wife's death he became more adsorbed in his training, vanishing for weeks on end to study. On several occasions he travelled great distances to study at the feet of true masters of their style. While he was really more interested in his martial arts than the family business he dutifully took over running it when his farther died. Soon he converted an unused laundry building into a dojo and began teaching students kung fu.

The Grey Shark's name isn't a secret but its so long since anyone used it that its nearly forgotten. Record show his name is Wei Hu.

## **The Chocolate Ninja**

The Chocolate Ninja's mission in life is to aid forbidden lovers, courting couples and those wanting to put a little excitement back into their relationships. He surreptitiously enters their love's chambers and places a precisely folded, black, origami box containing hand made chocolates on their bed. Atop the box he rests a shiny black card with the chocolate ninja symbol inscribed upon it.

Most of the time he performs his nocturnal jaunts to aid those who need a little help.

Some of his deliveries are special commissions for valued customers who seek to impress a special friend. As an added bonus, once the ninja has penetrated the security of his employer, he presents a complimentary security review of the location.

Those wishing to seek the ninja's services must seek him out by following a bizarre path. Starting with an approach to a calligrapher for the production of a token of their love they are set upon a journey following instructions that lead them through the city's underworld and back streets finally finding themselves brought blindfold, late at night to a Chinese laundry. There, if they pass a personal interview by an old Chinaman, a contract will be agreed for the ninja's services. The specified fee must be paid before the ninja will attempt to deliver the chocolates and is set by the old man's whim. One man may receive the service for free, another may owe a favour to be called in someday, a third might have to release his prized, caged songbird and a fourth might be asked for a large sum of money.

The history of the Chocolate Ninja is a sad tale of love lost. Wei Hu as a young man was a fanatical practitioner of kung fu and secretly an accomplished student of An Ch'i. Many years ago he married his childhood sweetheart, an unsurpassed beauty who loved him unreservedly, Lan Eu-meh. In the early years of his marriage he was a distant husband often away from home for long periods serving his secret master. While he was away from home one night an unknown enemy entered his home seeking to challenge him to a fight. When he could not find Hu he became enraged and mortally wounded Eu-meh.

Returning home the Hu founded Eu-meh. As she died in his arms he realised his loss and the opportunity to know true love that he has squandered. Knowing he could never right his wrong he swore to use his abilities to help those who had romantic problems that could not be overcome in more conventional ways. For thirty years he used his skills to help those for who loves path did not run true. Never once was he wounded. Rarely did a guard see him. He was never captured despite many attempts to ambush him through the years. Hu became the Chocolate Ninja.

Then, as he staggered from the water after struggling with a shark, he realised that as his fifty-sixth year approached that he was "getting too old for this lark". After dragging the dead shark back to town he slipped into retirement creating his dojo and running the family laundry business. The night the legend of

the Chocolate Ninja ended the legend of the Grey Shark began or so Hu thought.

The years passed and he grew old and wizened. With the passing of time the legend of the Chocolate Ninja grew. Then reports reached him of the ninja's trademark card and chocolates being found by a woman again. Yet the Grey Shark knew he was not responsible. Discreet enquiries revealed that the impostor wasn't perfect. His copycat boxes lacked the exacting quality in the folds of his originals. The chocolates weren't made from only the finest ingredients. Worse still, on his third outing the impostor's hand was wounded by a guard as the Grey Shark looked on.

Yet this wound proved fortuitous. The next day the Grey Shark noticed his best student's hand was bandaged. Offering to properly dress the wound Hu metaphorically unmasked Wu Cho as the new ninja. Soon he learnt that the student had lost his true love to a rival who spent less time on practicing martial prowess and more time on wooing. Knowing the student's rival to be a feckless, philandering bigamist; who kept many lovers and wives; the ninja decided to train his student to be the Chocolate Ninja so he might one day regain his lost love. In return the Cho agreed to do at least four missions as the ninja each year. Three years and fifteen missions have passed since that day.

### ***Flesh and Mortar***

On one of the city's bustling side streets an unassuming complex houses the Grey Shark's home, the Shark's Tooth Dojo and Wei's Laundry. Both the dojo and the laundry are run as a *guanxi qiye*. The three buildings are set around a courtyard while along the street side runs a sharply crenulated wall against which stand a variety of out buildings. At the centre of the wall a pair of ornate, but strong, gates wide enough for a single large vehicle to pass through. These lead into a small outer courtyard formed by the walls of two of the out buildings. After a second set of gates, entry to the main courtyard is gained. Both courtyards are cobbled and a deep well stands at the centre of the inner courtyard. On warm days students training in the courtyard compete for space with washing drying on lines strung across it.

Access to the outbuildings is at the same level as the courtyard. The other three buildings are raised nearly half a meter up on supports. Around the edges the supports consist of wooden poles. Beneath each building are a series of large brick piers de-

signed to support large vats of laundry back when the whole complex was a laundry. Each building has a short, but wide, flight of three steps leading to it. The building's roof overhangs the yard protecting the large, wax paper windows from the elements.

Most of doors and windows within the complex face into the inner courtyard. The outer wall is two stories high on all but the front leading to a steeply inclined, red tiled roof. When the gates and door are shut and barred and the outward facing windows are shuttered there are no weak points through which a lightly armed foe can easily gain access. Supplies of preserved food and the water from the deep well make this an easily defended position for an extended period.

### **The Shark's Tooth Dojo**

The Shark's Tooth Dojo gets its name from the Shark's head mounted at the centre of the schools signboard with only a single tooth in its mouth. The proximity of the laundry has, however, lead to the student's being nickname of "the washer boys". The Grey Shark has revelled in the nickname using it to teach his students the virtue of humility. His has a habit of using tasks around the laundry in his training regime simply adds to their humiliation. They are sent to fetch water from the well to build strength or maybe they fold clothes to improve precision. Sometime he has them perform various peculiar washing techniques accompanied by shouted mantra such as "Soap on, Soap off". A few less well to do students pay for their lessons by fetching and carrying laundry or by working in the laundry.

The Grey Shark is very selective in his choice of students. He subjects every candidate to an interview and several strange tests. He rarely uses the same tests twice so anyone practicing, for example, the art of balancing chopsticks on their pointy end on top of their head is wasting their time. The main aim of the stranger tests is to study a potential student's patience and persistence. Those who give up or anger too quickly will not be admitted to the school. His other tests examine a potential students acrobatic skill and potential. The style he has developed is very mobile and fluid so, unless they are in some other way truly exceptional, a clumsy applicant will not make it into the school.

He insists on a high level of commitment but also tries to encourage his students to maintain their life beyond the school. He regularly lectures his classes on family, love and the importance of friendship while they practice.

The dojo itself is built on two levels, the lower floor is entirely devoted to space for training with a large, sprung wooden floor. Several racks of weapons line the longer walls of the room. At the end nearest to the Grey Shark's home, behind a folding wall stands the school's shrine which honours the Sensei's masters and contains the rest of the shark's teeth.

The upper floor of the dojo is given over to a kitchen, a communal room, quarters for some of the students, a workshop for weapons repair, infirmary and storerooms. The Grey Shark inspects this floor at least once a week and woe betide anyone not reaching his standards of neatness and cleanliness.

A fight in the dojo will provide an opportunity for combatants to use a wide variety of weapon in a large enclosed space. Any students present will do what they can to protect the shrine and the signboard outside. If the fight spills upstairs a wide variety of furnishings and implements will come into play including woks, knives, a large cleaver, chairs, tables, sacks of rice and barrels full of sake.

The Grey Shark has about sixty students of a variety of abilities at any time. While most of them are not especially distinguished a few stand out in one way or another.

Wu Cho is the new Chocolate Ninja and the most rounded of the Grey Shark's students. A student of kung fu the Grey Shark also teaches him An Ch'i and chocolate making secretly. He still pines for his lost love, Chow Lien and hopes to one day expose Tong Te's despicable activities.

Wei Yin is a large, good-tempered orphan who was adopted by the Grey Shark when he was found abandoned on the doorsteps of the laundry twenty years ago. He isn't really suited to the school's style the Grey Shark has taught him some moves borrowed from others that make use of his size and strength. If he is missing he is usually found in the company of his girl friend Wan Mei.

Tan Kwan isn't exactly a student more a groupie. He hangs around outside the complex gates watching the students. He irritates many with his incessant questioning about the techniques they are learning.

When not training Yun Runmig works as one of the laundry's delivery staff fetching and carrying loads from right across the city. He is a bit of a clown and is completely incapable of refusing a challenge or a

dare. Combined with his job this means when trouble is brewing for the school he is often its first victim. Chow Szu plays him like a puppet for her own amusement.

Xu Ushi is the Shark's Tooth Dojo's most successful woman in tournaments. To any outward observer she appears entirely focused on her fighting. Ushi is secretly besotted with Wu Cho but is too much of a tomboy to know how to approach him.

## **The Grey Shark's Home**

The Grey Shark keeps his house in good order and everything is in its place. Simple, functional, yet beautifully crafted pieces of furniture are found throughout his home. Mementos from his journeys and tasteful works of art displayed in appropriate locations. He can easily adapt the house to his current needs by rearranging the moveable partition walls that segregate its rooms.

On the each floor there are usually four main rooms. On the ground floor he has a kitchen, a large main room where he entertains guests, a storeroom backing onto the dojo so he isn't disturbed by the noise of student's practicing and a room from which he runs his business affairs.

Along the front of his home run two wide verandas overlooking the courtyard. Easy access to the verandas can be gained through sliding doors from his bedroom on the first floor and the main room on the ground floor.

A fight in the house will probably involve manoeuvring round a lot of the furniture and other obstacles. Any students present will spend a lot of time worrying about breaking their sensei's vases, figurines and other delicate items he has on display.

## **Wei's Laundry**

The Laundry consists of two large open rooms. The lower floor is devoted to large washing vats full of soapy hot water, a solid fuel fired boiler for heating water and other washing equipment. Hampers of dirty laundry awaiting washing are stacked at one of the room around a very solid door into the laundry from an alley.

The first floor of the laundry is mostly given over to drying racks which hang from the roof on pulleys and ropes. The drying space is kept warm by running the chimney from the boiler on the ground floor along its length just above head height. The metal chimney pipe is nearly always hot to touch. At one

end a space is given over to ironing, folding and otherwise finishing clothes ready to be returned to the laundry's customers. The entire first floor wall to the courtyard can be removed leaving just a few supporting pillars to the roof. This allows washing to be run out to dry on lines that are seven meters above the courtyard floor.

The two floors are connected by stair at both ends. Pulley based hoists at each end allows loads of washing to be moved from one floor to the other. While they are designed to carry large amounts of washing it is possible for someone to go up or down on them. Going up on the hoist presents little danger. Going down though is quite fast and there is a risk of being injured by the fall. There are markings on the floor on the ground floor to warn people where not to stand but there are no safety rails, cages or other protection so it is possible for someone to be crushed by the hoists.

A fight in the laundry will have a strong Buster Keaton flavour. There are large vats of soapy water and laundry on the ground floor along with a boiler that is always hot, a lot of steam in the air and the risk of bars of soap on the floor. On the first floor there is lots of washing drying on racks while the racks form a really unstable third floor overhead. There are the ropes that hold up the racks can be released dropping washing onto people, climbed up or swung on. Along the centre of the room, just above head height runs the chimney which is usually very hot. There are the hoists that allow rapid, if somewhat dangerous, movement between floors.

Nearly two hundred people, mostly women, work in the laundry. Another ten are employed to fetch customers dirty laundry and return it once washed.

Chow Ah Cy, the Grey Shark's youngest sister, is in charge of its day-to-day operation. She once had the beauty of her daughters Lien and Szu she has grown large and soft with age. She is kind and gentle unless her ire is raised by someone interfering with the laundry or her daughters.

Chow Szu is a dangerous, erratic bombshell of teenage energy. She is Ah Cy's younger daughter but she gets no special treatment from her mother when she is caught misbehaving at work. If she isn't neglecting her duties to stare at the students she is luring them into trysts in a secluded corner. She isn't happy if she hasn't got at least three students wrapped round her little finger. She wants to learn kung fu but the Grey Shark won't teach her.

Wei Yin's girlfriend, Wan Mei, is a petit young woman. She is determined to persuade her farther to let her marry Yin rather than one of the many of his drinking cronies who he regularly promises her hand to when he has drunk too much.

Cho Chung is in charge of all of the equipment in the laundry and all of the laundry's vehicles and animals. He has made sure the boiler runs and the mangles are working since before anyone can remember. Since he does an excellent job of it no one has thought to ask him to retire. He is called uncle by Ah Cy and the Grey Shark's although how he is related to them even they aren't certain. His only weakness is his gambling habit, fortunately he is quite good and this has allowed him to save Wan Mei from unwanted marriages by winning her back after her farther has gambled her away.

Tah Peng, the apprentice stoker, is a shy young lad who hasn't worked here long and who has yet to become accustomed to the strong and suggestive language used by most of the women who work at the laundry.

## **Secrets**

There are secret doors in the Dojo behind the shrine and in an upstairs storeroom that lead into the storerooms in the Grey Shark's home. A trapdoor under a collection of heavy items, which move easily if a secret mechanism is discovered, lead to a ladder inside one of the house's supporting brick peers. The ladder drops into a passage beneath the house that leads to a chamber beneath the courtyard. It was built by one of the Grey Shark's ancestors during a time of conflict several generations ago. A long passage runs from the chamber to a small, well kept, unassuming building a couple of streets away.

The chamber houses the Chocolate Ninja's equipment, costumes, a variety of mementos and supplies to last several weeks. A short passage leads to the well. The secret of the chamber is not perfectly concealed. Someone climbing down the well could easily find the passageway into it. Seeing it from above, without lowering a light or through some supernatural eyesight, is nigh on impossible. Water spilt onto the cobbles above the chamber seeps away more quickly than it does in other parts of the yard.

## **Zeng Hung and the Fù Dojo**

Zeng Hung is a stereotypical evil eunuch trained since an early age in both the martial arts and the ways of power. He works for a powerful local figure

that often wants to get things done and who likes to cut through the red tape and delays by following a more direct course of action. When not clearing the way for his masters schemes Zeng works to increase his own power with his main objective being to one day replace his boss. He is constantly driven and rarely sleeps for more than two or three hours a day.

The Fù Dojo provides him with a useful cover for training, equipping and maintaining a force of fighters and ninjas. By careful observation of the students he is able to determine which of them should receive special lessons in Ninjutsu. It also provides him with a steady stream of income and an opportunity to launder his criminal gains. He secretly bought the dojo from Fù Shing ten years ago after he had engineered Fù's financial difficulties.

Fù Shing was once a great fighter and rival of the Grey Shark. Now officially the head of the Fù School. He has two son's Tung and On. Not a truly evil man more a fool who's honour has been used to bind him into fulfilling his contract to the Eunuch. Since the failure of his business enterprises and the death of his wife ten years ago he has spent most of his time drunk.

Tong Te is Zeng's mouthpiece, a highly effective negotiator and representative. Were it not for the protection of Zeng he would have been arrested for bigamy or killed by a jealous husband long ago. Zeng allows him his fun as he feels it keeps Te sharp. He trains just enough to stay in shape but his true gift is his silver tongue. His greatest triumph was stealing Chow Lien from Wu Cho and keeping her completely oblivious to his affairs and marriages.

Emori arrived at the school five years ago. How and why she came from Japan only Zeng knows. Publicly she is a master of Bojutsu who teaches at the school. A few others know that her real role at the school is to train, organise and lead Zeng's ninja. Emori is a truly beautiful woman, so beautiful that most men know she is unattainable and stay well away. A few unfortunates are drawn to her though. Fù Tung and Tong Te are two such fools.

Chow Lien expects to marry Tong Te soon but for now she is happy to be his girl. She often involves her mother and sister in preparations for her wedding and neither of them have yet had the courage to voice their fears about Te. She works for Zeng Hung as his live in housekeeper and assistant. She is completely unaware of any of Zeng or his staffs illegal

activities and will take quite a lot of convincing that any accusation is true.

Fù Tung is the Zeng's chief ninja and all round bad guy. The only man he fears is Wu Cho and he knows that in a real fight his underhand tactics would allow him to win. Fù Tung is embarrassed by his father's public drunkenness and has little time for him.

Fù On is Fù Shing's other son but he hasn't become a ninja and is unaware of the depths the school has sunk to since Zeng took over. He despairs of the school's loss of honour and is worried about his father. On is an honourable man caught up in a bad situation.

### ***Bystanders Adventure***

The characters discover a wounded figure and aid them, little knowing that he is the Chocolate Ninja. Enemies of the ninja realise that the characters have met the ninja and attempt to persuade them to reveal what they know. Depending on the enemies involved the persuasion may simply be financial, political or legal threats. Less scrupulous enemies may be considerably more brutal.

### ***Dojo Adventures***

The characters seek training at the Grey Shark's dojo. When he accepts them he first puts them to work in his laundry performing tasks that appear to have no benefit. In fact develop their skills through repetition of simple moves.

The Grey Shark has invited his old friend the sensei of a distant school to visit his home. While he is staying the Grey Shark wants to put on a meal in his honour. He asks some of the students to help him with the organisation of the evening. He is very insistent that everything should be perfect as for it to be otherwise would reflect badly on the school. All the students should need to worry about is the tablecloth being clean, not burning the food and the sake being served at the right temperature. Unfortunately for them all manner of other problems will arise including a raid by students of the Fù Dojo, hopping vampires, a swarm of rats eating through one of the supporting beams beneath the house and any other variety of chaos that must not be allowed to interrupt their master's pleasure.

The older ninja's nemesis makes an attempt on his life. He either kills him or leaves him seriously wounded. The character's are either friends or stu-

dents of the old ninja and must seek out his nemesis and avenge him.

## ***Evil Eunuch Adventure***

The Chocolate Ninja goes to leave chocolates for Chow Lien. He accidentally leaves the chocolates in Zeng's room by mistake. The eunuch is incensed especially as the ninja removed the wafer thin, minted chocolate from his pillow first. The eunuch sends men to track down the ninja. He attempts to destroy the ninja's business' reputations. He employs sorcerers to plague the ninjas' lives with unpredictable supernatural events. If all that fails he will seek to have them killed and their premises burnt to the ground. If that fails he will consider resorting to lawyers.

## ***Too Silly for You?***

If this is all a little too silly for you simply ignore the chocolate delivery aspects of the story. Instead the Grey Shark is a good practitioner of An Ch'i a lone crusader who proves an individual can make a difference. He takes on Zeng's evil schemes but may need the help of others to turn the tide. He will be motivated by a driving need to right wrongs brought on by the murder of his wife. He will be secretive and operate from the complex of buildings described above.

## ***Glossary***

**An Ch'i** is a Chinese martial art that focuses on trickery, deception, traps and thrown weapons. It is sometimes called Chinese ninjitsu.

**Bojutsu** is a fighting style using a six-foot long staff known as a bo held in two hands.

**Guanxi qiye** is the predominant type of business in China and flourishes in Chinese communities around the world. Guanxi qiye businesses are built on the finances and connections available to a large extended family rather than bank loans. Its great strength is that it ties many businesses together through family ties, favours and honour. Many Guanxi qiye businesses trade virtually exclusively with other businesses run by other family members.

A successful clothing company run in this way may have started in Hong Kong but now have moved production to China. When production moved to China a relative in the Chinese civil service will have provided advice on obtaining the right permits. The cloth it uses will come from a factory run by a distant

cousin who lives in Korea. The machinery used in making the clothing is probably serviced by a business belonging to another distant relative. They sell their clothing within China, Hong Kong and Korea. All of these businesses were established when someone decided they wanted to start a business. They persuaded several relatives to each give them a little money to get it started and are now part owners of the business. Banks are rarely involved in starting up this kind of operation. These business also have little in the way of formal contracts for work instead relying on family bonds, trust, honour and a complex web of favours.

**Ninjutso** is the art and skills of Japanese Ninja. Their fighting style is known as taijutsu.

## ***Grey Sharks Martial Art Style***

The style of Kung Fu taught by the Grey Shark to most of his students emphasises acrobatics and fluid movement. His students are exceptionally well trained in preventing an assailant from landing blows on them. Many of the manoeuvres he teaches focus on keeping an opponent off balance and steadily wearing their energy down. His style's main offensive moves rely on subterfuge and misdirection to allow a student to deliver a powerful blow to incapacitate or knock out an opponent. While he teaches a number of very effective killing moves to his more advanced students he is adamant that they are for use only in the most extreme situations and that his students must respect life at all times.

To this mix he has added some special training for Wu Cho in the arts of balance, stealth, covert entry and escape. While his own training in An Ch'i taught him many ways to kill and the art of trap making he hasn't passed on this knowledge to Cho or any of his other students. He has taught some of his better students how to avoid some of these tricks though.

## ***No Blood On the Floor!***

Most oriental role playing games focus on the high body count, melodramatic end of oriental fiction epitomized by the Seven Samurai and the Killer. There is nothing wrong with these films or the games they have inspired. It is important to consider that The Shark's Toot Dojo and the Chocolate Ninja belong to a lighter hearted, more comedic form of oriental story telling. Watch some of the films of Jackie Chan and Sammo Hung.

A woman who's father finds chocolates on her pillow will not commit ritual seppuku. The angry father will go to more and more extreme lengths to keep away the unwanted suitor. He may also force her to meet more and more unsuitable and unsavoury suitors that he chooses.

Fights should have a touch of slapstick about them as vases are smashed, thugs are kicked from ladders into tubs of water and general mayhem ensues. Very few fights will be to the death. Most of the time combatants will fight until one of them is unconscious or otherwise unable to go on.