

The Last Dowry

By *Andy Munich*

A sample quick-start scenario.

The tradition of the dowry has long since gone out of fashion, now only practiced in the most extremely orthodox of families. So it is no wonder that Minister Wu Yun, though blessed with both wealth and power, has failed to find a match for the eldest Wu heir. It is said the dowry demanded is so great that it would bankrupt anyone, including the sitting monarch.

A rumor has begun to spread that the Wu family no longer requires such a ransom but has in fact discreetly made it known that they will pay handsomely if a proper match is proposed. Those in the know have begun to make their way to the village bordering the Wu estate, hoping to find fortune within this sudden reversal.

Fortune seekers are not the only parties interested in the Wu situation. All sorts are arriving to bear witness to what could become a powerful, if peculiar, union.

Each character has a small number of questions to fill out in addition to the usual procedure of filling out the playbook.

Across the following pages are the questions that each playbook will fill out, followed by a page directed at the MC.



The Last Dowry: Airshaper

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You've never even considered marriage or having a family before.
Why are you thinking about it now?

You've lost or given away most of your wealth over the years.
What would you even do with such a large sum?

An adaptable spirit is something your people aspire to, but they also have many longstanding traditions.
How do you feel about these outdated ways of forming unions?

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The Last Dowry: Aristocrat

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This isn't the first you've heard of the Wu family, and in fact they are quite well known to you.

Why are the Wu so vital to your future plans?

A union of wealth and station should suit your ambitions just fine.

Why are you still so hesitant to consider one?

Your great grandparents were brought together by a similar situation.

Why were they the last in your line to have done so?

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The Last Dowry: Earthshaper

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Where you're from, a hand in marriage is often won by an act of valor.
What renown have you gathered to your name?

You were raised by more than just your parents; the whole community was involved.
What keeps you traveling so far from that place and those people?

You've never been that lucky with financial endeavors.
What do you have planned to increase your fortune?

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The Last Dowry: Fireshaper

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You were arranged to be married once.
Who called it off, and why were you relieved?

Your parents argued constantly when you were young.
What kept them together despite that, and how did you cope?

Your family once had financial dealings with the Wu.
Why did you get the poor side of the bargain?

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The Last Dowry: Hunter

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You've trespassed on Wu land many a time.
What did you encounter that made you stop?

You've been engaged, but it didn't last.
Why did the passion die out?

A smaller, rival family has you on retainer these days.
What won't you do for them?

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The Last Dowry: Monk

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You've presided over quite a few unions in your time.
Why aren't you qualified to officiate this one?

Monks are known for abandoning earthly attachments.
What is keeping you so tethered to yours?

You've heard that another monk of your order is advising the Wu.
Why aren't you pleased by this?

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The Last Dowry: Peasant

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You've been poor all your life.
Why doesn't that bother you in the least?

You left your old home to settle nearby the Wu estate.
What caused you to leave your friends behind?

You once won a fight with a person of noble birth.
What do they owe you now?

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The Last Dowry: Scholar

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The Wu estate is said to contain a staggeringly extensive library.
What tome do you need to return to it before it is noticed as missing?

You've studied law in many jurisdictions.
What seems wrong with the legality of this situation?

Your divorce was swift and relatively peaceful.
Why was your marriage the exact opposite of that?

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The Last Dowry: Spiritshaper

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The spirits seem very quiet in and around the Wu estate.
Why does this unnerve you so?

You've fallen in love very deeply before.
What kind of spirit was the object of your affection?

You had a sibling that died very young.
What do you two talk about when you see each other?

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The Last Dowry: Warrior

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You fought on the behalf of the Wu family once before.
Why would you do it again?

Your warrior code prevents you from settling down.
What is tempting you to break that code?

You carry the weapon of another warrior with you at all times.
Why did you slay them?

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The Last Dowry: Watershaper

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A fortuneteller once told you that you'd never marry, nor have any children.
Why did you believe them?

The Wu family have need of your unique talents.
How do you plan to convince them this is the case?

You put out a terrible fire that was raging in the nearby forest.
How did you start that fire?

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To The MC:

The first order of business might appear to be determining the nature of the Wu heir, but allow the players to help shape the final answer. It's not necessary that the reveal be a huge twist, but it should carry some impact. Having the heir's situation be sympathetic can be a strong play.

The village is a great meeting place and can be brought alive with vivid descriptions of the various parties gathering there to seek their fortunes. A mix of glamorous (or desperate) suitors and unsavory fortune hunters, along with the overwhelmed villagers, can add to the scene or create exciting encounters themselves. Don't forget these details when the spirit arrives to wreak havoc!

The Wu estate should require some effort to gain entrance to. Once inside, dealing with the monk is a great opportunity for social sparring, but don't be afraid to escalate the situation into a physical (or spiritual) confrontation as well.

The climax can go one of several ways, depending on the groundwork laid before. If the encounters with the spirit and monk both escalated into fights, it might be wise to allow this situation to be resolved via different means. Oaths, obligation and desires should come into play. A romantic or tragic angle (or mixture of both) concerning the heir will add some much needed pathos.

Plot: The Secret of the Wu Family Heir.



Event 1: An angry spirit rampages through the village at night, causing mindless destruction.

Threats:

Angry spirit. Great Spirit: Phoenix (*instinct: to destroy indiscriminately*).

Event Move: If the players defeat or drive off the spirit, they gain 1 Chi each.

Event 2: An ambitious monk is advising the Wu and will not tolerate interlopers.

Threats:

The Wu estate. Landscape: Mountain (*instinct: to forbid passage*).

Intolerant monk. Silvertongue: Tiger (*instinct: to rule firecelly*).

Event 3: The nature of the Wu heir is revealed and must be dealt with (or, perhaps, profited from).

Threats:

Minister Wu Yun. Silvertongue: Fox (*instinct: to lure and entrap*).

Minister Move: Any brazen, unprovoked attack on the minister's person will cause the initiator to lose the sympathy or loyalty of an ally. A well-justified attack will not.

Estate Guards and/or Fortune Hunters: Predator: Wolf (*instinct: to overwhelm with numbers or fear*).

More of a complication than a major Threat, include the estate guards and/or other fortune hunters along with any event (or outside one) to make matters worse. A group of smaller Threats can be a useful tool when dealing with several player characters who, if left unchecked, will often gang up on any single major Threat.