

A Sourcebook for **CHAMPIONS**[®]

#442

Watchers of the Dragon[™]



by Steven S. Long



Watchers of the Dragon™

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Dedication

I'd like to dedicate this book to my good friends in Raleigh, Jon and Kelley Ferrante and Steve and Anitra Stone, for the many hours of fun we've had gaming and talking, the excellent meals, the spare couches for me to crash on when necessary, and the countless other things they've done for me that show just what great friends they are. Thanks, guys.

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Introduction

For untold thousands of years, it has haunted mankind: the Death Dragon. A creature of shadow and evil, the Death Dragon desires nothing less than the enslavement of mankind and the destruction of its civilization. In its presence, light is quenched, goodness is shriveled and destroyed, and only the pure of heart can stand without fear.

To the ancient Chinese and Japanese, the Death Dragon was a terrifying spirit that caused eclipses and droughts, brought down curses, and strove against the gods for mastery of the world. Modern-day man has left behind his belief in spirits and evil magic, but nonetheless feels the work of the Dragon in the plagues and famines that sweep a prosperous Earth, in the terrible wars and weapons of destruction men have wrought, and in the hardheartedness and wickedness that he encounters every day.

But mankind is not without defenses against the Death Dragon. Millennia ago, the Dragon, in its overweening pride and lust for destruction, allowed itself to be trapped in the Otherworld by a group of Chinese sorcerers. This group called itself the Watchers of the Dragon, and took upon itself a never-ending task: to watch over the Death Dragon, and keep it ever shackled.

For the Death Dragon's prison, like so many magical bindings, was imperfect. Once every cycle, every 60 years, the Death Dragon could break free of its prison and go ravaging across the world. The only way to stop it was for a warrior of great skill and of pure heart to oppose it and defeat it in single combat. Bringing an army against it would be useless, for the Dragon can draw strength from his enemies and use it against them. Only when they sent a single man against him could the Watchers hope to defeat their ancient foe.



To choose the champion who would defend the world from the Death Dragon, the Watchers sponsored a grand competition—*Bisài Lóng*, the Tournament of the Dragon. From all over the Middle Kingdom, and eventually from all over the world, came warriors. Some fought with weapons, some fought with their bare hands, but all were determined to claim the title of *Zhànshì* (“Champion”) and go on to defeat the Death Dragon. To the victor, the Watchers promised magical powers that would help him defeat the Dragon. And such was the evil pall cast over the Earth by the Dragon that a triumph over it would earn the champion something even greater—the pre-eminence of his nation over all other nations of the world for the next 60-year cycle. But to this blessing, there was a corresponding curse: if the champion lost, and the Dragon triumphed, it would be free on Earth for the next cycle, and the world would be plunged into a Dark Age. Only with the coming of the next Tournament could the Watchers hope to re-imprison their adversary.

Over the centuries, the Watchers have continued to maintain a careful vigil over the Dragon. For the most part, the champions of their Tournament have been successful, and the Dragon has remained captive. When the Dragon has won its freedom, the Watchers have only been able to minimize the damage it caused as best they could. Watchers have come and gone, many of them slain in the battles against the Dragon and the forces it inspired. Though few men know it, humanity owes its collective existence to their efforts and their sacrifices.

Today

In the West, the year is 1995. But in the East, it is 4693, the Year of the Boar, a year corresponding to the element of Metal. Yet another cycle has finally run its course, and the Watchers are readying for another Tournament. For the past several years, the world’s greatest martial artists have been preparing for the Tournament. Many of them have begun the competition early, staging duels with or ambushes of likely opponents, for nothing in the rules of the Tournament forbids them to eliminate their competitors in advance. One by one, they are slowly making their way to the East, to the heart of China, to the secret underground arena where the Tournament is held every 60 years. The fate of the world hangs in the balance...

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The Champions of Martial Arts

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