



MVY STORY CIRCLE

The former general turned bandit king, Huo er Dan, has escaped from prison. Officials suspect he's hiding somewhere in crime-ridden Bazhou county, and that he's abducted Miao-Miao, the daughter of a prominent noble family. Shen, a dishonored detective, is tasked with finding her and restoring order to the province he once called home.

INTRO QUEST

1. "YOU"

The undisturbed status quo of the protagonist. This leads to the "Point of Attack."

Shen is resigned to dying in prison until he meets the mysterious eunuch, Fang.

2. "NEED"

The "Creation of the story." This leads to "Defining The Main Tension"

Fang directs Shen to return to his hometown (Bazhou) as a sub-prefect/detective. If he succeeds, he'll be a free man.

Bazhou county is teetering on the edge of a full-scale war between the local officials and bandits; a land where the laws of civilization have lost all credibility. Shen will have to navigate the tense political landscape with regards to the lawless Jinyiwei agents, uncooperative bandits, and the family he left behind.

3. "GO"

Why accomplishing the goal will be difficult.

Shen isn't the only one on the case. Mingke Tang, sister of the missing noblewoman, has brought a group of Jinyiwei agents, with imperial privileges, to conduct their own investigation.

Additionally, the bandit king Huo er Dan has assembled his soldiers across from Zhang's house and will not leave until Shen clears his name. The Jinyiwei are closely monitoring the situation, ready to strike at any time.

4. "SEARCH"

First attempt to resolve the main tension, the road of trials. This leads to the midpoint, "FIND." This refines the main tension, narrows its scope, and makes it more specific.

Through inspecting the house for evidence and interviewing the husband, servants, and neighbors, Shen comes to the following conclusion(s):

- a. Miao-Miao was abducted by kidnappers hired by her husband, Zhang
- b. Miao-Miao has been abducted by the bandit leader, Huo er Dan
- c. Miao-Miao has absconded with the bandit leader, Huo er Dan

5. "FIND"

This is when the officers find what they think they need, but it doesn't work out quite the way they expected. Shen pays a devastating price for attaining what they sought.

Shen discovers that some of the bandits are less than happy with Huo er Dan's return, and are willing to assist in turning him in (in exchange for fees and favors).

From here on Shen can:

- a. Forge evidence against Zhang, arresting him and clearing Huo er Dan.
 - i. Zhang will resist arrest, sustaining serious injurious
- b. Confront Huo er Dan, which leads to:
 - i. A fight between the Jinyiwei agents allied with Shen/Wang, and the Bandits.
 - Shen is injured
 - Zhang escapes
 - Huo er Dan is killed
 - ii. A fight between Shen/Wang and the Bandits. (One Jinyiwei stays to guard Zhang)
 - Shen and Wang are injured
 - Huo er Dan escapes
 - iii. A fight between the Bandits allied with Shen/Wang, and the Jinyiwei agents.
 - Shen is injured
 - Zhang escapes
 - Huo er Dan is injured
 - iv. A fight between Shen/Wang and the Bandits. (Jinyiwei don't help)
 - Shen and Wang are killed

- Zhang escapes
- Huo er Dan escapes

6. "TAKE"

Full frontal assault on main tension. This leads to the main tension being resolved "yes or no" ... For now...

Shen interrogates either the injured Zhang or Huo er Dan.

- a. If he interrogates Zhang:

Zhang will reveal (with little resistance) that he's been sitting on a ransom letter for a week. Shen can answer the ransom note and stage a fake payoff, which will lead him to the safehouse where Miao-Miao is hiding.

- b. If he interrogates Huo er Dan:

Huo, only after a vicious or well-reasoned questioning, will agree to take the officers to the safehouse (one of the neighbors) where Miao-Miao is hiding on the condition that he can see her first.

or: Players can gradually beat the address out of him, killing Huo er Dan.

7. "RETURN"

False resolution or exposition sequence. This leads to the twist! We've been set up to expect one thing, then it turns around.

Setup:

If Shen follows Huo's plan,

Huo er Dan will take the officers to the safehouse, but stays past the agreed-upon time.

Once inside, Shen will find the house is empty. Wang identifies footsteps leading to a ravine outside of town, where they observe Miao-Miao enjoying a quiet picnic with Huo er Dan.

Upon confronting them, Miao-Miao reveals that she left of her own will. Zhang's alcoholism, sexual preferences, and temperament drove the overworked and

unappreciated housewife towards her childhood sweetheart, the general-turned-bandit Huo er Dan. Together, they conspired to stage her kidnapping to retrieve her dowry.

She'll attempt to bribe Shen with her dowry, at which point players can:

- Arrest Miao-Miao + keep the money
- Arrest Miao-Miao + return the money

Accept her bribe and let them go

- ★ If players choose this path, they will have to forge evidence and force a false confession out of Zhang.

If Shen staged a payoff (Zhang path) or he reneges/kills Huo,

Shen finds Miao-Miao at the address left to them. Inside, she will maintain that Huo er Dan abducted her and that she never returned his feelings.

Miao-Miao wants to go back to Beijing with her sister, citing Zhang's alcoholism, sexual preferences, and temperment. She'll attempt to bribe Shen with her dowry, at which point players can:

- Ignore her request and send her back to Zhang
- Accept her bribe but still send her back to Zhang
- Arrest Miao-Miao + keep the money
- Arrest Miao-Miao + return the money
- Accept her bribe and send her to Mingke.
 - ★ If players choose this path, they will have to forge evidence and force a false confession out of Zhang.

Refuse her bribe and send her to Mingke.

- If players choose this path, they will have to forge evidence and force a false confession out of Zhang.

Twist:

Shen returns to Zhang's house with suspect(s) in hand, only to discover that Mingke has been killed!

8. "CHANGE"

Ultimate resolution (what happens after Shen has gone through these circumstances and made these decisions.)

The change is put to the test. Shen has closed the case of the missing noblewoman, but the matter of Mingke's killer remains. He discovers the Porcelain Man's calling card next to the body, challenging Shen to catch him before he kills again. In doing so, he signals the start of... **A MOST VIOLENT YEAR.**