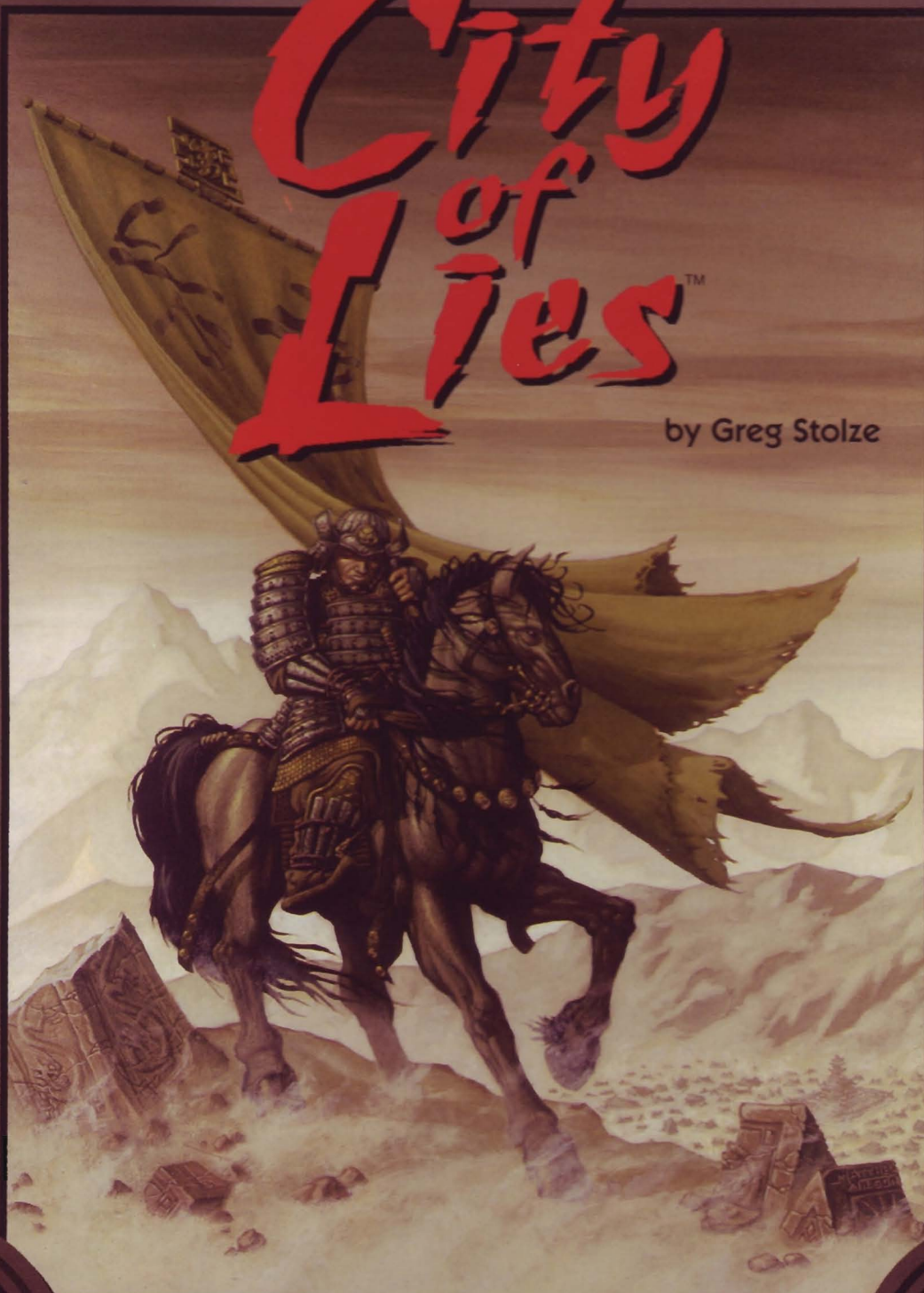




Legend of the Five Rings™

City of Lies™

by Greg Stolze



L-1

The City of Lies

A campaign setting for Legend of the Five Rings

Introduction to Ryoko Owari

Gamemasters Only:

Read This First



CITY OF LIES HAS a lot of stuff in it.

This is a good thing (I hope) because it gives you a lot of material to work with. However, it can be a bad thing because this much stuff may appear overwhelming – especially to a GM who is new to L5R or to roleplaying games in general.

The *Player Book* is a good place to start, but it was arranged to make things easy to find, not necessarily easy to comprehend all at once. I did that on purpose; I wanted to create a sense of the city slowly unfolding and revealing itself. However, a GM may not want that sense of gradual unveiling. Therefore, this pamphlet has been included to give you a general framework. Once you get the general outline of the city, it will be easier to grasp and use the details provided in the other three books.

In other words, there's nothing new in what follows; but it's presented in a plain, open fashion. When was the last time you got information on the Scorpion that way?



Aside from this guide, this box contains:

The Player's Guide. You probably want to read this next, and your players are allowed to see it. It's set up as a document for the next team of Imperial Magistrates to set up shop in Ryoko Owari – presumably your group.

The GM's Guide. This is for you, and *by no means* should you let your players at it. You should probably read it after you've read the Player's Book, or possibly switching back and forth. It includes the real information about the city, as well as the Opium War campaign.

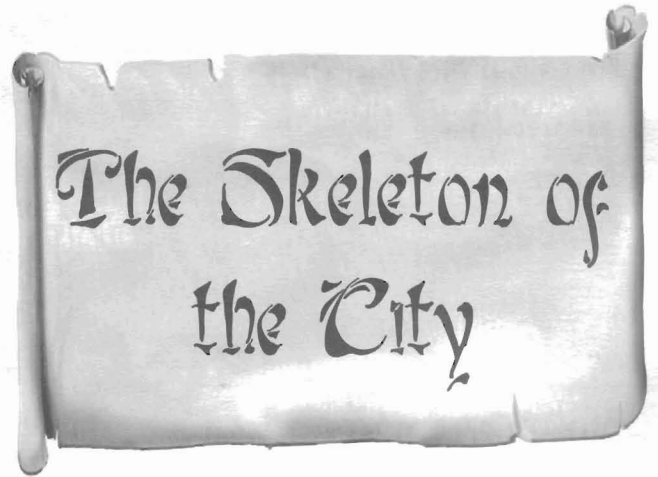
The City Map. This is the big black-and-white map of the city. You and your players can share and enjoy it. Only you, however, get to see...

The Map Book. This gives you the skinny on the quarters and neighborhoods that make up the city, and lets you make those snap decisions beloved of GMs: "Oh, they're in this part of the city? Who could they run into?" It also includes the three-part adventure "Yemon's Legacy".

Ashidaka's Journal. This is the private journal of the city's previous Imperial Magistrate. If your players manage to track it

down, you can give them this prop. There's an explanatory sidebar on page 38 of the "City of Lies" GM book.

The Big Color Map. This is a poster-size map of the Emerald Empire, suitable for play, navigation, and decorative purposes.



What follows is a general outline of how Ryoko Owari works. It's not the physical shape as much as the structure of how things happen, and how they happen as they do. It shows what's important in Ryoko Owari, and why it's important.

Shosuro Hyobu

The Governor of the city is a woman named Shosuro Hyobu, and she is the most powerful person in Ryoko Owari, period. The city has its share of deadly sword fighters and terrifying sorcerers, but Hyobu has the trump card; she can call in whatever she needs because she's Governor. A powerful sorcerer who crosses her is going to find out that a short message from her will have the senior faculty at the Yogo and Soshi schools in town faster than a battle maiden can gallop. Why? Because without Ryoko Owari, their castles starve. Similarly, a military threat can count on prompt and brutal retaliation from the Bayushis, because Ryoko Owari is crucial to the plans and well-being of the clan. Hyobu isn't a dangerous individual, but she makes the decisions for large, powerful, dangerous groups.

Her overriding goal is to keep her city stable, safe and prosperous. To her, any means is justified in the protection of Ryoko Owari. She doesn't like big changes (preferring small improvements) and she doesn't like people who make waves. However, she never acts hastily. Someone who makes a mistake is gently corrected. She only crushes repeat offenders.

Hyobu's idea of an ideal civic order is rather peculiar one. For one thing, it includes opium. Ryoko Owari is the center of a nationwide drug empire, and Hyobu is the biggest kingpin. It's made the city rich, prosperous and important; and as far as she's concerned, only the weak and unimportant have suffered.

This goes to show how big a mistake it is to misjudge Hyobu. She's nonviolent and forgiving, but that doesn't make her compassionate or kind.

Military

There are a number of groups in Ryoko Owari whose power stems from the strength of their arms. The first and foremost are the Thunder Guard (or "Red Plumes") who are under the command of Hyobu's son, Shosuro Jocho. They serve as the police force and civil guard of the city, and they have a great deal of discretion when it comes to deciding who's a "criminal". The Thunder Guard are also notoriously corrupt, with the notable exception of the elite "Lightning Squad".

Ryoko Owari also contains a number of gangs known as *kajinin*. These commoners are the city's fire departments (and they do a good job) but many of them have also become territorial criminal syndicates as well. The most violent of the gangs are in the Fisherman's Quarter, but the Merchant Quarter has more than one group of skull-breakers as well. The wealthiest of these gangs (the Firemen of Daikoku's Garden) is closely allied to Shosuro Hyobu and deeply involved in her opium schemes.

Economy

The underground opium economy is a major factor in Ryoko Owari's wealth. It complicates matters that there is trade in legal opium, used for medical purposes – and Ryoko Owari is the center of legal opium production as well. The poppies that produce the drug are openly grown around the city, and a small fraction of them are processed into medical form for distribution throughout Rokugan. Most of the blossoms are turned into illegal, narcotic forms (smokable and drinkable opium, specifically) and sold through the black market. Opium is not illegal until it is processed into one of these forms.

The kingpins of the opium trade are Shosuro Hyobu, Bayushi Korechika and Soshi Seiryoku. Each commands a family-dominated cartel with exclusive distribution territories. Each cartel has a monopoly; there is **no** competition in Rokugan's drug trade, which keeps prices right where the Scorpion clan wants them.

Though opium is important, the economy of Ryoko Owari is based on more than just drugs. In fact, opium just makes Ryoko Owari a rich city instead of a normal city. The legal basis of its economy is river trade. Ryoko Owari's potters and *sake* brewers are well known throughout Rokugan, and the fields around the city export rice as well as opium. Furthermore, barges carrying goods between the Unicorn provinces and the territories of the Crabs and the Scorpions pass through Ryoko Owari.

Patronage of merchants is a major concern of samurai in the City of Stories. Because there are many prosperous merchants

and much money to be made, competition for desirable vassals can be fierce. In fact, some very successful merchants attempt to play prospective patrons against each other for their own advantage – but this is a risky proposition at best.

A unique feature of the city's economy is the relative prosperity of its *eta* class. An ancient Governor structured the city taxes to encourage the *eta* to collect dung and sell it to area farmers. This fertilizes the soil (which is otherwise poor) and allows the *eta* to charge a fee for hauling away something they can then sell for money. They're not wealthy by any means, but they're better off than most *eta*.

Social

There are a large number of Unicorns in Ryoko Owari, because it's a trade hub between their lands, the Crab and the Scorpion. Relations between the two clans are often somewhat strained. The Unicorn regard the Scorpion as a maggoty nest of slick-tongued deceivers; the Scorpion consider the Unicorn to be thick-browed, shiny-chinned clowns. The greatest friction is between the Shinjo and Bayushi families, because the Bayushis have been steadily eroding the Shinjos' merchant influence. Hyobu's vision of the city is a harmonious one, however, and she has made overtures to the Unicorns. The crowning move was arranging a marriage between her daughter and a popular young Ide. Unfortunately, the groom wound up dead in a geisha house, putting a serious kink in her plans.

The samurai are not the only component of the city's culture, although they're dominant. There are many *heimin* and *hinin* who serve or interact with the samurai. The most important are the merchants (whose full impact is explained above) but the most respected are often the geisha.

The domain of the geisha is the Licensed Quarter on Teardrop Island, where the wealthy and noble can go to relax, socialize and blow off some steam. For most practical purposes, the normal social laws do not apply in the Licensed Quarter. Here the finest geisha have influence and admirers, even though they're of low social class. This is the one place where samurai are allowed to give vent to human feelings that would show weakness in any other context – feelings of tenderness or weakness or even open enjoyment.

Not every social interaction involves samurai, of course. The *eta* sometimes come into conflict with fireman gangs who want to sell drugs in their quarter. Monks have problems with merchants traveling through the Temple Quarter. The fishermen and riverboat sailors sometimes fight over the use of the docks. In the end, however, it's the samurai class that has to deal with the most difficult problems.

How to Use the City

What's most important is remember that the book is your servant, not your master. It's meant to help you, give you ideas and support your adventures and characters. It's not meant to constrain you or contradict you or slow you down. If something in the book disagrees with you, the GM, then the book is wrong.

Several pre-fabricated adventures have been included at various places in the box. All told, you have one short adventure ("Yemon's Legacy"), one long mini-campaign ("The Opium War") and a number of plot hooks (in the familiar "Challenge/Focus/Strike" format).

"The Opium War" (in "City of Lies") is the most fully developed of the adventures; stats are provided for the many characters involved, many different plot turns are considered, and long-term repercussions are discussed.

"Yemon's Legacy" (in "City of Green Walls") is not as well-developed. Guidelines are given to help you stat up the characters yourself. A general outline of events is given, but it's not as detailed; and long term results are left open. This adventure requires a little more GM tailoring, but the result is a scenario that better fits individual characters (and styles of play).

Finally, there are the plot hooks (back in "City of Lies"), which are little more than skeletal outlines of adventures. It's up to you to flesh them out, decide the toughness and reactions of the characters, figure out what's really going on and decide what the long term results of the magistrates' choices will be.

Yemon's Legacy

This is a good adventure for an introduction to Ryoko Owari. It's exciting, it's mysterious, and it provides several different challenges, but it takes place over a short period of time and has few (immediate) long-term effects.

Ideally, "Yemon's Legacy" runs something like this: the heroes meet Kaiu Joji, a surly and incoherent Crab clan samurai. He's in town following a merchant named Hoji Bokusui. Bokusui is looking for a map that was drawn by Joji's ancestor, Kaiu Yemon.

Regardless of what the players do in response to meeting Joji, they should wind up at a meeting between Bokusui, his *mahotsukai* allies (Yogo Senko and Kuni Hyakken), and their Scorpion contact Shosuro Mina. It turns out that Mina's ancestor forced Yemon to draw the map, and the map is hidden in that same ancestor's tomb. She's planning on double-crossing Bokusui because she's sworn to protect the map.

Led by Joji, the players show up in time either to find out where the map is, or to see Yogo Senko fleeing and follow her. (This should be an exciting chase scene.) They wind up at the tomb, where a deadly puzzle awaits them. Depending on your mood (and how beat up your characters are) you can set up a fight scene in front of the puzzle, or you can just let them confront it head-on. Eventually, they wind up with the map (on page 95 of "City of Lies"), while Joji, Mina and Bokusui's cabal are all dead.

The Opium War

This is a long and involved campaign that should take a number of sessions to resolve (if your players resolve it at all). The action begins long before your players become involved; in fact, it begins before they reach the city.

Ide Baranato has a grudge against Rokugan's opium trade because he blames the drug for his son's death. He has studied the three cartels and decided to beat them at their own game.

The scenario is divided into acts and scenes like a play. **Act One** starts the ball rolling.

In **Scene One**, the Unicorns arrange for a group of armed men in stolen Thunder Guard uniforms to steal a shipment of opium from Bayushi Korechika's processing center. Meanwhile, two other Unicorns steal opium from Shosuro Hyobu's warehouse – and frame the Soshi cartel for the crime. To complete the circle, they also rob Soshi Seiryoku (head of the Soshi cartel) and plant clues implicating Korechika's son Otado. At the end of Scene One, the Bayushis are mad at the Shosuros, the Shosuros are suspicious of the Soshis, and the Soshis think they've been robbed by the Bayushis.

In **Scene Two**, the magistrates are called in to investigate the Soshi cartel's warehouse (which is run by a woman named Watchful). They find the clues implicating Otado.

Scene Three is more investigating; the Bayushis clam up tight, making them look guilty.

The action starts in **Scene Four**. Watchful (Soshi's merchant front) sends an urgent summons to the magistrates. They arrive just in time to see an assassin try to cut her down. Regardless of whether they save Watchful or not, the Soshi cartel starts falling apart, leading to Act Two.

In the **first scene of Act Two**, there's a great deal of general unrest, magistrate maneuvering and opium hoarding (after all, prices just shot up because a third of the market just shut down). Mostly this scene builds tension and reveals the opium cartels as they get nervous and careless.

The **second scene** starts with a confusing raid on Shosuro opium by bandits disguised as Shosuro vassals, and it continues with a magical assault on a Bayushi opium shipment. Prices shoot up again, the cartels continue to feud, and the suspicion has now shifted to Soshi Seiryoku.

Scene Three is optional; if the magistrates question the merchants who oversee the Shosuro and Bayushi cartels (their names are Subtle and Sharp, respectively) they can learn the details of the cartels while earning themselves the powerful anger of their patrons.

In **Scene Four**, Shosuro Kimi gets kidnapped. She's Shosuro Hyobu's daughter, and Korechika claims he's "protecting" her until the current civil unrest calms down. Hyobu sends the players in to negotiate. It comes down to Korechika saying he'll let the girl go if the magistrates sign a document absolving his son of all guilt in the warehouse robbery (way back in Act One, Scene One). One way or another, the girl gets out, but the tension continues.

Scene Five is important, but subtle. It basically consists of Kimi asking the magistrates to help her go to her fiancée's family for protection. This is important because she's engaged to Ide Asamitsu, who is one of the main men in the Unicorn conspiracy.

Act Three continues to ratchet up the pressure. In the **first scene**, one of Korechika's merchants gets murdered – and not one involved (directly) in the opium trade. It doesn't really matter who killed her, at least not to the plot; what matters is that it gets everyone edgy and nervous again.

Scene Two is another warehouse attack, only this time it's arson and murder instead of theft. The attack is made on the Shosuro central warehouse, and again the attack is made by phony Thunder Guards. It's a big mess with dead bodies and flames everywhere.

In **Scene Three**, one of the magistrate's servants learns a critical fact; one of the men killed in the warehouse attack was wearing a Thunder Guard uniform, but wasn't a Thunder Guard. Furthermore, this corpse has a Unicorn Clan medallion melted into the skin of his chest. This is the first solid link between the Unicorn and the strange goings-on; however, this clue is not revealed until after the big fight in **Scene Four**.

The fight scene is big. It starts with Shosuro Hyobu sending in Thunder Guards (real ones, for once) to seize Bayushi Korechika's warehouse and kill everyone inside. The warehouse is guarded by Bayushi archers; to spice things up, Soshi Seiryoku summons an oni to cause panic; and the frosting on the cake is Ide Baranato (the Unicorn chief conspirator) showing up to set the whole fight on fire. The magistrates can either charge into the warehouse full of burning drugs, oni and warriors, or they can sit back and arrest the survivors. (Ideally, Bayushi Korechika dies here.)

Act Four's first scene starts with general low-grade unpleasantness; the oni from the warehouse is running around, opium unrest is peaking and the addicts are starting to riot. The magistrates are simply running around trying to hold the city together and getting increasingly fed up.

In **Scene Two**, the magistrates' servant tells them that a Unicorn was involved somehow. This obligates the magistrates to inform the local clan head. Also, the characters can run around and find out which Unicorn male is missing.

Scene Three involves a failure of the Unicorn to plot correctly. One of the conspirators, Otaku Naishi, betrays them. She's decided to rebuild the opium cartels, with her on top. Bayushi Otado is trying to restore his father's syndicate. Both of them approach the same opium processor (who's unemployed since the death of Watchful in Act One, Scene Four), they fight, and Otado dies. Not long after, a Scorpion clan hatchet man named Bayushi Saigo shows up claiming the rights to a blood feud with Naishi.

This leads to **Scene Four**. The magistrates should be asking themselves about the Unicorn involvement in this mess. They can learn a few important facts, all of which should push them towards Naishi.

The **Fifth** and final **Act begins** with Saigo paying his respects to the Emerald Magistrates and subtly warning them to keep out of his way. Immediately after, Naishi offers to tell them everything if they help her escape Saigo. They now have to choose between warning Naishi (which means interfering with a blood feud) and doing nothing (risking the loss of their best lead).

In **Scene Two**, the players ideally choose the path of most resistance and decide to protect Naishi. There's a confrontation between Naishi, the magistrates, and Naishi's sister (and fellow conspirator) Genshi. If they can protect her from her sister, they can find out the whole story (which is on page 91 of the GM guide). The Scorpion duelist shows up looking for her after she's signed a confession. The duel can be fought or avoided – for the conclusion of the story, it doesn't really matter (though it certainly matters to those involved).

In **Scene Three**, the players can discuss what they're going to do with the big loaded gun they've been handed. The most likely outcome is a confrontation with Ide Baranato, which occurs in Scene Four.

Scene Four is decision time. They can reveal the plot, get big favor from Governor Hyobu and the Scorpion Clan – and effectively allow the national opium market to be rebuilt. Or they can keep quiet – and allow the Unicorns who are responsible for multiple deaths and tremendous civil disorder get away scot free.

Scene Five is mopping up, and yet another critical decision; the Emerald Champion asks the magistrates for advice (!) on how to deal with the aftermath. If he rescinds Ryoko Owari's license to produce opium, he'll have to make big concessions to Shojū. Do the players think it's worth it? Naturally, either choice they make will produce more work, and more adventure, for the magistrates.

Plot Hooks

Unlike "Yemon's Legacy" and "The Opium War", the Plot Hooks are just bare bones. It's up to you to decide what how they run, how much time they can take and how challenging the

opposition is. These are provided to give you ideas; they have to be fitted to your plots, themes and characters.



As I've said before, this box isn't meant to limit your imagination; it's meant to inspire it. All the pieces in here – the locations, the people, the events and the history – are like costumes and sets for a play. Only you can write the script and play the parts.

What's critical to remember is that you, the GM, are the final authority. What you say about the city's history is correct, no matter what the book says. If you decide that Otado doesn't get killed offstage during "The Opium War", he survives. If you want Asako Kinto to be the mastermind behind one of the opium cartels instead of Bayushi Korechika, you can do that. If you want to make Hyobu senile and incompetent, or Soshi Seiryoku completely innocent, or Shinjo Yoshifusa a criminal mastermind – go for it.

How To Do My Job

Don't tell the publisher this, but I'd like you to be able to take this box... and not have to buy any adventures for a while. Adventure scenarios are just settings, individuals and events, right? In this box you've got plenty of the first two; you just need to string them together and figure out how they lead to the third – and how your characters can get involved.

One easy way to set up adventures is just pick a character and location at random. Doing this just now, I picked the Shosuro Palace and Iuchi Michisuna. What's the Unicorn musician doing at the Governor's house? Wooing Kimi? Partying with Jocho? Trying to impress Hyobu? Or something more sinister? Impressing the Governor sounds most likely, and it fits his character. Now figure out who's going to be helped by his plans (probably Ide Baranato, who wants the Unicorns to look good) and who will be hurt (how about Bayushi Korechika, who wants

to take merchants away from the Unicorns). Korechika probably doesn't want to kill Michisuna, but wants him to look bad and fail at what he's doing. Would he drug him? Vandalize his instrument? Blackmail him to play poorly? Any of the above could involve inquisitive magistrates, either before or after Michisuna's performance.

There's the guts of the plot; now the story needs excitement. A good pattern is this;

- Problem Appears
- Players Figure Things Out
- Players Confront The Wrongdoer

Each needs a bit of explanation. The "Problem Appears" phase is important because it needs to grab the attention of the players. It has to be dramatic or interesting or scary. It also has to hold the seeds for the next phase. The clues have to be here for them to discover – or there has to be something that *points to* the clues. It's a good idea to have several different clue paths that lead to the climax; even if they miss the first two they're likely to pick up a third. (On the other hand, if they miss all the clues you planned, it's quite possible that they'll think of something entirely else; if this happens, all you have to do is act like that was what you planned all along. Though you probably don't want to say "about time!" No one likes that.)

Once they've figured out what's going on, they can take appropriate action, and this is where the adventure either lives or dies. There are two ways you can go with this; the brain way and the body way.

A brain climax is one where they have to make a tough ethical decision. In "Murder at Kyotei Castle" (in *Honor's Veil*, the first L5R adventure supplement), the players have to decide if they're going to let the murderer get away with it or hang for her crimes. If they turn her in, a brave and noble woman dies an honorless death. If they let her go, a brutal murder goes unavenged. Emphasize that there are consequences to their actions. An example from film is "Casablanca": at the end, Rick has to choose between his true love and his duty. It's not a choice between evil and good, but a choice between two conflicting goods. These are the decisions that make your player characters memorable; they define who they are. Instead of just "the Crab guy with the big sword", he's now someone who made a difficult decision and has to live with the results.

On the other hand, you can pick a body climax, which is much easier. It's a big fight scene. These are nice because they're unambiguous; it's easy to see what to do. However, they can get monotonous if you always run them the same way. Variety is essential, and a great way to get variety is by using the setting. After all, which sounds like a better fight scene; a flat, dusty street, or a duel on the deck of a boat that's tilting wildly in the waves, slick with spray, with the ship's rigging and boxes getting in the way? Why have another fight in a back alley when you could have the bad guy fleeing across the rooftops, or running into the dimly lit passages of Shosuro Castle, or diving under the docks and scuttling around there in waist-deep water?

Alternative Campaigns

If you really want to make it your city you can run an “alternate” campaign. Ryoko Owari has been held by a lot of different people in its long history. What would happen if the Scorpion hadn’t gotten it back?

THE UNICORN CITY

What would have happened if the Unicorns had decided to keep a stronghold on this side of the mountains? Soshi and Yogo castles would either be heavily reinforced, or would have been conquered or moved. Shinjo Yoshifusa would be the Governor, but he’s an old, incompetent man. On the other hand, his son would probably have grown up a lot more confident and capable.

Would opium still be grown around the city? Would it be controlled by the Unicorn or the Scorpion? Would the cartels operate as smoothly as they do in base line Ryoko Owari?

THE LION CITY

The Lion clan controlled Ryoko Owari for only two weeks in a long-ago war; what if they hadn’t been called away to defend more important holdings? Ryoko Owari would be a Lion island in the middle of Scorpion territory – one that’s been subtly under siege for hundreds of years. Governor Kitsu Senshi’s chief magistrate would be Ikoma Yoriko, opium trafficking would be brutally punished, and the city would be substantially poorer – but more orderly.

THE CRAB CITY

The Crab clan conquered the city and held it for a year before retreating in disgrace. What if they’d stuck around? The Governor would probably be someone from out of town. You’d have to figure out for yourself what kind of person Kisada would send to be in charge. After all, this would be the one Crab city that was not, and had never been, threatened by the Shadowlands. On the other hand, the Governor would have to constantly be on the lookout for Scorpion intrigues – the Shosuros would constantly be scheming to humiliate the Governor and replace him with a Scorpion.



Write to Your Players

There’s one last thing to keep in mind when designing adventures for your campaign, and that is the characters who will be playing it. Role playing games aren’t competitive; you don’t want to beat them, you want to challenge them. If your players all created courtiers and politicians, they’re more interested in mystery than bloodshed. On the other hand, if they all built monster-killing warriors, they’ll probably be impatient with a steady diet of intrigue. Of course, you’re likely to have a variety of characters, which makes for a variety of adventures. This is good; variety makes for interest, and players who care about their characters are what separate good campaigns from great ones.

Credits

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Dedication:

To my brother and old gaming buddy Mike Stolze.

Special Thanks to:

Martha, for overlooking my faults long enough to marry me.

Jonathan Tweet, the past master of the "evil city ruled with an iron fist by a scheming woman" genre. (I swear I flipped a coin for Hyobu's gender.) The Fortune Deck is responsible for many elements of Ryoko Owari.

Rob Vaux and D.J. Trindle, who always brought me back to earth when my natural optimism and ebullience threatened to carry me away.

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The authors of the Bill of Rights and...

The many fine distillers of gin (both foreign and domestic) without whom Ryoko Owari would be radically different.

Comments? Questions? Send them to Greg Stolze, c/o AEG, 4045 Guasti Road, Suite 212, Ontario, CA 91761.

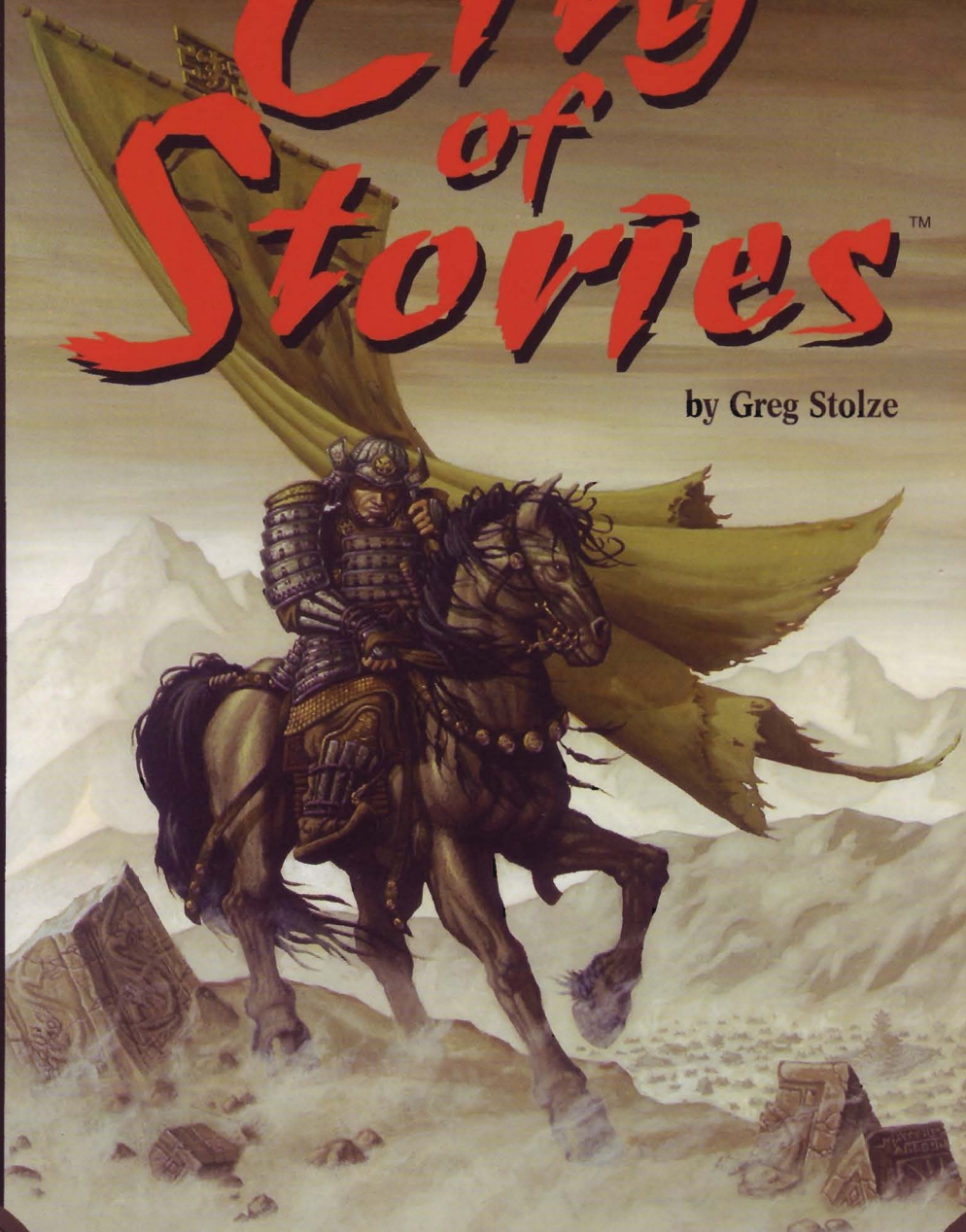
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Legend of the Five Rings™

City of Stories™

by Greg Stolze



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The City of Lies

The Player's Guide to Ryoko Owari

The logo consists of five overlapping circular rings, each containing a Japanese character: 風 (Wind), 火 (Fire), 土 (Earth), 水 (Water), and 空 (Air).

Legend of the Five Rings

City of Stories

The Player's Guide To Ryoko Owari

"Simple intelligence often appears malicious, to the naive."

—Ashidaka Naritoki

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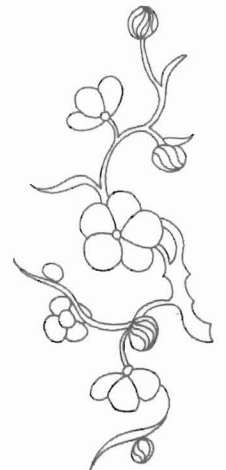
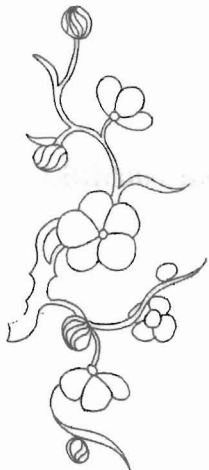
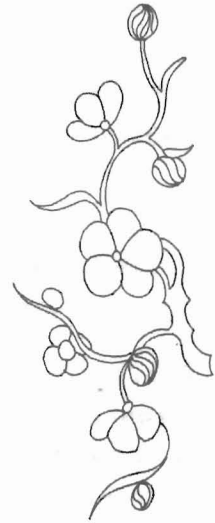


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Charter of the Emerald Magistrate

Wherein is delineated: those matters which concern the Emerald Magistrate; those duties which the Emerald Magistrate shall at all times labor to discharge; those restrictions placed upon the Magistrate to ensure honorable justice within his or her jurisdiction; and those rights and privileges given to the Magistrate to aid in the pursuit of justice and social order.

Part One: Jurisdiction

Wherein is delineated those crimes which are specifically the concern of the Emerald Magistrate and which require diligent pursuit.

Section One: Crimes Against the Emperor

Any attempt to harm, insult, endanger, steal from or otherwise inconvenience the Son of Heaven is a crime deserving of the utmost attention from all Emerald Magistrates. Any similar action taken against a member of the Emperor's family shall be constituted as a gesture against the Emperor himself and as such merits the attention of the Emerald Magistrate. Similarly, any action against a direct servant of the Emperor or the Imperial Family shall also be a matter of concern for the Emerald Magistrate.

Section Two: National Crimes

Crimes (including theft, murder, treason, robbery, murder, forgery, armed uprising, tax fraud and other transgression of local law) which are national in scope, either in planning or execution, are a concern for all Emerald Magistrates.

Section Three: Shadowlands Incursions

Any entry into Rokugan by denizens of the Shadowlands, or by those who have been corrupted by the influence of the Shadowlands, or by those who have made pacts with the sinister forces of the Shadowlands, are forbidden by law. The enforcement of this law is the duty of the Emerald Magistrates.

Crimes committed within Rokugan by violators of this law also fall within the enforcement charter of the Emerald Magistrates.

Section Four: Fugitives

The capture of any criminal who has fled across city or clan territorial boundaries is a matter of concern for all Emerald Magistrates, regardless of the scope of the crime or the location of its commission. Similarly, any criminal who flees the location of his or her crime, or attempts to, falls within the operational purview of Emerald Magistrates.

Section Five: Organized Blasphemy

Any meeting of more than two individuals for the express purpose of participating in blasphemous or obscene rituals is forbidden, and is a matter of concern for the Emerald Magistrates.

Section Six: Civil Disorder and General Lawlessness

Any crimes or actions which result in widespread civil disorder and/or general disrespect for the law and its enforcers is within the jurisdiction of the Emerald Magistrates.

Part Two: Duties

Wherein are delineated those tasks that the Emerald Magistrate is honor-bound to perform in addition to enforcing Imperial law.

Section One: Tax and Tariff Collection

It is the duty of the office of the Emerald Magistrate to oversee the collection of the yearly Imperial Tax and to enforce tariffs upon goods being transported across clan boundaries. In the case of larger cities this duty may be delegated to tax officials operating under official charter from the Emerald Champion. In such cases, it is still the duty of the local Emerald Magistrate(s) to audit the collections, ensure their accuracy, and protect the tax collectors and the gathered taxes.

Section Two: Authorizing Travel Papers

It is the duty of the Emerald Magistrate to make him- or herself available at least one day a week to sign Imperial travel documents. Such

documents are required only in the following instances: for persons who intend to travel across two different clan boundaries; for persons who require an open pass to all points within the Emerald Empire; for persons whose travel papers are to remain valid for longer than one year but not more than five years; or for residents who are not native to Rokugan.

Section Three: Protection of Visiting Dignitaries

Dignitaries from outside the Clan boundaries may, if they wish, request that the local Emerald Magistrates provide protection against threats mundane, military and supernatural. The Emerald Champion is bound to provide protection appropriate to the threat and to the visitor's social station.

Section Four: Briefing the Emerald Champion

Once per month the Emerald Magistrate shall meet with the Emerald Champion to provide a briefing on his or her current and ongoing activities and investigations. The Emerald Champion shall also be informed about any matters of national concern.

Section Five: Notification of Non-Jurisdictional Crimes

When any Emerald Magistrate becomes aware of a crime that is outside his or her jurisdiction, that Magistrate is honor bound to give a thorough briefing on the matter to whatever authority has jurisdiction over the crime in question.

Section Six: Briefing the Governor

The city or regional Governor of the province in which an Emerald Magistrate is stationed may, at any time, demand an accounting of the Magistrate's current and ongoing investigations. The Emerald Magistrate is to provide a detailed accounting in no less than three days. The Governor may not demand such an accounting more than once per month.

Section Seven: Notification of Accusations

If a person of samurai class, living or dead, has been accused of or implicated in a crime being investigated by the Emerald Magistrates, it is the duty of said Magistrates to inform the local family and/or clan leader of the accusation.

Part Three: Restrictions

Wherein are delineated those tasks, investigations and duties which are excluded from the obligations of the Emerald Magistrate.

Section One: Incidental Law Enforcement

It is not the duty of the Emerald Magistrates to provide street patrols or random policing.

Section Two: Problems of Limited Scope

It is not the duty of the Emerald Magistrate to investigate crimes which are of strictly local concern.

Section Three: Authorization of Blood Feuds

Emerald Magistrates have no authority in the matter of blood feuds. They can neither authorize such a feud nor declare one invalid.

Section Four: Levying of Troops

Emerald Magistrates have no authority to command the service of troops, except as noted below in Part Four, Sections Five and Six.

Section Five: Acceptance of Gifts and Monies

No Emerald Magistrate shall accept gifts, favors, monies, services or special considerations in exchange for any aspect of his or her duties as magistrate.

Part Four: Rights

Wherein are delineated those special privileges, powers and rights which are given to Emerald Magistrates to enable them to better pursue their goals and duties.

Section One: Right of Questioning

In the case of persons of inferior social class, station or worth, an Emerald Magistrate may arrest and restrain the individual for questioning about criminal matters.

This right of arrest, restraint and inquisition also applies to individuals of superior social class, worth or station who are apprehended in a criminal act by an Emerald Magistrate.

Persons of higher social rank, station or value may be apprehended, imprisoned and questioned if the Emerald Magistrate has obtained a valid Order of Appearance (cf. Part Four, Section Three).

Section Two: Right of Sentencing

If a signed confession has been notarized by an Emerald Magistrate, that Magistrate may opt to sentence the confessed criminal. This right of sentencing may be passed on to a different Emerald Magistrate, at the option of the notarizing Magistrate. Transcribed confessions are legitimate only in the case of illiterate criminals.

Sentences are to be appropriate for the crime and its circumstances. Possible sentences include, but are not limited to the following: execution by beheading for samurai criminals; execution by hanging from the neck for criminals of lower class; class-appropriate executions for the spouses, parents, or children of criminals; cuffing for periods not to exceed three months; public beatings with rods, sticks, or whips; house arrest; or fines, the sum of which is to be remitted to the office of the Emerald Champion.

Section Three: Orders of Appearance

An Emerald Magistrate may exercise rights of arrest, imprisonment and inquisition upon persons of higher social worth only upon the presentation of a valid Order of Appearance. An Order of Appearance must describe in detail the crime of which the samurai is accused, it must be dated within one month of its presentation, and it must be signed by the presenting Magistrate or Magistrates. In addition to this signature, it must also have the signature of one of the following: the Emerald Champion; the city or province Governor; or the local chief magistrate. The date of an Order of Appearance must be listed as the date on which the last individual signed it.

Section Four: Right to Prior Information

It is the duty of local Governors and daimyo to inform Emerald Magistrates of large scale military or police actions within that Emerald Magistrate's jurisdiction at least one day before the action occurs.

Section Five: Right to Commandeer Troops

Emerald Magistrates have the right to amass groups of troops for necessary operations, provided that they inform the local daimyo or Governor of their intentions. They may commandeer troops from local leaders if they can show demonstrable need and provide reasonable financial compensation for the troops' services.

Section Six: Right of Imperial Levy

Emerald Magistrates may, at any time, petition the Emerald Champion for the command of Emerald Legions. The assignment of these Legions is entirely at the discretion of the Emerald Champion. Emerald Legions have rights of action and armament in any and all places within the Emerald Empire.

Section Seven: Right of Privy Investigation

If there is a conflict of jurisdiction between an Emerald Magistrate and a local magistrate, the jurisdiction of the Emerald Magistrate takes precedence. If the Emerald Magistrate presents the local magistrate with a signed and dated Order of Privy Investigation, that magistrate must immediately cease all new investigations into the matter of contention. An Order of Privy Investigation is valid only if it fulfills the following conditions: it is dated on the day it was completed; it is signed by the Emerald Magistrate; it contains a complete description of the crime in question; and it explains, completely and reasonably, why the two investigations cannot proceed in a parallel fashion.

Section Eight: Right of Travel Authorization

In addition to their power to pen Imperial travel documents (defined in Part Two, Section Two), Emerald Magistrates also have the right to provide valid travel documents of more limited scope. These documents cannot be confiscated or contradicted by local magistrates for more than two days.

Travelogue Sources

Esteemed magistrates – it has been my privilege to compile for you a dossier on the city to which you will soon (no doubt) bring the blessings of public order. I have labored to provide a complete and comprehensive overview of Ryoko Owari, which should provide the background needed for you to complete the missions assigned to you by the Emerald Champion (described in the final chapter of this book).

The information in this travelogue comes from four sources, each of whom looks upon Ryoko Owari from a unique perspective. That you may better judge and evaluate the descriptions given (for, sadly, they do not always concur) I have taken the liberty of composing a short description of each.

MATSU SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER

As you are surely aware, your predecessor in Ryoko Owari was the magistrate Ashidaka Naritoki (P25). Before Naritoki, the magistrate was a woman named Matsu Shigeko, who resigned her office due to a self-perceived inability to effectively police the City of Stories.

Before retiring from her office, she prepared a dossier for her successor (Naritoki) including information on various individuals and locations throughout the city. Due to the honorable Naritoki's unforeseen demise, he was unable to provide the same service to you; therefore, her dossier has been included. Keep in mind that Shigeko's comments are three years old; observations in them may no longer be completely current.

Shigeko-san was first and foremost a warrior – a samurai-ko whose code of behavior was particularly strict. Naritoki had nothing but respect for her, but (on occasion) expressed an opinion that she had been unable to adapt to Ryoko Owari because she lacked "flexibility". When regarding her entries, keep in mind that she saw all things in highly charged terms – either good and virtuous or evil and corrupt. There is little room for ambiguity in Shigeko's view of the city.

"A HISTORY OF RYOKO OWARI" BY YOGO MOROSUKE

Composed one hundred and four years ago by Yogo Morosuke, this book has never been widely copied or collected. A powerful shugenja, Morosuke's unorthodox views of his clan's history were tolerated in his lifetime and quietly buried after his death. Only recently has a copy of his book been found outside the Scorpion clan libraries. (I owe a debt of gratitude to Iuchi Karasu for allowing me to peruse and copy his edition.)

Morosuke shows an unusual willingness to believe the worst about people (even historical and ancestral figures) and to commit even the most scandalous stories to paper. While many of his accounts are dismissed as folk stories by his own clan, many in my own Asako family, along with the venerable Ikoma historians, find his accounts compelling and (in several cases at least) probably factual.

"MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER" BY SHIBA SHONAGON

This is the most recent source available for this travelogue. Sadly, it has become available only with the death of its author.

As you may be aware, "Memoirs of an Opium Eater" is currently being read with much interest throughout Rokugan, having been published anonymously. The popular version names no names; we have been fortunate enough to acquire an intact edition, which attaches actual names to individuals and events.



SHIBA SHONAGON

While Shonagon paints a vivid picture of life in Ryoko Owari, I would caution any reader about jumping to conclusions. The unfortunate young lady, by her own admission, drank copiously and partook often in the opium which eventually claimed her life. Her opinions of certain individuals fluctuate wildly in her journal, and this inconsistency casts shadows of doubt on her factual accounts. Nonetheless, her account has value – if only because it gives a glimpse of the Floating World in which she lived and died.

The excerpts from her diary are arranged by topic in this dossier – they are not presented in chronological order. To read the selections given in a proper time frame, the following entries must be read in the following order:

P31, G2, P15, P39, G6, G6, P15, G11, L22, P25, P33, P23, P24, P2, P1, P21, P23, P46, P16, P29, P2, P37, P10, P26, P26, P8, P45, P45, P15, G11, P14, P18, P22, P25, G14, P22, G11, P31, P22, P2, G6.

Some subject entries (such as G6) contain multiple excerpts from the journal, which may be separated by a great deal of time. It is, of course, necessary to read the entries within a certain topic in order as well.

I surely need not remind you that revealing any information from Shonagon's diary could have dramatic and unpleasant effects – especially since the contents are so suspect.

"A VISITOR'S GUIDE TO RYOKO OWARI" BY SOSHI KOMACHI

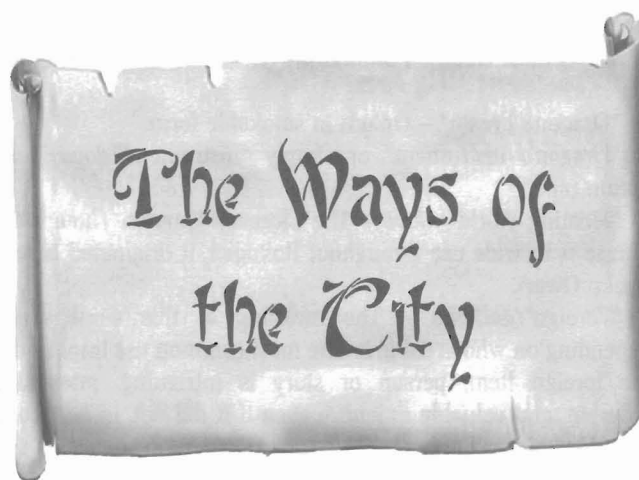
Soshi Komachi's guide to Ryoko Owari was written seventy-five years ago and is still considered the best resource for historical, architectural and travel information by the Scorpion Clan. The contents of this book are widely known and accepted.

How To Use the Reference Codes

A final note may be in order; after each entry in the book, I have placed a reference code. The codes for customs and general information begin with G. Location codes begin with L, while the codes for individual people begin with P and codes for known threats to social order begin with T. Each notation is completed by a number, allowing you to quickly cross reference when one entry refers to something in another entry. For instance, the shop "Swords Polished" (L20) refers to its owner, the ronin called Gate (P47). Thus, if you had read the "Swords Polished" entry, you would know that there was also information on its proprietor, and you would be able to find that information quickly.

I hope my humble services are useful.

– Asako Anjo

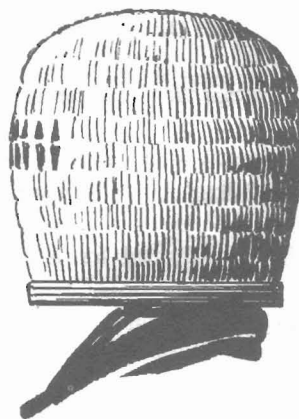


KOMACHI'S TRAVEL GUIDE: Every city, like every person, has a unique quality, a set of actions and expectations and beliefs that sets it apart. Ryoko Owari is no different; but where some cities are dour and standoffish, or formal and indifferent, Ryoko Owari is welcoming and light-hearted! Visit one of our many fine inns, sample the best *sake* brewed in Rokugan, and find out why so many visitors have decided to stay here, at Journey's End City.

The Colorful Language of Ryoko Owari

G1

SHIGEO'S DOSSIER: Ryoko Owari has its own particular dialect and turns of phrase, peculiar to this city and no other. Outsiders can easily be identified by their speech; it is a condition that only time in the city can cure. However, a few phrases in common use should be explained to the next magistrate.



"Basket hat"/*kagoboshi* – As you know, a basket hat completely covers the head, concealing the features within. They are a staple garment for noble visitors to the Licensed Quarter, and are cheaply available everywhere in the city. The phrase "basket hat" has also come to refer to any action or plan intended to conceal shame or identity.

"City of Green Walls" – Ryoko Owari (L1).

"The City That Dung Built" – Ryoko Owari (G13).

“Crab water”/*kani mizu* – Shochu or other hard liquors. This phrase is most common around the docks and in the Fisherman Quarter.

“Dragon’s breath” – Opium in smokable form.

“Dragon’s instrument” or simply “instrument”/*dogo* – An opium pipe.

“Floating World”/*ukiyo* – The Licensed Quarter. Though this phrase is in wide use throughout Rokugan, it originated here in Ryoko Owari.

“Foreign”/*gaikoku* – The meaning of this word varies, depending on who is using it. The most common use implies that the foreign item, person or story is intriguing, interesting, different, and valuably unique – even if it did not, in fact, come from beyond the borders of Rokugan. However, the Scorpion clan use “foreign” to express a disdain for novelty. A Scorpion will call an object foreign to imply that it is a worthless novelty.

The source of this word (and its two meanings) is probably the geisha Magda (P47) and her House of Foreign Stories (L22).

“Getting your sword polished” – This phrase is a euphemism for visiting the Licensed Quarter on Teardrop Island. In most licensed quarters, patrons are required to check their weapons at the doors of each establishment, retrieving them upon departure. However, Teardrop Island is unique in that there is only one dock, and it is impossible to get from the dock to the establishments of the island without passing through the establishment called “Swords Polished.” Noble visitors are expected to leave their weapons there – supposedly so they can be polished, but in truth so that they will not pose a threat to the island’s workers and patrons when drunk.

“Going to the bridge” or “trying to find the bridge” – Refers to heavy drinking. Presumably a reference to the Bridge of Drunken Lovers (L16).

“Hand gift”/*zairo* – A bribe.

“Hearing the dragons sing” – Smoking opium. This phrase was popularized by the poet known as “Slender”, herself a known addict.

“Leatherworker”/*kawa jugyoin* – *Eta*. The *eta* themselves prefer to be called leatherworkers.

“Liquid Void” – Purified opium suspended in alcohol. The most potent form of the drug.

“Little Shadowlands” – The Leatherworker Quarter. The *eta* themselves use this phrase only when talking about the mortuary section of the Leatherworker Quarter.

“Little Sister” – Someone who gets blamed for a crime committed by another; a patsy.

“Nightless City” – The Licensed Quarter, so called because the revelry there does not end with nightfall.

“Red Plumes” – The Thunder Guard (G10).

“The Sevenfold Gate” – The Pious Gate (L8).

“Stinkers”/*kageshiru* – *Eta* who collect human refuse and cart it away.

“Swimming for honor” – If someone has been murdered and their body dumped in the bay or the river, that person is said to be “swimming for honor”.

Local Customs and Holidays

YOUR OWN CUP

“MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER”: Nineteenth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Nineteenth Day, Month of the Horse

G2

I had tea today with Bayushi Saisho (P6), who was kind enough to issue my first invitation in Ryoko Owari. She was a most thoughtful hostess; despite my social station, she treated me as an equal. She said that Uncle Kinto (P31) had been very kind and patient with their daughter (P8) during her illness.

There was one awkward moment, when I realized that there was only a cup for Lady Saisho and none for me. I hope I didn’t lose my composure, because for a moment I was sure this was some sort of elaborate insult, that I was going to be used to bring shame to my family. Lady Saisho was the embarrassed one, however.

“Oh!” she said. “I’m so sorry; you must not know about our custom of your own cup.”

I of course did not.

“Well, it’s tradition for hosts to allow guests to bring their own cups to meals and visits. In fact, on one visit to Otsan Uchi, one of our local gentlemen – I won’t name names – actually brought out his own cup when having tea with a very prominent Crane official. Now, the Crane was so polite and sincere that she concealed how insulted she must have been at what would be seen as a lack of trust in the host. But you know *some* clans – they have no appreciation for tradition, and just assume they’ve learned everything there is to know about a thousand years of Rokugani culture. The honored Phoenix, of course, always recognize that what is appropriate in one place may be insulting in another.”

“Certainly,” I said, though I wasn’t entirely sure what I was agreeing with – I find conversations with Scorpions and Cranes often affect me that way. “But how did this custom originate?”

“I’m surprised your uncle didn’t tell you – he is quite the historian, yes? In any event, for a while Ryoko Owari was famous for its pottery – this was before the Unicorn started bringing in blackware from the badlands – and it seemed like every noble served as patron for a potter. Well, the Governor of the City had a banquet, and invited everyone to bring a cup from their own potter, so that all the styles could be compared. Since that time, people have often carried their own cups for style or good fortune.”

At the end of our tea, she gave me a lovely porcelain sake cup to welcome me to the city. It’s exquisite, and I’ll always carry it as ‘my’ cup.

(Later the same day)

I spoke with Uncle Kinto about the cup tradition, and he told me it came from something quite different; according to him, samurai used to sneak over into the Fisherman Quarter to go drinking and wenching, and there were unscrupulous women there who would put drugs into sake and serve it to samurai, stealing their possessions when they fell asleep. According to him, the custom of carrying your own cup has nothing to do with potters, but is instead to protect yourself from poisoning!

I'm not sure if I should believe him or not; I also asked him about the Bayushis' daughter, and he claimed that there was never anything wrong with her. I think I may have misunderstood him, for nobody doubts that the girl is dead. Perhaps he never looked at her at all, and Saisho simply said he had in order to make me feel more comfortable. Or perhaps he's become confused in his mind. Or perhaps I'm the confused one, and Saisho lied to me for some reason I'm too simple to grasp.

I fear I shall never understand this city.

THE FIRST BOAR

KOMACHI'S TRAVEL GUIDE: Every spring, the forest around Ryoko Owari echoes with the glad cries of hunters searching for the first boar.

G3

Every year, the competition between nobles to fell the first of these large animals is fierce. This is not only because the nobles are eager to test their skill and courage against a vicious, sometimes deadly creature; it's also because the samurai who kills the year's first boar is given additional hunting rights.

A family is usually limited to two bear, a dozen stags, two dozen deer and twenty foxes per year. However, the family that first delivers a boar to the Governor is allowed to kill two additional bear (though few ever kill even their first two), three more stags, another eight deer, and fourteen more foxes. More importantly, *no one* may hunt stags until a boar has been killed and given to the Governor.

The Governor traditionally has the boar's skin made into a fine saddle for the boar's killer, while its skull is boiled in wax and put on display in the Hall of Trophies. The gamy meat of the animal is usually given in payment to the Leatherworker who makes the saddle.

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: No one can hunt stags in the spring until someone has killed a boar. Consequently, the spring season finds many nobles riding through the forest, seeking to test their mettle against a dangerous animal that no one will eat.

Normally this is no concern of an Emerald Magistrate; the Thunder Guards (G10) are adequate to police the Governor's forest against poachers. However, this year, I was informed that an illegal duel was going to be joined over a boar. Upon arriving on the scene I found nobles of the Scorpion and Unicorn clans preparing to draw without observing any legal formalities whatsoever.

It emerged that the Unicorn was accusing the Scorpion of trying to steal his dead boar, and the Scorpion was attempting to defend his honor. I told them that if they wanted to settle a matter of honor, they could get permission from the Governor, or face the consequences of fighting an illegal duel.

Knowing the Governor's typical lack of patience for pointless duels, and the loss of face involved if she refused to allow the duel, both agreed that there had been a "misunderstanding". However, I fear that this sort of encounter, or worse, will always accompany the boar hunting season.



LIBERATION DAY

MOROSUKE'S HISTORY: Ryoko Owari has only been captured in war twice, and only once was it held for more than two weeks. It was during the reign of Hantei the Seventeenth. Having recently conquered a number of distant islands, the Emperor was of a mind to appreciate military might. Thus, the clan of the Crab felt they could move against the Scorpion with relative impunity, especially since the daimyo, Bayushi Michisuna, had fallen ill after the deaths of his three sons and never fully recovered. When the Crab army marched out of the Hidden Forest and across the Plains of Thunder, the Shosuro family was poorly garrisoned and expected little action from Michisuna. In any event, the Lion clan was pressing an attack at Beiden Pass at the same time, though they continue to deny complicity with the Crab.

The Crab army, fronted by Hida Atsushige, assaulted the city and challenged the Thunder Guards (G10) of Shosuro Sanekata. Sanekata fought for seven days, but surrendered after Atsushige destroyed the Moment's Edge Bridge, then built rafts and floated downstream into the Bay of Drowned Honor.

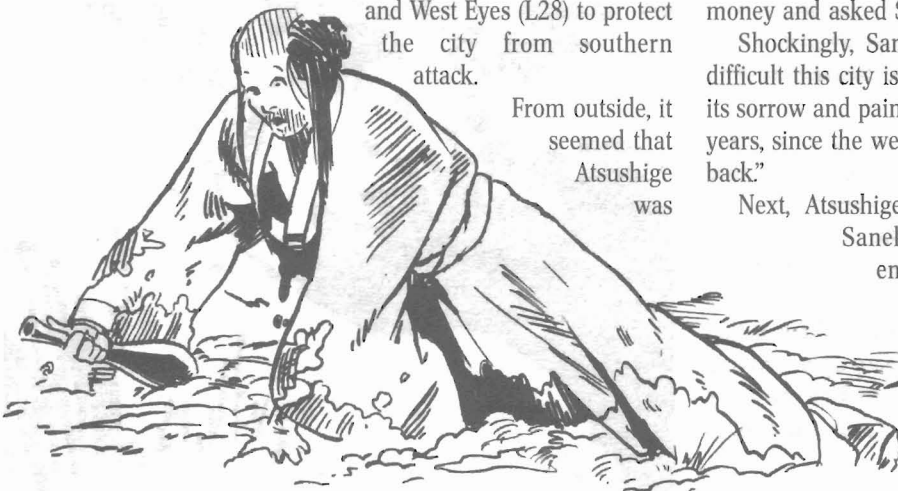
Sanekata and all of his troops withdrew to Shiro no Shosuro – an act that drew howls of protest from the Soshi and Yogo shugenja schools, who felt (with some reason) that they were now threatened by the Crab forces in Ryoko Owari.

"Have no fear," Sanekata told them. "Atsushige is far too good a strategist to hold Ryoko Owari, let alone take Yogo Shiro." Though his statement seemed baldly nonsensical, he would only give a small smile when asked to explain.

It appeared that Sanekata had spoken truly when he said Atsushige was a good strategist; he quickly established martial law in Ryoko Owari and seized much of the city's treasury. However, he had no good way to carry it to Crab country. Moving them outside the city walls would invite a Scorpion attack on the treasure convoy. Assigning enough guards to protect it would leave the city vulnerable. Instead, Atsushige spent much money

building the Towers of the East and West Eyes (L28) to protect the city from southern attack.

From outside, it seemed that Atsushige was



G4

entirely successful; records from within the city, however, tell a different story. With the removal of Sanekata, crime became far more frequent in Ryoko Owari – or at least, arrests did. Punishments for drunkenness, licentiousness, and public disgrace became daily occurrences – and a great bulk of the offenders were the foreign warriors. Trained and raised in the austere lands of the Crab, they were unprepared for the luxuries available in Ryoko Owari. With the arrogance of conquerors they drank the Shosuro family's fine sake – and fell mysteriously ill for extended periods. Eagerly they visited the many geisha houses – and awoke the next day missing coin, weapons and (on a few memorable occasions) limbs.

With many of his men ill or "indisposed", Atsushige was in no position to take additional territory. Even those troops who were healthy grumbled at the thought of forsaking the comforts of Ryoko Owari for the uncertainties of a battle camp. Morale was high among the conquerors – as long as they didn't try to extend their gains.

Next, Atsushige attempted to hire mercenaries. However, since both the Scorpion and Lion clans were hiring, this proved so expensive that he had soon spent Ryoko Owari's captured treasury. His mercenary army made one attack on Yogo Shiro, but Atsushige had lost his momentum; the shugenja had been preparing for the assault for months, and repelled his demoralized forces easily.

Returning to Ryoko Owari, Atsushige was greeted by a mutiny among his own men; apparently rumors were rife that Atsushige was going to abandon Ryoko Owari in an all-out attempt to take Yogo Shiro. His tired, beaten mercenaries were needed to put down his own rebellious soldiers. Atsushige requested more money from his clan to hire more mercenaries, but was refused. The Crab daimyo demanded to know how Atsushige had taken a major trade hub and was failing to make money from it. The daimyo was not pleased to hear stories of pilferage, a lack of administrators (Shosuro Sanekata had taken them all when he retreated) and uncooperative troops. Increasingly brutal discipline only demoralized the already surly Crab forces and, one year after his triumphant conquest of Ryoko Owari, Atsushige ran out of money and asked Sanekata for ransom for the city.

Shockingly, Sanekata refused. "Now you have learned how difficult this city is to rule," he said. "I'm perfectly happy to give its sorrow and pain to the Crab clan. I feel younger than I have in years, since the weight of Ryoko Owari has been taken from my back."

Next, Atsushige offered to simply vacate the city and let Sanekata return. The Scorpion clan daimyo encouraged him to accept, but Sanekata counseled patience. "After all, didn't I say that Atsushige's own strategic wisdom would lose the city for him? Give him another week and he will beg us to take the city back."

As predicted, Atsushige's offers became increasingly desperate. In the end, he left in disgrace, leaving behind much of the weaponry, armor and support gear that his men had arrived with. Sanekata returned to a city defended by two new towers, and has since been regarded as either a spectacularly clever man or a fabulously lucky one. When asked how much of the misfortunes that befell the Crab clan were engineered by him, he would say only "I am a far better city governor than I am a general."

KOMACHI'S TRAVEL GUIDE: The Liberation Day festival is held on the first day of every Month of the Ox, and celebrates the return of Ryoko Owari to Scorpion control after a year of Crab occupation.

In honor of the triumphant return of Shosuro Sanekata, this is a day of feasting and open celebration. Each district of the city (except the Leatherworker Quarter, of course) picks a group of men who dress up in wooden or paper versions of Crab clan mempos and armor. Starting at the Moment's Edge Bridge (L24), these men march to Goblin's Rest Road, and then proceed down the road towards the Gate of Oni's Teeth (L14). All along the way, they are invited by onlookers to trade their armor for food, drinks, pipes of tobacco, cheap trinkets and (in some cases) the kisses of beautiful and immodest women. By the time they reach the Gate of Oni's Teeth, they are naked except for loincloths, in order to represent the Crab soldiers' lack of discipline. They are then given heavy stones and required to march all the way to the Tower of the East Eye and pile their stones there. At this point, many in the parade are badly drunk, so not all of them make it, but a good time is had by all.

A traditional food for this festival is crab meat stewed in sake, eaten from its own shell.

PORRIDGE STICK DAY

KOMACHI'S TRAVEL GUIDE: The eighth day of every Month of the Snake is Porridge Stick Day, celebrating the day that Okami finally got the better of his wife Riko (L16) (L14).

G5

Okami, the great and powerful warrior, had only been married to his clever wife Riko for a short time before she came to realize that he was far from her equal in matters of cunning. She decided to test him by sending him on a nonsense errand.

"Oh husband," she said to him. "Your foolish wife has broken her last left-handed widdershins porridge stick. I would send the servants for one, but they are such simpletons that they can never get the right kind. I would go myself – but while the Merchant Quarter has left-handed porridge sticks, and widdershins porridge sticks, they don't have sticks that are both. For those, you have to go to the Fisherman Quarter."

Okami certainly didn't want his wife venturing into an area as rife with ruffians as the Fisherman Quarter, so he asked her where in that area he could find a left-handed, widdershins porridge stick.

"I'm afraid I simply don't recall the name of the merchant who makes them," she said, batting her eyes.

So her great husband lumbered out of their house looking for a left-handed, widdershins porridge stick. Now, any sensible person knows that a porridge stick is simply a rod the length of a forearm and as thick as a finger. It can be used in either hand, turning the porridge in a circle to the left or the right. But Okami knew that his wife was a clever woman, and because he did not want to appear stupid to her, he set out to complete a task that made him look stupid to everyone he asked. For of course, no one had ever heard of a left-handed, widdershins porridge stick – and few were anxious to argue about it to a man of such massive and warlike aspect.



Okami was not of a nature to go back on his word, or to admit that he had failed to do something when he said he would do it; so each day he set out to find the porridge stick, never giving up, even though he was quite tired of the puzzled looks of various people in the Fisherman Quarter.

Since the episode on the Bridge of Drunken Lovers (L16), Riko had not seen her friend from the Crane clan, so one day she decided to invite him over to drink tea and gossip, as they had before she was married. She did this even though Okami had told her to keep away from him. "Don't worry about Okami," she told her friend. "He will be gone all day on a foolish errand."

However, in this she was wrong; that was the very day that Okami completed his search. A certain cunning sailor had heard that a nobleman was looking for a left-handed, widdershins porridge stick, and so he took his fishing knife and carved up several rods into stirring sticks. Early the next day, he stood near the Gate of Condescension (L9) calling "Porridge sticks! Finest in the land! left-handed and widdershins, porridge sticks right here!" Presently, Okami emerged and, hearing his call, asked him if he had a porridge stick that was both left-handed *and* widdershins.

"I'm not sure," said the cunning fisherman. "That is a rare and expensive item, and I may have sold my last... no wait, I have one right here!" And with that, he produced a stick upon which he had carved the words "left hand" and "widdershins". Okami was overjoyed to have found the item at last, and while he thought the asking price of three koku seemed a bit expensive, he paid it because he was grateful to finally fulfill his promise.

Imagine his chagrin, then, when he returned home and saw his Crane clan rival entering his house. Okami immediately stormed inside and, with much shouting and breaking of objects, ejected the offending Crane, who fled with a great deal of haste.

Now, however, Okami had another problem. All his neighbors had seen him fling the Crane from his home, and all had heard him shouting. It did not take them long to surmise that the Crane had been Riko's lover – even though this was not true, and Riko, Okami and the Crane man himself all denied it. The Crane's rapid flight from the city did more to confirm their suspicions than allay them.

As for Riko, it was as if her eyes had been opened. The speed with which her former suitor fled made her realize what a coward the Crane was and, furthermore, had always been. When she understood this, she also saw how honorable her husband had been, spending day after day seeking something as trivial as a porridge stick.

She went to her husband and flung herself at his feet, confessing her deceitfulness with many tears but assuring him that she had never been unfaithful with the Crane. It took some explaining before Okami finally grasped the situation, but when he did, his mind was greatly disturbed.

"You have had a man in my home after I expressly forbade it," he said at last. "Even if you were not his lover, you ought to be punished. What is the accepted punishment in Ryoko Owari?"

At this, Riko turned pale, but because she now respected him she told him the truth. "You are supposed to publicly beat me with a staff," she whispered.

He thought a moment, then said, "So be it."

Soon, she found herself standing before her neighbors and peers, waiting for her husband to come and beat her with a staff. She was trembling – and well she might, for her husband's arms were each as thick around as both of her legs. When he arrived, he was carrying a massive tree trunk, as thick as her waist. The entire crowd gasped.

"My wife has wronged me and disobeyed my rules," Okami said, swinging the tree trunk. "Now I shall give her the punishment she deserves for her lies. Wife, turn your back, for I would not want you to have to see this coming."

Pale and terrified, she turned and braced herself. She did not see him pull from his sleeve his specially carved porridge stick, and it was with that slender rod that he struck her one time, across her backside.

"This is her punishment," he told the neighbors. "For while she did disobey me, she did not betray me with that man, and anyone who calls her a shameful woman can answer to me." With that, they went home. Nine months later, they had their first son.

Since that time, women of Ryoko Owari have celebrated the event by carrying porridge sticks with them on this day and using them to swat each other on the backside. As one might imagine, this can cause a great deal of confusion, but it is also amusing to watch women from all walks of life and stations clutching porridge sticks as if they were swords, waiting for the chance to smack their friends. Naturally, it is only considered proper to hit those of your own (or lesser) station, and only then with affection. Furthermore, while the women of Ryoko Owari will endure vicious sounding strikes from their fellow women, they often become vehemently upset if a man dares to engage in the same behavior.

DAYS OF GENEROSITY

KOMACHI'S TRAVEL GUIDE: Taxes are collected during the Month of the Monkey, and by the full moon of that month, the local nobles are generally feeling quite rich and, consequently cheerful. They therefore take this time to take a portion of their tax earnings and spend them on generous gifts for their fellow nobles.

The first Day of Generosity is spent selecting the King (or Queen) of Generosity. This is overseen by the head priest of the Temple of Daikoku. Everyone who wishes may put a slip of paper with a name on it in a basket. One slip of paper is chosen by the priest, and that person becomes the Ruler of Generosity for the next day.

The next day is a festival of gift giving, overseen by the King or Queen. Every noble past the age of *gempukku* is expected to participate, giving gifts to one or more fellow nobles. For each gift given, another is entrusted to the Ruler of Generosity. The Ruler

G6

does not get to keep all these “secondary gifts”, but rather holds them in trust; for there is also an element of competition in the giving of gifts, with the Ruler deciding who has been the best giver of gifts.

Some Rulers judge the best giver to be the person who gives the most gifts. Others say that the best giver is the person who gives the most gifts to individuals who only got one gift. (In other words, the best giver is one who gives gifts even to those who are unimportant or generally disliked.) Still others try to find out who received the *most* gifts, and judge which of those gifts is the finest. The best giver receives his or her choice of the finest items that the Ruler holds in trust, and the Ruler can keep or dispose of the others as he or she sees fit.

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: The Days of Generosity are a tremendous irritant to a dutiful magistrate. In addition to the normal problems associated with large groups of celebrating samurai (many of whom drink disgracefully) there is the problem of large quantities of valuable objects (both those sentimentally valuable and those financially valuable) being carried around, exchanged and simply piled in front of the King of Generosity in the Scorpion Garden. The possibilities for theft and loss are legion, and of course there are usually several insults and challenges arising from misunderstandings (often drunken ones) and genuine thefts.

I have attended these festivals for two consecutive years now, and on the second I had the extreme misfortune to be selected Queen of Generosity. I attempted to decline the honor, but was told that I had been “chosen by Daikoku” and could not possibly refuse. I spent the entire day upon a ridiculous “throne” in the Scorpion Garden, watching as a mind-numbing array of trinkets were stored in front of me, trying to find some way to maintain public order while still figuring out a “best giver” who would satisfy the various political factions of the city. I eventually selected Shosuro Jocho (P2) for giving a lavish carriage to his mother Hyobu (G9, P1), and this was accepted with adequate grace by all involved. He immediately selected several handsome weapons from the pile of gifts, along with an elaborately carved pipe. I took the rest of the gifts and distributed them among my deputies – though I will confess that I did keep for myself one beautifully carved shogi set.

“MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER”: Nineteenth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Month of the Monkey, First Day of Generosity.

This was my first Day of Generosity – a very loud and joyous festival, nothing like the solemn and serious holy days back home.

The feast is held to show our gratitude for a good tax year, and I certainly am grateful – under the guidance of my Dear Friend, the silver business has been quite profitable, far more so than I had dared hope.



We were supposed to put names in a basket so one could be picked as a festival ruler – I didn't want to put in Uncle Kinto's (P31) name – he seems far too shy to enjoy it. I put my own name in, and though I felt a little guilty, I was also excited and hopeful when they drew from the basket. I didn't get to be Ruler, however – that honor fell to Ide Michikane (P15).

"MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER": Nineteenth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Month of the Monkey, Second Day of Generosity.

I gave Uncle Kinto a silver ring from our finest craftsman, and he gave me one of his peculiar little statues. With each gift you give, you're also supposed to give something to the King of Generosity – I gave fans with some of my poems written on them.

For a while I thought I was only going to get a gift from Kinto, and it made me sad, but then a young man named Iuchi Michisuna (P22) gave me a lovely painted umbrella. I wonder if he was planning to give it to me, or just saw that no one else was giving me anything?

King Michikane picked his cousin Otaku Naishi (P20) as the best giver because she gave small gifts to almost *everyone* it seemed (though not me). I noticed that she did not pick one of my fans as a trophy, but I probably shouldn't have expected it.

"MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER": Twentieth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Month of the Monkey, Second Day of Generosity.

Kinto keeps trying to see me, but I can't bear the thought of his poor, timid, concerned face today. I don't even want to go out, I don't have anything to give anyone anymore... nothing real, no hope or friendship or love. I'm not sure if I even really love Michisuna. If I loved him, would I have screamed at him so? All the anger and pain I felt when I saw him with That Slut (Magda, P47) – it felt much more like hate than love.

(later the same day)

I managed to go out by noon. Jocho (P2) simply looked at me, then looked away. Osako (P10) saw that and smirked, and then had the gall to give me a little horse statue from That Slut's shop (L22). I waited until she was gone, then dropped it in a public toilet. Let some leatherworker have her gift.

Kinto found me of course, asked if I'd been ill, offered to read some scrolls over me. I told him I was fine, and thanked him for implying that I looked like I was on death's door. I regretted it the moment I said it – it was as if he got even littler as I watched. Then, I couldn't believe it – he gave me an actual dragon's instrument (G1). It turns out he has no idea what it's supposed to be for – he thought it was for tobacco! "I saw that many of your friends were carrying these... I hope you like it"

I almost cried. Then Otado (P7) came by and gave me a scroll case, asking if anyone else had given me anything. I showed him the instrument and he got a good, mean laugh out of it. Then he feigned disappointment and said he'd hoped he would be the only one to give me a gift, so that he'd be regarded as the best giver. I didn't laugh – I just turned and walked away, leaving him gaping foolishly for a few seconds. Then he started shouting at me,

calling me terrible names and trying to follow me, but I'd gotten through a thick crowd by then.

I'm home now, writing my day down and wondering why I bother. Why would anyone be concerned about my days? Why would I want to remember this day? Is there anything about me that gives my opinions importance?

That feeling is coming again, the feeling like a cold black fever of the soul. Even liquid opium isn't helping like it used to, but it still helps a bit.

Poor Uncle Kinto. Someday he'll know enough to be ashamed of me.

Bribes

G7

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: Ryoko Owari's custom of asking for bribes or "hand gifts" (G1) is disgustingly pervasive among the Thunder Guards (G10) and firemen (G12). Even my own assistants were behaving in this shameful fashion until certain drastic steps were taken. This should demonstrate the debased nature of this city – where the honor of officials is bought and sold, like dishes at a noodle stand.

The process is an obscene mockery of the noble etiquette surrounding the giving of gifts. Instead of being offered a sincere gift, the individual searching for a hand gift makes a suggestive comment about a particular object or (even more blatant) a sum of money. "Ah, what a beautiful kimono! Surely I would be the envy of my fellow magistrates if I had it," or "Oh, if only I had ten more koku I would be the happiest man alive."

At this point, the person addressed may simply offer the object or sum in expectation of future favors. In such cases, the standard series of offers and refusals is followed. Far more frequently, however, the owner of the object generally makes some modest or proprietary comment in return. "Yes, it is a fine kimono, isn't it? I treasure it deeply," or "Ah, ten koku is a great sum of money. Much of value can be had for such a sum."

Next, the bribe seeker gives some subtle idea of what is being offered in return for the "gift". "If I wore such a lovely garment, I would surely bear very warm feelings towards its maker, praising him to everyone I met. Equally great would be my anger towards anyone who made trouble for someone who gave so precious a gift." "So much money would be a distraction. Were I to suddenly come into such wealth, it might even distract me from enforcing tariffs and taxes with complete thoroughness and impartiality. Perhaps it is just as well that I am so poor."

The owner of the object now has a chance to haggle like an avaricious shop keeper – trying to offer something of lesser value, or to get more value for the hand gift. "I could only dream that you would value one of my robes so highly. Far more likely you would realize how meager my skills are, even telling the tax collectors that my garments are worth far less than their asking price and should be taxed only as so many rags." "To a poor man,

any sum of money would seem dazzling – even seven koku, or five.” Alternately, if the shop keeper (or whoever) does not wish to give the bribe, he or she may simply continue to assert the high value of the object or sum.

Now the corrupt official has one final rebuttal – he or she may indicate that the reduced bribe or increased service is equitable, or may instead continue to press for the full, initial bribe. “Ah, surely the tax collectors will recognize the full value of your wares, even if I were to insult them – which I cannot do, in good conscience.” “Seven koku would be dazzling, I admit – one for each of the Fortunes, or each of the clans. Five, however – the number of the elemental rings – would serve only to remind me of wisdom and Shinsei, and that in turn would encourage me to perform my duty to the fullest extent.”

Now is the time for the bribe to be offered or declined. “Your friendship and flattery are so dear to me that I feel compelled to offer you the kimono you so clearly admire.” “Truly, seven koku would be dazzling to receive, but even more appalling to lose.”

In summation, then, the request for a bribe goes as follows.

| CORRUPT OFFICIAL | CORRUPT MERCHANT |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| Expression of envy. | Statement of value. |
| Suggestion of favors offered. | Counteroffer. |
| Response to counteroffer. | Give or refuse. |

Be alert for such exchanges. Though they may seem innocuous on the surface, they are only a fair mask covering the face of extensive and repellent corruption.

One final note: as you can imagine, it is not difficult to adapt this exchange for the purposes of threats or extortion.

Patronage System

G8

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: Ryoko Owari has an extensive system of samurai patronage for peasant merchants and craft workers. I recognize that many noble families consider guiding Rokugan's commerce to be a necessary task. Some would even like to claim honor from this activity, even as they make tremendous personal gain. While I would argue that contact with the merchant classes pollutes a samurai's warrior spirit, it is recognized that interactions between the samurai and merchant classes are inevitable, and I accept this.

I do feel, however, that the widespread attention given to merchant matters by samurai families in Ryoko Owari is a key factor in this city's moral decay.

The natural form of patronage followed almost everywhere else is for a samurai to provide protection to the peasants who work and live upon his land, in return for his rightful taxes. This elegant system has become corrupted in an urban setting where



there is a large transient population and large numbers of merchants in close proximity to each other – each potentially under the protection of a different family or samurai.

It would be absurd for a Crab village to decide it wanted the protection of the Phoenix instead; however, in a city, it becomes possible for a merchant or craftsman to leave the protection of one samurai for the patronage of another. (It is impossible, however, to go from having a patron to having no patron, except under highly unusual circumstances such as the death of a patron with no heir.)

In cities, then, and especially in Ryoko Owari, it is common for merchants to actively solicit the patronage of a samurai or family. Families and samurai, in turn, may now pick and choose who they support – for support of a vassal involves some risk on the part of the samurai (as explained below), and the samurai of Ryoko Owari are most interested in getting the greatest return of profit from their investment of time, money and effort.

The vassal merchant is expected to give a certain percentage of his profits – usually about 10% – to his or her patron. (In certain cases – notably opium traders – this percentage can soar to 65% or 70%.)

In return for this financial boon, the patron is expected to protect the vassal physically, legally and financially. If misfortune befalls a vassal (for example, a merchant's cargo ship sinks) the patron is expected to provide the merchant with enough money for a second start. (After such a second start, however, the merchant can usually expect to pay a significantly larger levy to his master.) The patron is expected to protect the vassal from extortion, and (if the business requires it) furnish protection for caravans. Finally, the samurai is expected to protect the person of the merchant and his family, just as a country samurai protects his villages from bandits.

So far, this sounds somewhat similar to the protection offered a village by its lord. The difference, however, lies in proximity and competition.

Since the city samurai is much closer to his merchants and craft workers than a country samurai, it is natural for the urban noble to take a keener interest in the operations that receive his protection. Soon, the samurai is making suggestions to his vassals – then asking questions – and before long his entire attention is absorbed by commerce, instead of being concerned with honor, duty and those studies proper to his class. One result of this is the expectation on the part of vassals that, if they sell or produce a commodity used by the samurai class, the patron will tout the merchant's wares to friends and family. Thus we see the noble samurai of Rokugan reduced to the level of merchant skills in a marketplace.

This has happened throughout Ryoko Owari. Some samurai are content to leave such matters to those of proper station, but the great majority of Ryoko Owari samurai take a direct and controlling interest in the businesses of their vassals. Instead of hunting, praying or practicing arms, the Ryoko samurai spends his days haggling, gathering money, and making loans. The corruption of the spirit this engenders is slow, but its results are clearly visible to any outsider.

Bad enough that our samurai are developing a commercial attitude, but the competition for prized artisans adds another level of tension and dishonor. A silversmith (for example) whose works are prized may decide to change patrons – leaving the employ of one samurai for another who may (for example) require a lesser tith. If the new patron has greater political influence (or martial skill) there is little the former patron can do about it.

The result is a grotesque inversion of the social order. Instead of commanding *heimin*, the samurai are reduced to placating them and seeking their favor, instead of the other way around. This reversal is an obvious threat to the social order – yet Ryoko Owari's patronage system contains dangers beyond the obvious.

One such hazard is “ronin” merchants – those peddlers who have no noble patron. Supposedly they are protected by the Governor, to whom they pay some taxes; yet they certainly receive far less attention from the Thunder Guard (G10) than those who are patronized directly by the Shosuro family. Criminals perceive such merchants as easy prey, and this perception is accurate. Ronin merchants have come to me with complaints and begged for my protection, but if I were to protect one, soon all of them would expect the intervention of an Emerald Magistrate, leaving me no time for my real duties. I refused them.

Instead they turn to their local firemen (G12), asking for protection from threats other than careless blazes. They offer bribes, and in return the firemen act as bodyguards and hired muscle. This mitigates the problem of crimes against merchants, but it adds, again, to a perception that the magistrates (both those of the Governor and those of the Emperor) cannot cope with crime.

A final danger – possibly the greatest threat – is still in the potential stage. In my tenure as magistrate, two samurai attempted to get permission from the Governor to duel, because one had killed the merchant vassal of the other. It came out that the merchant had formerly been a vassal of the samurai who killed her; her new master claimed that the killing had been a cowardly and indirect attack on him by a samurai afraid to face him directly.

Hyobu (G9, P1) refused to countenance the duel, and both samurai lost face; but I fear that if one had been from her own clan, she would have allowed the duel. A precedent of samurai dueling over merchants is not one I am anxious to see established in any city.

A Political Overview

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: The political situation in Ryoko Owari is a tangled mass of obligations, muddled alliances, long-concealed vendettas and conflicting jurisdictions. My departure will change the balance of power drastically, as will your arrival. You will almost certainly be required to align yourself with one of Ryoko Owari's powerful organizations; without such an alliance, the

others will feel they can move against you with impunity. However, any ally you choose will support you only in the hopes of gain. Choose carefully; there are no heroes here.

THE GOVERNOR

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: Shosuro Hyobu (P1) is the current Governor of Ryoko Owari, and has been since the death of her husband Akitada eight years ago. Technically, her son Jocho (P2) should have taken the throne after his *gempukku*, but he shows little inclination to do so; he is happier as the leader of the Thunder Guards (G10).

For this we should probably be thankful. Though far from a perfect woman, Hyobu appreciates the importance of social order, and she is adept at maintaining Ryoko Owari's situation. This is both her greatest strength and her greatest weakness.

Her reign has provided Ryoko Owari with the blessings of prosperity and a fair degree of peace and safety. However, her intransigence also protects corrupt elements that have arrayed themselves with her. Because she considers things "good enough"

G9



she is unwilling to take actions that will have good effects in the long term, but which will result in necessary upheaval in the immediate future. The greatest case in point is the opium trade. Her husband tolerated it, and so does she. It has undoubtedly brought wealth to her city – but only through the most corrupt and debased individuals. She is unwilling to chase elusive honor; instead, she is content to pursue less lofty game, such as wealth.

Unless her hand is forced, she is unwilling to make hard choices. Hyobu would always prefer to talk than to fight. She is a born negotiator, and good at it; if she wants a problem resolved without bloodshed, she will sacrifice much and make good on her promises. She is reluctant to give permission for duels that she feels are "unwarranted" – those based on impulse rather than an insurmountable point of honor. However, her "good nature" is self-serving – she has no compunctions about extracting favors from those she has helped out of tight spots. Furthermore, she can only be pushed so far; if she decides she has been deliberately crossed or disobeyed, she will not hesitate to use force.

In other words, her "forgiving nature" is a function of strength, not weakness. She prefers to think any offenses against her are unintentional, because she knows only the worst kind of fool would cross her on purpose.

THE THUNDER GUARD

KOMACHI'S TRAVEL GUIDE: The Governor's Thunder Guard are easily recognizable by their armor, naginatas and handsome plumed helmets. It would take the tails from a hundred horses and fifty gallons of dye to replicate all the crimson plumes on the Thunder Guards' helmets!

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: The Thunder Guard are the personal army of Shosuro Hyobu (G9, P1) and serve to keep her city peaceful and orderly.

Their leader is her son, Shosuro Jocho (P2), a fierce and dangerous warrior. While hardly his mother's equal in matters political, he has a crude (but effective) grasp of small unit tactics and organization. This, joined with a native cunning and the numbers and training of his men, makes the Thunder Guards the single most physically dangerous force in Ryoko Owari.

The lowest level of the guards are footmen known as "*kaisatsukan*". They are dressed in light armor with a plumed helm, and are armed with naginatas. There are over three hundred *kaisatsukan* in Ryoko Owari, predominantly children of minor nobility. On a usual day, fifty will be in each of the Towers of the East and West Eyes (L28), another twenty will be guarding the walls around the Noble Quarter, thirty will be guarding the walls around the rest of the city, and five will be stationed at each gate. In addition, twenty-five are generally patrolling the Fisherman Quarter (usually by the docks, checking ships for contraband and protecting the tariff collectors), a like number are in the Merchant Quarter and a dozen are in the Temple Quarter. These guards are assigned to specific areas and do not wander from them. However, Teardrop Island is such a popular assignment that the staff there

G10

is changed weekly, and is composed of soldiers from all other districts (led by one chief who is stationed there permanently).

The duties of the Thunder Guard are to defend the city from invasion, halt crimes against the Governor (but not investigate crimes that have been committed; that's a job for one of Hyobu's magistrates (P10) or the Emerald Magistrate), check incoming barges, boats and wagons for contraband, check the papers of travellers, and generally ensure civic peace.

One of Jocho's initiatives since he took control of the Guards last year has been to offer incentives for *kaisatsukan* to receive elite training for two specialized units, the Samurai Squad and the Lightning Squad.

The Lightning Squad is a rapid response, mounted unit, currently consisting of fifty members. In addition to training in horsemanship, the Lightning Squad learn the meanings of a series of large banners that can be raised on a pole at the Dragon's Gate (L10). These banners represent different, tactically significant locations in the city. When the banner is raised, a great bell is rung and the Lightning Squad is expected to proceed to that location at top speed, there to rally for further orders. Each bridge, gate, and dock has its own banner, along with a number of other rallying points throughout the city. It is Jocho's boast that he can place the entire Lightning Squad at any point in the city (except the Licensed Quarter) within half an hour. This may be an exaggeration, but if it is, his frequent tests and drills are constantly bringing it closer to reality. It is a crime against the Governor to impede a galloping member of the Lightning Squad.

In addition to extra pay, the members of the Lightning Squad receive a stipend to support two horses and two grooms, so that they can always have a horse ready for action.

It should be noted that admission into the Lightning Squad seems to be based solely on ability, and loyalty to Jocho – wealthy members of the Scorpion clan have been refused and impoverished Unicorns accepted, despite the political friction this has caused. Unless Jocho is weaving some elaborate basket hat (G1), his sole interest in this matter is building the finest fighting force he can.

The same cannot be said of the Samurai Squad. They are not trained on horseback; instead, they study archery and the art of the sickle and chain (*kusari-gama*), a weapon designed specifically to disarm sword fighters. The purpose of the Samurai Squad is to deal with rebellious, unruly or drunk samurai. Consequently, they are assigned almost exclusively to the Noble and Licensed Quarters.

Acceptance into the Samurai Squad is as much a matter of political influence and judicious application of hand gifts (G1) as it is a question of ability. Members of the Samurai Squad are generally regarded as having a better job (patrolling the more luxurious areas of town) but also a more dangerous one (since they're expected to be the first on the scene to fight rowdy samurai). The Samurai Squad is full of bushi whose first loyalty is to Jocho and Hyobu, even to the exclusion of Imperial authority. When someone angers Hyobu or Jocho, and an example is to be

made, it's the Samurai Squad who do the work. There are between seventy and eighty men on this squad.

Twenty five officers (known as "*koshiki*") are in charge of organizing, training and disciplining the Thunder Guard. There is usually an officer on duty at a central location in each Quarter, and another at the Gate of Condescension.

THE NOBLES

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: This is the most complicated level of politics, since it not only penetrates many other levels of the city, it extends beyond the city boundaries. I can only offer guidelines; the shifting currents of favor and insult can change these at any moment.

Generally, the Scorpion are the dominant clan, and the Shosuro the dominant family. There are rumors that the Scorpions are heavily involved in the illegal trade of opium, and that there is some friction about the equitable distribution of the profits from distributing the drug.

Their legitimate enterprises are also impressive. No one has challenged Shosuro Hyobu (P1, G9) as the city's preeminent merchant patron, but Bayushi Korechika (P5) has amassed a great deal of merchant influence in a short period of time. There may be trouble between the two houses on that account – if not now, soon. The Scorpion do, however, present a united front against challenges from other clans – particularly the Unicorn clan.

The Unicorns have a substantial presence in Ryoko Owari, as it is an important trade hub between their own domain and the lands of the Scorpion and Crab clans. It is also the primary juncture for Unicorn trade with the Mantis clan and any overseas markets.

The formal leader of the Unicorn clan in Ryoko Owari is Shinjo Yoshifusa (P11), but for many years the real leader has been Ide Baranato (P14), who has relocated many members of his family to the city. He has made some gestures of friendship towards the Scorpion clan, but tensions remain, inflamed by trade frictions and accusations that tariffs are unfairly levied against Unicorn caravans.

The other clans have limited influence in Ryoko Owari, but can often gain temporary advantage by acting as "tie breakers" between the Scorpion and Unicorn. They claim impartiality, and back up their claim by shifting alliances frequently on different issues – everything from trade regulation to the fashion of garments – but it is more fair to say that they are less impartial than self-interested.

"MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER": Nineteenth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Twenty-Fourth Day, Month of the Rooster

There is a great stir throughout the city today; Ide Baranato and Shosuro Hyobu have announced a union of their families! Michisuna (P22) told me all about it – he was very excited, his face was flushed with pleasure and he was hard put to avoid grinning like a fool.

G11

He explained to me that there has been bad feeling between the Shosuros and the Ides for a long time – the Ides felt that the Scorpions did not accept them, while the Shosuros regarded the Unicorns as pushy outsiders. This marriage will put all that to the lie; no one would give her beloved daughter to a “foreigner.”

Michisuna even mentioned that he might want me to write words for a song to commemorate the occasion. I told him I would be most honored. I meant what I said – I hope he wasn’t just being polite.

Everyone is so happy; it’s like a second spring over the whole city. Michisuna has invited me to accompany him this evening to celebrate.

(later)

The evening was delightful! Michisuna and I sailed out to Teardrop Island on a small, elegant skiff. There I met the bride-to-be – Hyobu’s daughter Kimi (P3), a woman of great loveliness and grace. She was very quiet and demure when I congratulated her on her match – I hope I didn’t inadvertently give offense.

The intended groom, Michikane (P15) was a contrast to his bride, being jolly and somewhat brash. By the time we joined his party, he was already blushing – with drink or emotion, I could not say. One thing he had in common with Kimi was the blessing of Benten – they will surely have beautiful children.

This was the first time I went to Teardrop Island, and I was afraid at first, but all my apprehensions were silly and groundless. The Licensed Quarter is not the seedy, furtive place I had been told of – it was beautiful, glamorous, joyful. If such happiness is dishonorable, then what is the point of life?

“MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER”: Twentieth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Eleventh Day, Month of the Snake

Today when I was walking with Jocho (P2) I saw Otaku Genshi glaring at him when she didn’t think we could see, and then she spat on the ground towards his back! I know she is sad about her cousin – we all are – but this was the first time I realized the political repercussions of Michikane’s (P15) death.

I looked back in my book to when the union was announced – it seems like decades ago; I was a child at heart, instead of an old woman... but even I could grasp the politics. Michikane’s death has shamed his

family, proving them to be crude and honorless rubes as the Scorpion suspected.

If that day was a second spring, this is a second winter.

“MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER”: Twentieth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, First Day, Month of the Sheep

A marriage has been announced between Ide Asamitsu (P16) and Shosuro Kimi! Now I really have seen everything.

I wonder how Asamitsu feels about stepping into the shoes of his dead brother. Too, what is Kimi feeling about this sudden change of suitors? When I saw them, both looked stunned and confused.

Everybody’s getting married or falling in love, but no one is doing both. Well, at least their parents will be happy. That’s what really matters, right?

THE FIREMEN/KAJININ

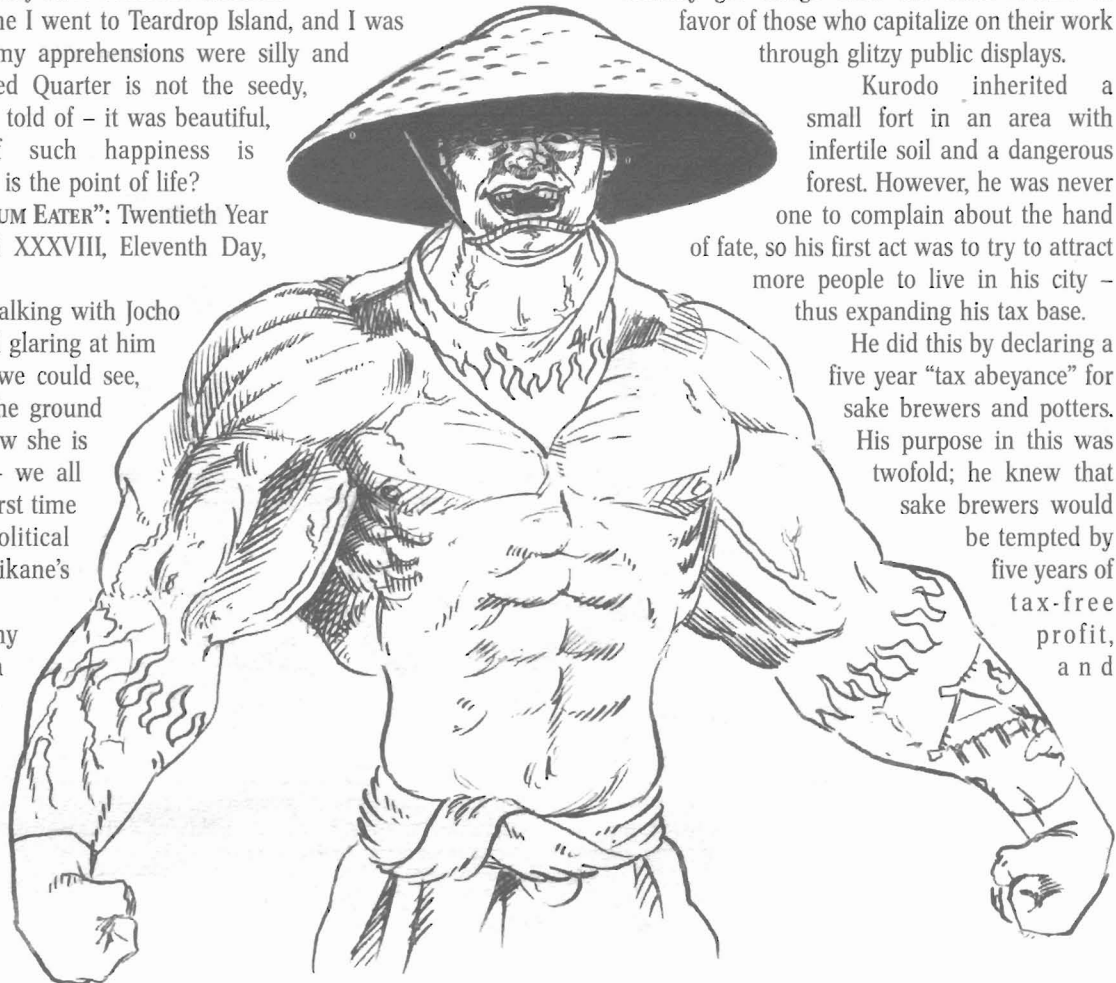
MOROSUKE’S HISTORY: The prosperity of Ryoko Owari during the reign of its ninth governor, Shosuro Kinsue, is directly due to the ground-breaking policies of Shosuro Kurodo, the sixth governor. Sadly, it seems to be the way of the world that those subtle and far-seeing individuals who actually get things done are often looked in favor of those who capitalize on their work through glitzy public displays.

Kurodo inherited a small fort in an area with infertile soil and a dangerous forest. However, he was never one to complain about the hand of fate, so his first act was to try to attract more people to live in his city – thus expanding his tax base.

He did this by declaring a five year “tax abeyance” for sake brewers and potters.

His purpose in this was twofold; he knew that sake brewers would be tempted by five years of tax-free profit, and

G12



that once they were established they would stay. He knew that the presence of cheap sake would attract foresters and merchants, especially since the main timber felling city (Forest Shadow City) was on the other side of the country. He encouraged potters in hopes of making his city known for an artistic community as well – and also because he hoped that brickmakers would come along and make construction cheaper.

In order to pay for this tax abeyance, Kurodo had to take some risks and cut down on some services. One service he eliminated was a city-wide fire department. The citizens grumbled, but cheap sake and prosperity were palliatives for their unhappiness. Eventually, neighborhood fire-fighting groups were formed, and at least one of them (the Temple Road Firemen) have been active since the reign of Kurodo.

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: At some point in the history of Ryoko Owari, the Governor stopped paying for firefighters. The neighborhoods of the city responded by hiring or forming their own groups to put out fires. (Given the prevalence of wooden buildings, fire is a major threat to social order.)

These groups of firemen (or "*kajinin*") have become more than simple blaze-fighters, however. In some cases, the *kajinin* have become casual police forces, enforcing their own (largely unwritten) neighborhood laws. In some cases this is a boon, when it prevents minor problems from being troubling the Thunder Guard or Emerald Magistrate. In other areas, it is very difficult to

tell the difference between these "neighborhood watches" and a criminal syndicate.

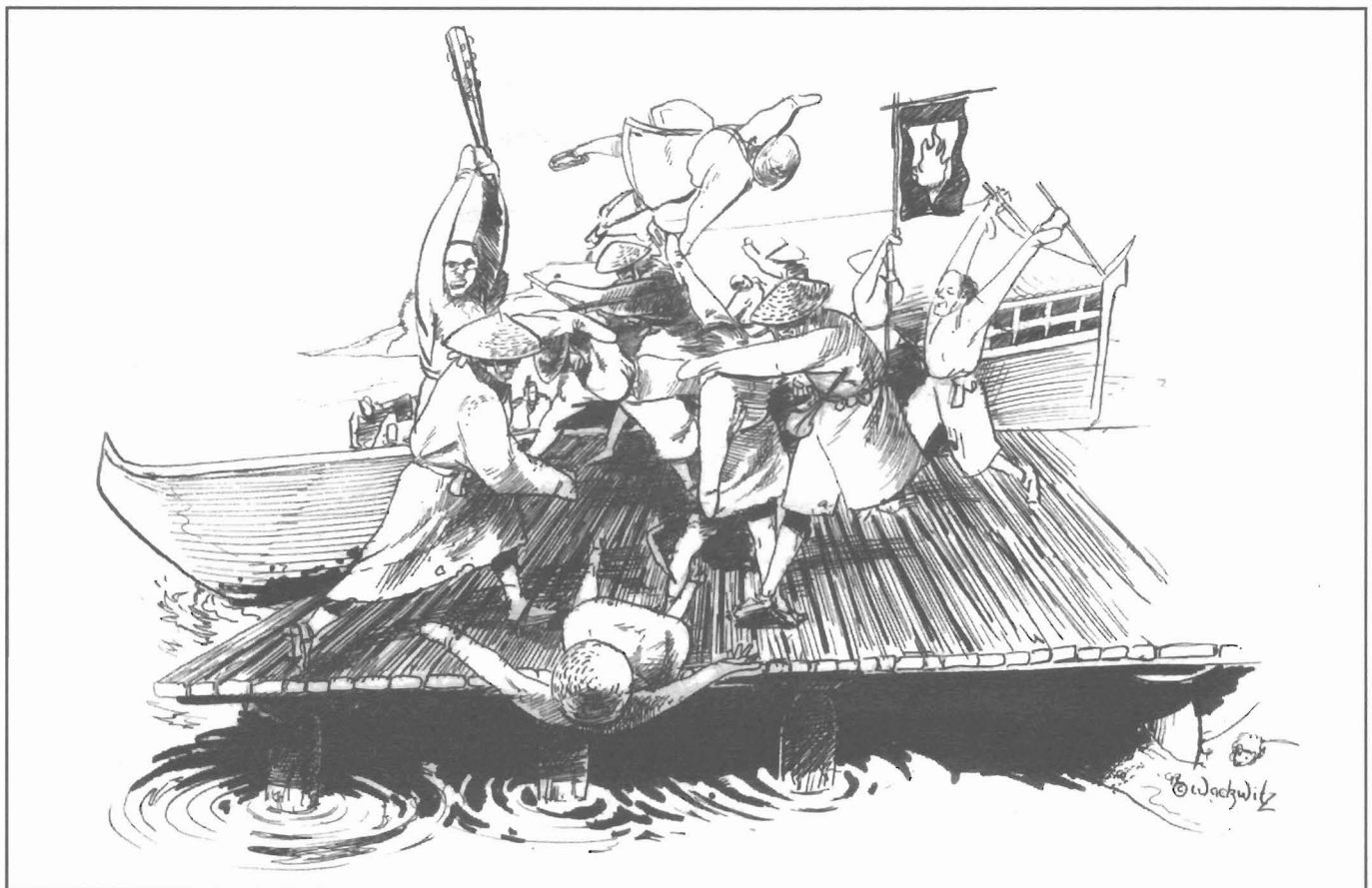
Currently, each official fire fighting organization receives a sum of money from Shosuro Hyobu for their services. They are loyal to her in return for this money (which in some cases is little more than a bribe paid in return for peace and quiet), and also out of fear of the Thunder Guard.

Fire fighting in Ryoko Owari is handled as follows;

The Noble Quarter is protected by the Thunder Guard, who maintain a central reservoir for this purpose.

The southernmost part of the Merchant Quarter is protected by the Little Gate Firemen. The central stretch is patrolled by the Firemen of Daikoku's Garden, while the northern third is protected by the Strong Arm Firemen. The Little Gate Firemen are generally an honorable group, who will generally turn any captured "undesirables" over to the Thunder Guard. The other two organizations are a bit more informal – more likely to administer mob justice to any perceived threats. The Strong Arm and Daikoku's Garden gangs are also particularly prone to ask for hand gifts (G1), and the Strong Arm may have crossed the line into actual extortion on some occasions.

The Temple Quarter is protected by the Temple Road Firemen in the north, and by the monks of Daikoku to the south. The monks have never been accused of extortion or shady dealings. As for the Temple Road Firemen, they are not completely above



reproach, but they are generally very religious – in some cases, they've been known to ask for prayers as hand gifts! It should be noted that the Temple Road Firemen are reputed to have brutally murdered two individuals suspected of burgling a temple – but there is no evidence to support this, and it may well be a rumor they started to prevent future burglaries.

The Licensed Quarter has a unique system of professional fire fighters who have no other job, and from whom no other activity is tolerated. While the firemen in other areas are regarded as authority figures, and exert power over the merchants and businesses they protect, in the Floating World, the tea rooms and geisha houses make it clear that the firemen are their employees and are expected to behave as such. Thus, Teardrop Island has excellent fire protection, and relies on the Thunder Guard for law enforcement.

The Leatherworker Quarter is protected by a large and informal organization that seems to have few leaders or permanent members, but many volunteer and part time members. There are no complaints of abuse from them.

As you might expect, the Fisherman Quarter has the roughest, most numerous and most suspicious *kajinin*. These two groups are the Moment's Edge Firemen and the Fire Eaters. The Moment's Edge Firemen run the area from the northeast border of the city down to a line defined by the third pier. The Fire Eaters' domain is south of the third pier down to the Wretched Gate (L27) and the Bridge of Drunken Lovers (L16). Both gangs, while superficially respectful of authority (and genuinely respectful of military power) are violent and corrupt. During my tenure, both were proved to be associated with prostitution, the sale of opium (both in edible and smokable form), smuggling, extortion and the unlicensed sale of alcohol.

In her wisdom, Shosuro Hyobu (G9, P1) ignored my request that their official charter be revoked. Her rationale was that they might well be replaced by a gang or gangs equally ruthless or more so, and that such an upheaval in the criminal underworld would cause far more injury than it would heal.

In my experience with the tougher gangs, they will respect the office of the magistrate – to the extent that they feel a genuine threat. Many of the gangs are complicit with corrupt Thunder Guards, and believe that their destruction is either beyond the power of an Emerald Magistrate, or is simply too much trouble to bother with. If you would have their cooperation, you must have their personal respect.

This is a fine line to walk. I had not been in the city long before I killed an insolent member of the Fire Eaters. After that, I was treated with sullen respect, but they were still tight-mouthed when I made inquiries. Having killed one, I was perceived as an enemy.

Killing a Fire Eater earned me temporary appreciation from the Moment's Edge Firemen, but when they learned that I was honorable and did not intend to play favorites with my enforcement of the law, they too perceived me as an enemy.

Acting on the advice of a former ally, when the Strong Arm firemen tried my patience, I used jiu-jitsu techniques upon the offender. While this was riskier than using a the sword, it also impressed them that I could fight them on their own terms and win. (Be warned; you must win, and they will use unfair tricks when fighting a samurai.) After that I did not have their love, but I had their respect without fear or hatred.

THE LEATHERWORKERS

MOROSUKE'S HISTORY: Perhaps the most radical and important of Kurodo's schemes to build up his city was his treatment of the local *eta*.

G13

There are two stories about where Kurodo had his great idea. One legend claims that it came to him at the Temple of Daikoku (L12). A more humble story is that Kurodo had his great idea after he capsized a small pleasure boat. At that time, the River of Gold was used as the city's primary sewer, and could more accurately be described as the River of Dung.

Emerging besmirched, the Governor saw a pair of *eta* industriously gathering excrement from the river. When he asked them what they were doing, they respectfully told him that they were gathering night soil to make their garden more fertile.

At that moment, the Governor realized that the city's ever-growing supply of dung did not have to be the public nuisance and hazard he thought. Instead, it could be used to repair the sadly infertile soil surrounding the city.

Within a week, he had drafted the following laws;

- 1) Dumping excrement into the river, or into any local waterway, was forbidden.
- 2) Money collected by *eta* for removing dung from the city limits would never be taxed unless the *eta* charged more than a certain sum per day for removal.
- 3) For the next five years, no taxes would be levied on *eta* for the sale of dung to farmers outside the city limits, unless the *eta* charged more than a certain sum per pound.

These laws had a number of effects.

- The *eta* were delighted and quickly capitalized on a situation where they could get paid to collect something, get paid to deliver it, and pay no taxes on either transaction.
- The farmers were pleased to get a steady source of quality fertilizer. The tax laws were structured to keep prices low.
- The citizens along the river were happy to think their neighborhoods would now become less fragrant.

Initially the citizens were upset that they now had to pay for the collection of their own bowel movements, as well as pay for their own protection from fires (G12). However, the rates charged by the *eta* for their services were again kept reasonable by the tax structure, and soon the city was noticeably cleaner.

The harvest that year was substantially improved, which meant lower prices for food for everyone in the city (as well as lower rice prices for the sake brewers). In time, the farming

community around Ryoko Owari grew and became more prosperous than anyone could have expected.

A further effect, however, was somewhat unanticipated. The *eta* of Ryoko Owari quickly became the wealthiest of their class in Rokugan. This advantageous situation attracted *eta* from other areas, until the *eta* quarter of Ryoko Owari was also the largest of its type in the country.

This was an uncomfortable situation for the nobles and *heimin* of the city, who didn't care to have so many "undesirables" (no matter how useful) around them. Early in his reign, the twelfth Governor (Shosuro Atsusuke) thought he had an elegant solution; he simply started taxing the collection of dung at a heavy rate, hoping to make Ryoko Owari less attractive to the *eta*.

The *eta* complained to the extent that their natural timidity allowed, as did the farmers (who had to pay increased prices to cover the collection taxes), but rather than back down, Atsusuke doubled the taxes – and send troops into the *eta* area with orders to show them who was boss.

Before one judges Atsusuke harshly, one should remember that he was a new Governor, inexperienced, and that furthermore there was a new Emperor (Hantei the Seventeenth) planning a visit to the city. Atsusuke doubtless wanted to make a good impression early on. Sadly, he failed.

The result of his taxation and military assault has been termed "The Garbage Rebellion". The sixth governor had promised that dung collection would never be taxed, and the *eta* had built not only a business, but a community around that oath. When Atsusuke broke the promise, they were devastated – and retaliated the only way they could.

They stopped collecting refuse.

The farmers were outraged. The people of the city were enraged. Atsusuke was furious and ordered another punitive raid on the *eta* settlement.

The *eta* response was to leave a crudely written sign on the Dragon Bridge. It said "Dead *eta* cannot clean your city."

This was during the height of summer, and the emperor was due to arrive soon. Atsusuke considered rescinding the law against river dumping, until he learned the emperor was coming by barge. Food prices rose, driving up the prices of everything else in the city – a city that was already angry, and increasingly smelly.

The Governor offered a reward to any *eta* who would turn in the leaders of the rebellion. No ever claimed it, though some historians believe that a few *eta* tried. Next he tried to hire non-*eta* stinkers (G1) with public funds – but in this, too, he failed. Few *heimin* were willing to do the work, and no *eta* was going to risk the wrath of his fellows by applying for the job.

Atsusuke was increasingly desperate for a solution, and was increasingly told by all his advisors that there was a solution – let the *eta* do the job without taxation.

The official history says that Governor Atsusuke apprehended the five leaders of the "eta rebellion" and executed them, after which he rewarded the other *eta* for their loyalty by reinstating

their tax-exempt status. The truth is a bit less simple. It's true that five *eta* were executed, but in all likelihood they were, in fact, *eta* who had tried to betray the leaders of the rebellion – imprisoned by their fellows until, conveniently, the Governor needed to kill some *eta* in order to save face.

Furthermore, it is my belief that Atsusuke made more concessions to the *eta* than a simple return to their previous state. For one thing, ever since that time, they have collectively been called "Leatherworkers" in all official laws and documents. Furthermore, no additional attempts have been made to remove them from Ryoko Owari, though they do have their settlement outside the official city walls.

It is my considered opinion that the Leatherworkers are here to stay. After all, this has been called "The City that Dung Built".

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: The *eta* of Ryoko Owari, the so-called "Leatherworkers", really do not deserve consideration in this political overview, but I include them because they are plentiful and can (if provoked) have an influence on social order.

The Leatherworkers tend to keep to themselves. They collect the trash of the city in return for a nominal fee, and sell what they scavenge to area farmers. Their residence is outside the city walls and is therefore of little concern of the Thunder Guard (who have jurisdiction there, but rarely choose to exercise it) nor of any concern of the Emerald Magistrate.

A Word on the Opium Situation

"MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER": Twentieth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Tenth Day, Month of the Horse

G14

I am never as pure as when opium rapes me
Never as alive as when it is killing me
Never as full as when it is emptying me
Never as rich as when it steals from me
It is the only cure for this illness called life.

I still can't believe Michikane (P15) is dead. Just thinking about it robs me of my will; nothing seems worth doing. All the servants, merchants and beggars go on with their labors, just as they did when he was alive, when to me it's as if the whole world was transformed in an instant.

The only thing that gives me even a moment's relief is the pipe, but even that is losing its power to console me. They warned me that this would happen, but expectation and preparedness are no comfort; rather the contrary. I feel like I'm on a long road off the edge of a precipice, but I cannot change course or even stop to rest.

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: Opium was introduced to Rokugan by the Unicorn clan upon their return from the Burning Lands. Initially it was used for medicinal purposes such as relieving pain and

suppressing severe coughs. It did not take long for its purpose to change.

The smokable form of opium ("dragon's breath"), and the refined form suspended in alcohol ("liquid void") were quickly adapted for recreational use by the debased, weak and dishonorable. Consequently, they were outlawed, but the use of dragon's breath is prevalent throughout society, while liquid void is becoming more common – especially in Ryoko Owari.

The medicinal usefulness of opium makes enforcement of anti-abuse laws problematical; it is legal to grow, store and transport unprocessed opium in small quantities. Since the substance is not illegal (at least, not until it is turned into an abusable form), it is necessary to either catch the user in the act, or obtain a confession of deliberate abuse.

Enough opium poppies are grown around Ryoko Owari in one year to supply Rokugan's legitimate opium needs for a decade; but year after year the harvests are sold and more is demanded.

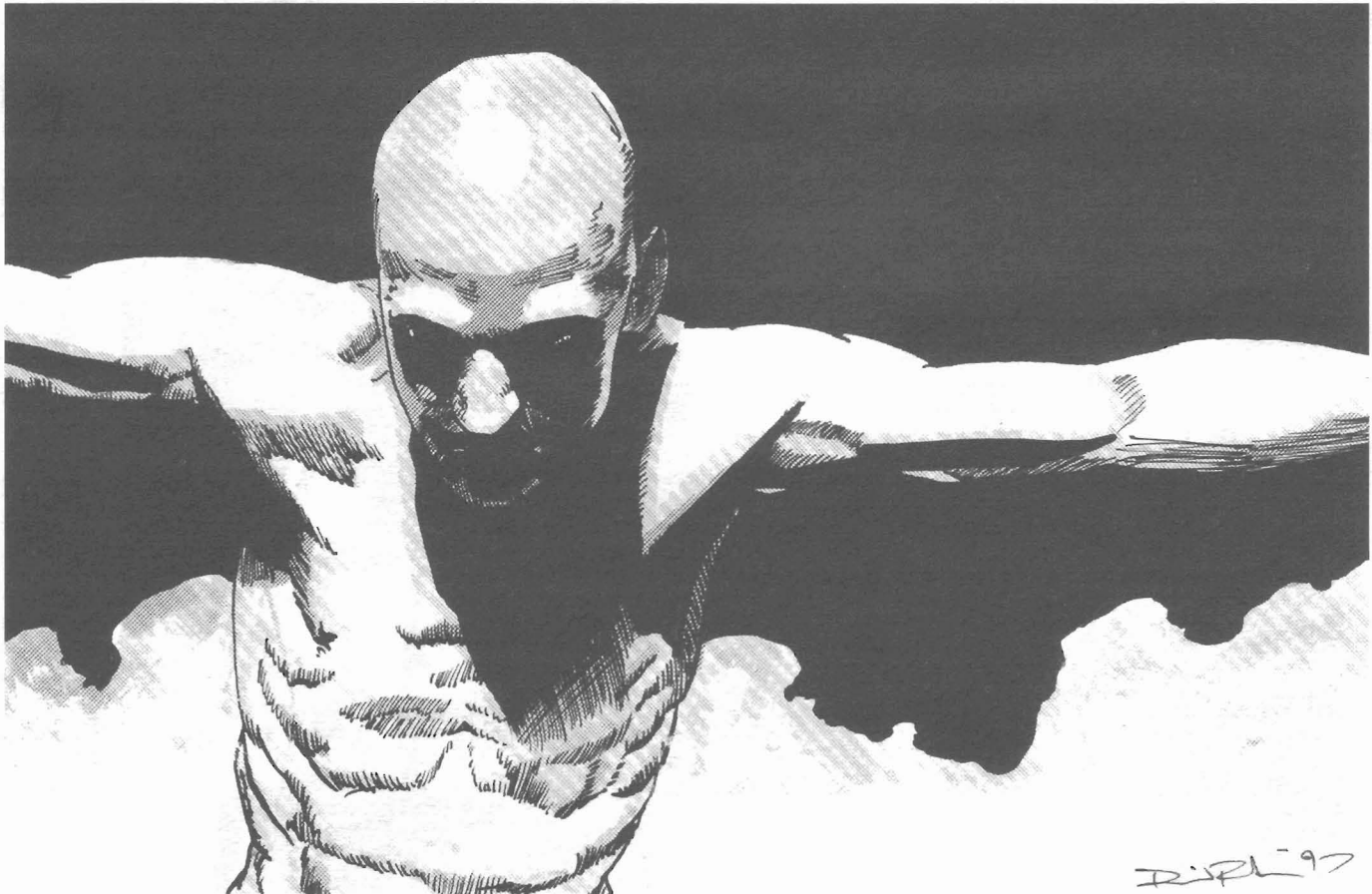
It is my belief that Ryoko Owari is the primary hub for the growth, processing and distribution of opium in Rokugan. I have been maddeningly unable to effectively halt or slow the growth of this industry, let alone reduce it, because it is protected on all

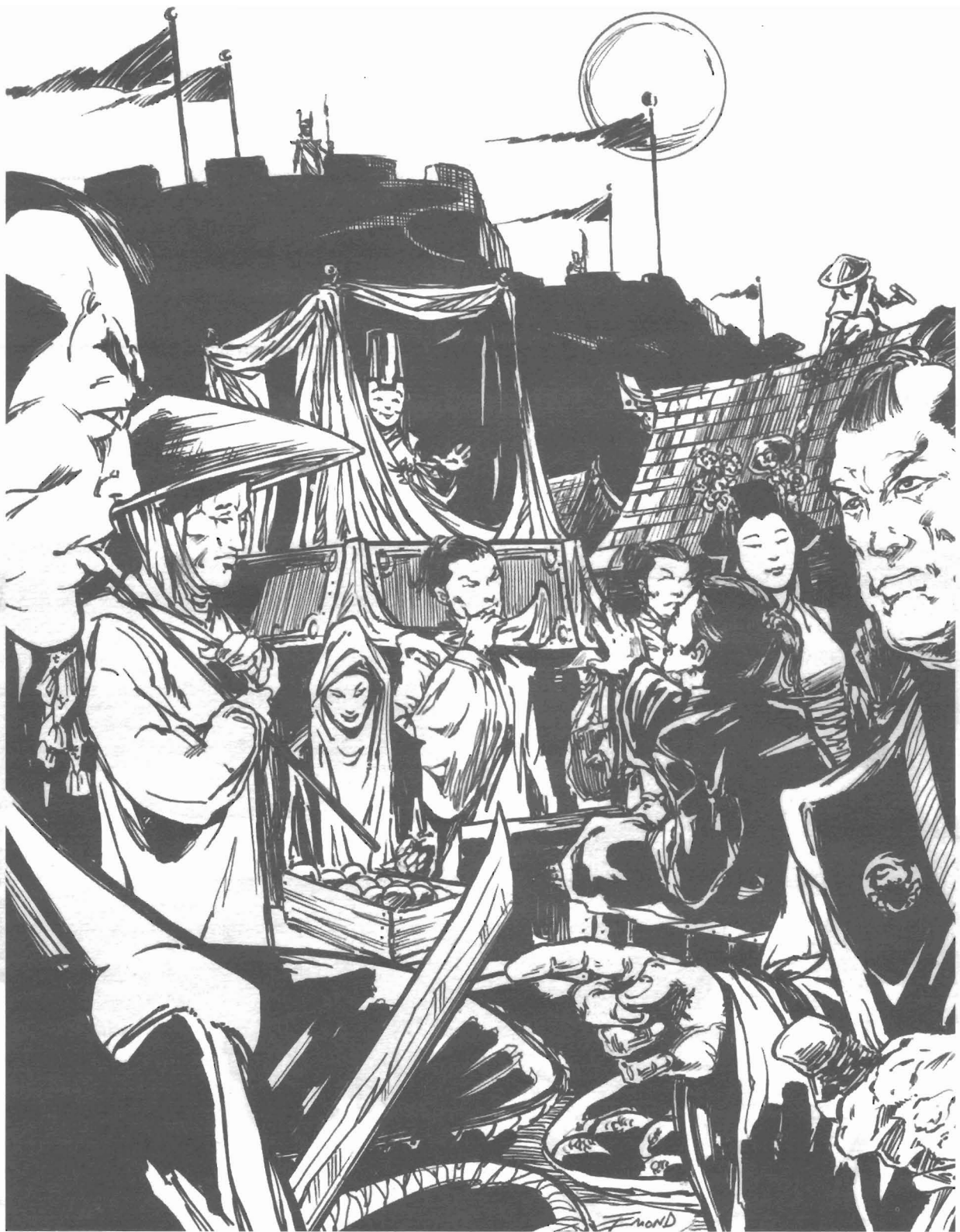
sides by all factions. The bickering noble families of Ryoko Owari all agree that the opium trade is necessary. The Governor supports it. The Thunder Guard ignores it. The farmers grow it, the *eta* fertilize it, the merchants move it and everyone smokes it.

The Emerald Champion who appointed me has, in recent years, increased the tax burden on Ryoko Owari as a punitive measure to deter the opium trade. I believe it has had the opposite effect; since opium is the one commodity in the city that is largely untaxed, it has become the foundation of a second, illegal economy.

Those who would defend the drug argue that it is harmless; that it isn't fatal, it doesn't encourage barbarity (like sake), it gives only pleasure and takes nothing away. "Opium addicts don't brawl, don't rape, don't rob," they said. "They only wish to lie back, harm no one, and hear the dragons sing. What is the harm?"

To this, I reply that the harm is to the honor of the individuals, and by extension to the honor of the country. Opium may not kill the body, but it kills the soul, leaving empty abominations where once there were men.







Section Two

The City



MOROSUKE'S HISTORY: Ryoko Owari was founded by Shosuro Kaneie during the reign of Hantei the Ninth. At that time the boundaries between the Crab and Scorpion lands were very different, and a fort was needed to protect the Shosuro logging interests in the Hidden Forest.

It is said that Kaneie had an unusual degree of friendship with the Emerald Champion of that time; certainly the Champion extended several extremely (some might say "suspiciously") generous gestures towards this budding city, including protection by Imperial forces stationed at the Plains of Thunder.

The settlement around the fort prospered when a truce was (temporarily) struck between the Scorpion and Crab clans. This was due in no small part to an eagerness by the Crab to put more effort into building ships. Not only had that year seen a naval increase by the Phoenix clan (who were at that time somewhat more militant than today), but there were also disturbing reports of aquatic monsters attacking the coast.

Naturally the Crab clan had their own sources of wood, but their demand exceeded local supply. The settlement around Kaneie's fort was well positioned to fell trees and ship them downstream, and certain tax incentives from the Emerald Champion made it economically feasible to do so. (There are stories that the Scorpion sold the Crab inferior timber, causing delays in shipbuilding and eventually stalling out the Crab's plans of conquering the Phoenix coast. However, no evidence exists to support this allegation – and a Crab who loses will say anything.)

A small town had soon developed by the bay to the north of the fort. Kaneie named the town "Journey's End" in hopes of attracting settlers – an act which arguably succeeded, though personally I give much of the credit to the aggressive and radical policies of the sixth Governor (G12, G13).

The City Wall

L1

MOROSUKE'S HISTORY: Very little remains of the original walls of Ryoko Owari, which were quarried from local limestone and gave us the name "City of Green Walls" – a name which is now rarely used. The weakness of the walls was demonstrated during a siege by the Lion clan during the reign of Hantei the Twentieth. At that time, the lands now reclaimed by the Unicorn were being fought over by the Lion, Scorpion and Crab clans, with the Lions having the upper hand. They assaulted Ryoko Owari and easily breached the weak limestone walls. However, they held the city for only a week before attacks on more vital holdings forced them to recall their forces. Before they left, however, they wrought great destruction on the city. The only part of the old wall they left unharmed was those sections supporting the Dragon's Gate, because the Lion general declared that it would be a crime against souls to destroy something of such beauty.

When the walls were rebuilt, the Scorpion Clan brought in granite from the Spine of the World Mountains, and those walls have never fallen.

KOMACHI'S TRAVEL GUIDE: The walls of Ryoko Owari are eight feet thick and fifteen feet high, made of the finest black granite quarried in Rokugan. Builders call this granite (from the Spine of the World Mountains) "starry" granite because it has flecks of crystal in it that catch the light, making twinkling stars in the black stone.

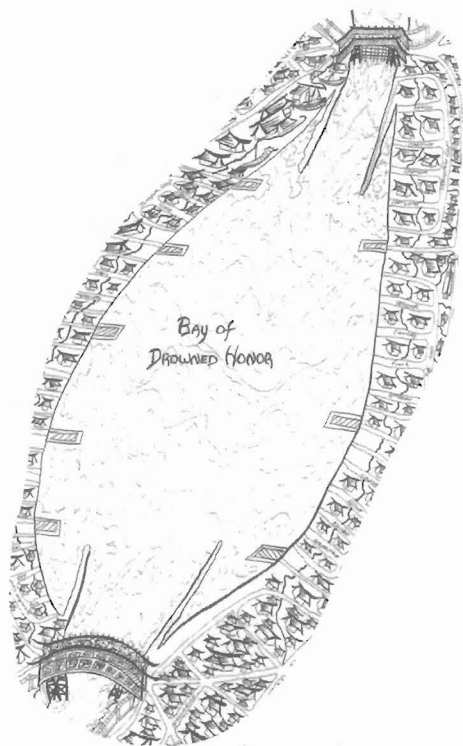
The walls around the Noble Quarter are even higher (twenty feet) and ten feet thick!

The Bay of Drowned Honor

L2

KOMACHI'S TRAVEL GUIDE: The story of the Bay of Drowned Honor is a noble and tragic one, dating back to the reign of the third Governor. Two nobles of the Scorpion Clan had quarreled, and the matter could only be resolved with blood. They resolved to meet at the Moment's Edge Bridge at dusk, for a duel to the death.

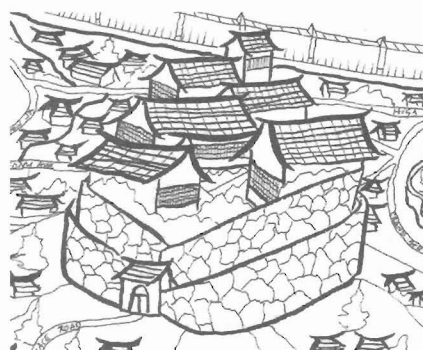
That day, a great storm rolled in off the Plains of Thunder, but the two samurai were undeterred. Even though everyone urged them to postpone their duel, both insisted that their honor would not wait.



They stood at the center of the bridge and prepared to draw, when there was a crack of thunder and a great wave swept one of the samurai over the edge of the bridge. The second immediately dove in after him. Their bodies were found the next day, clinging tight to one another. To this day, no one knows if they died fighting each other in the water, or swimming together to land and finish their duel.

The Noble Quarter

KOMACHI'S TRAVEL GUIDE: The Noble Quarter of Ryoko Owari is a poem in stone. Its beauty has many levels; in addition to the surface loveliness, which can be seen by any passing merchant or mendicant, the Noble Quarter also serves as a metaphor for the relationship between its dwellers and the rest of the city. Just as the children of the Kami are closer to heaven, so is the Noble Quarter, raised up on Noble Hill. Just as there are important barriers to keep the social ranks pure, so is there a thick and beautiful wall around the Noble Quarter. As the nobles look after the *heimin*, as a parent looks after a child, so does the Noble Quarter watch over Ryoko Owari.



THE SHOSURO PALACE

KOMACHI'S TRAVEL GUIDE: The top of the Shosuro Governor's Palace is the highest spot in Ryoko Owari. (However, the Palace is not the tallest building; that honor belongs to the Temple of Daikoku, built on the plains below Noble Hill.) Built out of Hidden Forest cedar, fronted with local limestone, and supported by bricks from local clay, the palace was built completely from materials sold in Ryoko Owari.

MOROSUKE'S HISTORY: The first Governor's Residence was occupied by Hida Atsushige when the Crab clan took the city (G4). Upon his departure, he burned it to the ground in what his contemporaries call a "sullen rage" but which I personally would characterize as a "fit of pique".

The second Residence was always described with the careful terms that only truly ugly structures merit. This is not surprising; after Sanekata returned, he had little money for a magnificent residence, and consequently built a modest structure of wood and brick. Later (and more prosperous) Governors were reluctant to raze a house built by such a notable man, so they attempted to redeem the structure by adding on to it. Sadly, their additions only had the effect of making the central house look shabby by comparison. It was only with the invasion of the Lions that the eyesore could reasonably be destroyed.

There are rumors that the second Palace was destroyed by returning Scorpion troops, not departing Lion ones, so that the Governor could build a "fitting" home. I find this story implausible; maybe during a good year a convenient fire might occur, but not during wartime.

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: It takes twelve minutes to ride from the Palace to the Civil Hall, and nine minutes to the Magistrate's Residence.

THE IDE RESIDENCE

KOMACHI'S TRAVEL GUIDE: The Ide residence is an exotic fixture in Ryoko Owari, being designed in foreign style. It consists of a round central building with a dome on top, flanked by long outbuildings on the right and left sides. The family dwells in the round central building, while the left

L3

L4

wing is a large family temple and the right wing is an extensive set of stables.



SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: The Ide Residence is sixteen minutes from the Civil Hall and five minutes from the Magistrate's Residence.

THE SCORPION GARDEN

KOMACHI'S TRAVEL GUIDE: This lovely garden was constructed by the twelfth Governor of Ryoko Owari, a man named Shosuro Atsusuke, to commemorate an imperial visit. It is the largest garden in the city, and is unparalleled in the region for the artistry of its construction. Since the return of our Unicorn neighbors, part of the garden has been set aside to display exotic blossoms and foreign animals.

L5

The garden was built to front the bath house of the Noble Quarter. Built of highly polished green limestone, the bath house is one of the oldest buildings in Ryoko Owari, dating to the reign of the second Governor.



Visitors are often startled by a unique custom of this bath house. In honor of the Scorpion tradition of mask wearing, everyone wears a gauze veil while in the bath house. Some visitors find it disconcerting to cover their features while bathing, but it is a venerable custom, the thin gauze does not interfere with cleanliness, and many natives feel most "naked" when their faces are exposed.

MOROSUKE'S HISTORY: There's a story that the wife of the second Governor was a great beauty, but that when he found her in the arms of a lover he killed the man and cut off her nose to

ruin her beauty. While she looked normal with her clan mask on, she could never appear unclothed again without hearing horrified gasps. Her friends were sad that she could no longer join them at the baths, but she was too ashamed of her deformity. Therefore, they started the mask practice so that she could join them.

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: The Scorpion Garden can be reached from the Magistrate's Residence in ten minutes, and in a like amount from the Civil Hall.

THE MAGISTRATE RESIDENCE

KOMACHI'S TRAVEL GUIDE: This stout yet graceful residence serves as the home for the local Emerald Magistrate. The view from the front is imposing and stern, but it masks an interior garden reserved for the Magistrate and his guests. The business rooms are understandably plain and functional, but the lesser and greater interiors are said to be extremely comfortable and charming.

L6



SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: You should find the Magistrate Residence to be adequate to your needs, at the very least. It is a large home – opulent, by my standards, though other clans may have a different opinion. The Palace can be reached in nine minutes. The Civil Hall can be reached in eleven minutes. The Gate of Condescension can be reached in thirteen minutes, the Pious Gate in fourteen minutes, and the Dragon's Gate in eleven minutes.

THE CIVIL HALL

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: This is the seat of civil government. There are three courtrooms – one grand courtroom and two lesser ones. You will share use of these with the Governor's magistrates (P10), but there should be few causes for disagreement. I personally claimed the third and smallest courtroom for my use, and this was agreeable to all parties.

L7



This building also houses the prison, which seems to be stout and well guarded; there is also an interrogation hall on the premises. I am assured that its facilities are more than adequate.

The Gate of Condescension is only a minute away, while riding to the Pious Gate takes ten minutes' time. The Civil Hall is eleven minutes from the Magistrate's Residence.

THE PIOUS GATE

KOMACHI'S TRAVEL GUIDE: The gate between the Noble Quarter and the Temple Quarter is a wide and handsome one. Reaching across the top is the lucky boat of the Seven Fortunes, all carved from the local green limestone. The doors, gifts of the Crane clan on the city's 500th anniversary, are brass fronted. The sides facing the Temple Quarter each contain eight panels depicting events from the lives of Hantei Jimmu Tenu and the Seven Kami. The sides facing the Noble Quarter also have eight panels, each depicting events from the lives of Shinsei and the Seven Thunders. The depiction of seven Thunders, Fortunes and Kami is one reason this is sometimes called the Sevenfold Gate.

L8



SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: From the Pious Gate, it is ten minutes to the Civil Hall, thirteen minutes to the Magistrate's Residence, ten minutes to the Temple of Daikoku, four minutes to the Temple of Amaterasu, twelve minutes to the Gate of Condescension, and five minutes to the Gate of Oni's Teeth.

THE GATE OF CONDESCENSION

KOMACHI'S TRAVEL GUIDE: This rather simple and unadorned gate is the narrowest of the gates into the Noble Quarter, since there is little need for traffic between the Noble and Merchant Quarter. Its stout oak doors open to a steep cobblestone road.

L9



SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: The Gate of Condescension is often one of the most congested areas in Ryoko Owari, especially during the afternoon and early evening. A crowded day can add up to five minutes to any travel through the city, even if you're shouting and waving a drawn sword.

It is five minutes (usually) between the Gate of Condescension and the Little Gate, and only a minute further to the Bridge of Drunken Lovers. It is ten minutes to the southwest pier. It takes 12 minutes to reach the Pious Gate, a minute or less to reach the Civil Hall, and thirteen minutes to reach the Magistrate's Residence.

MOROSUKE'S HISTORY: Although such a recent event is not necessarily "history", a crime so heinous was committed at this spot that I feel certain it will become part of Ryoko Owari's history in years to come. It was at the Gate of Condescension, six years ago in the Month of the Dog, in the seventh year of the reign of Hantei XXXIV, Bayushi Genshi was murdered.

No one seems willing to speculate about what she was doing at such a late hour – I suspect returning from the Licensed Quarter. In any event, there was no sign of a struggle – even her facial expression, it is said, was strangely tranquil. She was found lying on her back, arms at her sides, sword sheathed. Her only injury was a gruesome excavation of her lower body; she had been meticulously opened between her lower ribs and her hips, and (it was said) certain organs spirited away. Shugenja found a strange and diabolical stain of dark magic on the area, but were unable to discern who had done the deed. Her brother and her father both have sworn vengeance, and several magistrates have been removed for incompetence – but her death remains unsolved.

THE DRAGON'S GATE

KOMACHI'S TRAVEL GUIDE: This magnificent structure was built by the architect Kenchikuka (L11, L16) during the reign of Hantei the Fifteenth. The gates are made of stone, and each is carved with five twining dragons. There is a lever inside the tower which can easily be moved by a young child; when the lever is to the right, the doors can barely be opened by five strong men. When the lever is to the right, however, a hidden series of rollers shifts the balance of the doors – and they can be pushed open by a single person. No one is sure how Kenchikuka engineered this; the entire gate would have to be dismantled to examine the workings of the lever, and the

L10

architect only allowed the workmen to work on the mechanism for a single day each, so that no one saw all the parts. Shugenja have examined it and declare that it is not the work of awakened spirits; they've poured water into the workings and then interrogated the water spirits, but to little effect, since the interior is too dark to see the gears. It remains a mystery to this day.



The tower next to the gate is decorated with a dragon figure twining around it, and serves as the headquarters of the Thunder Guard (G10).

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: From the Dragon's Gate it is eleven minutes to the Residence, three minutes to the Civil Hall, four minutes to the Gate of Condescension and eleven minutes to the Pious Gate.

THE BRIDGE OF THE DRAGON

KOMACHI'S TRAVEL GUIDE: The view from the Bridge of the Dragon, between the pillars that support the roof, is one of the finest sights in Ryoko Owari. To the north, one can look out over the Bridge of Drunken Lovers (L16) and the Bay of Drowned Honor (L2). To the south, one can survey Teardrop Island. And of course, the bridge itself is worth viewing. Carved in the shape of a two headed dragon, it is hard to walk onto the bridge, through the dragon's mouth, without a shiver of fear.

MOROSUKE'S HISTORY: The Bridge of the Dragon was planned by the ninth Governor, who hoped it would encourage merchants to build on the west side of the river. At first this occurred, but the area soon became a den of the most depraved (and highly sought) vices. This pleasure section was destroyed during the Lion occupation, and the next Governor took advantage of the destruction to legislate many of those activities onto Teardrop Island, where they could be more readily isolated from the rest of society.

L11



Ironically, it was not merchants who settled in the ruins of the former Floating World; it was the *eta*. Although initially upset by their proximity to the Noble Quarter, it soon became apparent that there were certain advantages. Using the Dragon Bridge allowed the Leatherworkers to clean the Noble Quarter much more quickly. Few nobles wanted to go to the Leatherworker Quarter, so they used the bridge only for sightseeing, and the Leatherworkers soon became accustomed to waiting discreetly until the nobles had left before completing their journey across the bridge.

The bridge is closed to Leatherworkers during festivals, Cherry Blossom season, and Autumn Moon season, when the numbers of sight-seeing nobles are at their highest.

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: I am told that one can walk from the Dragon's Bridge to the Wretched Gate in thirty minutes, which would make it a ten minute ride.

The Temple Quarter

THE TEMPLE OF DAIKOKU

KOMACHI'S TRAVEL GUIDE: The tallest building in Ryoko Owari is also one of the most beautiful. Pilgrims from all over Rokugan come to the Temple of Daikoku to ask for a blessing from the Abbot (P37), or to pray to the Fortune of Wealth. Few merchants passing along the Mountain Goblin's Rest Road will miss the opportunity to visit the temple – if only to marvel at the strange antics of the monks, or stare at the statue in the courtyard. Twenty feet tall and made of pink granite carried all the way from the Dragon clan mountains, it is the largest statue of Daikoku in the world!

L12



MOROSUKE'S HISTORY: Shosuro Kurodo (G12, G13) is said to have had his idea for making Ryoko Owari a wealthy city after a conversation with a monk at the Temple of Daikoku.

The story is that Kurodo was praying for guidance. He prayed so hard that sweat poured from his forehead and trickled down his nose. He prayed like a man in torment, begging the Fortunes to show him how to make his city prosperous.

As he was praying, a monk entered the temple carrying a great sack, which he flung down on the floor with a loud crash. Kurodo's eyes twitched open, and he watched as the disheveled monk sat on the floor and mopped his brow.

"What are you doing?" demanded Kurodo. "Can't you see I'm trying to pray here?"

"Really? What for?" asked the monk.

"I want to know how to make my city prosper, but it's clear I'll never receive an answer with you distracting me."

At this, the monk burst into laughter.

"Truly you are a master of paradox," said the monk. "How can the answer you seek be a distraction from seeking the answer?"

"What nonsense are you talking?"

"The kind of nonsense that will save your city," the monk said.

"You can tell me?"

"No – but I can stop you from shutting your own mouth. Then you'll tell yourself."

Kurodo was only becoming more and more confused.

"All day, I have been carrying this burden," the monk said, gesturing at his sack. "It's heavy. It's bulky. It strains my muscles and pains my back. All day I have been praying to get rid of it, hoping to be free from this burden, wanting nothing more than to get it out of my sight. Do you know what it is, this burden I shun?"

Kurodo shook his head. The monk opened the sack, and coins spilled out – copper, silver, even gold.

"It is treasure," the monk said. "I wish to be rid of the very thing which others want. A wise man sees value where others see dross."

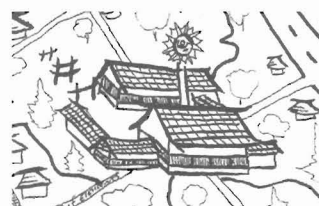
At that moment, Kurodo realized what he had to do.

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: From the Temple of Daikoku it is about five minutes to the Gate of Oni's Teeth, ten minutes to the Pious Gate, five minutes to the Temple of the Sun Goddess, and ten minutes to the Gate of Increasing Fortune.

TEMPLE OF THE SUN GODDESS

KOMACHI'S TRAVEL GUIDE: This graceful structure dates from the rule of the fifth Governor, and is notable for the white limestone used in its construction. It is said that when the first priestess of the temple came to Ryoko Owari, she went out into the wilderness and told her servants to dig under a certain hillside. There, they struck a vein of white limestone, which they used to construct the temple. They ran out of the rare white stone the day the temple was completed, and no more has been found in the area since that time.

L13



SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: The Temple of Daikoku is five minutes away, it's two minutes to the Gate of Oni's Teeth, and four minutes to the Pious Gate.

THE GATE OF ONI'S TEETH

KOMACHI'S TRAVEL GUIDE: The original gate here was torn down and enlarged as traffic in the area grew. The first gate was built by the Suna family (L2) but was replaced with a structure honoring the lovers Riko and Okami (G5, L16) after they freed the city from Oni no Hukuro, the dreadful Owl With Teeth. The demon was reported to be twenty feet tall, with the head and wings of an owl, and legs that were shaped like human arms. If you examine the teeth embedded in the road, you can see that they're as long as a shinbone – lending credence to the reports of Hukuro's great size.

L14



Oni no Hukuro flew from the great forest one day and began tormenting the people of Ryoko Owari – carrying off young maidens, dropping great stones upon the temples and terrifying the peasants in the fields. The magistrate could not stop it; the

priests could not stop it; the Thunder Guards (G10) could not stop it. Seeing this, Okami decided that he would be the one to kill the demon, and he set forth in his armor, getting great cheers from everyone in the city.

He rode out the Fisherman Gate and into the forest, and there he found the great Owl Demon sitting in a tree.

“Come down and fight!” Okami said. Now, the Owl Demon was afraid of Okami, because he knew Okami’s heart was pure. Therefore he decided to trick him.

“I accept your challenge,” the oni said, “And to show the respect I have for you, I will give you the choice of weapons.”

Okami thought this was very fair, and he immediately said “Katana.”

“Very well. Katana it is. Would you care to name a time?”

“As soon as possible!”

“No time like the present. A place?”

“Right here.” At that the Owl Demon clucked and cooed, finally saying, “I’m not sure I am completely comfortable with that. After all, this tree is my home. If I am fortunate enough to kill you, I should hate to have the blood of such a courageous bushi polluting my residence.”

“Very well; name your place.”

“Perhaps the Great Lunar Cave?” (L30)

“Certainly!”

The two traveled to the cave, and, with a gracious bow, the Oni gestured for Okami to precede him. Anxious to begin the battle, Okami went in, whereupon the Owl Demon rolled a great stone over the entrance, trapping him inside.

“That wasn’t very difficult,” the Owl Demon said. “I will let you out when you agree to give me your name.”

“Never!”

“Very well; enjoy your lingering, honorless death.” With that, the Owl Demon departed, cooing with laughter.

Okami no doubt would have starved if a mujina had not heard him praying to the Fortunes for freedom from his predicament.

“How did you come to be trapped?” asked the mujina. When Okami told him what had happened, the mujina laughed and laughed.

“Truly, that was a marvelous trick,” the mujina said.

“Oh, that was nothing compared to the trick my wife played on me,” Okami said, and told the mujina the story of the porridge stick (G5).

“I wonder who is the more clever,” the mujina said, “The Owl Demon, or your wife?”

“I can think of no way to find out,” Okami said.

The question of which was the more clever plagued the mujina until eventually he was driven to run into Ryoko Owari on his quick little legs and find Riko.

“I know where your husband is, for he has been imprisoned,” the mujina told her. “I will tell you where if you can outwit the Owl Demon.”

On hearing that, Riko immediately put on her husband’s training armor and went into the forest.

“Oni no Hukuro!” she cried, “I am Riko, brother of Okami, and I have come to kill you!”

Seeing another samurai, the Owl Demon came down and asked “What makes you think you will succeed where your brother failed?”

“I will succeed,” Riko said “Because I am even stronger than my brother.”

“Oh really?”

“Indeed. Name any boulder along the riverbank, and I will break it into pieces before the next sunrise.”

“If you fail?”

Riko took a deep breath. “You shall have my name.”

“And if you succeed?”

“Then I shall put a test of strength to you.”

“Very well,” the oni said, and selected a boulder as long as a horse, and as thick as a mill-wheel.

Riko, however, did not strike at it even one time; instead, she began gathering a great quantity of wood, and soon she had built a roaring fire all around the rock. Then she took a shovel and began digging a trench around the stone and to the riverbank. She only stopped digging to add wood to the fire, and only stopped feeding the fire when it was too hot to approach.

Just before sunrise, the Owl Demon returned. “What are you about?” he asked. “I said you were to break the stone, not set it on fire. Your name is mine!”

“I will break it – but with cleverness, not strength,” Riko said, and with that, she completed her channel from the river to the stone. When the cold river water touched the red-hot stone, the contrary elements smashed the stone to pieces.

“Now I have a test of might for you – remove the stone in front of the Great Lunar Cavern.”

The Owl Demon was filled with dread, but it had to fulfill her command. Okami had been sitting in the cavern, nursing his anger at the Owl Demon, and when it lifted the stone he leaped out and killed it with a single stroke.

Okami pried the teeth from the Owl Demon’s head and set them in the ground outside the gate, so that everyone who walked by could trample them with their filthy feet. Riko had the blackened pieces of the stone she had broken collected, and these were set into the gate. That is why it is now called the Gate of Oni’s Teeth.

SHIGEKO’S DOSSIER: From here it is a little over thirty minutes to the Tower of the East Eye on a stout horse, four or five minutes to the Pious Gate, and twelve minutes to the Garden of Daikoku.

The Merchants’ Quarter

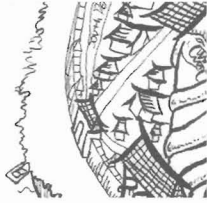
THE LITTLE GATE

MOROSUKE’S HISTORY: This unassuming gate is narrow – not even wide enough for a horse

L15

to pass – and thick, with heavy wooden doors reinforced with iron. It leads down to a small dock.

The water around the dock is not deep enough for a barge or cargo vessel, but the dock is only used for small pleasure craft. It is from this pier that nobles sail to Teardrop Island to visit the Licensed Quarter. It was to get access to this private dock that the Little Gate was built.



There was considerable debate over the construction of the Little Gate in the reign of the twentieth Governor. Conservative samurai argued that putting a gate on the river that close to the Noble Quarter would invite invasion. However, since the walls ended not far away, on the other side of the Bridge of Drunken Lovers (L16), these arguments were dismissed by those eager to visit the Licensed Quarter, but substantially less anxious to travel to piers in the Merchant or Fisherman Quarters in order to gain access.

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: The Little Gate is a perpetual thorn in the side of any magistrate. This is where nobles go when they are

randy, brash and eager to “polish their swords”. It's where they come from when they are drunk, exhausted and hearing the dragons sing (G1). You will get called there to deal with troublesome samurai and samurai who are having trouble with *heimin*. Normally bandits are too smart to attack samurai, but they know that samurai returning from Teardrop Island are not at their best. Nobles are sensitive to being seen drunk by their inferiors, however, so there is resistance to having too many sentries posted. The Thunder Guard won't go near the place unless there's a major problem.

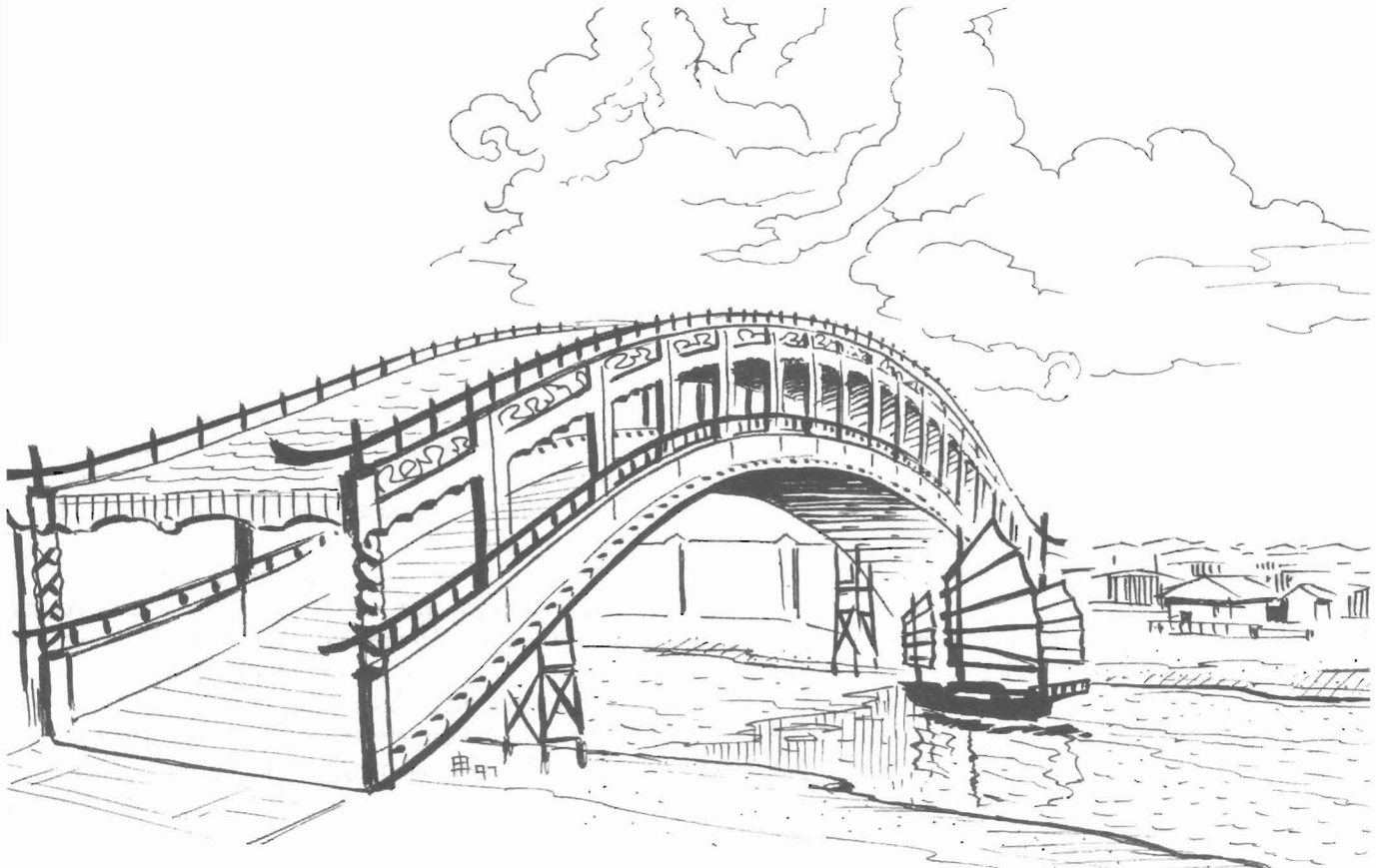
It's five minutes from the Bridge of Drunken Lovers and a little less than that from the Gate of Condescension.

THE BRIDGE OF DRUNKEN LOVERS

KOMACHI'S TRAVEL GUIDE: This bridge was built by Ryoko Owari's ninth governor, and was one of the first projects of the famous architect Kenchikuka (L10) (L11). At the time it was called the Magnificent Bridge because of its width and splendid decorations. In time its name changed; this is how.

Long ago, there lived a woman named Riko who was renowned throughout the city for her cunning. However, her father was sad, for though he had nine daughters, he had no sons.

L16



At this same time, in the distant Lion lands there was a young warrior named Okami who was making quite a name for himself as a fearless and deadly fighter. However, his father was unhappy, because their family was poor.

It happened that the father of Riko learned that Okami's family had produced only boy children for the last six generations. Hoping to marry his daughter to Okami, and get a grandson before his death, he proposed a marriage and offered a great sum as a dowry.



The idea of the marriage pleased Okami's father a great deal, for he had need of money. Therefore, he asked his son to write a letter to Riko. When Okami had completed it, his father was appalled. Though a great warrior, his son was no poet and was lacking in certain graces of wit and mind. Therefore, Okami's father recopied the letter, making a number of changes, and passed it on to Riko's father.

Now, Riko's father was also uneasy, for he knew his clever daughter had a sharp and sometimes unpleasant manner of speaking – to men especially. Therefore, he opened the letter from Okami and, finding it a bit crude and provincial, recopied it, adding certain phrases and passages he thought his daughter would find pleasing.

When Riko read the letter, she immediately wrote a reply, which her father read, changed and recopied before passing it to Okami's father, who also read, changed and recopied it before giving it to his son. In this fashion, Riko and Okami corresponded for half a year, during which neither read more than one word in ten from the other.

Now, at this same time there was a certain Crane gentleman who had an interest in Riko – an interest that increased as her father announced her vast dowry. He had encouraged her to reject or dissuade her distant Lion clan suitor, and though she tried, none of her harsh words could make it past the two fathers, both intent on a marriage of mutual advantage.

In due time, it was decided that Riko and Okami should meet. Riko's father suggested dusk (for he knew his daughter was no great beauty and hoped that the lengthening shadows would add allure to her features) and Okami's father suggested the Magnificent Bridge (for he knew his son was no great thinker, and hoped that the Magnificent Bridge was obvious enough that even Okami could find it).

As the time of the meeting came closer, both fathers grew nervous. Okami's father knew that, although Okami was fearless in battle, he sometimes became quiet and shy around women, especially beautiful ones. Since Riko's father had told him that

Riko was lovely as the dawn, he was afraid his son would become shy and say nothing. As for Riko's father, he was increasingly afraid that his daughter would say something sarcastic and offend her provincial suitor.

Too, Okami and Riko became nervous. Okami was nervous because he, too, had heard that Riko was beautiful almost beyond bearing, while Riko was unsure if she wanted to marry anyone, let alone a strange Lion instead of her friend the Crane. Consequently, both Okami and Riko took several drinks of liquor before the meeting to give themselves courage.

Neither had imagined that their fathers would also ply them with sake on their way to the bridge. Okami's father hoped the sake would loosen his son's tongue, while Riko's father hoped it would still hers. By the time they reached the bridge, both were very drunk.

Things still might have been different if Riko's Crane friend was not waiting upon the scene. As the drunken Okami staggered towards the bridge, the Crane approached him and asked him where he was going.

"The Magnificent Bridge," Okami said. "I'm supposed to meet my fiancée there for the first time."

The Crane briefly considered sending him to the wrong bridge, but then decided to make him look so foolish that Riko would refuse to marry him.

"Oh my," said the Crane. "Looking like that? That will never do. Haven't you heard of the latest fashion?"

"Fashion?"

"Yes, you simply must carry a flower behind each ear when courting. It's all the rage."

"Flower?"

"If you really want to impress her, carry a third blossom between your teeth. When you see her, don't speak a word, but embrace her firmly and pass her the flower with a kiss." The Crane providentially had three large, garish blossoms, which he gave the Lion samurai, then sent him off, confident that he would make an utter fool of himself.

The Lion did indeed look foolish with a flower behind each ear and another clutched in his mouth. Even his small wit could imagine, and at the foot of the bridge he could not resist bending down to look at his reflection. As he bent, both flowers slid from his ears and fell in the water. Upset, the Lion opened his mouth to curse, and the third flower fell as well. Seeing his finery float downstream, the disconsolate Lion pulled out a tiny bottle of sake and finished it cold.

Now thoroughly inebriated, both suitors staggered onto the bridge and saw each other. Okami was highly fuddled, but still remembered being told something about "don't speak a word, but embrace her firmly" and so he did just that. Riko was too surprised to speak before his lips had found hers.

Seeing their children embracing, the two fathers (who had, naturally, lurked near the bridge to watch events) rushed forth, proclaimed a match blessed by love at first sight, and arranged

the nuptials before Riko and Okami had even said their first words to each other.

Since that time, the bridge has been called the Bridge of Drunken Lovers.

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: Since it is both broad and beautiful, the Bridge of Drunken Lovers is a popular place at all times of the day. During the morning it is busy with Leatherworkers going to the Merchant and Temple Quarters to ply their trade. By noon, it is full of fishermen and merchants, crossing back and forth to make exchanges and move their wares. In the afternoon, the crowd is complicated by servants of nobles heading to the Fisherman Quarter for bargains, and in the evening they are usually joined by at least several young couples in love. One can never be sure how long it will take to cross the bridge – except that it will usually be longer than you think.

It is five minutes to the Little Gate, a little longer to the Gate of Condescension, five minutes to the southeast pier, six to the southwest pier, five minutes to the Wretched Gate and nine minutes to the Peasant's Gate.

THE GARDEN OF DAIKOKU

KOMACHI'S TRAVEL GUIDE: This handsome garden was built and paid for by area merchants to show their gratitude to the Fortune who has blessed Ryoko Owari with such prosperity.

This garden is located at the junction of two major trade routes – the Mountain Goblin's Rest Road and the Road Once Hidden – and many merchant travelers will stop here to exchange news in the Poppy Garden. The monks from the local Temple of Daikoku (L12) can often be found here tending the Garden of Contemplation.



SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: This is the headquarters of the Garden of Daikoku Firemen (G12). They insolently lounge around the garden, smoking, drinking and openly gambling, until an opportunity for graft presents itself. They have a close and mutually advantageous relationship with the local Thunder Guard, so you cannot rely on them for help if you are investigating the firemen.

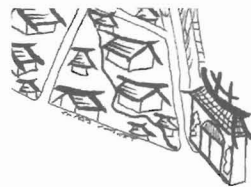
It takes four minutes to reach the Gate of Increasing Fortune from the Garden of Daikoku, six minutes to reach the Unicorn

Gate, seven to reach the northeast pier, six to reach the central east pier and fifteen to reach the Gate of Condescension.

THE GATE OF INCREASING FORTUNE

KOMACHI'S TRAVEL GUIDE: This wide gate opens Ryoko Owari to the trade goods of the Scorpion Clan's eastern half. While less magnificent than the Gate of Oni's Teeth, it still provides an impressive welcome to visiting merchants, as it is topped by images of Daikoku, the friendly Fortune of Wealth.

L18



SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: This Gate is four minutes from the Garden of Daikoku, five or six from the Unicorn Gate.

THE UNICORN GATE

KOMACHI'S TRAVEL GUIDE: When the Unicorn returned, bearing their many wondrous treasures from abroad, they found Ryoko Owari a welcome home for their merchant enterprises. They quickly established this as one of their most favored locales for merchant patronage, building an impressive residence (L4) and offering to show their friendship by building a new gate to the city, and connecting the Scorpion's provinces to their own by a new road.

Sadly, no pass could be found through the mountains to their lands – but the gate they built is a wonder, flanked by pillars of gold-flecked purple stone. The Unicorn say those pillars were carried over a thousand miles to reach Ryoko Owari! Stretched across the top of the gate is a thick polearm twenty feet long, captured from one of the many monsters the Unicorn Clan found in distant lands. The doors are made of an exotic white wood, carved with scenes of the Unicorn clan's foreign adventures.

L19



SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: The Unicorn Gate is six minutes from the Moment's Edge Bridge, a like distance from the Garden of Daikoku and five from the Gate of Increasing Fortune. It is, I think, no coincidence that most of the Thunder Guards posted to

this gate come from the Unicorn clan. I suspect they may turn a blind eye to valuable goods in Unicorn caravans when it comes time to evaluate for tariff purposes, but I have proved nothing. At least they are honorable enough to be less connected with the Strong Arm firemen. If you must call any of the Thunder Guard for help against the firemen here, these are the ones to call.

The Licensed Quarter

SWORDS POLISHED

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: I find it hard to describe the establishment called "Swords Polished" in a seamless and complete fashion... Part of me sees it as a place of disgrace, where samurai surrender their honor to indulge the weaknesses of the flesh. Yet I also know that the man who runs it (P46) does so according to his own sense of honor – and he follows a code as strict as that of any clan samurai. If it were not for "Swords Polished", every establishment in the Nightless City would have its own weapons check, with increased chances of theft and loss. Too, samurai walking the streets drunk or under the influence of opium would be armed – a dangerous thought indeed.

L20



I suppose I must say that "Swords Polished" is necessary to the peace of the Licensed District. It is unfortunate that such a district is desired, but if it must exist, it is best for it to exist with some degree of social order.

From Swords Polished it is less than a minute's ride to the Island Garden, four minutes to the House of Foreign Stories, and seven minutes to the House of the Morning Star. With adequate wind, it takes about fifteen minutes to sail from the Little Pier. It takes twice as long to sail back against the current.

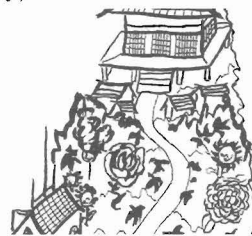
THE ISLAND GARDEN

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: This garden does not contain the tasteful arrangements you would see at the Scorpion Garden or the Garden of Daikoku. Instead, it is a riot of garish display and vulgar foreign blooms. No one seems quite sure who paid to have the Island Garden built, but it shows a definite Unicorn influence in its contents.

Most establishments on Teardrop Island seem as independent as the fiefs of neighboring lords; each sake shop or geisha house provides its own security. As you would expect, they care little

L21

about the fates of their neighbors. (An exception to this rule of indifference is the matter of fire suppression (G12), which is handled collectively.)



If individual buildings are provinces, then the Island Garden is something of a no-man's-land. A pair of gardeners are supported in an apparently mendicant fashion, begging contributions from merchants and visitors to keep the garden presentable. Apparently they are sufficiently subsidized to keep the garden somewhat under control (though it can be hard to tell).

In any event, even though the plants are tended, the visitors are not. There are usually a few members of the Thunder Guard on hand, but they will only become involved in the most blatant or violent transgressions. Opium is smoked openly, sake is drunk with abandon, deals are made and trysts arranged. It is a busy place, one where something is occurring day and night. I tried to appoint a deputy to keep an eye on events, but so much of a dubious nature occurs in the Island Park, and its layout is so confusing and labyrinthine that I eventually abandoned the effort.

It is only two minutes from the House of Foreign Stories, five from the Morning Star and a minute or so from "Swords Polished".

THE HOUSE OF FOREIGN STORIES

"MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER": Nineteenth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, First Day, Month of the Dog

L22

Who knew the world was big enough to hold so many wonders? Shosuro Kimi (P3) took me to the House of Foreign Stories for my first time today, and I was overwhelmed. I had never been to a geisha house before, let alone one run by a *gaijin*!



The woman who runs the House is named "Magda" (P47) and I find it hard to imagine that even the Shadowlands could hold anyone with a more outrageous appearance. Her hair is the color of gold, and seems to naturally curl and coil like the body of a snake or the tail of a pig. Her nose is almost absurdly high from

her face, and her chin is long and pointed. The bones beneath her eyes are so prominent that her entire face looks like a triangle. Her eyes are her most amazing feature, however; the color of a clear sky, they are huge and round as coins. She was dressed in an outlandish outfit of crimson silk – billowing trousers like hakama, only strangely tight around her feet, which were bare except for rings of gold on her toes. She wore no robe, but only a sort of vest or shirt that left her stomach exposed to the gaze of any who passed by.

Kimi and I drank a strange beverage made from foreign fruit – it was sweet and tart, not harsh at all, but soon it made me giggly and dizzy like *sake*. Then Magda started to speak, and everyone was silent.

She spun out an incredible tale of her homeland, far beyond the Burning Sands, where it is winter for half the year and the mountain tops have ice on them that hasn't melted since time began. She says that in her homeland there are giant wolves the size of houses, with tusks like a boar, only as long as a man is tall, and that her family hunted these creatures. Then she told about her travels across the Burning Sands; she said her caravan was attacked by men who rode giant birds, bigger than a horse. She was afraid they would be overcome, but their Unicorn guide had made a deal with a group of mujina, who distracted and confused the bird riders until the caravan was safe. In return, their guide had to tell the mujina stories every night for a week.

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: This house is owned and run by a woman named Magda, who is a vassal of the Unicorn clan. Her house is in some ways a standard geisha house – a place where songs are heard, tales are told and women are... entertaining. The difference is that in Magda's house, the stories, songs, women and drinks are all from distant lands. She also has a profitable sideline selling works of art from foreign countries.

When the Unicorn first arrived on Ryoko Owari, they tried to establish a geisha house, but had little success at luring patrons away from the Scorpion houses (which were apparently more polished and refined – or at least more experienced at their trade). It was not until they realized that their foreign nature could be a titillating advantage (at least to some jaded nobles), instead of a shame to be hidden, that they were successful.

Magda, the owner of the House of Foreign Stories, is the center of a bit of political maneuvering that I heartily encourage any Emerald Magistrate to avoid. The Scorpion clan would like to get rid of her, since her house competes with the Morning Star, whose patroness is their vassal. The Unicorn is equally eager for her to stay. She can remain only as long as her papers are renewed by the Emerald Magistrate. I have renewed her documents twice, due to pressure both from the Unicorn clan and from certain powerful clients she serves. I felt that getting rid of her would cause more problems than it would solve. Though she runs a house of vice, it is a safe and stable one.

From the House of Foreign Stories it is four minutes to "Swords Polished", two or three to the Island Garden and four to the Morning Star.

HOUSE OF THE MORNING STAR

KOMACHI'S TRAVEL GUIDE: Many visitors to Ryoko Owari make it a point to visit the House of the Morning Star – a tea house whose entertainments are renowned throughout Rokugan.

The Morning Star is on Teardrop Island, which houses the Licensed Quarter of Ryoko Owari. Reaching it involves a lovely sail through the peaceful waters of the River of Gold – a journey almost as serene as the destination.

The House itself is modest and unassuming, as befits the refined entertainments presented within. Here one will find no vulgar display or garish excesses; no, the arts practiced here are completely those of Rokugan, as traditional in their way as the services in a temple.



SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: The House of the Morning Star can be seen as the polar opposite of the House of Foreign Stories. Where one is loud and bright, the other is calm and subdued. Where one is foreign and exotic, the other is strictly traditional. However, in the eyes of honor, both are equal and both are disgusting.

Both houses are where those of samurai caste (mostly men, but women as well) gather to drink, smoke opium, and engage in disgraceful behaviors. In other words, it is where they go to forget their families, their clan and their duties. While Komachi and the Scorpion clan would have you believe that such houses are a venerable establishment in Rokugan, I say that there is nothing more contrary to our national spirit.

The Morning Star is run by Jewel (P49), but it centers around her daughter Precious (P48), who is their central attraction. It is rumored that Precious is the mistress of Jocho (P2), but it is also said that she is the mistress of Korechika (P5), Baranato (P14), Sanifusa (P12) and Sukemara (P27). Some would even have me believe that all of the above are true, but I find such a claim dubious at best. It is certain, however, that both women enjoy significant protection from their noble patrons.

It is four minutes from the Morning Star to the House of Foreign Stories, five or more minutes to the Island Garden, and seven minutes to "Swords Polished".

L23

The Fisherman Quarter

MOMENT'S EDGE BRIDGE

MOROSUKE'S HISTORY: This plain and unadorned structure is famous for being the site of a fatal duel between shugenja/swordsmith Togashi Nyoko and Hida Raiden during the reign of Hantei the sixteenth.

L24

Raiden had mocked Nyoko for trying to be a swordsmith, a shugenja and a samurai-ko at the same time. Nyoko offered to show him that all three were the same by dueling him to the death. Ryoko Owari was settled as a neutral location for the duel.

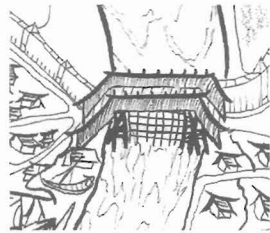
Raiden was confident that he, who had studied only the sword, would easily defeat a woman who had split her attention between the sword and the temple.

They met at sunrise in the center of the bridge, and the instant the duel began, Raiden found himself with a deep slash to his belly. He had not even seen her draw.

"Impossible," he gasped. "No one alive is so fast!"

Nyoko shook her head.

"I am alive and dead; dead to the past and dead to the future, because I live at the moment's edge." When she saw comprehension in his eyes, she drew her wakizashi and cut off his head.



SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: The Moment's Edge Bridge is another consistent trouble spot. The Strong Arm firemen and the Moment's Edge firemen (G12) have long been rivals, and the bridge is the place where their domains cross. This makes it the most likely site for brawls between the two gangs.

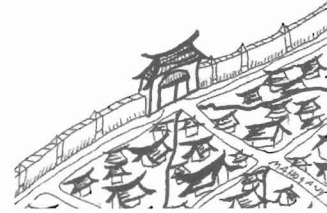
While battling criminal rackets would seem to be a concern for the Thunder Guard, the distressing truth is that the Guard in those areas are so corrupt and connected to the firemen of the area that such conflicts are usually ignored by the Guard - that is, when members of the Guard are not actively fighting on one side or the other.

It takes seven minutes to reach the Moment's Edge Bridge from the Garden of Daikoku, six minutes from the Unicorn Gate or the northwest pier, seven minutes from the northeast pier, and eight minutes from the Fisherman's Gate.

THE FISHERMAN'S GATE

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: This gate is plain, stout and unadorned. It is used primarily by fishermen who wish to sell their wares to the farmers of the surrounding countryside, and by farmers moving their goods into the city.

L25



It is eight minutes from the Moment's Edge Bridge, five minutes from the northwest pier, and ten minutes from the Peasant's Gate.

THE PEASANT'S GATE

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: This gate is built along the same lines as the Fisherman's Gate (L25) and serves a similar purpose. It is also the gate most frequently used by poachers who don't have access to a boat. Since they cannot sail to the forest to poach game, they have to walk.

The guards here are known to turn a blind eye to poachers in return for a few *zeni* or (in rare cases) a portion of the game meat.

L26



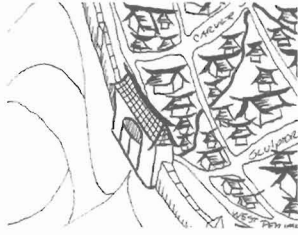
It is five minutes from the Wretched Gate, ten minutes from the Fisherman's Gate, six minutes from the Fisherman's Dock, and nine minutes from the Bridge of Drunken Lovers.

The Leatherworker Quarter

THE WRETCHED GATE

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: It is strange, but this is one of the stoutest and most forbidding of the gates through the city walls. Certainly the *eta* of the Leatherworker Quarter are distasteful, but I think the size of the gate here is disproportionate; after all, they surely pose no threat.

L27



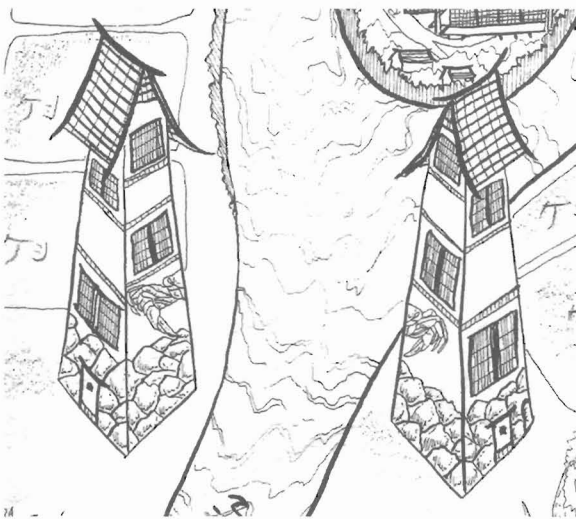
In any event, beyond this gate is the Leatherworker Quarter, where the *eta* sleep when they are not cleaning the city and poking through its trash. It is under five minutes from this gate to the Bridge of Drunken Lovers, and about five minutes to the Peasant's Gate.

The Surrounding Countryside

THE TOWERS OF THE EAST AND WEST EYES

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: When the Crab clan occupied Ryoko Owari (G4), they built these two towers, which explains why they are of a much more practical design than most of the city. While the inhabitants scorn them as "graceless Crab architecture", they are stout fortresses holding many members of the Thunder Guard. The towers overlook the river and are well placed to sink any floating invasion force. The Tower of the East Eye also has a clear plain between it and the Mountain Goblin's Rest Road. Jocho (P2) and his Lightning Squad (G10) frequently drill here, training against a possible invasion from the south along the road.

L28



If the towers have a weakness, it is their separation; there is no good way to get across the river from one tower to the other.

Apparently the Crab clan intended to build a bridge between the tops of the towers, but ran out of money before they could do so.

The East Eye tower is about thirty minutes from the Gate of Oni's Teeth. The West Eye Tower is twenty minutes from the Bridge of the Dragon.

THE FOREST

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: Some twenty miles to the southwest there are forests that Shosuro Hyobu (P1) claims as her own preserve and domain. These forests are fairly well known to the local nobility, who often go there to hunt. It is possible that they are also well known to local bandit gangs, and they are certainly well known by the many peasant poachers who go there to supplement their diet with stolen game. Periodically Hyobu will send a detachment of Thunder Guards (G10) to go through the forest and arrest any peasants found within. These expeditions are often unsuccessful; sometimes the Thunder Guard have to seize innocent peasants from farms in order to look efficient. It should be noted that one illegal sake works was found on their last expedition, however.

In any event, the forest is of little interest to an Emerald Magistrate, except possibly during the early spring (G3).

About thirty five miles from the city, Hyobu's forest turns into the Hidden Forest, which is considerably less familiar and much more dangerous.

L29

GREAT LUNAR CAVE

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: I have visited the Great Lunar Cave only once, in order to satisfy myself that it was unfeasible as a bandit hideout. While its interior is quite spacious, the entrance is small; any sizeable group would have to exit the cave one at a time, which is slow. In the case of a battle, it would be dangerous as well.

The cave itself is something of a marvel, being full of pillars and projections in strange shapes – as if carved by a fanciful spirit of the water or the air. A stream of brackish water runs through it, and there is even an underground waterfall. Nonetheless, I did not like the place; it is cold and there is a feeling of decay throughout.

It is about fifteen miles outside the city to the northeast.

L30



Section Three

***The People of
Ryoko Owari***

Guide to the People of Ryoko Owari

SAMURAI

| I.D. No. | NAME | CLAN | PAGE No. | I.D. No. | NAME | CLAN | PAGE No. |
|----------|-------------------|----------|----------|----------|--------------------|---------|----------|
| P1 | Shosuro Hyobu | Scorpion | 47 | P19 | Otaku Genshi | Unicorn | 60 |
| P2 | Shosuro Jocho | Scorpion | 48 | P20 | Otaku Naishi | Unicorn | 60 |
| P3 | Shosuro Kimi | Scorpion | 49 | P21 | Iuchi Sadako | Unicorn | 60 |
| P4 | Shosuro Gobei | Scorpion | 50 | P22 | Iuchi Michisuna | Unicorn | 61 |
| P5 | Bayushi Korechika | Scorpion | 50 | P23 | Kaiu Shinya | Crab | 63 |
| P6 | Bayushi Saisho | Scorpion | 51 | P24 | Yasuki Nobuko | Crab | 63 |
| P7 | Bayushi Otado | Scorpion | 51 | P25 | Ashidaka Naritoki | Crane | 64 |
| P8 | Bayushi Omoto | Scorpion | 52 | P26 | Ashidaka Michitaka | Crane | 65 |
| P9 | Soshi Seiryoku | Scorpion | 53 | P27 | Doji Sukemara | Crane | 66 |
| P10 | Yogo Osako | Scorpion | 53 | P28 | Kitsuki Jotomon | Dragon | 66 |
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| P12 | Shinjo Sanefusa | Unicorn | 55 | P30 | Kitsu Senshi | Lion | 68 |
| P13 | Shinjo Yoshiko | Unicorn | 55 | P31 | Asako Kinto | Phoenix | 68 |
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| P16 | Ide Asamitsu | Unicorn | 58 | P34 | Shrimp | Mantis | 70 |
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Reversed type indicates a deceased individual.

NON-SAMURAI

| I.D. No. | NAME | QUARTER | PAGE No. | I.D. No. | NAME | QUARTER | PAGE No. |
|----------|-------------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|---------------|----------|
| P37 | Abbot Okawa | Temple | 71 | P46 | Gate | Licensed | 76 |
| P38 | Jirohei | Temple | 72 | P47 | Magda | Licensed | 77 |
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| | | | | P55 | Pitiful | Leatherworker | 81 |

The People of Ryoko Owari

The Scorpion Clan

MOROSUKE'S HISTORY: Ryoko Owari was built by the Shosuros, and it remains a Shosuro city to this day – and will, I think, be one for all time. What does this mean? It is a city of secrets, of course – but not the secrets of the world (for those are the domain of the Bayushis) nor the secrets of the next world (which are given to my family) nor the secrets of the spirits (which belong to the Soshi family). No, a Shosuro city is not a place of political secrets, or magic secrets – it is a place of the secrets of the heart.

SHOSURO HYOBU

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: The current Governor (G9) of Ryoko Owari is Shosuro Hyobu. I have already given an overview of her political position (which is basically unassailable by anyone within the city). Now I will address Hyobu as a person.

I find myself reluctantly admiring her. I admire the way she has made herself powerful on her own terms – not merely as her husband's widow or her son's mother, but as herself. As Governor she is not tolerated or humored, she is respected and feared. She has used the power she was given with great skill to order the city to her liking and protect its interests. There is no longer any doubt that she is a very skilled Governor.

P1



However, I would hesitate to call her a “good” Governor. The reason for this, and for my reluctance to admire her in all her strength and skill, is that the ends to which she applies her tremendous abilities are so unworthy of her attention. She could make this city not only prosperous, but honorable. She could make its people not only satisfied, but safe. Yet her goals are modest; she wishes only that things not be “too corrupt”. In this, I fear she means “too obvious”. She keeps the opium trade deniable, hidden – but she expends no effort eradicating it. She maintains peace in the city by overlooking minor excesses of the firemen – when she could gain a lasting, honorable peace by replacing them with a better system.

An incompetent Governor would destroy this city; an average Governor would maintain it as it is. Hyobu's tragedy is that she is a superb Governor – but is content to achieve only what an average Governor could.

“MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER”: Twentieth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, First Day, Month of the Rat

While at the New Year's celebration today, I heard the most scandalous rumor. Otaku Genshi (P19) told me that many claim the Governor's lover is none other than her own brother in law – Shosuro Gobei (P4)! I was shocked, and insisted that it could not be true, but Genshi only sneered at me and told me to watch them when they were together.

It is true that Gobei and the Governor seem very comfortable with each other – he is less formal with her than anyone other than her own son (P2). Yet there did not seem to be any of the

longing glances one expects between secret lovers. Still, if they have been... entangled... for many years, it might be that they can hide it well. And if anyone could conceal such a thing, it would be the Scorpion...

But what if Genshi is playing me for a fool? Perhaps I am to be her "little sister" (G1) in this and spread a baseless rumor on her behalf. It is clear to me that she hates the whole Scorpion clan, though I cannot say why.

Perhaps it is best to keep my own counsel on this matter.

SHOSURO JOCHO

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: As the son of Hyobu (P1, G9), Jocho is in line to inherit the post of Governor. In fact, he should have done so upon his father's death – but he has chosen instead to allow his mother to remain in power while he serves as the head of the Thunder Guard (G10).

Jocho strikes me, above all, as a shallow man. His desires are simple; he wishes to command an elite unit, to enjoy his pleasures and live a comfortable life. He seems to me a man who would rather seem honorable than be honorable.

He possesses great zeal for martial feats, and for this he should be commended, but it is my belief that his strong body masks what is, in many ways, a weak spirit.

P2



"MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER": Nineteenth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Eleventh Day, Month of the Pig

This evening I had a disturbing conversation with Shosuro Jocho. We were in the House of the Morning Star (L23) and he was sitting at the next table, smoking and apparently listening to Precious (P48) sing. However, when Michisuna (P22) and Michikane (P15) left my table briefly, he turned to me and smiled. I'll admit, I felt a flutter of nervousness; he is a very handsome man, and his mask – more of a diadem – does nothing to hide it.

"Why don't you smoke?" he asked me.

"I don't like it," I said – blushing, I'm sure.

"You mean you haven't tried it?"

"How do you know that?"

"Because everyone who tries it likes it"

I had no answer to that, so I tried to change the subject.

"Are you an admirer of Precious? She sings so prettily?"

"I thought all Phoenix were shugenja," he said. "Are you? Do you traffic with 'unseen powers', spirits and ancestors?"

"No, I... don't"

"I'm sorry. I've hurt your feelings, haven't I?"

Looking back on it, is it possible that he knew I had left school? It is said the Scorpions are the masters of secrets, but he seemed genuinely sorry to have hurt my feelings.

"It's not important," I said.

"It is very important to me if I have wounded you unknowing," he said seriously. "What have you heard about the Scorpion? That we hoard our venom, biding our time for a deadly strike? But that is only one side. Because our weapons – the weapons of the heart – are so dangerous, we must be cautious to keep them sheathed until used."

"I'm not sure I understand..."

"The Crane operate with the promise of happiness; we operate on the threat of pain. Yet we must be kinder than the Crane until the time for cruelty comes; otherwise, our punishment means nothing."

His eyes were fixed on mine – deep and intense, and for a second I thought I saw in them a bottomless sorrow. I felt, for a moment, what it must mean to be him – every kindness regarded with suspicion, every accidental slight read as deliberate. No chance of trust and little of forgiveness. I could imagine no worse fate.

Then Michikane and Michisuna returned. Jocho's face became blank as a mask and he returned to his pipe. Michisuna furrowed his brow, but said nothing until later. Then he told me to be careful around Jocho.

"The Scorpion values purity only to the extent that he can soil it," he said.

I nodded, but in my heart I wondered. Is it mad to think that the polluted might envy the clean?

"MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER": Twentieth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Twenty-Second Day, Month of the Rabbit

I am so adrift in conflicting thoughts that I cannot believe the tranquil void described by Shinsei can exist anywhere. I look at myself in the mirror and wonder that my face has not changed,

for I am certainly not the same woman who rose this morning, put on her robe, and set out determined to win the love of a man.

Have I done it? Certainly not the way I hoped, nor even the man I hoped. Yet who would not envy me? I set my net for a musician and snared the son of a Governor!

Everyone at Michisuna's birthday celebration agreed that the poem I read to him was beautiful, poignant, elegant. Everyone smiled, except for Jocho and Michisuna. Michisuna frowned, and Jocho only looked a little sad, a little wise. This showed me that only they understood. Only they knew what I was really offering in that poem, and to whom I wanted it given.

Naturally everyone surrounded Michisuna, and he was too much of a gentleman to ruin my hopes in front of everyone else. It was torment, but a beautiful torment. Fear of his rejection wrestled in my heart with hope that he would know, that he would tell me he felt the same, that he would love me. I knew it couldn't be so, but until I heard the words, I had hope.

He found a way. He snuck away and sent his cousin, serious-faced Asamitsu (P16), to fetch me. Michisuna broke my heart quickly. I could only stare at him as he spoke; at that moment I saw too clearly the pouches beneath his eyes, the beginnings of a belly his robe could not hide, the thick veins on his hands. At that moment, he was beautiful to me still, and he would not look at me. He fled as I wept.

That was how Jocho found me. I was so ashamed, and so afraid. Never in my life had I been weaker, and I had been taught that the Scorpion's nature is to torment the weak, to take an injured heart and cripple it, so that it can be possessed.

Jocho said nothing, but he knelt and held me. I sobbed and sobbed, and his patience was boundless, his kindness without limit. Finally I regained enough of my composure to speak, and I thanked him, and begged his pardon for making a scene. When I said it, I could see his eyes redden with tears.

"Even in your suffering, you apologize," he said with a smile. I laughed a little, but I couldn't for long. The tears came again, and I asked Jocho, "Why? Why doesn't he love me?"

"Because he is a musician, a poet. He deals with stories, which are nothing but lies. Beautiful lies, but still false. Can he ever appreciate something so genuine? Something flawless and naked as your love?"

I started to cry again.

"I am a soldier and a Scorpion," he said softly. "I know lies... know them intimately. They do not beguile me, they can make no claim on my heart. I know truth when I see it, and it is only truth that I can love."

As he said these words, he gently stroked my hair.

"MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER": Twentieth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Fifth Day, Month of the Monkey

Jocho has left me, of course. It was only a matter of time. I should be grateful that it wasn't done in public.

I can't believe I once hoped to marry a future Governor. Now my greatest desire is a hole to die in.

As could be expected, there were bitter words between the two of us. He played the injured party; fairly, I must admit here, but I wasn't about to give him the satisfaction when we were face to face.

"Was I ever anything to you, anything but a substitute for that impotent musician?" he demanded.

"In my heart? Of course not. But let's not be bitter; after all, you taught me how to buy liquid void (G1), how to feign affection, how to endure the embraces of a man I don't love... so many valuable skills! Most of all, you taught me how to see the fool in everyone, by generously showing me what a buffoon you are!"

"I think you're mistaken, my dear; what you've learned is how to show everyone else your own idiocy. Honestly, you think Michisuna would dare to touch the mistress of an Emerald Magistrate? Or that she would desire the caresses of someone so pathetic and powerless? Just because you were snared by his womanly charms doesn't mean everyone is so weak."

"Certainly I've been quite stupid; one only has to judge my lover to see that."

"I'm the best thing that will ever happen to you!"

"In that case I'm destined for a tragic life indeed. Tell me, what really upsets you? That I love him, not you? Or is it that there aren't enough unspoiled parts left in me to interest you? No, wait, I know; you're angry that you never managed to corrupt my heart. As long as I can love, you know you failed to destroy me completely with your phony affection and mock kindness."

"It does my heart good to learn that you finally figured me out," he sneered. "I'll admit that I was curious to see how difficult it would be to lure a virgin Phoenix into my bed and my life. Not hard at all, it seems."

"Certainly easier than seeing what's obvious to even a fool like me. You have another lover and you don't even know it."

"What are you talking about?"

I just laughed.

He's so right, though. I am a fool. Fool to think Michisuna would love me, bigger fool to think Jocho did. I'm an awkward friend to one – if even that, now. And to Jocho? Was I ever more than an experiment in lies?

SHOSURO KIMI

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: Jocho's (P2) sister is a lovely girl who gives every appearance of sincerity with each word she speaks. She has never been anything but polite, respectful, helpful and straightforward with me. At all times and in all places she behaves in a manner proper beyond reproach.

P3



Kimi appears to have no real political power or influence, other than what she gains from standing in the shadow of her brother and her mother (P1). She appears to have no goals other than those appropriate to a young maiden – please her ancestors, obey her mother, and marry well. Yet although she pursues these goals openly and in an honorable fashion, there are no signs that she has any other intentions, nor that she is scheming or maneuvering the way so many other courtiers do.

She is either exactly what she appears to be, or the finest liar in a city known for them.

SHOSURO GOBEI

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: Shosuro Gobei was the brother of Hyobu's (P1) husband – uncle to Jocho (P2) and Kimi (P3). He is the patron of several large and profitable sake works in the city, and his beverages are exported through Rokugan as far as the Phoenix lands.

P4

He is a wealthy man but not, I think, a greedy one. He is not showy with his wealth, but neither is he stingy. He spends most of his time and attention on his mercantile endeavors. He makes a great deal of money, but does not seem to have money as his goal. He is almost like those swordsmen who practice, not to win battles, but in order to perfect their strikes and themselves. Yet I cannot see how such a thing can be done through buying and selling.



Like Kimi, he seems to have no concealed interests, which may mean his interests are the most deeply concealed.

There are persistent rumors that he is Hyobu's lover. I cannot say one way or the other; certainly he is her friend, and as such is no one to trouble lightly.

BAYUSHI KORECHIKA

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: Bayushi Korechika I like less than almost every Scorpion in the city, and yet I feel strangely comfortable around him. He seems so much the typical Scorpion; venal, slippery, dishonest and selfish. I feel that I know exactly what to expect.

P5

Korechika came into power as the local head of the Bayushi family during the first year I was in office. He immediately took the stable and sedate Bayushi network of merchants and began gathering more merchants, and taxing others until they begged to be allowed to find new patrons. He is constantly jockeying for position among the merchants of Ryoko Owari, and has become a significant force in a short period of time.

He seems to have little time for personal concerns, except for his hobby of collecting rare foreign birds. I don't even think he keeps a mistress.

I suspect that his real concern is opium. He already has substantial rural holdings which grow the opium poppy; I believe his city holdings and merchant connections are being used to

process the poppies into smokable or liquid form, and then distribute them throughout Rokugan.

I was able to successfully charge one of his craftsmen with possession of liquid opium, but before I could have him questioned, Korechika showed up with Yogo Osako (P10) and a writ signed by the Governor (G9, P1). They claimed that the craftsman was planning to distribute the opium locally, and that therefore it was a matter for the Governor's magistrate (Osako) instead of the Emerald Magistrate. It took all my willpower not to curse loudly as they took him away "for questioning". I know he died that same day, and my interrogator (P55) assures me that the prisoner was never taken to the torture hall.



It is clear to me that Korechika killed that craftsman, not for being a criminal, but for being an inept one and for putting his smuggling operation in jeopardy.

I believe Korechika learned from that mistake. I now suspect that most of his dirty work is arranged by a merchant named Sharp (P40). I have arrested three of Sharp's workers, but Korechika's protection has stymied my attempts to question the man himself.

BAYUSHI SAISHO

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: Saisho is Korechika's wife, and seems to be one of the most singularly sad women in Ryoko Owari. I am not sure why this is; can it be that she is an honorable woman, and is sorry to be married to

P6

a criminal? When I have tried (subtly, of course) to gain her confidence, I have been gently spurned. Perhaps she is only sad because her husband neglects her for his workings.



I have heard that she had a daughter she loved very much, and who died of a sudden illness. Surely, though, even a mother's love could not make her so sad after such a long time?

On the other hand, when I consider her son Otado, I wonder if perhaps she is not pining for some distant lover. It would be ironic indeed for her tricky husband to be unaware of his wife's entanglement even as he claims an illegitimate child as his own. But this is speculation – possibly my observations are colored by my feelings towards Korechika.

BAYUSHI OTADO

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: I have implied that Otado may be an illegitimate child (P6). This may not be so, since he does resemble Korechika (P5) somewhat in appearance. In behavior, however, they are far apart – though not so far as I might have hoped.

P7



Where Korechika is polite, Otado is crude and graceless. Where Korechika hides his venom with a mask of friendship, you always know what Otado is thinking – and it’s rarely pleasant. Korechika’s subtlety is thrown into high relief by Otado’s blatant indiscretions. Though only sixteen, Otado has already been reprimanded by Hyobu (P1, G9) herself for a public brawl in a den of vice.

In short, he has the cruelty of the Scorpion and the base appetites of the Crab, mated to the crassness of the Unicorn.

BAYUSHI OMOTO

“MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER”: Twentieth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Twenty-Second Day, Month of the Dragon

P8

Jocho (P2) told me the truth about Bayushi Omoto today. She was a beautiful girl – even as a young child, it could be seen what a great beauty she would be someday. She was so beautiful that she didn’t like to wear her mask, and defied Scorpion tradition by going about with her face naked.

One of the servants of the Bayushi family became enamored with her when she was only thirteen, so he poisoned the household with opium and carried the girl off while everyone else slept.



When her parents awoke to find her gone, they immediately set out to find her. Because her kidnapper was only a *heimin*, he was quickly discovered in his hiding place – but by then the damage had been done.

The *heimin* had tried to force himself upon Omoto as soon as she awoke, but she fought him off. Then he swore he’d starve her until she was too weak to resist. Terrified by this threat, Omoto took her fingernails and clawed her own beautiful face until it was a mass of blood and injury; after that, no man would want her.

This saved her from the *heimin*’s vile embraces, but when she was rescued, she was deeply saddened by her lost beauty. She felt that Bayushi Kami was punishing her for not wearing her mask, and eventually she killed herself.

This certainly explains why Saisho (P6) told me Omoto had died of illness! (G2) I asked Jocho why Uncle Kinto (P31) had said there was nothing wrong with Omoto, and he told me that Kinto had been the only one who was too kind to turn away from her when she was deformed. Kinto even offered to marry her, even though he was then old enough to be her grandfather. He was deeply saddened when she killed herself. Jocho made me swear to never bring the subject up with Kinto again – he said it would hurt the old man too deeply. Of course I promised him, and told him that I wouldn’t have brought it up even if I hadn’t promised.

He kissed me then and told me how deeply he envied the natural kindness of the Phoenix clan.

SOSHI SEIRYOKU

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: I have never had a pleasant encounter with Soshi Seiryoku – she hardly bothers to mask her hatred with politeness. A shugenja (but one who rarely attends a temple publically), she has a reputation even within her own clan as a woman it is suicide to cross.

P9



She is a prominent merchant patroness. When asked about her, her merchants mouth platitudes about how kind and benevolent she is, while their eyes dart around in terror – as if they fear she might climb out of any nearby shadow and overhear them. The merchants stressed that they would never, *ever* consider going to another patron. It took some careful investigation to learn how highly she taxes her merchants. Clearly they are terrified of her – too frightened to seek a less fearsome patroness.

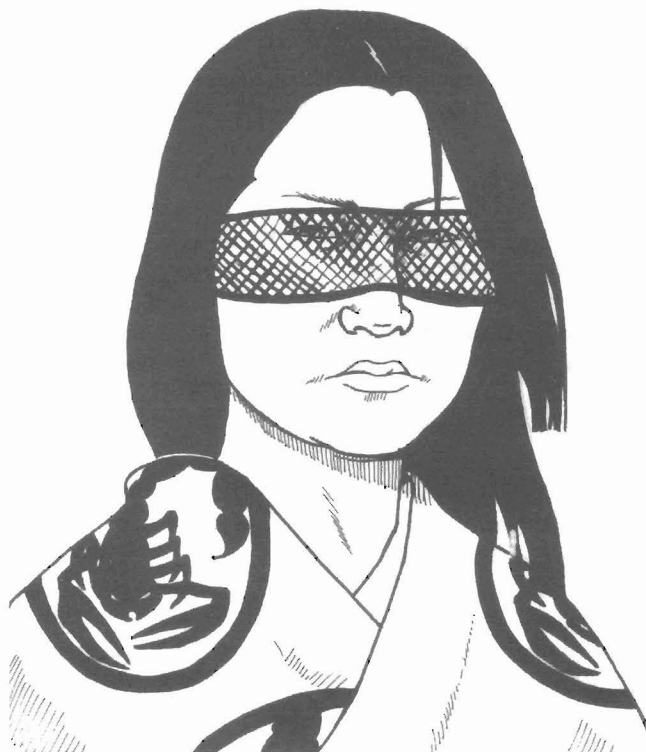
I feel in my bones that she is evil, but I cannot make any accusation stick. I have petitioned the Phoenix clan to send one of their Inquisitors, but have had no luck.

If my successor is a shugenja, I encourage him to watch this woman very, very closely.

YOGO OSAKO

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: Yogo Osako is the first and most trusted of Hyobu's (G9, P1) magistrates. This means, of course, that she applies the laws of the city and the country in a very selective and arbitrary fashion.

P10



Although I worked with her on occasion and saw her almost every day, I find it hard to describe any feelings I might have had for her. She seems to be an honorable samurai-ko, and I cannot say I have ever seen her drunk or known her to shame her duty. We worked together on some non-political cases, and she was a competent and dedicated investigator; yet I never felt close to her. She never gave me the impression that I was anything but a tool to her when useful, and a hindrance when we were at odds. I suppose I feel the same way about her; it is difficult to even think of her as having a human heart.

“MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER”: Twentieth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Thirteenth Day, Month of the Dragon

A strange but amusing thing happened this evening at the House of Foreign Stories. I was drunk of course, but not so drunk that I might have imagined it. Besides, drink dulls my mind, and it would have taken all my mental might to lift the weight of a concept as unlikely as Yogo Osako in love.

I had stepped away from my table and was proceeding towards the necessary room when Yogo Osako emerged from the shadows and gripped my arm. At first I thought she was holding

me steady (I was stumbling a bit) and thanked her, but then her face showed that her interest certainly was not my aid.

"Can I help you, magistrate?" I said at last.

"You can help yourself, Phoenix. You're out of your depth; best swim to shore before you drown."

"I'm sure I have no idea what you're talking about. Is this a criminal matter?"

"If it is, you will be the victim."

"Huh?" I must confess that since coming to Ryoko Owari, I have become much more open about confessing confusion in conversations. Nothing seems to exasperate extremely clever and subtle people as when you simply fail to understand. Then they're forced to say what they were trying to hide with all their cleverness. (Though I never thought of Osako as particularly clever.)

In any event, instead of speaking she grabbed my instrument (G1) and held it under my face.

"This," she said. "I could ruin you with this. Humiliate your family, sully your name, get you cuffed for a month..."

"So? You could do the same to almost everyone here. Why me?"

And then her eyes flicked to Jocho (P3).

I couldn't help but laugh. Having been the victim of hopeless love for so long, it was easy to see it on the face of another.

"Jocho? You want me stay away from Jocho?"

Even in the shadows, I could see her blush.

"A Scorpion and a Phoenix... it's no good. He'll only toy with you and leave you a dead, heartless husk."

"So you're threatening to have me cuffed because you're concerned that he'll break my heart? How strange... Perhaps it's because you want him for yourself?"

Her hand was tightening on my arm, but I was too drunk to do more than notice. I'm sure it will hurt tomorrow.

"Why don't you just tell him?" I asked. I'll admit it, I was taunting her - I liked knowing this dangerous, powerful woman was as much of a fool over love as I had been. Perhaps I should have shown that Phoenix kindness Jocho talks about, but all I had to offer her was venom. "You're afraid, aren't you? You don't know what he sees in me, and you're afraid to have him tell you. You're afraid he'll laugh. Aren't you? And even if you were brave enough, you couldn't come out and say it because that's so *obvious*. So plain. So crude and unsophisticated. Not like a Scorpion at all, is it, to love someone and just tell them?"

She said nothing. Her breath was harsh and ragged, and I could see her veil shake.

"So why not arrest me?" I asked. "It would be the perfect way to show your love, Scorpion style, right? Affection through aggression? 'I love you, so I'll destroy what you love? Then maybe you'll love me instead?' Is that how courtship works in your clan?"

"Be quiet," she whispered.

"But why? I'm just trying to figure out Scorpion love. As you know, I'm involved with it... intimately."

"You Phoenix and your 'understanding,'" she hissed. "You're not nearly as clever as you think." Then she let go and slunk away.

I had to laugh. Apparently I'm 'clever' now.

The Unicorn Clan

SHINJO YOSHIFUSA

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: Yoshifusa is the leader of Ryoko Owari's Unicorn clansmen in name only. He is an old man; the only time he is seen outside the Shinjo estate is when he attends services at the Temple of the Sun Goddess (L13). Despite this, he has not retired from his position as family head, nor as a merchant patron.

P11



The story is that he went on a merchant caravan as a young man and earned great glory protecting the Unicorn trade interests from foreign attackers. Having made his fortune in this way he retired to Ryoko Owari, where he has spent the remainder of his long life.

At one time an influential merchant patron, his influence has waned as he has aged. Bayushi Korechika (P5) has succeeded in taking control of one of Yoshifusa's most prosperous stables (P43), along with several less important merchant concerns. At his advanced age, there is little the Unicorn can do about it.

SHINJO SANEFUSA

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: Sanefusa is Yoshifusa's son (P11). Alongside his father, Sanefusa manages a number of merchant vassals. It appears that father and son do not always manage in complete harmony, however. There are persistent stories of one countermanding the decisions of the other. This may be one reason Korechika (P5) has been able to lure some of their vassals away.

P12



Their most important and prosperous investment is the House of Foreign Stories (L22). Significantly, this is the endeavor that Yoshifusa cares least for. (His age and infirmity prevent him from taking the boat to Teardrop Island.) Sanefusa therefore has a free hand to manage their vassal Magda (P47) consistently, if not well. There are rumors that Magda is Sanefusa's mistress, but these are (of course) difficult to verify.

As for Sanefusa himself, he strikes me as a man whose mind and spirit are going east and west. He cannot act decisively because he is perpetually split between two views and cannot bring them together. For example, despite his age he has not married. It is commonly believed that he is waiting until his father dies, so that he will be the head of the Ryoko Owari Unicorns and will be able to make a better match. However, while he has waited, his father has continued to live on and Ide Baranato has ascended in influence until he is the local clan chief in all but name.

SHINJO YOSHIKO

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: Yoshiko is the daughter of Yoshifusa (P11) and sister of Sanefusa (P12). Although she is almost old enough to have a child at *gempukku*, she has never married. Her own mother died not long after Yoshiko came of

P13



age, and Yoshifusa asked her to come and help mind the house until he could find another wife. That was many years ago, and neither of them has gotten married. Yoshifusa refuses to find her a husband, and as she ages her chances of marrying well continue to shrink.

IDE BARANATO

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: While Yoshifusa (P11) is the official head of Ryoko Owari's Unicorn clan, it is Ide Baranato who makes all the significant decisions. The clan is fortunate in this, for Baranato is a man of honor.

P14

He is also a skilled healer. I had opportunity to learn this after an altercation with a ronin called Ample (P32). Baranato and I had an interesting conversation while he was putting my arm back into its socket. He told me that Ample was very skilled with the Two Way Throw, but beyond that his jiu-jitsu skills were limited. I told him I'd keep it in mind.

Then he told me that I shouldn't be afraid to tell him that my arm was in pain – that if I told him where it hurt, he would be better able to make the pain stop.

"Or would the shame of admitting pain be worse than the pain itself?" he asked. I looked at him to see if he was joking, and he was, somewhat. But I also saw that my pain hurt him as well.

Baranato is a compassionate man, but there is more to him than kindness; I saw something unyielding at the back of his gaze. It is something I have seen in the eyes of Akodo Toturi, in the eyes of the Emerald Champion, in the eyes of Kakita Toshimoko. These men who have seen death, seen naked suffering, and understood these things – but have not been broken by them. It gives them strength, and I believe Baranato has the same strength.

"MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER": Twentieth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Twelfth Day, Month of the Snake

Today was Michikane's (P15) funeral. It was the largest grouping of nobles I have seen in Ryoko Owari since the Days of Generosity (G6).



Ide Baranato's eyes were as red as raw salmon from crying over his son. His wife (P18) was even worse. She could not even restrain herself during the shugenja's prayers. Tears streamed down her face and her whole body shook, even as she tried to remain still.

Baranato would not let True Word (P33) into the funeral! I happened to arrive at the same time, and I saw True Word halt as Baranato put up his arm.

"You are not welcome here," Baranato said.

"I come only to pay my respects to a fallen friend," True Word said.

"You were no friend to my son," Baranato said. "And if he had known that he would live still!"

True Word's eyes got wide and his mouth twisted.

"Me? You blame me for your son's death?" Even though I never completed my training, I still have some sense for the unseen powers, and I could feel True Word drawing them in. Then Baranato's eyes flashed accusation, and I could feel a strong surge of power from him as well.

"Don't tempt me," Baranato said. "Spilling your blood would ease my pain, but I would not have it mingled with that of my son."

People were turning to look. Perhaps it was the ice in Baranato's voice. Perhaps the power the two men were drawing was so great that even the uninitiated could feel it.

True Word turned and left, Baranato's glare at his back.

Poor man. If he blames True Word for Michikane's death, he is truly blind. Equal guilt could fall on most of the funeral guests.

IDE MICHIKANE

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: Baranato's (P14) heir and oldest son is charming, handsome, a fine hunter and a warm and sincere courtier. He is widely liked and admired, and seems to have no enemies within the city. His parents dote on him and he seems in all things destined for greatness.

P15

"MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER": Nineteenth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Twenty Third Day, Month of the Horse

Today I visited the Ide family. Their house is very strange and foreign – the center is a round dome, with more proper, square edged halls to its side. Around the dome are tall pillars – but not just two to frame the door. I counted a dozen, all identical, fronting a sort of open area – not quite a courtyard, for it had a floor, but not an antechamber because one wall was open to the air, and it had no mats or furnishings.

The first person to greet me was Ide Michikane, who had issued my invitation. He was waiting for me by the pillars – how different from my reception by Saisho (P6, G2), who waited while I was shown into her presence by a servant.

The interior of the house was fantastically ornate – it seemed that every surface had some foreign marvel or decoration on it, but I had little chance to examine them because Michikane was making conversation – asking where I was from, what the Phoenix lands were like, how I was adapting to Ryoko Owari. He showed great animation and interest in my answers, saying that the Isawa Woodlands sounded wonderful and that someday he would make a visit there. I immediately felt quite at ease with him.

I met his brother Asamitsu (P16) as well, and his parents Baranato (P14) and Shikibu (P18) of course. Their family seems to be a close and affectionate one – very different from the strict norm in Rokugan. I do not know if this was particular to the Ide family of Ryoko Owari, or if it is a trait of the Unicorn Clan as a whole. While it was very strange, I found it pleasant as well.

“MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER”: Nineteenth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Twenty First Day, Month of the Monkey

Today I was invited to a gathering at Iuchi Michisuna’s (P24) residence. He was a magnificent host, and soon everyone was in a jolly mood. Many were partaking in sake, even though I thought it was early in the day for such things, and I suspect some few were even smoking opium.

Bayushi Otado (P7) was drinking but not smoking, and he became very aggressive. He began to boast of the fine horse that he had gotten from his father (P5). The Unicorns present looked irked at that – apparently Otado’s father got the better of the Unicorn clan in some business deal, and bragging about the horse was Otado’s way of insulting them.

Ide Michikane stood up and said that the finest chef in Rokugan couldn’t make a simple sashimi if all he had was pork. When Otado asked what he meant by that, Michikane said that a horse was only as good as its rider.

“I’ll wager you a koku that I can win a race around the entire city. In fact, I’ll bet I can circle the city twice in the time it takes you to ride your horse around it one time.”

Otado accepted his challenge – on the condition that they raise the stakes. “One koku? That’s a bet for merchants. I’ll stake my steed against yours.”

This was a grand wager indeed, but Michikane simply took a draw from his pipe and said “As you wish.”

There was great commotion and much discussion as to how the race was to be monitored, and it was settled as follows:

- Ikoma Yoriko (P29) watched the Gate of Oni’s Teeth (L14), where the race was to begin.
- Kitsuki Jotomon (P28) volunteered to watch the Unicorn Gate (L19) and ensure that both contestants were outside the walls at that point. The contestants would be allowed to enter at the Unicorn Gate and cross the Moment’s Edge Bridge.
- True Word (P33) was placed at the Fisherman’s Gate (L25) to watch for both contestants to emerge (thus preventing a shortcut to the Bridge of Drunken Lovers). It was decided that the Peasant’s Gate (L26) would be a permissible point of return to the city, so the contestants would not have to go through the Leatherworker Quarter.

The two men looked magnificent as they lined their horses up. Otado’s steed was enormous, black as a winter night, with only a white star on its head and white bands by its hooves to break up the darkness. Michikane’s steed was smaller but still large – the color of honey, deepening into a flame auburn mane and tail. When they took off, it looked like a sunrise chasing the night.

The race began exactly at noon, and Otado made an early lead, flogging his steed without mercy. He did not look completely comfortable, however, since he had consumed a great deal of crab water (G1).

When they were out of sight, we immediately made our way towards the Bridge of the Dragon, for there we had a fine view of the cliff’s bottom by the river.

There was much discussion as we watched for the racers to emerge from the Little Gate (L15). It was agreed that Michikane was the better rider, but to circle the city twice before Otado could do so once seemed impossible.

It was Michikane we saw first – but not at the Little Gate! He had ridden past the Peasant’s Gate, through the Leatherworker Quarter and, to the cheers of his family, swam his horse across the river!

There was much discussion of how much time Michikane must have saved, swimming his horse across instead of taking one of the bridges – which of course, we now realized, would be very congested.

Our conjectures were all for nothing when we saw Otado ride forth – also from the Leatherworker Quarter. Later, I learned that True Word had told him of Michikane’s shortcut around the Moment’s Edge Bridge. Otado looked very ill, but also determined. His horse balked and reared as he reached the river, but Otado struck it with his whip and it entered just as Michikane emerged from the Leatherworker Quarter for the second time.



Michikane’s horse plunged into the water without hesitation, and it was clearly more calm in the water. Before our eyes, Michikane passed Otado, to the loud cheers of the Unicorns. Then the cheers turned to gasps; just as Michikane reached the shore, Otado was swept from his horse.

Hearing our cries, Michikane looked. He immediately turned his steed and entered the water again, reaching out for the younger samurai. Michikane pulled his opponent to shore. It

appeared that he was going to dismount to help him, but Otado pushed him away and staggered towards his horse. Michikane shrugged, turned his own steed around, and began galloping south. Otado followed.

We all mounted up and made our best speed towards the Gate of Oni's Teeth, but even though our steeds were fresh, we still were unable to beat Michikane. We arrived just as Otado charged through the gate. We could see that he had lost by a minute at most.

Both men were panting, but Michikane, smiling, gave Otado a deep bow.

"Truly, I do believe your steed is the better; I never would have won without trickery."

Otado was silent, then closed his eyes, opened them and said, "My clan has always held that 'trickery' is just a word people use for when they envy another's idea. This fine steed is now yours."

"I cannot take it," Michikane said. "Having seen how well you ride, I would not separate you."

Otado offered twice more. Michikane finally said he would take the steed only if Otado would be mortified otherwise, but that he genuinely thought the horse and Otado belonged together. Otado blinked, and in the end, kept the horse. The two rode off together, Otado scratching his head.

"MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER": Twentieth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Ninth Day, Month of the Snake

Ide Michikane is dead and the whole city grieves. I heard it from Ashidaka Michitaka (P26), and initially hoped it was just a rumor, but then Kitsu Senshi (P30) said the same thing.

He was found in an upstairs room of the Morning Star, pipe by his side. There was an empty sake cup by his hand, bottles... Michitaka said that he had been drinking liquid void (G1) as well.

(later the same day)

I've been crying, and trying to write a memorial poem to him. I can't write a thing. I wet my inkstone with tears, but all I see is a black smudge. All I can think is that this meaningless death could easily have been my own.

IDE ASAMITSU

"MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER": Twentieth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Nineteenth Day, Month of the Tiger

Today I went on the hunt I mentioned with Asamitsu (P16), his brother Michikane and Shosuro Kimi (P3). Both Kimi and I were of course no match for the brothers when it came to riding, so at one point we found ourselves riding alone as the two men pursued a fox.

P16



"I am glad Asamitsu asked you along," Kimi said. "The last time I went hunting with them I was also left behind, but had no company at all."

"It gladdens my heart to hear it."

We rode through the woods in companionable silence for a while before Kimi asked "What do you think of Asamitsu?"

"He seems to be a fine man," I said.

Behind her butterfly mask, her eyelids fluttered.

"Do you think his father may be considering you as his wife?" she asked, with a coy smile.

"I'm sure I don't know," I said. "My, what a blunt question! I thought you Scorpions were supposed to be subtle."

"There are many, *many* people in the Scorpion clan, and not all of us are alike. Besides, soon I will be in the Unicorn clan, and they are not subtle at all. I'm just practicing."

We laughed. "Is this your plot, then?" I asked. "You're trying to arrange a sister in law who's to your liking?" She just smiled a little.

"Asamitsu has many fine qualities," I said at last. "He gives every appearance of being honorable, serious, a dutiful son..."

"Yes," she said. "He is all those things. And do not forget thoughtful, like his mother (P18). Gentle and kind as well – in that he takes after his father (P14)."

"If I didn't know better, I'd say you were going to wed the wrong brother!"

When I said that, she laughed and laughed.

IDE NAKATADA

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: I have very little to report about Baranato's (P14) nephew Ide Nakatada, except that he seems to appear at every celebration held by the Ide family or the Unicorn clan, and universally fails to do or say anything to arouse comment. I have seen him in the temples on occasion, and it is said that he is an accomplished shugenja.

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A Crane of my acquaintance once said that every family has one member who avoids notice; Nakatada serves that function for the Unicorns of Ryoko Owari.

IDE SHIKIBU

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: The wife of Ide Baranato (P14) lacks the charms of the Crane or the subtlety of the Scorpion, but I feel a great affection for her – an affection that is, I think, shared by many in Ryoko Owari. She is a cheerful matron to the Unicorn clan – many of them call her “mother” to show their respect and love.

An example may illuminate; when I first arrived, Shosuro Hyobu (G9, P1) gave me the gift of a fine saddle, and Kitsuo Senshi (P30) gave me a new horse bow. These gifts were appropriate, courteously offered to the new magistrate. Shikibu visited me personally, and her gift was a tree for the garden of the magistrate's residence. It was a strange, foreign tree – she told me that it needs little water but much sun, and that the blossoms can

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be dried and brewed for tea. (It is planted in the northeast corner of the magistrate garden.) She brought her own servants to plant it, and as we watched them work she told me many things about the city – who sold the freshest fish, which *heimin* families were dependable servants, which merchants gave good value.

She left with the same wide smile she wore when she arrived, and I was greatly cheered. I felt that while others saw me come and gave gifts to my office, only she had concern for the woman who holds the office.



“MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER”: Twentieth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Seventeenth Day, Month of the Snake

That pointy-nosed little rodent Nobuko (P24) today told a piece of gossip to me – it was a bald attempt to gain my confidence. If I weren't so sad I could almost find it in my heart to pity Nobuko. Certainly she has few friends, but she has only her own odious habits to blame.

In any event, she told me that she saw Ide Shikibu at the grave of her son (P15), sobbing and pouring something from a bowl onto the ground. After Shikibu left, Nobuko went to see and said it looked like there had been blood mixed in with water and some other things.

I asked Uncle Kinto (P31) if he had heard anything about it – I'll admit, the story sounded like black magic to me – and he was concerned enough to visit the grave. When he saw whose grave it was, he nodded and told me he had heard of something similar.

It seems that in the northlands, when a child dies before its parent, the parent makes a soup that contains the parent's own

blood, and pours it on the grave to feed the child's ghost and settle it. It is supposed to apologize to the child for not dying first.

When I thought of cheerful Shikibu piercing her skin to make soup for Michikane's ghost, I started weeping and could not stop until I got to my instrument (G1). Since her son died, I have not seen her in public at all.

OTAKU GENSHI

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: Otaku Genshi is a dangerous and impetuous woman. In my first year as magistrate she and some of her servants started a brawl with some of Shosuro Korechika's (P5) vassals. I told her she was lucky that it was I who got there first and not the Samurai Squad (G10). Because she had not drawn her sword on Korechika's *heimin* and no one had been killed, I convinced Osako (P10) not to formally charge her – once Genshi had made an abject apology to Korechika.

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The very next year, she came to blows with Korechika's son Otado (P7) while in the Licensed Quarter; I believe if they had been elsewhere, it would have been swordplay. Osako cuffed her for a month.

While Genshi was cuffed, I asked her why she caused such trouble for the Bayushis. She said it was only natural for an honorable woman to hate evil. I asked what evil they had done, and she told me to read a history of the Scorpion clan. Then I asked why she lived in a city held by the Scorpions, if she hates

them so. She smiled and said I might as well ask why fishermen live near the water.

OTAKU NAISHI

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: Naishi is the younger sister of Genshi (P19) and in many ways acts as if she was the older. She is respectful, thoughtful, honest and possesses a calm demeanor her rash sister sorely lacks. It was she who explained to me the root of Genshi's anger; as with many stories of anger, it comes from shame.

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Some years ago, their cousin Otaku Isas challenged Bayushi Tomaru to a duel. When the appointed day came, Isas asked for a delay, claiming illness. Then, on the date of the delay, he vanished altogether. It is widely believed that he fled the country rather than face Tomaru.

Genshi believes that Tomaru somehow poisoned Isas before each duel, but I find it more likely that she is simply denying her cousin's cowardice.

IUCHI SADAKO

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: Iuchi Sadako is a strange young woman. I'll admit that she is clever, honorable and keen eyed – but I fear that the composition of her spirit has too much imagination in the mixture. If she still resides in Ryoko Owari when you arrive, you will soon get to know her,

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along with her outlandish tales of secret cults and mysterious creatures garbed in human form. Be warned; she is persistent, despite a complete lack of concrete evidence for her outlandish tales.



“MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER”: Twentieth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Second Day, Month of the Ox

When I woke up this morning, I had such a pain in my head that I was afraid I would die. Then I *hoped* I would die. Then I became afraid that I *wouldn't* die. Apparently I overindulged in crab water (G1) during the Liberation Day (G4) festival.

I remembered that Nakatada (P17) had said the best cure for such suffering was to steam out the toxins, so I visited the bath house (L5).

So debilitated was I that I didn't even realize that the woman settling into the pool with me was Iuchi Sadako – it helped not a bit that both of us were wearing those ridiculous gauze masks. An idiotic custom, but one that must not be transgressed or even called into question (like bowing, adultery and all venerable customs). Before I knew what was what she had entangled me in a long, rambling discussion of her theory about how the Crab forces were *really* ejected from Ryoko Owari. According to her there was a great conspiracy (of course) of sake merchants, geishas (or people pretending to be geisha – though who would bother to pretend such a thing is quite beyond my imagination) and similar lesser people who simply corrupted the Crab soldiers until they were too weak to hold the city. Naturally there was a mastermind behind all this – she said, with no hint of jest in her

voice, that she wasn't sure if it was the ninja or the secret cult of Lord Moon.

In my kindest voice, I told her that I wished my poems had half the creativity of her “theories”. She took it as a compliment, which just shows she can't be nearly as perceptive as she believes herself to be.

IUCHI MICHISUNA

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: Iuchi Michisuna is noted throughout the city as a talented musician, and is widely admired for his accomplishments as a poet. Unlike many such artisans, he has not developed an arrogant attitude; instead, he has a balanced spirit and sees his gifts in proper proportion to the rest of the world. He does have a tendency to drink, and I suspect him of indulging in opium, but I have no proof. In any event, he is not a swaggerer, and his indulgences are discreet ones.

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“MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER”: Twentieth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Twenty-Eighth Day, Month of the Snake

I have just returned from a visit to the bath house (L5) but I still feel dirty. I was a fool to think that hot water could wash away a pollution that comes from the inside, that spreads through my body with every beat of my deceiving heart.

I do not love Jocho (P2). I never did and I do not want to. My heart belongs only to Michisuna, and it was his arms that were meant to hold me.

My father once told me that oath-breaking was a double sin. It is a sin against the person to whom the promise is made, because you have disappointed and betrayed them. But he told me that I would also be sinning against myself, by being the kind of person who would break an oath.

He told me that while a lie might seem to make things easier in the moment, I would only be borrowing trouble; not just because the lie might be discovered, but because each lie would weaken my spirit and make me less able to see the truth.

My father was so wise, and I was a fool not to listen. My lies blinded me to the truth of my own heart. Only by breaking my promise to my parents, only by giving myself away, did I realize whose love I truly want – and no longer deserve.

If I become pregnant, I wonder if Jocho will marry me.

“MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER”: Twentieth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Nineteenth Day, Month of the Horse

I remember once when I had a fever. I became so weak that the blankets on my body were too heavy for me to lift. I was pinned down and stifled and could hardly breathe. When the fever broke and I could leave my bed, I felt light as a feather – like I was truly reborn and could fly away.

Today I felt the same way. I saw Michisuna – and he smiled at me! Jocho (P2) wasn't with me, so I felt I could speak freely to him... he told me how much he had missed talking with me, told me that he had felt terribly lonely since Michikane (P15) died, even with everyone around offering their consolation. “The only

thing that made me feel even a bit better was your funeral poem,” he said. I blushed so furiously that I had to hide my face behind my fan.

“It was a pale thing compared to how I felt for him,” I said. “It was the hardest poem I ever had to write.”

“It was the only thing that made me feel like anyone knew the same feelings I knew. I could still mourn, but I no longer felt I mourned alone.”

He looked away then, said his next words without looking at me. “I know there has been a... a gulf between us since my birthday,” he said. “I feel now a great regret. I don’t want us to be strangers anymore.”

Can it be that he feels he made a mistake? He didn’t make any declaration of love – but Michisuna is an honorable man and would never try to seduce me away from Jocho. If I leave Jocho, will Michisuna love me? But what if he doesn’t?



Perhaps Jocho would then realize that Osako (P10) loves him – but perhaps he would be angry that I spurned him. Osako already hates me; if Jocho hated me too, I would be an outcast in Ryoko Owari. I wouldn’t care if Michisuna loved me – but if he doesn’t? If I send Jocho away, who would marry me? What a fool I was to lie with Jocho – no man would marry a used up girl, no one wants a slattern for a wife...

If Michisuna loves me, surely he will have to show it somehow. I *knew* he didn’t like Jocho’s interest in me! I knew it from the first. If he loves me, and keeps seeing me with Jocho, he’ll have

to show his feelings. He’s an artist – he won’t be able to help himself.

On the other hand, if he does not love me, at least I won’t have given up my virginity in vain.

I stay with a man I don’t love in order to test the man I do – and to keep my shame secret. Perhaps it would be for the best if Jocho were to marry me; I fear that I am becoming quite the Scorpion with my deceptions and manipulations.

“MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER”: Twentieth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Second Day, Month of the Monkey

Is any fool worse than she who fools herself? Is any lie worse than those we tell ourselves, then cling to in a desperate hope of turning them true?

It’s all over. I added secrets to the load on my back until I had to stumble and fall, and now everyone knows. My heart has been spilled into the street for all to marvel at and step on.

I was at the House of Foreign Stories – may it burn to the ground and take its whorish mistress with it! I was with Jocho, and Michisuna was there, and I kept looking at him, trying to see if he was jealous, if he cared at all about me. For months I have been trying to gauge his feelings, and been unsure if I saw genuine love, or just a reflection of my own love and foolish hope. Tonight, my hopes have been shattered forever.

Magda (P47), that vile burlesque of a woman, was flouncing her unnatural hair around and displaying her grotesquely disproportionate breasts in a costume that was barely a veil for a decent woman. It was a nauseating display – but Michisuna was not offended. No, Michisuna stood up to sing with her – and the song was the song we had written, my words and his tune, for Michikane (P15) and Kimi’s (P3) marriage.

I had always secretly felt that the marriage song was as much about a marriage between me and Michisuna as it was about Michikane and Kimi – my words wrapped around his music, the way I’ve longed for our bodies to wrap together. And then he goes and puts it in the mouth of that foreign *slut*, that caricature of womanhood who couldn’t read a Rokugani poem to save her miserable life!

In tales, one hears of a soldier in battle who goes berserk; a red fog clouds his eyes and he cares for nothing but the death of his foes, holding his own life of no account. Hearing my words in that foreign mouth, that dark cloud came down on me, only my weapon was my tongue, not a sword.

Before I knew what was happening I was on my feet, screaming at the top of my voice at them. I do not recall exactly what words I spoke, but I remember seeing the faces turned towards me, all wide eyes and open jaws.

I told him that he was a fool to give his love to someone who wasn’t even a person, who was a harlot and a foreigner. I said that she hoped to become a little more like us and would try to steal his seed and his love so that she could convince herself. I told him that a dog would be a better object for his love than an alien woman, for at least dogs know loyalty.

Then I accused him of treachery – saying it was a crime against the nation to mix our blood with that of foreigners. I said he must be mad to follow such dirty lusts when there were women of Rokugan, women with clean blood, who would give their honor, their love and even their lives to be his wife. I said a great many things besides – that I hated him, that I was sorry I'd ever spoken a word to him or given him the least thought, and then I burst into tears and fled into the night.

The Crab Clan

KAIU SHINYA

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: Kaiu Shinya is not a social butterfly – but then, who would expect a member of his clan to be? He is a skilled weaponsmith and cares little about city politics; these two facts in concert keep him in the good graces of the nobles, even if he is taciturn by nature.

P23



In this city of merchants, schemers and politicians, Shinya is one of the few who has known battle; he lost his right leg, below the knee, in the Shadowlands. He now favors elaborate artificial legs and is rarely seen without an ornate walking stick. He honors his battle injury, and for that I should respect him.

Somehow, I cannot. Kaiu Shinya has never been other than respectful and helpful to me, but I do not like him. There is something in his glance that makes my teeth ache and my fingers

itch for a sword. I have not found the slightest indication that he is a criminal; but I fear in my heart that he is evil.

“MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER”: Nineteenth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Twenty-Sixth Day, Month of the Dog

Just last month, a wedding was announced between Kimi (P3) and Michikane (P15). Today a much less important wedding has been announced, but it is still a sweet one.

I had met Kaiu Shinya only once before, and he had made a singular impression. For the most part he is unremarkable; a heavy man with a red nose and a moustache whose style was much in fashion two years ago. Most remarkable was his right leg, which was apparently cut off under the knee while he was in the Shadowlands. (No one knows just how, though there is much speculation.) He apparently amuses himself by building elaborate replacements. Not content with a simple peg, the leg he wore when first we met had an arrangement of springs to cushion his weight while he walked. Furthermore, it was elaborately decorated with a spiderweb motif, and with each step, a mechanical spider would crawl through the webs of his leg. It looked frightfully clever, but I did not want to look too closely.

In any event, today he announced that he had arranged a marriage with a young woman of the Sparrow clan, who is expected in town within a week. He received many congratulations; today his leg was an elaborate birdcage with a live bird singing inside.

“MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER”: Twentieth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Thirteenth Day, Month of the Ox

Kaiu Shinya has caused much comment by marrying his intended after a courtship of not even three months. Considering the year that Kimi and Michikane are taking, he appears unfashionably hasty. Yet his explanation – “I feel that every day I delay our marriage is one I regret remaining unmarried,” struck me as terribly sweet and sincere.

I must say I don't think much of her; she's named Sakyo, and she seems as shy and timid as a little mouse. Also, sadly, as drab. I met her only once, when she first arrived, and nothing she did gave the impression that she would kindle such passion in the armored breast of a Crab. But who can comprehend the mystery of love?

YASUKI NOBUKO

“MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER”: Nineteenth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Eighth Day, Month of the Pig

P24

I am no longer the newest samurai in Ryoko Owari, though from the behavior of the newcomer one would hardly think her noble. Her name is Yasuki Nobuko, and she has the sharp face and wiry body of a rat or a street noodle vendor. Her actions do little to dispel either impression.



She is pushy, she leers, she insinuates, she is patently insincere in her flattery, she is too bold and too familiar, and worst of all she seems to care for little other than *commerce*. Has there ever been such a dull and tiresome woman before in the history of life? Surely not. There is no doubt in my mind that she is some sort of nadir.

The Crane Clan

ASHIDAKA NARITOKI

“MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER”: Nineteenth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Seventeenth Day, Month of the Dog

There was a great celebration today for the birthday of the Governor’s son, Shosuro Jocho (P2). Every noble in the city attended, dressed in their finest garments. It was a magnificent sight.

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I was paid a pretty compliment by an older man in Crane clan colors. He told me he had read several of my poems and was deeply touched by their sincere sentiments. I was so flustered that I didn’t even think to get his name. I later found out he was Ashidaka Naritoki – Ryoko Owari’s Emerald Magistrate!

I wonder if he has shown my verses to the Emerald Champion? That could get them read by the Emperor himself! But I’m surely being a foolish little girl if I raise my hopes so high... but shouldn’t one hope for the best?

“MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER”: Twentieth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, First Day, Month of the Horse

Today I saw the most singular and disturbing thing. I was in the market on the way to visit my Dear Friend, when I heard a great commotion. A *heimin* dashed around a corner and shoved me rudely out of the way, but before I could even shout, a horse had turned the corner at full gallop.

Riding the horse was Ashidaka Naritoki, the local Emerald Magistrate. He had a long horsewhip in his hand, and when he had closed the distance, he struck the *heimin* and knocked him to the ground. The *heimin* tried to stand, but Naritoki’s horse reared and made as if to trample him, and he fell back. Naritoki leapt to the ground and grabbed the criminal by the arm.

I didn’t see what he did next, because Naritoki’s two chief retainers, True Word (P33) and Ample (P32) rode up then, panting. They too dismounted, and soon the criminal’s hands were cuffed behind his back.

I supposed then that they would carry him off to the Civil Hall (P7), but they did not. Instead, Naritoki said something to Ample, and the criminal turned pale. Ample got a rope from his saddlebags while Naritoki put his hands to his mouth and called out “Gather round! Come, all of you! Behold – the fearsome ninja!” (T3).

As he said that, his prisoner gave a great groan – and well he should, for Ample had tied a rope to his handcuffs and looped the other end around the drain of an overhanging roof. As Naritoki called us to watch, Ample pulled the rope and hauled the man into the air – by his wrists, which were bound behind his back.

“This is the man who burgled the house of Yasuki Nobuko (P24)!” the magistrate cried. “Now you can see the face of the ninja you fear!” With that, he took his whip and gave the man a ferocious lash.

“Where are his vanishing tricks now? His miraculous escapes? His supernatural powers?” With each question, Naritoki lashed the prisoner, who cried out piteously. Naritoki’s face got redder each time he shouted and struck.

“One would think he was no more than a man! A man who thought he was clever! A man who broke into the home of his betters, and robbed them, full of contempt for the Emperor and his laws! A man sure that he would get away! Well, good people, let me assure you – he will not escape this time!” He had been punctuating each statement with a blow, and with this last statement he flew into a veritable frenzy, lashing the man until he was flecked with blood like a rain-dappled pond. He only stopped when he was winded, and then he nodded to Ample.

The great ronin pulled on the rope, hauling the prisoner higher and higher – and then he let go. I could not watch, but I still heard the crack as his head struck the cobblestone street.

“There are your ninja,” Naritoki said, and spat on the body. Then he mounted and rode off without a backwards glance.

ASHIDAKA MICHITAKA

“MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER”: Twentieth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Sixteenth Day, Month of the Dragon

In the House of the Morning Star (L23) this evening, I saw the most pathetic and disgusting spectacle – yet also a monstrously funny one. It was Ashidaka Michitaka, the cousin of our venerable Emerald Magistrate (G26), and he was drunk as a prawn in a barrel of sake.

Michitaka has a superficial resemblance to his cousin, but only in the sense that a goblin resembles a proper man. Where Naritoki is a bit stout, Michitaka is so fat his belly makes rolls beneath his robes. It is not just his flab that makes him ridiculous, however; he dresses so garishly that he’d make a color-blind Unicorn chuckle. On top of all that, he fancies himself a man of culture and refinement, when he in fact has not the fraction of a title of his cousin’s elegance and intelligence.



In him we have the perfect puppet of a buffoon, and tonight we saw him in a most amusing farce. Drunk, as I said, and mooning for the love of a geisha called Oko. A *hinin*, she still is too wise to submit to Michitaka’s embraces when he’s sober. Drunk, he’s simply too monstrous a spectacle for any but the most debased of prostitutes.

Thus we find drunk Michitaka kneeling on the ground before her door, proclaiming his undying passion between hiccups. What he did not see was that Oko was, in fact, outside her chamber with the rest of us.

Her next action was so bold and brazen that it was all we could do to keep our laughter inside. While Michitaka moaned and slobbered before her door, she slipped out the back, and soon had returned with a young geisha simply called Syrup (Tomitsu). Now, Syrup is not skilled in the arts of conversation or music, and furthermore has a long face that would be more handsome on a mare than a woman.

Oko had changed robes with Syrup – and I must now add that Syrup was a full head taller than the other woman, so Oko’s fine and colorful robe looked tiny and ridiculous on her – and Oko was begging Syrup to lie with Michitaka and pretend to be her (that is, pretend to be Oko). Syrup was not eager, and said she’d be discovered, but Oko begged, and swore Michitaka was far too drunk to know the difference. Then she pushed many coins into Syrup’s hands until Syrup said she would try.

I cannot even bring myself to imagine what happened when Syrup went into Oko’s room with Michitaka.

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“MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER”: Twentieth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Seventeenth Day, Month of the Dragon

Today my Dear Friend mentioned that Michitaka came to the silver smithy today and purchased an expensive comb from our finest craftsman. She said that he never stopped smirking and said that it was for a beautiful lady who had finally accepted his love for her.

Poor Syrup!

DOJI SUKEMARA

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: Doji Sukemara is a well respected merchant patron of the Crane clan. While he has many vassals, he does not seem to be the busybody patron that many in the city are. He seems careful to maintain time for the finer things – he is a great fancier of *ikebana*, and he told me he still tries to practice with his katana for an hour every day.

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He is of mature years. His wife is so graceful that when one visits, there is found at hand whatever one desires, but she is simultaneously so modest that it's as if one does not even see her serving you.

The Dragon Clan

KITSUKI JOTOMON

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: No one is completely sure what to make of Kitsuki Jotomon. She shows little interest in the romances which occupy the young nobles, nor aptitude for the merchant schemes which fascinate the older ones. She has one passion only, and that is swordplay.

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Make no mistake; though she seems naive and trusting, she is a dangerous woman if she has a weapon within reach. I'll give an example; I was once present for a demonstration of her skill. I'd like to say I saw it, but it was too swift to be seen. She stood before a lit candle, set onto a bamboo pole. Then she cut the candle in half down the center, along with a foot of bamboo. All this she did with such quickness that it looked like only a twitch; but she had cut the candle's wick in half as well – and both sides remained lit.

It's a telling example of her skill, but there is more to Jotomon than skill. I heard a story about her from the Strong Arm Firemen. They said that one time they found some Moment's Edge Firemen in their area of town and, since they outnumbered them, decided to give them a beating to “keep them humble”. It happened that Jotomon came upon this fracas while the leader of the Strong Arms was kicking a fallen opponent.

He said that Jotomon grabbed him and immobilized him, and then she said to him, "What are you doing? Don't you realize you could be executed for this? What if you kill him? Can't you see that he is helpless?" He told me that he was amazed that even as he struggled with her, she was concerned for his future and well-being.

Perhaps this attitude explains some of her more outlandish behaviors – specifically, she has opened a dojo located in the Merchant Quarter, not far from the southeast pier. She has a few noble students – the sons (P15, P16) of Ide Baranato (P14) study with her, along with Iuchi Sadako (P21) and a member of the Mantis clan called Shrimp (P34). She also accepts peasant students, which occasioned much outcry (as you can imagine).

When Governor Hyobu (G9, P1) learned that Jotomon was teaching *bushido* to commoners, her first thought was to enact a law forbidding such instruction. Jotomon, however, asked for an opportunity to argue her case. Hyobu agreed, and convened a panel consisting of myself, the Governor, Jocho (P2) and Yogo Osako (P10). The panel would be allowed to freely advise, but in the end it was Hyobu's sole decision.

Osako and Jocho were expecting little from Jotomon, except some transparent attempt at political maneuvering. Jotomon was certainly transparent; she said that if any student of hers was convicted of a crime, Jotomon would share in any punishment.

"It is my belief," she said, "that the code of *bushido* strengthens souls and improves those who study it. I will eject any whom I feel are unfit vessels for my knowledge, and I will accept the consequences of any failures in judgment."

Then she said she would gladly accept the law if we could answer two questions. "First, if you believe that the way of the warrior improves the soul, does it not make sense to give its improvements to those whose souls are weakest? Or is it only the samurai whose souls need improvement? Secondly – if you believe that the samurai are truly superior to the *heimin* and *hinin*, why are you afraid? Surely such inferior stuff could never be made into superior fighters?"

We had no answers. Hyobu accepted Jotomon's arguments and struck down her law. However, Osako, myself and the Thunder Guard all keep a close watch on her and her common students. There have never been any problems.

The Lion Clan

IKOMA YORIKO

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: Ikoma Yoriko is a Lion samurai-ko in the truest sense of the word. She has taken strict vows and follows them with complete rigor. I have never known her to deceive, dissemble, or do anything other than offer complete co-operation to those of higher station.

It is, perhaps, her very honor which worries me. Perhaps it is a measure of how weary this corrupt city has made me; but I

know that those of little honor consider devotees of bushido to be gullible pawns – easily led by our strong duty to what is right and wrong.



So far, this young woman has managed to avoid being ensnared by the machinations of evil men. I am afraid for her, though. As a magistrate I know better than most that the purest blossom attracts the most venomous insects.

"MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER": Twentieth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Twenty First Day, Month of the Tiger

How embarrassing! I woke up today in my home, with no idea how I got here!

Last night I went to a celebration of Ide Michikane's birthday, where I fear I indulged far too much in sake and opium. I know it's not good for me, but I feel so bored... no, lonesome at gatherings where everyone is drinking but me. So I have a drink. And that loosens my mind until a second drink seems reasonable. After a second drink, opium becomes appealing.

I remember that progression from last night – but after that is just a blank. However, my servant told me that a letter was left with me by the woman who left me here.

The letter simply said "You must be very sad to wish to lose yourself so. I wish I could help you with your sorrow." It was signed with Ikoma Yoriko's chop.

I'm filled with shame. Yoriko is as high above me as the clouds are above the bottom of the ocean. Not only is she of high station, and beautiful, but it is widely held that her honor is above reproach. Her samurai-ko vows include an oath of celibacy. I've

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heard that many men have tested her – the rumors say Bayushi Korechika (P5) and Shinjo Sanefusa (P12) have both made advances, and been rebuffed.

From now on, I am going to take her as my standard. She is only a few years older than me. Like me, she lives by herself, far from ancestral lands, in a city with few people from her clan. If she can live a life of such exceptional virtue, then I can surely avoid drunkenness and opium, and lead a life of normal virtue at least.

KITSU SENSHI

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: Kitsu Senshi is a pillar of virtue in this antheap of vice. A shugenja, she has been devoted to the spirits for over thirty years now. She has been an unremitting and inexorable supporter of the Emperor's justice since my arrival, and I have been glad of it.

P30



The Phoenix Clan

ASAKO KINTO

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: I have seen him only a few times; he seems to be something of a recluse, preferring the company of his home and his library to that of his peers. I did, however, consult him one time on a question of

P31

botany. He is known to be an expert on the subject, and a strange blossom had been found in a hoofprint left by bandits.



He is a tiny man of tremendous age, and gives an impression of distance common to many who are closer to the next world. I had to remind him of my name several times, and at least once recall to him why I had visited. He did, however, inform me that the blossom was from a creeper which grew only along the banks of the River of Gold at high altitudes. This clue eventually led me to the bandit hideout and the extermination of those particular criminals.

It is my understanding that he is also something of a historian.

"MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER": Nineteenth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Ninth Day, Month of the Horse

It had been several years since I visited Ryoko Owari – but still, its walls upon the hill, and the great jagged stones of the Gate of Oni's Teeth (L14) still made my eyes widen with wonder, just as when I was a girl.

Uncle Kinto, however, seemed to have shrunk. I did not recall him as being so tiny, so white haired, so frail! He looks like a ricepaper kite to be blown away in the lightest wind.

He was delighted to see me, as always, and begged me to spend my first night in the city as his guest; although I was eager to see my own home, I couldn't refuse him.

After a fine supper, he took me out back to his garden. It, at least, has not shrunk! In fact, he has obtained a parcel of land in back of his, leaving his modest home at the front of a large and

as always – but he had something else to show me as well. While digging in his garden, he found the stones of an ancient foundation. He told me he used a scroll to speak with the spirits of the stones, and they answered him in a foreign tongue! Convinced that he had found an ancient site, he has been digging industriously in the area and has unearthed several strange statues. He showed them to me – their craftsmanship is very unusual. They appear very detailed, but strangely stylized – as if they weren't trying to show the thing they obviously are. He says that they are statues of Naga – women and men who are great serpents below the waist.

“MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER”: Twentieth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Second Day, Month of the Sheep

I have become sick unto death of the nagging of Uncle Kinto. I have tried to be a dutiful relative, but I can no longer stomach it. Last month he came and criticized my choice of companions – not stridently, of course, but in his tenuous, hesitating, cautious way. He couldn't come out and condemn my life, but he tried (in his bumbling fashion) to make it clear that he felt Jocho (P2) was a bad influence and that I should spend my time on more “enlightening” pursuits. Every time I received him, it was the same. It got to be so unpleasant that I left instructions for the servants to tell him I was out, or indisposed. He finally realized I don't want to see him, so now of course he's writing letters.

It's agonizing; I know that he loves me, and is only doing what he thinks is best – but he's trapped in the past, and wants what's best for the little girl I was. If only he knew how things have changed for the woman that I am.

Poor Uncle Kinto. I suppose I can't blame him for living in the past. After all, what does his present offer him? A frail body, a wandering mind, and a shameful, decadent niece.

Minor Clans and Ronin



AMPLE / ONKA

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: The ronin called Ample is well named – he is a grotesque heap of muscle and fat. He works for a gambler called Lean Meat (P50) providing what he calls “threat services”. Consequently, he has had a few run-ins with me, Osako (P10) and the Thunder Guard (G10) after snapping people's arms for defaulting on a debt.

Ample is usually open to reason, once he respects you. He is a fairly stupid man, and he consequently has little control over his emotions. He's not brash; it takes a bit of provocation to upset him, but once he's angry he is extremely difficult to calm. In addition to being very strong, he is proficient with the jujutsu attack known as the Two Way Throw.

(See P25 and P14.)

P32



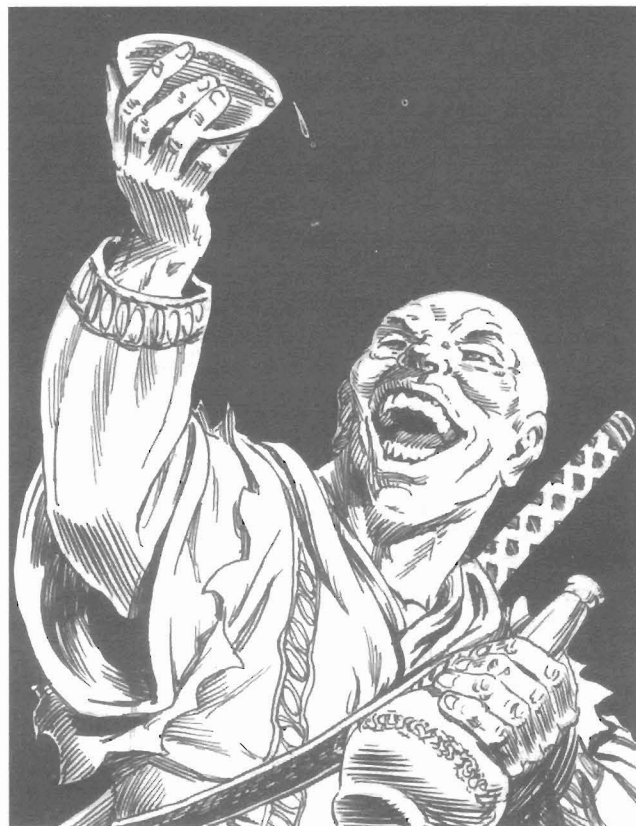
TRUE WORD/SHINGON

"MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER": Nineteenth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Twenty-Third Day, Month of the Dog

P33

Today I had a disturbing encounter with a man called True Word, who is one of Naritoki's (P25) assistants. I was at the silver smithy visiting my Dear Friend when he entered and began regarding one of our decorated lacquer boxes. He stated his admiration of it in no uncertain terms, but seemed unwilling to haggle with my Dear Friend or meet our price.

Then he implied that a shop with so many precious things was always in danger of robbery. I said I had utmost confidence in the vigilance of the magistrates. Fondling the box, he looked right in my eyes and told me that a happy magistrate, with fine things to be proud of, is more vigilant. I was dumbfounded by such open corruption and simply played the simpleton until he left in disgust.



SHRIMP/KOEBI

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: This sailor owes allegiance to the Mantis clan, but seems to have little care for duty to his lord when he is this far upstream. On one occasion I found island silks on his ship that had no tariff mark on them; I had to confiscate the lot.

P34

I have kept a sharp eye on him; however, I must say that his behavior has either improved or gotten much more crafty since he began studying with Kitsuki Jotomon (P28).



JAW/AGO

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: This ronin's nickname comes from a disfigurement he received from a tetsubo. He is a sullen, morose and uncooperative man, much given to fits of complaining and bitter speculation on unpleasant futures.

His self pity is as irritating as his excuses – and he has many, because he has much to be excused for. I have cuffed him for selling sake without a license (he later admitted it was stolen) and given him a public beating for being involved in a brawl in the Licensed Quarter.

P35



DOVE/HATO

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: The ronin called “Dove” is something of a conundrum to me. She works as a *yojimbo* (bodyguard) for hire, and apparently is quite proficient at her trade. On two separate occasions she has killed *heimin* – one member of the Strong Arm Firemen and three Fire Eaters (G12). She claimed the Strong Arm was threatening a merchant she had been hired to protect. (He has since relocated far downstream to Garden Under Shadow city.) In the second instance, she said the Fire Eaters had made violent advances.

No one knows much about her past; she herself will say only that she was hired by the Crab for work in the Shadowlands – and that it was her experiences there that turned her hair white.

P36

Priests and Monks

ABBOT OKAWA

“MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER”: Twentieth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Twenty-Eighth Day, Month of the Rabbit

I will never return to the Temple of Daikoku, even if I grow so old as to outlive mountains! I have never been so insulted and doubt I ever shall be again. What sort of deformed soul repays gratitude with malice?

P37



This morning I went to give thanks for my good fortune, and as I left the temple, I saw the abbot himself. He was smiling, but as I bowed to him and gave him my name, his smile vanished.

"I have come to show my gratitude," I told him, "For I have been blessed by Daikoku with wealth."

"You are wrong," he said, and his voice was as flat as his eyes. "You have been given Daikoku's curse."

Naturally, I was taken aback.

"Curse? But... but I've been lucky! I've made a great deal of money since I came here!"

"That is the curse; wealth unearned brings only misfortune to a weak soul!"

"But how can wealth be a curse?"

Instead of answering my question, he reached into a pouch and pulled out a heavy roll of copper coins. With all his might, he flung it at me. I cried out, and he pulled out another roll. I started to run, as he hurled roll after roll at my back.

"Wealth is only a reward to those who know how to spend as wisely as they can earn! Learn this lesson, or Daikoku's curse will put you in your grave!"

I am mottled with bruises. Jocho (P2) is going to complain to the magistrate (P10).

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: I saw little of the Abbot of the Daikoku Monks while I was in Ryoko Owari, but I had heard rumors of extremely unorthodox behavior. The one time I did encounter him was during a festival, in which he told me quite cheerfully

that I could expect to make little improvement to Ryoko Owari's social order.

"Can a crow teach a fish to fly?" he asked me. "Certainly not – and a fish would have no use for the knowledge. But one fish can teach another."

I asked him the meaning of this riddle, and he just laughed. "Now the crow would learn to swim?"

THE MONK JIROHEI

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: The monk Jirohei, who has authority over the temple's finances and is in charge of paying imperial and local taxes, is in all ways a more respectful and helpful man than his abbot. He has never been late with his tax payments, and is always exactly precise with his debts. In any case where you are dealing with the Monks of Daikoku, I strongly recommend you gain the assistance of this individual.

P38



PRIESTESS MEIYO

"MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER": Nineteenth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Sixteenth Day, Month of the Sheep

Today I went to the Temple of the Sun Goddess and was fortunate enough to see a service led by the high priestess Meiyo. She is very old, and does not hold services on any regular schedule.

P39



She is a tiny woman who moves with such grace and delicacy that she does not seem to walk, but float along. Although I have seen the ceremony she performed hundreds of times in my life, it was as if her very simplicity reinvented it for me. While she was speaking, it felt as if sunlight was falling on my soul.

Merchants

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: The city of Ryoko Owari is full of merchants, and giving a full accounting of them would be tiresome and pointless. I have described a few of the most important for this dossier; information on any other merchant can be had from Yogo Osako (P10) or another local magistrate. Be warned, however; when a merchant chooses a Scorpion as a patron, the decision is often made with the belief that the patron will protect the merchant from magistrates as much as from bandits.



SHARP/SURUDOI

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: I have exiled no fewer than three of Sharp's employees for opium smuggling – the last one he gave up voluntarily, mouthing sentiments about wanting to “clean his house”, but I suspect he was simply making a pretense to save his own skin. He is a vassal of Bayushi Korechika (P5), who is a loud and belligerent defender of his merchant interests.

Sharp owns a number of barges and specializes in moving goods up and down the coast between the Scorpion domains and the Crab lands. To complicate matters, he also has a legitimate license to transport raw opium down the river for medicinal purposes. I have pressured Yogo Osako (P10) not to renew his license, but against my wishes she has done so.

P40



SUBTLE / BIMYO

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: Sharp's (P40) cousin is older, wiser and more prosperous – possibly because his patron is Shosuro Hyobu herself (P1, G9). I have encouraged him to try to exert some control over his venal kinsman, but to no avail. I can only hope that Sharp will learn from example.

P41

Subtle is also an exporter, but unlike his brother he transports his goods by land, taking them through Beiden Pass to the east, and then into the heart of Rokugan. He moves a great many goods, but his primary interests are sake, silks, timber and fine ceramics.



WATCHFUL / JITTU

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: Watchful's patroness is the fearsome Soshi Seiryoku (P9) herself. No one who works for her has ever been caught in illegal dealing (though there have been a suspicious number of "accidental deaths" each time suspicion has fallen on her enterprises). She is a nervous mouse of a woman whose dread of her mistress outweighs even the threat of torture.

P42

My suspicions of her mistress make me feel that there is something dirty in her dealings, but I have been unable to prove anything.



HORSE/UMA

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: Horse was once a vassal of the Shinjo family (P11, P12) but has recently switched her allegiance to Bayushi Korechika (P5), who made her a remarkably generous offer. I heard that Horse will be exempt from all formal duties to Korechika for a year, in exchange for her loyalty.

P43

Horse runs an extensive stable which has produced some of Ryoko Owari's finest steeds. There are rumors that Korechika is pressuring her to concentrate less on producing a few outstanding mounts; instead, she is to produce large numbers of steeds of lesser (but still good) quality.

This makes me deeply suspicious. Through Sharp (P40), Korechika already has a well developed river transport network. If Sharp can get a supply of fine horses as well, he could begin to compete with his cousin's land transport business.

I wouldn't care a fig for such merchant maneuvers if I didn't suspect Sharp of being Bayushi's opium smuggler. That suspicion makes me deeply uneasy about him forging paths into Rokugan's heart.



BUILDER/TATERU

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: Builder is the most prosperous of Doji Sukemara's vassals (P27). He oversees a group of carpenters, and has become well regarded as a reliable builder. This has, of course, made him a target for Scorpion malice. Sukemara, I am happy to say, has shown a remarkable talent for turning Scorpion ploys against each other and coming out unscathed in the end. Nonetheless, Builder is probably at risk, despite his wealth.

P44



WHISPER/SASAYAKU

“MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER”: Twentieth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Twenty-Eighth Day, Month of the Dragon

P45

I'm outraged! Today my Dear Friend informed me that the merchant Whisper – a disgusting lickspittle working for that rat-faced Nobuko (P24) – has been selling jewelry that uses patterns and motifs from my craftsmen! Not only is he stealing their ideas, he uses cheap copper and adulterated silver, and is putting them on caravans – hoping people will mistake them for the real thing!

My worst suspicions of him are confirmed. I can't very well go to Yogo Osako (P10) – I know what kind of reception I'd get there. Naritoki is unlikely to care about a strictly merchant complaint. I've asked Jocho (P2) for advice. He just smiled and told me not to worry about it.

“MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER”: Twentieth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Twenty-Ninth Day, Month of the Dragon

Today a group of Jocho's Thunder Guards (G10) went into Whisper's shop and “accidentally” knocked over the cases holding the jewelry with stolen designs. Apparently the merchant began complaining loudly, and got a few teeth knocked out for his trouble.

I don't know... while I'm glad that the problem is settled, I wish Jocho had found a more subtle way to fix things. But I suppose the threat of violence only works when there's genuine vio-

lence behind it. He tells me that all of Rokugan's social order is based on violence – and I find it difficult to argue against him.

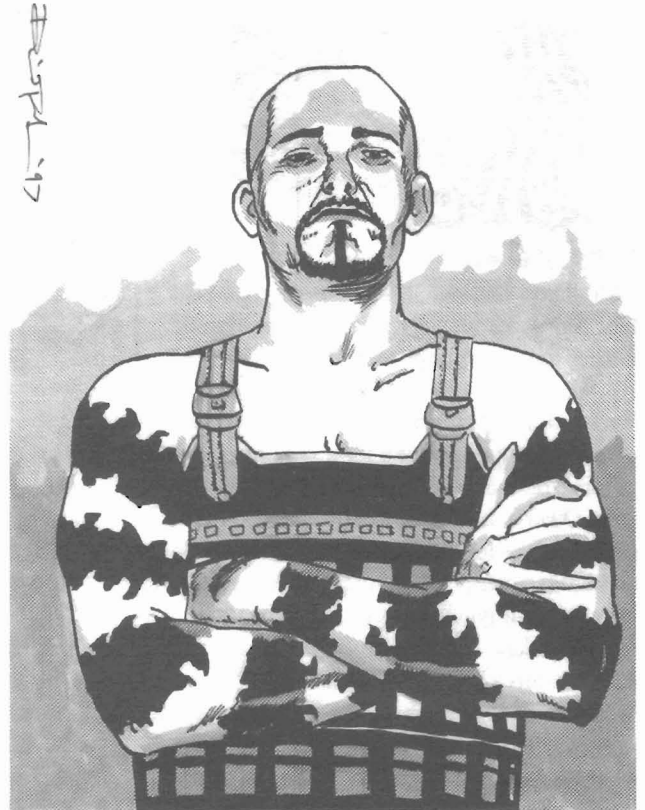
The Licensed Quarter

GATE/KADO

“MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER”: Twentieth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Twenty-Eighth Day, Month of the Ox

P46

It's been a cold, ugly day. The snow has been on the ground long enough to pick up the stains of mud and horse urine. Michikane (P15) wanted to go to the Licensed Quarter, and would not be dissuaded. Bored, I agreed to go as well, and begged him to invite Michisuna (P22). Soon, a great group of us had gathered, and were waiting impatiently while servants chopped our boats free of ice for the short sail to the island.



As I mentioned before, there is a large man called Gate who guards the entry to the Floating World; a samurai cannot reach the Licensed District from the dock without going through his shop, which is called “Swords Polished.” (L20) Similarly, you cannot leave his shop unless you've left your weapons with him – along with a sum of money to polish them. I know that this is simply a ruse to allow samurai to surrender the swords of their grandfathers without losing face – but I'm told that he (or an

assistant) actually does polish the swords, and does a fine job of it too.

Today I realized something that I guess I must have seen before, but never really thought about. There is a strange attitude between Gate and the visitors to the island. Gate is a ronin, but he doesn't act like one – he is not diffident (like some) or sly (like others) and he lacks the habit of shame that most ronin seem to instinctively possess. He carries himself well; not with the arrogant pride of a young duelist, but like an old general. My noble friends all respond to this like pups around a grand hunting hound; they are respectful, almost humble. He always looks everyone in the eye, and sometimes they are afraid to meet his.

He behaves as if he is the Governor of Teardrop Island, and Swords Polished is his estate.

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: I first met Gate a long time ago. I had just taken my vows; he was a sergeant in the Lion clan infantry, and went by the name Akodo Yogodayu. Yogodayu and I became close friends, and served together at Beiden Pass.

The man I knew then was brash and a little arrogant – he took great pride in his ancestors' deeds of renown and sought to match them in valor.

It was his love of his own family history that led to his downfall. In Ikoma Castle he found documents that contradicted what he had always been taught about his grandfather, Akodo Ippai. He never tired of telling the story of how Ippai had held Beiden Pass with only twenty samurai against a thousand Scorpions until their relief could arrive.

What the document showed was that Ippai had not been present at all; he had left his men there to present a false front of greater force while he retreated to a superior position. The twenty men – including Ippai's own son – were left to die so that he could retreat and protect the bulk of his forces. Ippai then lied about the battle – not only to conceal his numbers (which led to a later victory) but to protect his family reputation as well.

Yogodayu was devastated and asked his daimyo for permission to tell the world the truth about his ancestor, and then commit *seppuku* to cleanse the stain from his family honor. The daimyo refused, saying that a story of valor was more important than a lie from the distant past. Yogodayu was shocked that his lord would allow his family to believe a falsehood and continue to honor a coward. (At least, Yogodayu believed Ippai was a coward.) The daimyo told him that if Yogodayu felt ashamed of his family, he could be relieved of the burden. Yogodayu chose to leave his family, and has not gone by the name Yogodayu since that time.

He came to Ryoko Owari and has lived here ever since.

I would beg my successor not to tell Gate that you know of his past; he has suffered tremendously and deserves no punishment past what he inflicts on himself. He has a tremendous sense of honor; perhaps it is misplaced, but it is strong nonetheless. He will keep his word and be an invaluable ally to those he deems worthy.



MAGDA

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: Magda is a foreign woman with strangely tangled yellow hair and sky colored eyes. She owns and runs the House of Foreign Stories (L22) as a vassal of Shinjo Sanefusa (P13) and his father (P11).

As a foreigner, her position in Rokugan is tenuous; she can only remain in Ryoko Owari as long as her papers are renewed by the Emerald Magistrate every year. This gives you a considerable threat to hold over her head. Judiciously applied, this pressure can yield a great deal of information. (There is an old Scorpion saying; "Hearts are the depositories of secrets; lips are their locks and tongues are their keys." The mistress of a geisha house is privy to many things that even a magistrate does not know.)

Magda is aware of her position, but is also wise enough to know that removing her will cause as many problems for a magistrate as it would solve. She can be pushed – but not too far.

P47



PRECIOUS/KICHO

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: Precious is the most prominent geisha at the House of the Morning Star (L23) and as such is the unofficial queen of Teardrop Island and the Licensed District. While Hyobu (P1, G9) may reign over the political world of Ryoko Owari, and Jocho (P2, G10) controls the military, in matters of gossip, fashion and (most important) social favor, the influence of Precious is second to no one.

P48

This raises the question of what sort of woman she is; the answer is that I cannot say. She is always traditional, compliant, friendly, respectful – and impenetrable. There is a sense of danger in every conversation with Precious, because it is absolutely impossible to know if she means what she says, or if she is simply saying what you want to hear. (She never says anything that anyone would *not* want to hear; it's one of her many talents.)

The only words one can apply to her with certainty are “beautiful” and “influential”. Every other impression could be a false one deliberately given. It is impossible to know the heart behind the face.

“MEMOIRS OF AN OPIUM EATER”: Nineteenth Year in the Reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Fifteenth Day, Month of the Dog

I was at the Morning Star this evening when Precious was singing. I found myself looking around at the men in the audience – each had a rapt expression. Some looked as if they were in actual pain, while others gazed with longing and parted lips.

After her song, Precious came by my table and introduced herself. I complimented her on her singing, and she looked away modestly.

“It must be very flattering to see so many admiring stares,” I said. “They call you the Queen of the Nightless City.”

She smiled, but as she looked in my eyes, I thought I saw sadness. “Perhaps,” she replied. “But I am not even a citizen of the world of sunlight!”

JEWEL/HOSEKI

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: What Precious (P48) is today – the arbiter of fashion and the ruler of the demimonde – Jewel was ten years ago. No longer under the direct gaze of admirers, Jewel is content to stand behind Precious and guide her.

P49



Jewel is the owner of the House of the Morning Star (L23) and is a vassal to Shosuro Hyobu (P1, G9). Even though a *hinin*, she is no one to trifle with – and unlike Precious, Jewel has a discernable agenda.

That agenda is her own wealth and aggrandizement. Since Jewel's fortunes are yoked to Hyobu's, she pursues her agenda with the governor's full support.

She is a crafty, avaricious and manipulative woman. She has access to a great store of money, a greater degree of social influence, and operates largely above the law.

Her immediate goal is the destruction of the House of Foreign Stories.

The Fisherman Quarter

LEAN MEAT/AKAMI

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: Sometimes I wonder what would have happened if I had just killed Lean Meat the gambler when I had the chance.

He is a scoundrel, and largely without honor, but he has a peculiar and undeniable charm. He runs a floating dice game in the Fisherman Quarter – never to be found in the same location twice, it meets once a week and the stakes are high. Though occasional violence is unavoidable at such meetings, Lean Meat has a knack for making the game more important than the money. I have heard several times that he will not accept bets if losing would leave the bettor destitute. When asked about this, he says that it is foolish to kill a cow for leather when it is still giving milk – but I suspect his motives are as merciful as mercenary.

P50



In short – he is a criminal, but one who knows his place. He runs a game that is largely harmless, and if he were removed, it is unlikely that so forgiving a gambler would take his place.



SHORTCUT/CHIKAMICHI

As I leave Ryoko Owari, I find myself thinking of Shortcut surprisingly often. He is thirteen as I depart – my successor will see him grow into manhood.

P51

Shortcut first saw me during my fight with the Fire Eaters. He did not approach me then, but later he told me (in his childish, excited fashion) of his admiration for my swordplay. (He was then only eleven years old.)

I explained to him that swordplay is only the most superficial level of bushido, and he seemed fascinated. Seeing an opportunity to teach at least one child about honor, I told him my real strength came from the knowledge that I was doing a noble deed.

Imagine my surprise when, a week later, he came and told me about an extortionist threatening to sink ships in the southwest harbor.

From that moment on, Shortcut became my eyes and ears around the southwest piers. As he aged, he became well known throughout the Fisherman Quarter, where he now works as a messenger and courier.

If I had hoped to mold him into a miniature, *heimin* samurai I have certainly failed; Shortcut is too much a creature of the streets, too crafty and slippery and self interested. Yet I have given him a sense that justice exists and that there are higher things than self interest.

Perhaps I'm a fond old woman; but I can see in him a better future for Ryoko Owari. Perhaps he can be the first of a new

breed – still cunning and self interested, but without the brutal edge that has left its mark on so many in this city.

YELLOW/KIRO

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: Yellow – or “Captain Yellow” as she prefers to be called – is the captain of a riverboat that plies the waters between the City of the Rich Frog and the Scorpion Clan Palace. Her vessel is called the Bullfrog, and she makes Ryoko Owari her port of call because her sponsor is Shosuro Gobei (P4). Gobei seems more concerned with ensuring a steady supply of his wares both up and down the river than he is with strictly enforcing his right of taxation upon her.

P52



I strongly suspect that she has a secondary business – smuggling. It may be a coincidence that she often schedules a voyage when there is an intense criminal manhunt in the city. I have never found fugitives or passengers without papers hiding on her ship – but when she takes one of her conveniently timed voyages, the criminal sought has a way of never turning up at all.

The Leatherworker Quarter

EYEBROWS/MAYU

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: I wish I could take credit for employing this endlessly useful *eta*, but I'm afraid that honor goes to my predecessor, Isawa Choyo.

P53

Eyebrows is an herbalist and surgeon for the Leatherworkers, and also has some status within their fire-fighting league (which also serves as a *de facto* police force). When she wrote her dossier for me, Choyo stressed Eyebrows' proficiency at a skill he calls “dead reading.” This is nothing less than the ability to gain information from observing a dead body.



While this may sound like black magic, I assure you it is completely mundane. It is simply a matter of keen eyes and knowledge of certain signs – much as a skilled hunter knows how find tracks where game has passed. It seems that among the *eta*, the morticians are also the community healers. (It's appalling to think of one individual serving the dead and living alike – but that's why they're *eta*, after all.) While preparing the dead for burial, these healers have learned to see signs that indicate the cause of death. Eyebrows is so skilled that he can look at a man killed by a sword blow and say if he died quickly (from shock) or slowly (by bleeding to death).

Dead reading has proven invaluable on many occasions. In fact, Eyebrows is not limited to reading the dead; by looking at an

injury, he can tell what sort of weapon inflicted it, how long ago, and from which direction the attack originated.

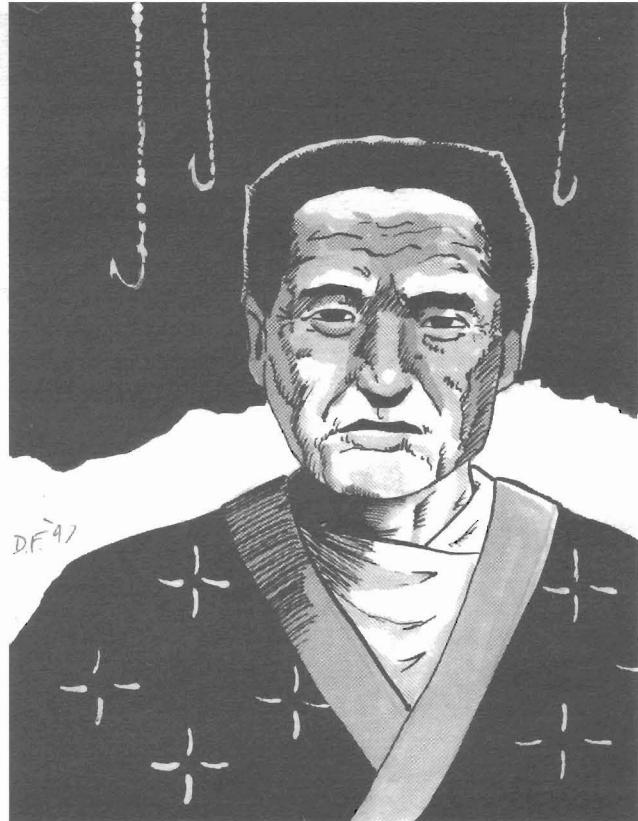
Although working with an *eta* may seem unpleasant, I assure you that Eyebrows knows his place and is respectful at all times.



RASPY/OIGOE

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: The Leatherworker known as Raspy is the headman of their community – inasmuch as they can be said to have a leader (or a community, for that matter). He is a crusty old man, but like Eyebrows (P53) (who seems to be some sort of apprentice or protege) he is well aware of his station in life.

P54



PITIFUL/ITOSHI

SHIGEKO'S DOSSIER: Like Eyebrows (P53), Pitiful is an *eta* whose services have great value to an Emerald Magistrate. I retained Pitiful as my torturer.

P55

He does not look like an inquisitor; he is older than me, and furthermore is missing his legs beneath the knees. He was given the name Pitiful partly because of this injury, but also (he tells me) because the Leatherworkers believe that an *eta* who accepts money to torment others in this life is doomed to be an *eta* in the next life as well. I suppose even the *eta* need someone to look down upon.

While I rarely opted to watch Pitiful at work, I became aware that he has an unusual style. He seems to develop a strange sort of empathy with his victim that makes them surrender all the sooner. I once heard him say "This suffering is your choice; I am not a cruel man, but you must endure this by your own will. You know how to make me stop – but I cannot stop hurting you until you allow me to cease."

One prisoner said that Pitiful's kindness is the cruelest of his weapons.





Section Four

***Threats to
Public Order***

Threats to Public Order

The loss of a magistrate is a tragedy – doubly so when the loss is in such a sudden and unexpected fashion. I owe you a debt of gratitude for your swift acceptance of Naritoki's assignment.

Naritoki reported to me personally every month; I had not thought the situation in Ryoko Owari severe enough to merit multiple magistrates. Naritoki's death has proved me wrong, which is why the group of you have been assigned to this troublesome city. As is customary in these situations, only one of you will have to report to me each month, freeing the others to maintain order in the city.

Based on Naritoki's reports and my own observations, these are the primary threats to public order in Ryoko Owari.

Naritoki's Assassin

T1

By far the most serious threat is the blatant murder of an Emerald Magistrate. An attack on a magistrate is an attack on the Emperor, and therefore an attack on Rokugan. Any city where the magistrates are not feared or respected is a cancer in the throat of our nation.

Ashidaka Naritoki (P25) died, along with one of his deputies, a man called True Word (P33), between the hours of the Ox and the Hare, on the third day of the month of the Snake. He was found in the neighborhood of the Little Gate (L15). There were no witnesses.

Naritoki was found inside the burned wreckage of his own carriage. His body was examined by an *eta* called Eyebrows (P53) who said that the body had been burned and stabbed through the carriage walls. The carriage itself was badly burned, and the harnesses were cut. Furthermore, the door of the carriage had apparently been blocked by a wooden pole.

True Word was found eight paces from the front of the wagon, several scrolls scattered around his body. Again, the *eta* Eyebrows examined the body and said that he had been beaten and stabbed by short, bladed weapons – possibly *kama*, *yari* or *tanto*. True Word was found clutching his katana, but he had not drawn it.

The position of his body indicates that he died on his knees. The *eta* said that there was a strong, acrid smell around the body's face, and that True Word's face, hair and kimono were wet. It is believed that someone sprayed strong vinegar in True Word's eyes in order to prevent him from reading his scrolls, and then cut him down while he was blinded.

At the same time that True Word was being attacked, it seems likely that someone wedged the door of Naritoki's carriage shut and set the carriage on fire. The speed with which the coach burned on a wet and rainy night raises the suspicion that the coach was sabotaged earlier – coated with some flammable substance to aid the assassination. While he was trapped in the burning carriage, Naritoki's assassins struck at him through the walls. In all likelihood, they intended only to keep him trapped until the flames and smoke could finish him off.

Fade/Kaeru

T2

The nickname "Fade" has been given to a bandit who has plagued Ryoko Owari and its vicinity for two years running. It stems from his ability to evade pursuit – an ability that is fast becoming legendary, to the chagrin of both the Emperor's magistrates and the Thunder Guards (G10) of Shosuro Hyobu (P1). A list of crimes attributed to him follows.

- Two years ago, in the month of the Tiger, Fade took a silk caravan by surprise and captured the entire cargo. Reports vary, but it seems that he and six of his followers were mounted. These mounted bandits were engaged to draw off the caravan's guards. When most of the guards were off in pursuit, another dozen bandits, on foot, attacked the main body of the caravan and captured it.

- That same year, in the month of the Snake, Fade and his gang intercepted a shipment of gold on the Road Once Hidden. This time, they attacked an inn in the middle of the night, capturing everyone inside and locking them in the basement. When the shipment arrived, Fade and his bandits were masquerading as the innkeeper and guests. After drugging most of the guards, the remaining defenders were easily overpowered.

- Also, in the month of the Monkey, Fade and his gang assaulted a Scorpion village while the tax collector was present. The bandits made off with the entire tax payment. Reliable reports describe at least twenty bandits – all mounted, and several in armor.

- The next year, again in the month of the Tiger, the bandits assaulted a merchant caravan at night in pitch blackness. Possibly the bandits had some sort of black magic to help them see at night, but another theory is that they simply kept their eyes hidden for some days (or weeks?) before the raid, giving them sensitive night eyes. In any event, they were there and gone before the caravan could even mount a coherent defense.

The caravan leader, who was formerly an officer in the Scorpion cavalry, said that the attack resembled a “classic Unicorn lightning raid.”

- In the month of the Dragon, Fade ambushed a group of Scorpion shugenja who were travelling from Yogo Shiro to Shiro no Soshi. A fierce battle ended with two of the priests dead, along with six of the bandits. After the shugenja surrendered, Fade made them strip naked, and it was in that condition that they returned to Yogo Shiro. The three chief shugenja were ordered to commit *seppuku*, and three of their four acolytes followed suit.

- In the month of the Horse that same year, Fade and his bandits attacked a group on their way from Kyuden Bayushi to celebrate Shosuro Hyobu's (P1) birthday. For the first time, the bandit underestimated his opponents. Not only were the bandits repulsed with heavy casualties, one of Fade's henchmen was captured alive. At first the bandit was too afraid of his master to speak, but under torture he revealed the location of one of Fade's hideouts in the Hidden Forest. However, before he could be persuaded to reveal more information, he escaped from prison (L7) – quite possibly with aid from the outside.

As an aside, it was not long after that escape that Naritoki executed one of the prison guards for involvement in a similar jail break (T3).

- In the Month of the Monkey, a tax collector returning from several local villages was ambushed. Though he was heavily guarded, the bandits attacked first with a volley of arrows – ensuring that their numbers compensated for the superior skill of the tax collector's guards. Four guards died in the ensuing melee, and took only two bandits with them.

- Fade's depredations have become so well known that by this year, many merchants are choosing to move their goods by boat rather than caravan. Fade has adapted. In the month of the Tiger, a barge was assaulted with burning arrows and stones from a crude catapult as it passed a cliff to the south of Ryoko Owari. As the sailors tried to quench the flames and escape, the barge was surrounded by three small fishing boats full of bandits. The sailors were overwhelmed and put ashore. Their boat was found the next day, ten miles downstream. Interestingly, the bandits had gone to the trouble of scuttling it; instead of abandoning it for salvage, they chose instead to prevent its rightful owners from reclaiming it.

- Finally, just last month, Fade and his gang – now numbering at least thirty-five men – brazenly attacked a caravan of weapons and armor destined for the Towers of the East and West Eyes (L28). Initially the soldiers seemed to repulse the attackers, but Fade continued to harass them. Making quick attacks whenever



they moved, he forced them to stand and face him in disadvantageous terrain. In the end, nine guards were killed, along with a dozen of Fade's men, but the convoy was captured. It included ten suits of heavy armor, twenty suits of light armor, fifty longbows, three score of arrows, sixty spears and twenty swords.

Fade now has a fortune in stolen weapons to sell, but it is my suspicion that he will keep as much armament as he can. His band has grown from a small nuisance to a major menace in a short span of years; at this rate, he will lead a private army within four years.

Naritoki strongly suspected Fade of being a disgraced samurai. His skills at mounted strategy argue for a former Unicorn, while his leadership skills and ability to recruit loyal followers might indicate a Lion. Both clans deny even the possibility, of course.

The most noteworthy thing about Fade's actions and strategy is his agenda. Bandits seek gold, and so does Fade. However, most bandits are content to make one raid a year and live off the proceeds until they're out of cash. Fade is much more active, which argues for a purpose beyond survival or greed.

A majority of the commerce around Ryoko Owari occurs on behalf of the Scorpion clan, but there is a significant amount of trade for other clans as well. Fade, however, attacks only Scorpion caravans and tax collectors.

Perhaps he has a grudge against Scorpions. Perhaps he has some source of intelligence that only spies on Scorpions. Perhaps he strikes at Scorpions because there are more of them. Perhaps you will find out when you catch him – but I find it more likely that you will not catch him until you find out.

The Ryoko "Ninja"

T3

Periodically, Matsu Shigeko would report that a crime in Ryoko Owari had been blamed on "ninja". While both of us scoffed at the idea, it has now become clear that there is a criminal gang operating in Ryoko Owari who claim to be the mythical "ninja" in order to intimidate peasants.

Though hardly the supernatural opponents that ninja stories describe, this gang is still widespread, violent and capable. Naritoki had made them his first priority in recent years, and succeeded in breaking part of their power before his death. One plausible theory is that his assassins were these fraudulent "ninja". A timeline of "ninja" activity in Ryoko Owari follows.

- In Matsu Shigeko's first year as magistrate (five years ago), a store that sold kimonos was burned to the ground in the Month of the Dragon. The shopkeeper claimed that "the ninja" had done it, but no further progress was made.

- That same year, in the Month of the Dog, a merchant's wife claimed that a "dark clad ninja" had accosted her, threatened her with a shuriken, and stole a valuable necklace from her while she was in the Licensed Quarter.

- The next year, in the Month of the Tiger, a samurai claimed that he was assaulted by a gang of ten ninja. Upon investigation, Shigeko learned that the samurai had in fact been beaten by a ronin called Ample (P32). Ample was arrested, and when questioned denied any connection to ninja, claiming that the samurai had defaulted on a gambling debt. When confronted with Ample's testimony, the samurai recanted, admitting that he'd been ashamed to admit defeat at the hands of a ronin.

- In the Month of the Monkey, a merchant made a curious complaint to Shigeko. He claimed that he had been extorted by "phony ninja" who threatened to burn down his shop in the Merchant Quarter if he didn't pay them. He said that he'd seen "real ninja" and knew that these thugs were fakes. However, Shigeko was unable to find any "ninja" in the area and was also unable to prevent the merchant from being murdered.

- The next year, another merchant was killed in the Fisherman Quarter. It happened during the Month of the Dragon; he was apparently tortured and killed in his own home, and his shop burned to the ground.

- In the Month of the Horse there was a dockside scuffle between the Moment's Edge Firemen (G12) and a group of "ninja". Two firemen were injured and no ninja were captured.

- The next month, Naritoki was installed as magistrate. He made pursuit of the "ninja" his first task.

- Two months after his arrival, in the Month of the Monkey, Naritoki captured and unmasked a "ninja" – in reality a dock worker with a record for public drinking – and executed him.

- After that, the "ninja" laid low for almost seven months. The next "ninja" associated crime was the murder of a merchant in the Licensed Quarter during the Month of the Dragon.

- In the first month of the next year, there was another melee between firemen and "ninja" – this time in the Merchant Quarter, with the Firemen of Daikoku's Garden. This seems to mark an increase in "ninja" activity. Naritoki believed that the gang had new leadership.

- In the Month of the Dragon, the "ninja" surprised and killed the leader of the Little Gate Firemen. That same month, Naritoki arrested and executed two "ninja" – both peasant criminals from the Merchant Quarter.

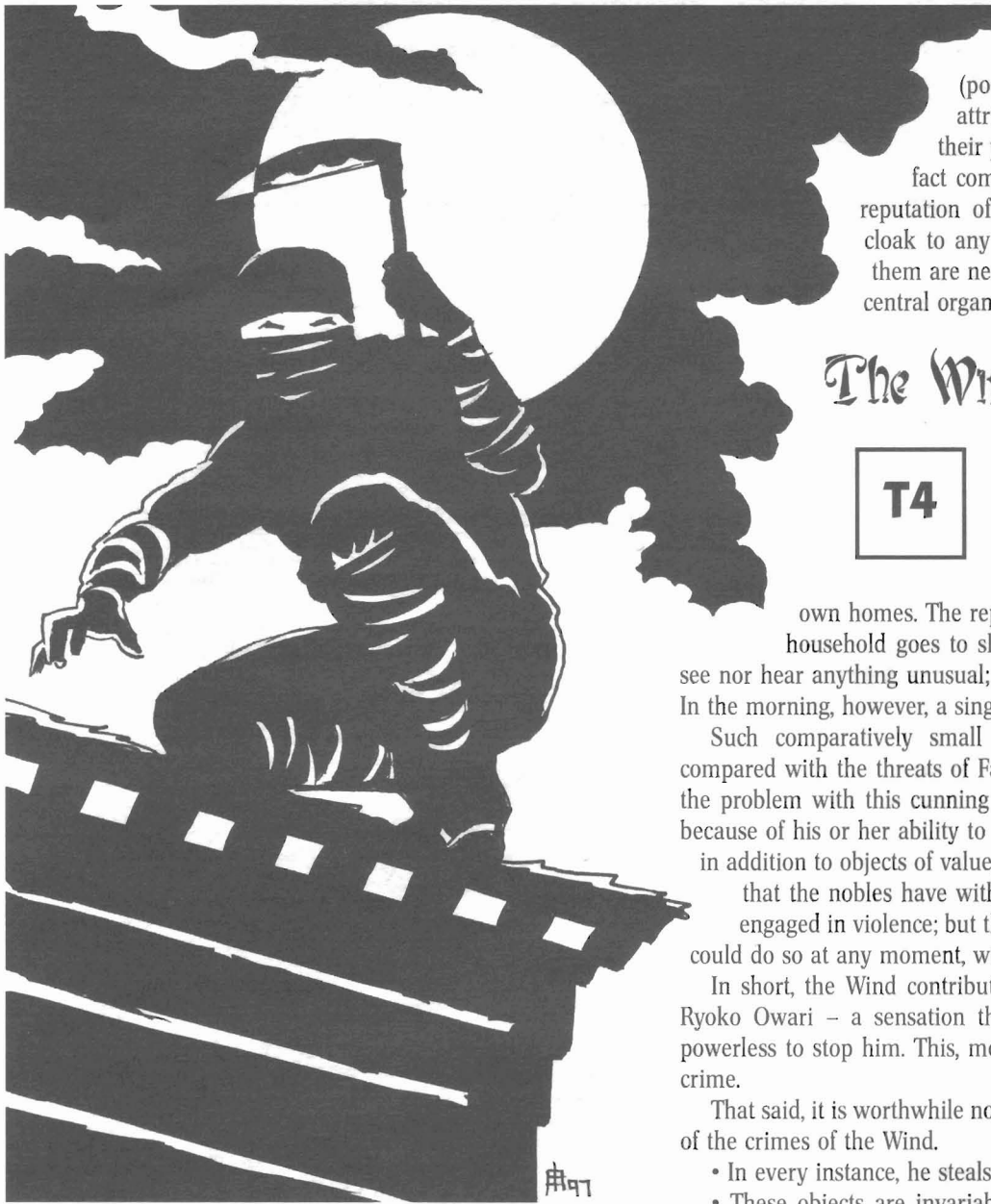
- It was in the Month of the Dog that the "ninja" first moved against a noble family, stealing a set of official trade documents from a home in the Noble Quarter.

- Two months later, in the Month of the Ox, Naritoki arrested a "ninja" for the crime – a ronin burglar from Niwa Shita no Kage Toshi. The "ninja" escaped from prison within a day.

- It took Naritoki five months, but in the Month of the Horse, he found the burglar "ninja", who was killed while resisting arrest.

- The next month, Naritoki ended a thorough investigation of the prison with the execution of a prison guard (L7). (You will recall that this was not long after one of the bandit Fade's men also escaped from prison.)

- That same year, in the Month of the Dog, valuables were stolen from the Otaku household. The "ninja" were suspected.



against this organization, it is also very likely that some (possibly many) of the crimes attributed to the “ninja”, or in which their participation is suspected, were in fact committed by others. The menacing reputation of the ninja is surely a tempting cloak to any number of criminals. Not all of them are necessarily associated with a single, central organization.

The Wind/Kaze

T4

For the last two years, there have been numerous reports from nobles of robberies in their own homes. The reports are always very similar; the household goes to sleep at night. The guards neither see nor hear anything unusual; no one is awakened or alarmed. In the morning, however, a single item of value is missing.

Such comparatively small losses may seem insignificant compared with the threats of Fade (T2) and the “ninja” (T3), but the problem with this cunning burglar (nicknamed “The Wind” because of his or her ability to come and go unobserved) is that in addition to objects of value, he is stealing the sense of safety that the nobles have within their own homes. He has not engaged in violence; but there is a persistent feeling that he could do so at any moment, with impunity.

In short, the Wind contributes to the general lawlessness of Ryoko Owari – a sensation that the Emerald Magistrates are powerless to stop him. This, more than any theft, is his greatest crime.

That said, it is worthwhile noting a number of unusual aspects of the crimes of the Wind.

- In every instance, he steals only a single object.
- These objects are invariably small but precious – jewelry, gold or silver. The largest object ever taken was a necklace with a pendant the length of a finger.
- In several cases, the Wind has taken objects of lesser value that were left lying out when more valuable items were nearby, but out of sight.

Naritoki’s theory was that the Wind (possibly like Fade) is a wayward noble. The ingenuity required by these crimes certainly argues for an intellect higher than that possessed by peasants. Furthermore, the taking of a single object argues for a motive other than pure profit – perhaps a misplaced sense of adventure.

Until these mysteries are solved and the malefactors punished, I will expect progress reports on each of these every month.

–Doji Satsume

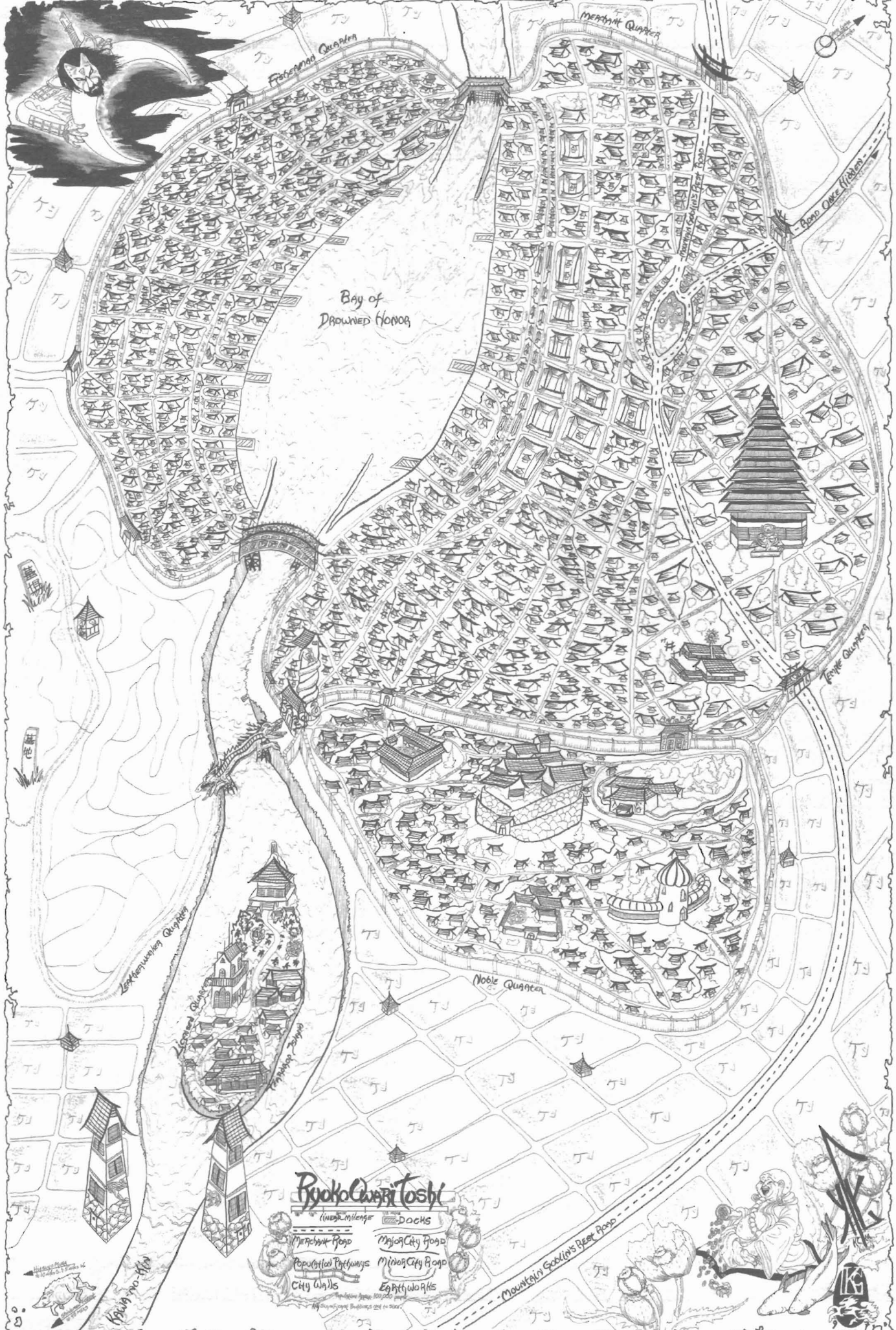
Crane Clan Daimyo and Emerald Champion

The very next month (Month of the Pig), the magistrate’s own mansion was burgled – possibly by the “ninja”.

- This year, in the Month of the Ox, Naritoki staged a raid on Teardrop Island with thirty deputies. He killed four supposed “ninja” and captured three others (all of whom have since died during questioning).

- In the Month of the Rabbit, a smaller raid on a private home in the Fisherman Quarter resulted in the death of three more “ninja.” This was only two months before Naritoki’s assassination.

Reading this list might create the impression that the “ninja” of Ryoko Owari are everywhere, skilled at all manner of perfidy and able to engage in crimes with near impunity. This is certainly not the case. Not only was Naritoki able to strike decisive blows



Bay of Drawn Honors

Ryoko Chūjū Toshi

- (1 inch = 1 mile)
- DOCKS
- Merchant Road
- Major City Road
- Populated Pathways
- Minor City Road
- City Walls
- EGG'S WORKS



City of Stories™



Alderac Entertainment Group



Legend of the Five Rings™

City of Green Walls™

by Greg Stolze



L-1

The City of Lies

The Location Guide to Ryoko Owari



Legend of the Five Rings

City of Green Walls

Guide to the Map of Ryoko Owari

“Rokugan's most elegant cesspit; a monster of beauty, a seductive lie cast in limestone and gold, a treacherous maiden whose loveliness is exceeded only by her brutality – that is my home. Ryoko Owari is a grand tombstone for dead honor, where decadent children caper and rejoice in their unholy freedom. I could live nowhere else.”

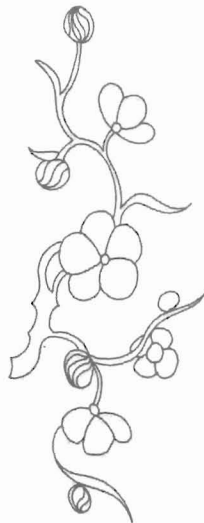
– **Shosuro Sokichi**
Thirteenth Governor of Ryoko Owari

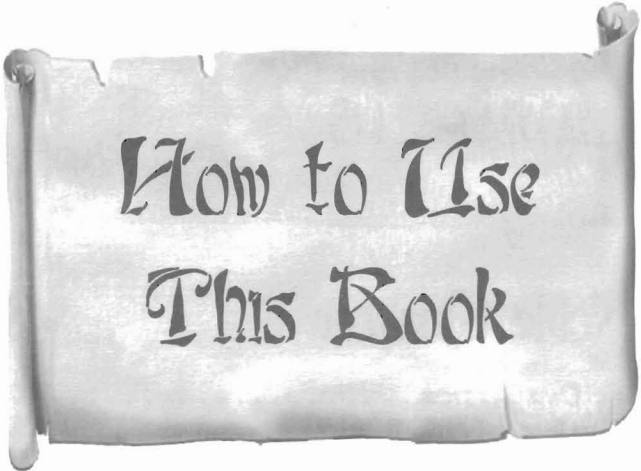
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How to Use This Book

The book “City of Stories” presents Ryoko Owari from a magistrate’s point of view – it’s the book for players. “City of Lies” shows the GM’s perspective on Ryoko Owari. “City of Green Walls” is also a GM book, but where “City of Lies” concentrates on the city as a whole, this book breaks Ryoko Owari down Quarter by Quarter and neighborhood by neighborhood to present a more detailed picture.

The wrong way to use this book is to dive for it every time the players are going to a particular area and make everyone wait while you look up exactly what that neighborhood is supposed to be like. If the players are going there pursuing a plot, there’s no need to throw new stuff at them. You can gloss over the neighborhood politics and concerns.

Here’s the right way to use this book; skim it once before your heroes reach the city. Re-read any bits you particularly liked (or which confused you). Ignore anything that you don’t care for. **Change whatever you want.** If you know your characters are going into a specific neighborhood next session, familiarize yourself with that area. Use the book to give flavor and impressions – where appropriate. Don’t feel like you have to throw everything in a neighborhood or Quarter at your players the first time they go there; give them a clue or two about the plots or concerns that interest you the most, and let them follow the paths that interest them. That way they get a sense that they’re slowly becoming more familiar with the city – winding their way towards the heart of its secrets.

That said, here’s a peek at the skeleton of this book. There are six chapters, covering the six Quarters of the city. (Does that make Ryoko Owari a city and a half?) Each chapter starts out with an overview of the Quarter as a whole. Then there’s a section on “local concerns” – meaning issues of governance or local life that most interest the citizens. This doesn’t mean that everyone who lives in the Fisherman’s Quarter is worried about fighting between *kajinin* gangs; but most people have an opinion and know about the conflict between the Moment’s Edge Firemen and the Fire Eaters.

Next, there’s a section discussing the important people in the Quarter. Everyone from “City of Stories” is given a place in the city here (except the dead, of course). They may also be placed more specifically in a particular neighborhood. After this overview of each Quarter, there are descriptions of the neighborhoods in that Quarter. Each neighborhood includes noteworthy locations, residents of that area (who may be minor characters without their own entries in other books) and neighborhood concerns.

Finally, scattered throughout the book are plot hooks. These are in the familiar “Challenge/Focus/Strike” format.

Yemon’s Legacy

On pages 38, 47, and 22 are a triad of plot seeds that are a little more developed than the others. That’s because they’re linked, part of a story called Yemon’s Legacy. Part One takes place at the Gate of Oni’s Teeth (L14), Part Two takes place in the Island Garden (L21), and the climax occurs in the shadow of the city’s crematorium.

Here’s the brief rundown; many years ago, Kaiu Yemon built a vault to protect something. Yemon didn’t know where he built it, other than desolate granite mountains. (They blindfolded him for over a week while they traveled – sometimes by boat, sometimes on horseback). Yemon didn’t know what he was protecting – other than something valuable. He didn’t even know the details of the interior of the structure. He built the outside walls, and was told to spare no expense to making them secure.

Yemon was handsomely paid, taken home blindfolded, and promptly kidnapped by a man who refused to identify himself but whom Yemon recognized as a Shosuro by his accent. The Scorpion tortured Yemon until he’d drawn a map of his part of the project. Then the mysterious Shosuro killed him.

That all happened about five hundred years ago. Last year, a Mantis clan merchant named Hoji Bokusui engaged the services of a shady shugenja named Yogo Senko. Bokusui was on the trail of a fortune in jade – if only he could find the vault and enter it safely. He needed Senko to raise the ghost of Yemon, which she did (with some help from her lover, a shugenja named Kuni Hyakken). Yemon was not a cooperative ghost; he told them only that the Shosuros had the map they sought. A few discreet inquiries by Senko eventually attracted the attention of Shosuro Mina – a descendant of Shosuro Sanzo, the man who extorted the map out of Yemon.

What Mina told them was that she suspected she knew where the map was hidden – but that she didn’t know what it led to. Furthermore, she thought her ancestor might have guarded the map, either by mundane or magical means. She suggested they meet in Ryoko Owari to discuss a partnership of mutual advantage. Mina was not being entirely honest with Senko, Bokusui and Hyakken. Stories about the map have been passed through her family for generations, along with severe but

maddeningly imprecise threats about what dangers will ensue if it's ever used. The map is hidden in Sanzo's burial urn; she plans to use the three conspirators to get the map out of the trapped crypt and urn, then kill them and hide the map somewhere else.

There's an onion in the ointment, however; Yemon's ghost didn't just settle when Senko and Hyakken's spell ended. Awakened, he feels terrible remorse for drawing the map in the first place, and has begun haunting his last lineal descendant, a surly youth named Kaiu Joji. Badgered by Yemon, Joji has abandoned his post in the Shadowlands and made his way to Ryoko Owari, intent on finding and destroying the map.

In the first plot seed, the magistrates meet Joji. In the second, he busts up the meeting between Mina and Bokusui's cabal – with fatal results. In the third scene, the magistrates have to confront the survivor(s) in the graveyard and fight for the map.

That's the story of Yemon's Legacy.

Oh, the map?

That's another story – a bigger one.

Wait.

The Characters of Yemon's Legacy

To make things a little simpler, the principals are described briefly here, along with what they know. No stats are given for them; if I stat them up definitely, they'll be too tough for some groups and too wimpy for others. Instead, a general idea of their ability is given in comparison with your characters, so that you can build them tailor made.

KAIU JOJI

Description: A hulking, sallow man with greasy hair, bloodshot eyes and black gums receding from prominent teeth. He looks like he's just come off a five day bender. He's surly and uncooperative. Any Crab can recognize "the taint" on an Awareness check of 10 or higher.

Comparative Toughness: Take the highest Insight of any of the magistrates, add another ten points and that's Joji. A lot of his points should be invested in Earth and Strength. He's probably got the Advantages of Large, and maybe Strength of the Earth. He's got the Shadowlands taint at Rank 2 or 3. However, he's also got a Permanent Injury (internal bleeding – in an attempt to alleviate his taint, he's been grinding up jade and eating it). **Honor:** 1. **Glory:** 1.

What He Knows: His ancestor Yemon built some kind of vault or fortress. A Shosuro tortured him until he drew a map, then killed him. Bokusui, Senko and Hyakken are trying to get the map.

HOJI BOKUSUI

Description: A tough young man who's already wealthy, and who enjoys the power wealth brings. He's got sharp eyes, stylish clothes, but the eyes and mouth of a peasant.

Comparative Toughness: Take the lowest Insight of any of the magistrates and build Bokusui at five points lower. If you're worried that his conspiracy won't challenge your PCs (a real possibility if there are more than three magistrates), equip him with 2-4 ronin bodyguards. **Honor:** 1. **Glory:** 0.

What He Knows: Five hundred years ago, a fortune in jade was purchased from one of his ancestors. The treasure vault to hide it in was designed in part by Kaiu Yemon, who drew a map for someone from the Shosuro family before his death.

YOGO SENKO

Description: A tall, extremely slender woman in her late forties. She's still good looking, in a haughty way, but the bloom is off the rose. She exhibits a good deal of superior attitude, but in a kind of sexy way. Her mask consists of three lengths of black cord, connected at each end to a headband, so that they dangle and overlap over her face without really concealing it.

Comparative Toughness: She should have Insight equal to the highest Insight of any of your characters. She knows *maho*, and in addition to her other abilities, she has a *nemuranai* – a ring that allows her to walk on water. She's got Shadowlands taint of 2 or 3. **Honor:** 1. **Glory:** 1.

What He Knows: What Bokusui knows.

KUNI HYAKKEN

Description: A burly young man whose pallor is just a little too stark to be attractive. He's got a long mustache and beard, and he's plaited them into two braids after the Unicorn fashion.

Comparative Toughness: He has Insight that's about average for one of your magistrates. He knows a little *maho*, he probably has a fairly high Earth ring, and he's got a touch of Shadowlands taint (just a point or so.) **Honor:** 1. **Glory:** 1.


What He Knows: What Senko knows.

SHOSURO MINA

Description: A plain young woman – the kind who never rates a second glance. Her mask is a blue gauze veil, and she tends to accent her clan colors with blue.

Comparative Toughness: Doesn't matter, since she only shows up for her death scene. **Honor:** 2. **Glory:** 1.

What He Knows: She knows her ancestor Shosuro Sanzo had a map that showed part of how to get at something very dangerous. He ordered that the map be hidden in his funeral urn, and that anyone outside the family who tried to steal it should be killed. She also knows that it's guarded by a riddle, and the key is to answer like a Shosuro.



Chapter One:
The
Fisherman's
Quarter

The first thing most nobles notice when they enter the Fisherman's Quarter is the smell. (Matsu Shigeo always carried a perfumed fan into this Quarter – an affectation which did not endear her to the locals.) A strong odor of fish and stale water pervades everything, though the locals claim not to notice.

The roads of the Fisherman's Quarter are narrow and cramped – some of the pathways the citizens use go between buildings so close together that people must take turns going through. A horse (or a man in armor) would never fit. Though the buildings are low to the ground (few above two stories), their closeness often blots out the daylight and creates a feeling of claustrophobia. Six people can feel like sixty in the tightly packed streets of this Quarter. The population here is so dense that even in the open areas, Lady Amaterasu's light is blocked by the smoke from countless cooking fires (not to mention smokehouses for fish).

The firemen of the Fisherman's Quarter are easy to spot, and easy to tell apart. Both gangs shave their heads like monks, to keep from catching sparks in their hair. The Fire Eaters wear red scarves around their necks to identify themselves. (These scarves can quickly be pulled up to conceal identity, as well.) Most Fire Eaters are satisfied with red rags, but a few have beautifully embroidered scarves – usually with a flame motif. The Moment's Edge Firemen are also easy to identify, because each one of them carries a horn, which they use to sound the alarm if a fire starts. The more wealthy (that is, corrupt) *kajinin* have horns of brass.

The Fisherman's Quarter is a noisy area. The tight streets cause perpetual traffic problems (only the major roads are wide enough for carts, horses or rickshaws) which are attended by constant yelling and threats. This merges with the cries of sellers in the fish market. At night, however, it gets considerably quieter. The muttering of people on the streets merges with the water sounds of the bay, broken only by the occasional boisterous sailor song – or scream.

Overall, the Fisherman's Quarter is dominated by work and play. While rich captains and their noble patrons enjoy Teardrop Island, their sailors come here for dive bars, opium dens, brothels and gambling hells. However, the Fisherman's Quarter is also home to countless legitimate businesses – fishing is a huge industry here, as is freight and storage. Many brewers and potters are located in the Fisherman Quarter as well. Much of what gets sold in the Merchant Quarter is either made or stored in the Fisherman's Quarter. The produce of the rice fields all around Ryoko Owari gathers here before going downstream to the Crabs or upstream to the Scorpion and even Unicorn territories.

Naturally, the poppy fields also see their yields come here as well. Also, for every shipment of trade goods that is unloaded at the docks, there's at least one stevedore who's willing to "drop" a few things where he can find them later. This has led to a flourishing black market where everything from spices to weapons can be bought – for a price.

Quarter Concerns

One local concern is "the Fireman situation" (G12). The Moment's Edge Firemen and the Fire Eaters have always been rivals. The Moment's Edge Firemen are extremely numerous and perpetually test their boundaries, while the gruesome code of vengeance followed by the Fire Eaters sometimes spills over on families and perceived allies of their rivals – as well as innocent bystanders.

Some residents support the Fire Eaters (who usually leave merchants alone as long as they pay their protection money). Others prefer the Moment's Edge Firemen (who are less concerned with shaking down legitimate merchants and more interested in monopolizing gambling, prostitution and opium sales). A majority of the Quarter's permanent residents wouldn't mind seeing both gangs abolished – but given the apathy that Hyobu (G9, P1) and her magistrate Osako (P10) have shown towards their requests, and the violence that has greeted those who stood up to either gang, they've become a silent majority.

Hand in hand with opinions about the *kajinin* come opinions about the opium trade. It's hard to be neutral on the subject in Ryoko Owari. People who benefit from the drug trade, directly or – as almost everyone does – indirectly tend to quietly support it. Many who've lost a loved one to the clutches of the drug are loudly against it. These divisions are even more marked in the Fisherman's Quarter, because the situation can't be ignored. A rich addict can hide his cravings; not so a penniless sailor. A merchant who intellectually knows that the opium trade keeps money moving is removed from the realities of the industry – he can allow himself to think it doesn't affect him much. Someone whose children eat only as long as she can turn poppies into Liquid Void (G1) doesn't have that luxury. She has to look at addicts and know she helped make them. Consequently, drug abuse finds more open, defiant defenders in this Quarter than anywhere else – often among those who make it, but don't take it. On the other hand, you won't find as many anti-opium hardliners anywhere in town (outside of the Ide Residence (L4)).

Quarter Residents

The closest that most nobles ever get to the Fisherman Quarter is sending their servants to get fresh fish there. However, a number of ronin have made it their home. **Jaw** (P35) has a cheap, dingy house in the Crab Caves (page 11) while the Mantis sailor **Shrimp** (P34) has a regular room at an inn on Pine Loop for when he's in town. (Pine Loop is in the Loops, page 13.) The ronin **Ample** (P32) has been forced to move into the Crab Caves following Naritoki's death, but hopes he can soon move back into the Noble Quarter as a magistrate's deputy.

The merchants **Sharp** (P40) and **Watchful** (P42) do not live in the Fisherman Quarter, but they are often around checking out

their warehouses of opium poppies. Watchful's warehouses are spread throughout the Quarter, but most of them are in the North Rim or the Loops. Sharp has one central warehouse near the southwest dock.

Yellow (P52), captain of the Bullfrog and suspected smuggler, has a small house in the Loops close to the northwest dock. She spends little of her time there, however, preferring the Floating World and the Merchant Quarter.

Shortcut (P51) the rickshaw driver resides in the Crab Caves and plies his trade up and down both sides of the bay. One of his neighbors is the gambler **Lean Meat (P50)**.

Adventure Hooks

Challenge: Agasha Ogoie, a visiting dignitary from the Dragon Clan, storms into the Magistrate's residence demanding protection under Part Two, Section Three of the Emerald Magistrate's Charter. He claims to have been threatened by a gang of thugs, and says that Osako (P10) told him it was a matter for the Emerald Magistrates.

Focus: Ogoie is of high station and is known to have influence in Otosan Uchi; he's not a good man to anger. However, the man is a terrible boor, insisting that the magistrates accompany him as he boozes and wenches up and down the length of Teardrop Island. He keeps looking for a game of dice, but most gamblers avoid playing with him.

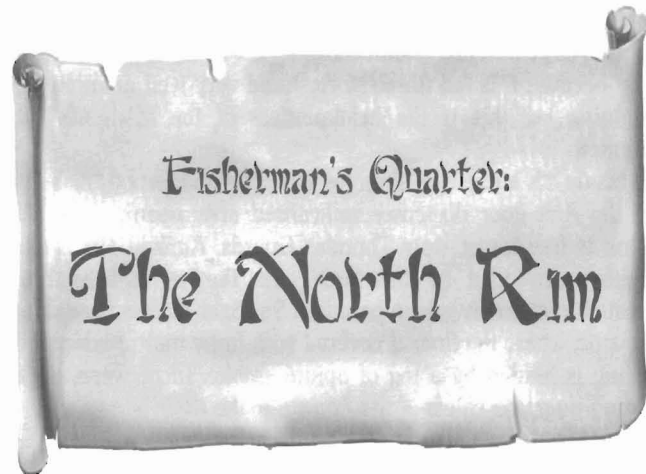
Eventually it comes out that Ogoie lost a lot of money to a gambler in the Fisherman Quarter and refused to pay. The gambler called on some of his Fire Eater friends to rough Ogoie up, and Ogoie retaliated by having his servants find the gambler's young daughter. Then Ogoie killed her.

Strike: Ogoie makes no effort to hide what he did; as far as he (and the letter of the law) is concerned, it's no big deal. The Fire Eaters are bound and determined to kill him. Osako isn't going to stand in their way, since she has to deal with them once Ogoie leaves town (one way or the other). So – do the magistrates protect a cowardly murderer, earning the enmity of Ryoko Owari's gamblers, or do they bungle their job as bodyguards?

Challenge: A hotheaded Dragon samurai comes to town with a dozen men at arms, intent on avenging the death of his sister, who overdosed on opium. He's not subtle; he goes to the Fisherman Quarter and starts killing everyone he can find who's selling, using, carrying, or processing opium. This quickly turns into a riot.

Focus: The Emerald Magistrates hear about this at the same time as Osako (P10), and can either handle it themselves or leave it to her. If they leave it to her, she charges in with the Samurai Squad and arrests the Dragon. Otherwise, they have a conflict with Osako (who wants to stop this threat to the opium trade), both groups of *kajinin* (who likewise want to stop him) and the samurai himself.

Strike: Regardless of what happens, the samurai claims he did nothing wrong – they were only *heimin*, after all. Hyobu (G9, P1) wants him dead to protect the opium trade, but he claims the right to be tried by the Emerald Magistrates. They can get involved, find him guilty, kill him and look good to Hyobu (but bad to the Dragon clan). Or they can spare his life, annoy Hyobu and gain an unpredictable ally. Or they can refuse to try him and let Osako do whatever she wants.



From the Moment's Edge Bridge (L24) down to Timber Street stretches a neighborhood known as the North Rim. This is where the Moment's Edge Firemen are officially responsible for fire fighting – and unofficially responsible for just about every type of illegal activity.

Locations

THE NORTHWEST DOCK

This is the cleanest and most well-ordered wharf on its side of the river. (This isn't saying much – there's still enough rats and fish guts to feed a goblin army.) It's primarily used by small vessels carrying import items from Unicorn territory and light cargoes (silk, spices, *sake*, some pottery) north on the return journey. Because this dock is not very deep, larger barges (such as those used for rice and timber) cannot easily dock here. Because it specializes in more expensive items (and sometimes items that are easier to slip under a kimono and steal), the warehouses nearby are in better shape than most in the Quarter.

In addition to the guards hired by the captains or merchants, the Moment's Edge Firemen are often tipped handsomely to make sure no fires occur in these warehouses. Merchants willing to accept some pilfering prefer to eliminate the middleman and hire the *kajinin* as guards. (All they ask is that the Firemen do their stealing before the tax assessors visit.)

MADAME YAKKOKU'S

There's a footpath that cuts east from the Fisherman's Gate (L25) to Teak Street. On this path there is a small, tidy house that stands out because it has a garden. This is Madame Yakkoku's.

Yakkoku herself is an ancient crone who dispenses herbs and home-brewed medicine. While the *kajinin* scoff at her skills, the people who live and work in the North Rim know who to come to for the relief of a fever or to make sure a bone sets straight.

THE JUNIPER TEAHOUSE

This large building is innocuous on the outside; it's exceptional only because it is tall (three stories) and very well maintained. It ought to be; this is the headquarters of the Moment's Edge Firemen.

Inside, it's a one-stop shop for vice. The unadorned "teahouse" on the first floor dispenses unlicensed *sake* openly – the first drink is free for off-duty Thunder Guards. *Kajinin* pimps sit at tables surrounded by the farm girls they've purchased and painted into garish geisha parodies. Stronger stuff is available in the attic, where the floor is covered with filthy mattresses and the ceiling is hidden by a fog of opium smoke. In between, on the second floor, the chiefs of the *kajinin* make their homes.

The first time magistrates approach the Juniper openly, they see and hear a wave of fleeing, stumbling people – opium dozers, johns and illegal drinkers desperate to avoid being caught inside. The Moment's Edge Firemen make some effort to conceal the true nature of the establishment, but only enough that magistrates can ignore it if they choose. They are cordial; they offer drinks and prepare to get down to the business of bribes. Magistrates making a bust are greeted with mild surprise but no resistance; the *kajinin* have faith that Osako (P10) won't let them rot in jail for long.

Every Fire Eater dreams of watching the Juniper Teahouse burn to the ground. No Fire Eater has ever walked into the Juniper without getting badly thrashed.

Neighborhood Residents

Watchful (P42) can sometimes be found here overseeing her opium works, but she is not a resident.

Yellow (P52), the captain of the Bullfrog and a suspected smuggler, has a small dwelling here, but she usually only goes

there to sleep (if that – she's been known to spend nights elsewhere, especially on Teardrop Island).

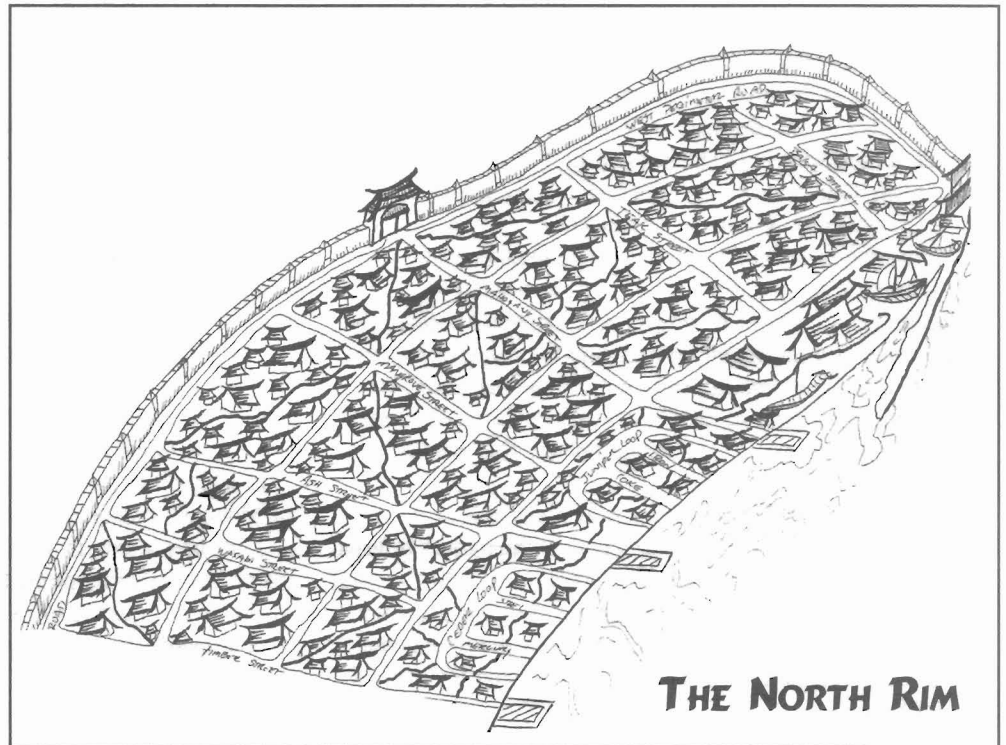
NO NOSE/HANA MIRATANARI

No Nose (or "Hana", as he's called by his few close friends) is the leader of the Moment's Edge Firemen. Every time one of them is involved in gambling, extortion, black marketeering or any other crime, a portion of the profit goes to No Nose.

He's tough; he lost his nose in a fight at age thirteen and has never looked back. He can pound the hell out of any of his subordinates, and is probably a match for many unarmed samurai. His real strength, however, lies in his vision. He plans, considers and consolidates where other criminals simply act. Under his guidance, the Moment's Edge Firemen have come to include "specialists" who are technically *kajinin* but who don't have any duty to fight fires. These "specialists" get to wear the horn, but their only jobs are to be fences, pimps or pushers. The Strong Arm and Fire Eater gangs single out these "fake firemen" for special punishment when they catch one alone.

HAPPY/YAKI

Happy is No Nose's girlfriend. Before her he had a string of pretty, forgettable lady companions, but she's different. They've been together for three years now, and unlike the others she is deeply interested in the gang and how it's run. To his surprise, No Nose has found it very useful to have Happy with him as a "friendly face" for the *kajinin*. She's sweet and unfailingly cheerful. Together, they have the "good cop/bad cop" routine down pat. She's helped bring in a lot of business for them, has recruited "specialists" and – perhaps most importantly – has



given No Nose an excuse for when he wants to let someone off with a warning.

Neighborhood Concerns

Many people in the North Rim are allied with the Moment's Edge Firemen (or at least tolerate them) and have become increasingly nervous and upset over incursions by the Strong Arm Firemen from across the river. Their attitude towards the Moment's Edge Firemen usually ranges from admiration to grudging acceptance ("Yeah, they're scum, but they're *our* scum – and at least they aren't too pushy about it.") The Strong Arm are seen as dangerous, unpredictable and violent interlopers.

This concern is especially keen on the part of those legitimate merchants and residents who would like to see their neighborhood get a little nicer. To achieve that end, they hope to attract more merchants (and a better class of them), as well as possibly the interest of nobles. (It's unlikely, but it could happen.) They have some advantages – the Moment's Edge Firemen may be violent and intolerant, but they're predictable and would understand the value of keeping a low profile. Furthermore, the Northeast Dock has already made some decent merchants familiar with the North Rim. The citizens who want to see the neighborhood improve are extremely courteous and helpful to any wealthy-looking merchant who visits, and absolutely abase themselves before samurai.

Neighborhood Plots

Challenge: The Magistrates hear that there's a fire in the North Rim and that the Moment's Edge Firemen are doing nothing to quench it.

Focus: When they arrive on the scene, they see the *kajinin* gang dividing their efforts between preventing the spread of the fire (which is consuming a small warehouse near the city wall), and keeping a growing crowd away. As they get nearer, they see that Osako (P10) is on the scene with the Thunder Guard (G10), busily trying to control the crowd. She's grateful for any assistance the Emerald Magistrates can offer. She can also explain why no one can get too close to the fire; the warehouse was full of opium.

Strike: If they investigate, the Emerald Magistrates learn some curious facts. There was a tunnel between the warehouse and a poppy field outside the city, enabling the warehouse's owners to skim from the fields at night and process the opium during the day. They all died in the fire – but were apparently beaten to death before the blaze started. Furthermore, witnesses and clues indicate the fire was started by the local *kajinin*.

Figuring out why the Moment's Edge firemen were destroying an opium operation, instead of skimming from it or annexing it, can provide the magistrates with their first hints about who *really* runs the cartels...



The neighborhood called the Crab Caves was the location of Ryoko Owari's first red light district. When the city was young, prostitutes, actors and other unsavory types were chased out by the magistrates but tolerated on the other side of the river, where only those corrupt souls who sought them out would be tempted by their lascivious wiles. (By the time the city walls were built, there was a bridge across the river to make the aforementioned wiles more readily accessible.) This is the neighborhood where the Crab army of Hida Atsushige (G4) was seduced and broken. It has been called "The Crab Caves" ever since.

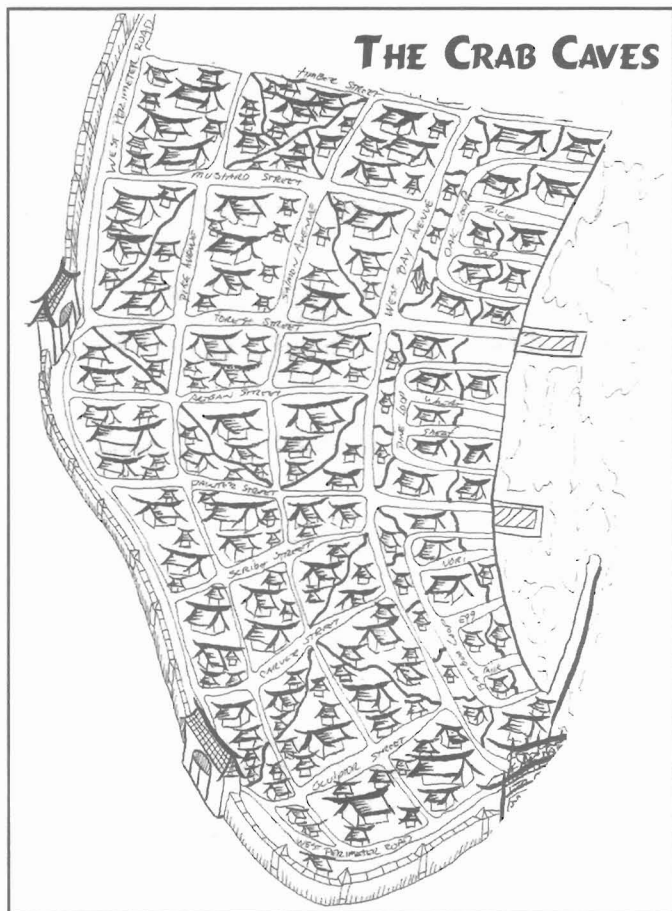
Since the licensing of Teardrop Island, the Crab Caves have become the only thing worse than a nightless city – a *second-rate* nightless city. From sunset to sunup, this is the domain of inferior courtesans, cut-rate fences, bumbling grifters and penny-ante pushers. During the day they scuttle back indoors to make room for the city's biggest (and many say best) fish market, which stretches from the Bridge of Drunken Lovers (L16) up West Bay Avenue towards the Fisherman's Dock (see The Loops, page 13).

The Crab Caves lie between the Wretched Gate (L27) and Timber Street.

Locations

THE HOUSE(S) OF LEAN MEAT

As the gambler Lean Meat (P50) became more prosperous, he bought two run-down houses near the Peasant's Gate (L26) and moved his younger brothers and sisters into them. Since that time, he's knocked down two outside walls and joined the houses together, making one large and awkward structure out of two. Despite its odd appearance, the house of Lean Meat is always busy, swarming with the many friends, associates, relatives and debtors of the popular gambler. Almost against his will, Lean Meat is becoming something of a neighborhood authority. Lean Meat has never hosted his weekly dice game in his house, and he never will.



THE FISHERMAN'S DOCK

The small fishing boats that ply the river dock here to unload their wares, which is why the fish market in this neighborhood is known for freshness. Boats are coming and going at all hours, making this a busy place – and a dangerous one for anyone who isn't used to walking on wet, rotted wood that's been slicked down by the slime and blood of countless fish. It quiets down substantially at night, but there are still a few boats that go out at night to hunt the elusive moonfish. (Raw moonfish eyes are prized as aphrodisiacs by some connoisseurs. The rest of the fish tastes terrible, but can still be unloaded to those who can't afford to be choosy. The eyes alone can pay for the price of landing a moonfish – selling the meat is just extra.)

MADAME KARAKU'S INN

This ugly place is where old, used-up prostitutes go. It is the cheapest, and arguably most depressing, den of sin in a city known for them. Something about the very building seems to suck every spark of life and vitality out of the unfortunate women who work here, leaving them dead-eyed husks serving the lusts of men who are almost as poor, desperate and wasted as they themselves.

There are rumors around the neighborhood that Madame Karaku is an evil sorceress who drains the lifeblood from her

charges on a nightly basis. This isn't true; it just looks that way. When women fall long and far, this is where they land.

The ronin Jaw (P35) is sometimes seen around Madame Karaku's, though he denies it – and if confronted with proof, denies being a client.

Neighborhood Residents

Lean Meat (P50) lives here in his peculiar house(s).

The ronin **Jaw (P35)** also makes this neighborhood his home.

The ronin **Ample (P32)** is living here while he tries to get employment as a deputy again.

Shortcut (P51), a onetime ally of Matsu Shigeko, has a dwelling here.

MADAME KARAKU

A sharp-eyed old woman who looks as if she's never seen a good deed done, Madame Karaku has managed to put together a comfortable life by scraping together the pennies earned by her wretched flock. She's known for her bad temper and the duration of her grudges. The Fire Eaters offer her some protection for her money, but even they don't like her.

BIGGER/HIROI

The man called Bigger is the leader of the Fire Eaters, inasmuch as they have a leader. This doesn't mean he makes plans for them, the way that No Nose (page 10) makes plans for the Moment's Edge Firemen. It just means that when Bigger says to do something, the other *kajinin* do it and don't argue. It also means that he can punish those Fire Eaters who do something he doesn't like – but this doesn't mean they have to ask his permission before doing anything. They just have to respect his opinion.

Lately, Bigger has been feeling insecure. He's almost thirty. His mighty physique is starting to turn soft where it should be strong, and is getting tight and sore where it once obeyed his every whim. He's started to think some of his lieutenants could beat him in a fair fight – which has only made him more desperate to prove that he's still as tough as he ever was.

In short, Bigger needs to somehow change himself from the top dog in a chaotic pack into a genuine leader – someone who's the smartest, not just the toughest. Until he does, he (and the Fire Eaters) are vulnerable.

Neighborhood Concerns

The biggest issue among the residents of the Crab Caves concerns the Wretched Gate (L27). Currently, the gate is not sealed after nightfall, although it is guarded. This means that *eta* from the Leatherworker's Quarter have free access to the neighborhood at all hours.

Some people think this is just great. After all, the *eta* have money to spend just like everyone else. Unlike most others, they can't go to Teardrop Island. This makes *eta* "tourists" a foundation of the Crab Caves' night time industries. The pushers, pimps and prostitutes are happy to see the gate stay open, and so far they've had decisive pull with the Fire Eaters.

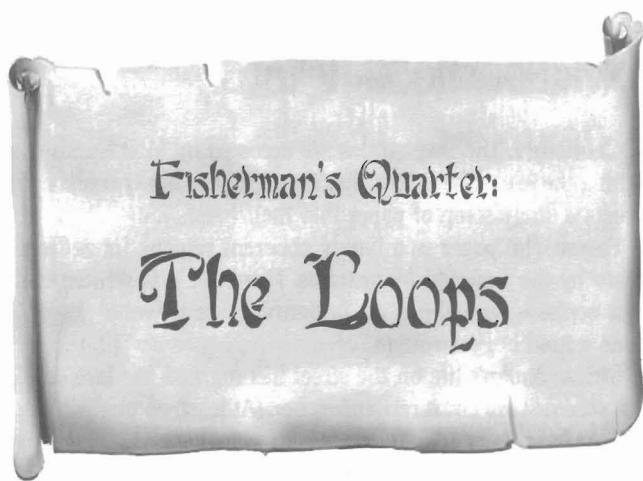
On the other hand, there are a lot of people in the area who don't have many they can look down on – but they can look down on an *eta*. Especially a drunk, debauched *eta*. These people (many of whom are the backbone of the neighborhood's legitimate and legal economy) see the leatherworkers as a necessary evil during the day, but an odious nuisance at night. They want them out, and have been pleading to the Fire Eaters, the Thunder Guard and any magistrates they can find to shut the gate – and thus shut down much of the vice in the Crab Caves.

Neighborhood Plots

Challenge: An order comes down from the Emerald Champion that all city gates are to be shut at nightfall to increase national security. However, local Emerald Magistrates may issue exceptions to the law for gates that are "obviously secure" and which would pose no threat to local or national security if left open.

Focus: Various groups begin petitioning the Emerald Magistrates to issue exceptions. The loudest requests – both for and against an exception – refer to the Wretched Gate.

Strike: Hyobu would prefer the Gate stay open, but this is one time that going against her will won't even result in a shift on the Popularity Chart (pages 63–67 in "City of Lies"). A conflict between *eta* and *heimin* really is beneath her notice. Eyebrows wants it shut, but a lot of other *eta* want it open. What will the magistrates decide?



This small neighborhood covers the dockside around the three wharves between Juniper Loop and Pine Loop. It extends back as

far as Salmon Avenue. Although the Loops overlap both the territories of the Fire Eaters (G12) and of the Moment's Edge gang (see pages 9–11 in this book, also page 6 in "City of Lies"), the Loops really have a different flavor than either the Crab Caves (page 11) or the North Rim (page 9) neighborhoods.

This flavor comes from the sailors and stevedores who make up the bulk of the neighborhood's people. The transient nature of the sailors gives this area a cosmopolitan flavor missing in much of the city – rumors from up and down Rokugan's coast can be heard here, along with the latest stories floating along the River of Gold.

Locations

THE ASH STREET DOCK

The dock off of Ash Street is primarily used for the transport of rice and other foodstuffs. Sometimes barges dock here before carrying truly heroic shipments of *sake* downstream, but mostly the business here is rice. In addition to the dock, there are a great number of coopers and warehouses around. There are also several good sized *sake* brewers here, several of whom have licenses to sell their wares to thirsty passers-by.

THE TIMBER DOCK

Oddly enough, the Timber Dock is not the dock at the end of Timber Street; that's the Blossom Dock. Timber Street is an old one, which predates the city wall. Logs used to be hauled straight down Timber Street to the dock, and were there sent up or downstream for construction. However, when the city wall was built a coalition of merchants from Forest Street (which was then called Arrow Road) lobbied successfully to have the gate put by their street. It then became much easier for the foresters to bring their wares to the dock at the end of that street. However, the demand for timber became so great that most of the merchants on Arrow Road went out of business because no one wanted to try to get past the carts of timber that were always clogging the street. The thoroughfare was renamed Forest Street, and timber has been hauled down it ever since.

THE BLOSSOM DOCK

The dock at the end of Timber Street technically belongs to the merchant Sharp (P40), but everyone knows its true master is Bayushi Korechika (P5). Though the samurai never openly visits except during times of trouble, there are perpetual rumors that he appears in disguise to keep an eye on his business. This business is, of course, the storage and transport of opium poppies.

The business Korechika conducts within Ryoko Owari is completely legal; the poppies are only processed into illegal form downstream at Necessary Village (see page 9 in "City of Lies"). Here the legal poppies are stored and shipped under the watchful eye of his hired muscle.

The Fire Eaters have an extremely close understanding with Sharp and Korechika, and their presence in this area is heavy. They protect his warehouses against fire and against other threats, in return for a piece of the action. The wharf is dark with the smudged remains of the raw opium packed here, and sometimes desperate addicts have been known to sweep up the chaff from the street and docks and try to smoke it.

Neighborhood Residents

While the merchant **Sharp (P40)** does not live here, he is sometimes seen around, watching over his valuable property.

The same can be said of **Bayushi Korechika (P5)**, though his visits are extremely rare and usually mean trouble.

When he's in town, the sailor **Shrimp (P34)** stays at a small inn in this area.

MAD NUIKO

This beggar woman is known for her loud voice, funny accent, crazed ranting, and disturbing eyes. She wanders the streets of the Loops, loudly decrying the samurai who despoiled her

of her honor. When asked who it was, she refuses to name him, saying she took an oath to confront him only to his face. She claims that she's of noble birth and that she took poison after her lover spurned her. The poison didn't work, however – it only blinded her, leaving her eyes filmed over by a sickly grey-green sheen.

No one's sure how she's survived so long, since she's blind and obviously insane. There are a number of area residents who believe her story (though they'd never admit it). They give her a little food when they can spare it and let her sleep in their homes. There aren't many who believe her, but there are enough to keep her alive.

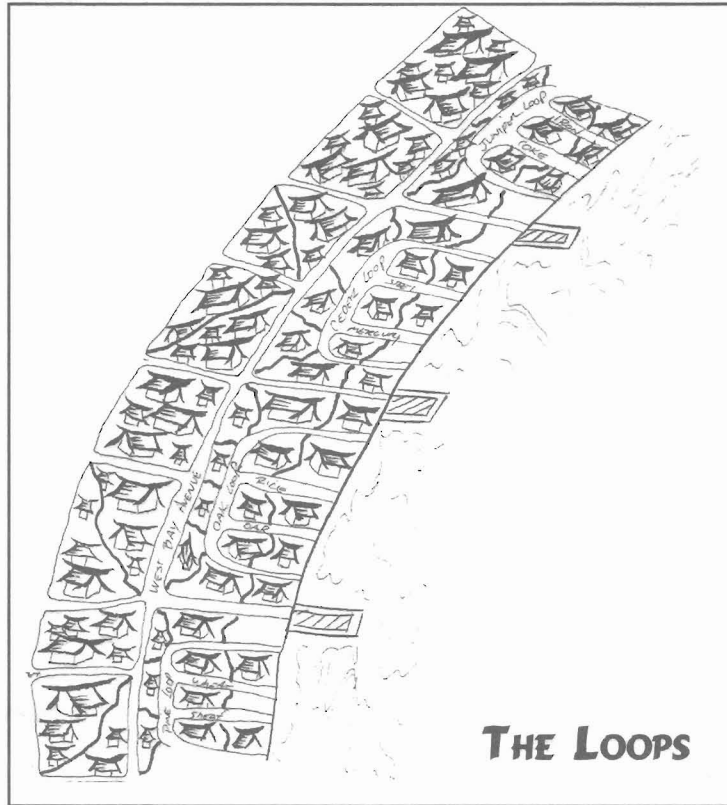
Neighborhood Concerns

The permanent settlers in this area share the concerns of the North Rim – they worry about the rivalry between the two

kajinin gangs. Since this is a fairly rich area for vice (with a lot of sailors coming through and getting paid), both gangs covet it, so conflicts between them are frequent here.

The biggest concern of the sailors and captains (other than the perpetual question of the best place to get drunk) is the gates of the Moment's Edge Bridge (L24). These gates go down into the water and are there to prevent warships from entering the city

from upstream. These gates are locked at night and opened during the day, but there are often delays in the morning, causing backups that can lose a crew hours and hours of sailing time. It's even worse if (for whatever reason) they're late arriving in the evening. If a boat arrives to find the gates closed, they either have to wait until morning (and risk piracy) or turn around and go miles upstream to the closest village with a dock. The sailors don't think the Unicorns would attack by the river. Besides, the Bridge of Drunken Lovers isn't gated...



THE LOOPS

Neighborhood Plots

Challenge: The magistrates are accosted by Mad Nuiko while visiting the area. She insists that they listen to her complaint, and thrusts a dingy scrap of paper into their hands.

Focus: The paper is a barely coherent request for redress of injury by the Emerald Magistrates. However, it is written in the high script – something no ordinary peasant would know, let alone a mad beggarwoman.

Strike: Nuiko's life on the street has marked her face enough that no one from court recognizes her. (At least, no one will admit it...) She refuses to identify herself or her former lover until she can confront him. Can the magistrates find the man who ruined her and see that justice is done?

The Rumor Mill

The citizens of Ryoko Owari thrive on gossip, just like people in a high school, a business or any other situation where there's constant pressure to engage in casual slander. To help you simulate this, what follows are a series of rumor templates that provide you with handy stories to put in the mouths of talebearing snitches. It's up to you to decide if a particular story is true or not; either way, you can use it as a springboard for a plot. If it's true, how did the news get out – and what's going to happen? If it's not true, who stands to benefit from spreading the false rumor?

Just in case there's a reader out there who's unfamiliar with the format, here's how it works. Cover up the paragraph in quotes and pick specific things for each general category in

brackets. Then uncover the paragraph and stick in the words you picked.

For example, rumor #3 has the following things in brackets: (essential item), (family), (group), (character), (item of clothing). Reading this, you might pick "lamp oil", "Agasha", "Crab Clan Magistrates", "Doji Sukemara" and "hat". When you stick them in the paragraph, the rumor you get is as follows... "Best stock up on LAMP OIL. I hear the AGASHA family is angling to get the price here pushed up, and they may even have help from the CRAB CLAN MAGISTRATES to do it. Honestly, you'd think they'd be more mature – it's all because DOJI SUKEMARA said something snide about somebody's HAT." See? Simple. Now start gossiping!

RUMOR MILL No. 1

(NOBLE CHARACTER) (SOMETHING IN NATURE)
(CHARACTER) (CHARACTER)

"HAVE YOU READ _____'S MOST RECENT
Noble Character
POEM? I PERSONALLY THINK IT'S ABOUT _____
Something In
Nature, BUT _____ THINKS IT'S ABOUT
Character
— AND IS VERY UPSET!"

RUMOR MILL No. 2

(MARRIED FEMALE CHARACTER) (MALE CHARACTER)

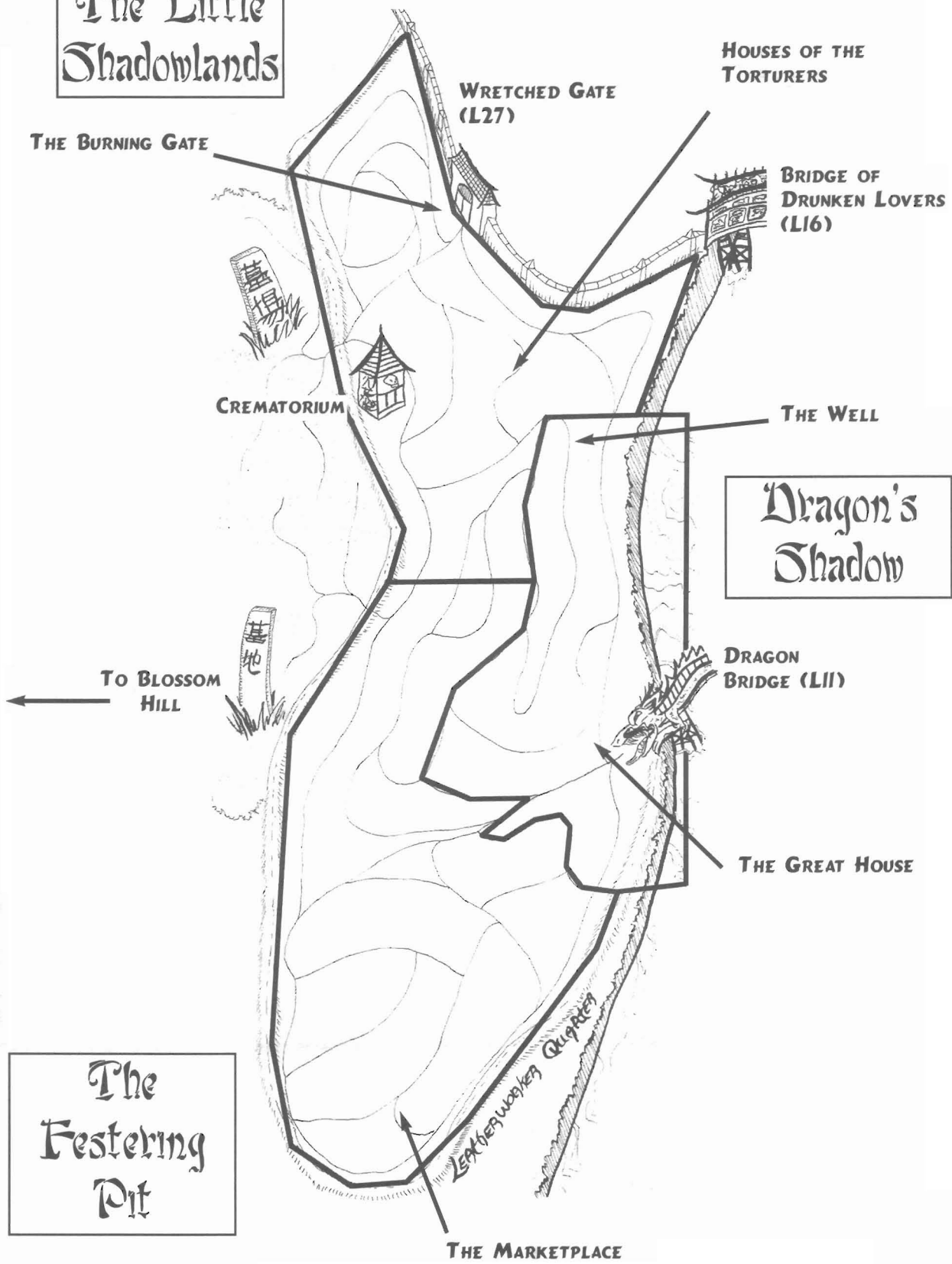
"_____ HAS BEEN BURNING INCENSE
Married Female Character
AT THE TEMPLE OF HIYOKUKO. I HEAR — THE FORTUNE
OF FERTILITY. I WONDER WHAT HER HUSBAND HAS TO SAY
ABOUT THAT — NOT TO MENTION _____"
Male Character

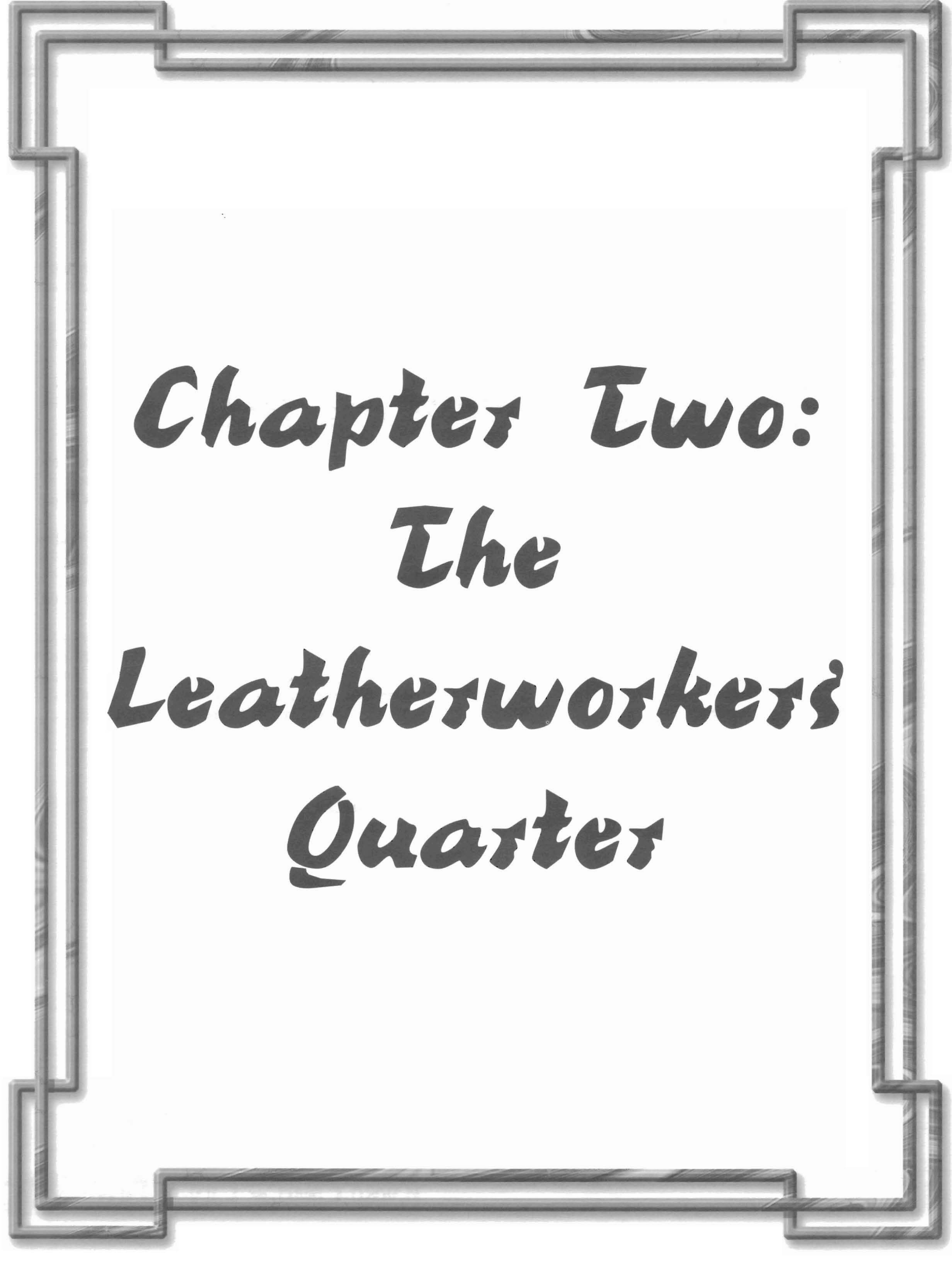
RUMOR MILL No. 3

(ESSENTIAL ITEM) (FAMILY) (GROUP) (CHARACTER)
(ITEM OF CLOTHING)

"BEST STOCK UP ON _____ . I HEAR THE
Essential Item
FAMILY IS ANGLING TO GET THE PRICE HERE
Family
PUSHED UP, AND THEY MAY EVEN HAVE HELP FROM THE
Group
TO DO IT. HONESTLY, YOU'D THINK THEY'D BE
MORE MATURE — IT'S ALL BECAUSE _____ SAID
Character
SOMETHING SNIDE ABOUT SOMEBODY'S _____"
Item of Clothing

The Little Shadowlands





Chapter Two:
The
Leatherworkers'
Quarter

Like the Fisherman's Quarter, this part of town has a distinctive smell. In this case, it comes from all the human refuse that's hauled through the area day in, day out, every day of the year. However, the stench is relieved by the prevailing winds (in this, perhaps, the *eta* are fortunate to be outside the city walls). The houses here are simple mud and timber affairs, but they're farther apart than those in the Fisherman Quarter – in fact, many of the leatherworkers grow flowers (but not poppies) around their homes in an attempt to freshen things up. The clay soil makes this tough if they don't fertilize, but since the fertilizer is the cause of the problem, most content themselves with unimpressive blossoms.

A visitor's second impression (after the aroma) is likely to run something like this; flat, brown, bright. It's flat because there are few structures above one story. It's brown because the roads are unpaved, the buildings are covered with mud, and the inhabitants aren't allowed to dye their clothes. Finally, it's bright, because the houses are spread out and this lets a lot of daylight into the area, making it a contrast to the cramped, dim city interior.

It's also comparatively quiet – or at least it gets quiet real fast when outsiders visit. When those outsiders are samurai, the only sound is the squelch of knees and foreheads hitting the ground.

A samurai who enters an *eta's* house (which is almost unthinkable) may be surprised to find it clean, tidy and pleasant (albeit very plain). The leatherworkers tend towards extremes about cleanliness; some never give it a second thought, while others are very fastidious and never enter their houses without a good wash. (After all, if you work in filth all day, you don't want to come home to it.)

Quarter Concerns

Opium, of course, is a significant concern (as discussed in the GM book, page 7). The *eta* suffer from an odd predicament; they make reliable money, but have little they're permitted to spend it on. This has led to one of the highest addiction rates in the city, despite the hard line that Eyebrows (P53), Raspy (P54) and Pitiful (P55) take towards *eta* who sell drugs in the Quarter. (They get cremated. If they're caught when Pitiful is on duty, he's kind enough to kill them first.)

Another concern is Teardrop Island, which does not allow leatherworkers to enter. A few *eta* live there to take care of necessary tasks, but since Teardrop Island is downstream of the rest of the city, it's easy for them to simply dump their refuse instead of selling it. Although this is technically illegal, no one cares; it doesn't hurt the city, it only hurts the leatherworkers. Besides, most samurai would prefer their pleasure district to have as few *eta* present as possible.

A final concern is a question of division within their own ranks. Some *eta* believe that those who handle animal carcasses are less contaminated than those who work with dead humans,

and that those who haul dung for a living are a third category altogether. The idea of dividing the Quarter up by profession (which convenience has already done, to a large extent) appalls some and appeals to others.

Quarter Residents

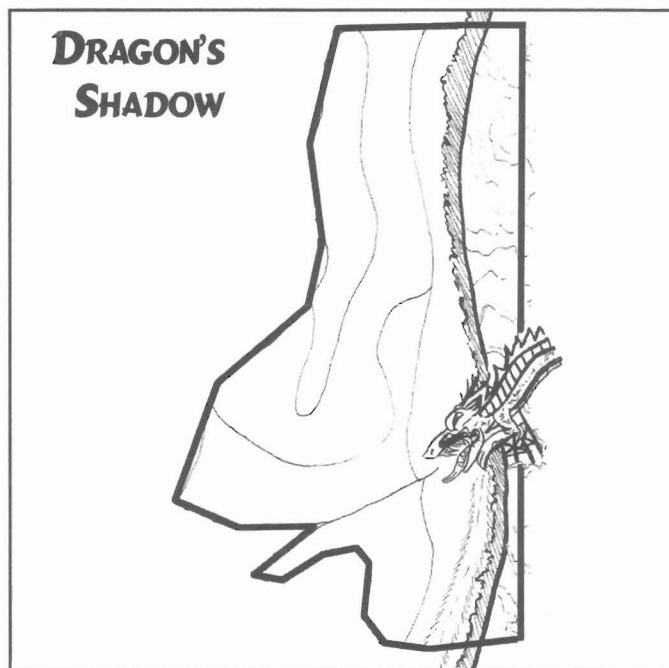
Raspy (P54), the leader of the *eta*, lives in a fairly large house in Dragon's Shadow (page 19). **Eyebrows (P53)**, his lieutenant (and a close ally of previous Emerald Magistrates) lives close by. One particular area of the Little Shadowlands (page 22) has historically been the dwelling-place of torturers, and it is here that **Pitiful (P55)** makes his home.

Adventure Hook

Challenge: A magistrate from the Shosuro family visits Ryoko Owari and complains that *eta* are sneaking downstream from Ryoko Owari without papers and establishing themselves as loan sharks in the villages along the River of Gold.

Focus: Osako (P10) is all in favor of just riding in and handing out some punishment to the *eta* community at random; after all, she can't be bothered to tell them apart, can she? However, if the Emerald Magistrates have a better idea, she's be glad to unload the problem in their lap.

Strike: What's occurring (as any friendly leatherworker leaders will tell them) is that families are pooling their extra funds and using that capital as the basis for money lending. However, no magistrate is willing to let these would-be moneylenders travel into their territory (since no one wants more



eta hanging around, especially those from a criminal hellhole like Ryoko Owari).

Consequently, the moneylenders are forced to smuggle themselves and set up operations illegally – otherwise, their money and effort just go to waste. Now, if they had travel papers from an Emerald Magistrate, they couldn't even be questioned – other than the question of why an Emerald Magistrate would bother writing papers for an *eta*...



This neighborhood stretches about a mile upstream and a half a mile downstream from the Bridge of the Dragon (L11). Because of its proximity to the Noble Quarter, and the beautiful bridge, this is the most desired location for an *eta* to make a home. The houses here tend to be of better quality, and have been in families for generations. Most residents are involved in the leather trade. Saddlemakers are generally among the wealthiest of the residents here.

Locations

THE GREAT HOUSE

This is where Raspy (P54) lives, and it is also the seat of what "government" the leatherworkers have. It is a two story building with an enclosed courtyard, very close to the bridge. It is, in fact, one of the few structures that escaped destruction at the hands of an invading Lion clan army many years ago; it used to be a large stable, and it was only luck that saved it from the flames. This is where the leatherworkers meet to discuss their problems and voice their concerns. Between noon and sunset, the house is open to all *eta*, who can come in and air their grievances to Raspy or some other authority figure. Between sunrise and noon, Raspy generally meets with other community leaders to discuss matters.

THE WELL

Towards the northwestern edge of the neighborhood is a well, dating back to before the Lion invasion. The water within is

exceptionally pure and clear, and the *eta* are pleased to have it (even though it's only a third of a mile from the river).

The well has become a meeting place for the leatherworkers. People gather there at almost any time of day or night when they have a little leisure time (which isn't often in the busy life of an *eta*). Here they sit, discuss the world or their work, smoke pipes, eat, and generally behave like human beings.

Neighborhood Residents

Raspy (P54) lives here with his family.

Eyebrows (P53) also makes his home nearby. (He's unmarried and considered quite a catch by most of the mortuary and stinker (G1) families.)

TREASURE/TAKARA

Treasure is Raspy's son – a man in his twenties, confident and charismatic among his own kind. He helps his father and Eyebrows with the governance of the Leatherworker's Quarter and almost never goes into the city proper, except to pick up opium.

Raspy would be devastated to learn that his own son was smoking opium, but the truth is even worse. Treasure isn't using; he's selling. His close connection to Eyebrows and Raspy ensures that he's above suspicion, even as it allows him to track and subtly sabotage anything that might uncover his activities. Strangely enough, Treasure isn't even sure why he does it. It's not really the money – there's not much he can spend it on. He really loves his father, and knows that what he's doing is abominable.

Perhaps he only wants to find something that no one else can do as well.

CUTTER/KIRU

Cutter is a large, powerfully built man who is only a few years younger than Raspy. However, while age has only seemed to make Raspy smaller, Cutter is still the big, loud man he always was. He got his name for his skill and speed at stripping the skin off a carcass, and he has prospered making and selling leather goods.

He's also a snob. Cutter believes that not all *eta* are created equal in the celestial order. Those who work with animal carcasses are somewhat impure, but not as bad as those who haul feces (the stinkers or *kageshiru*) or those who have to touch human corpses (the mortuary workers). Lowest of the low are torturers, who can't even expect improvement in their next lives.

Cutter accepts that the samurai and *heimin* look down on him (or says he does, anyway – like Treasure, he doesn't leave the Quarter much). All he wants is license to look down on others. Specifically, he believes that the Quarter should be divided by profession, with the mortuary workers staying near the cemetery, the *kageshiru* keeping to the south, and the "proper" leather workers living in the Dragon's Shadow.

In fact, these divisions are reality, for the most part. Cutter just wants it formalized, and has been trying to play the stinkers and the mortuary families off against each other to get them to agree. So far Raspy's opposition has been enough to stop his plans, but if something were to happen to Raspy (for instance, if he were to die of grief and shock after finding out his son's a drug dealer), Cutter might well give Eyebrows serious competition for leadership of the *eta*.

Neighborhood Concerns

The biggest neighborhood concern is the segregation question. The majority of the area residents strip cattle for leather; they'd like to have the area to themselves without worrying about dung haulers and mortuary tenders. Raspy is from an old leather goods family, and his pressure on behalf of integration has been steady. It doesn't hurt that two mortuary workers (Pitiful and Eyebrows) rub shoulders with samurai and are consequently prestigious. Still, a lot of people would like to see the area "purified".

Neighborhood Plots

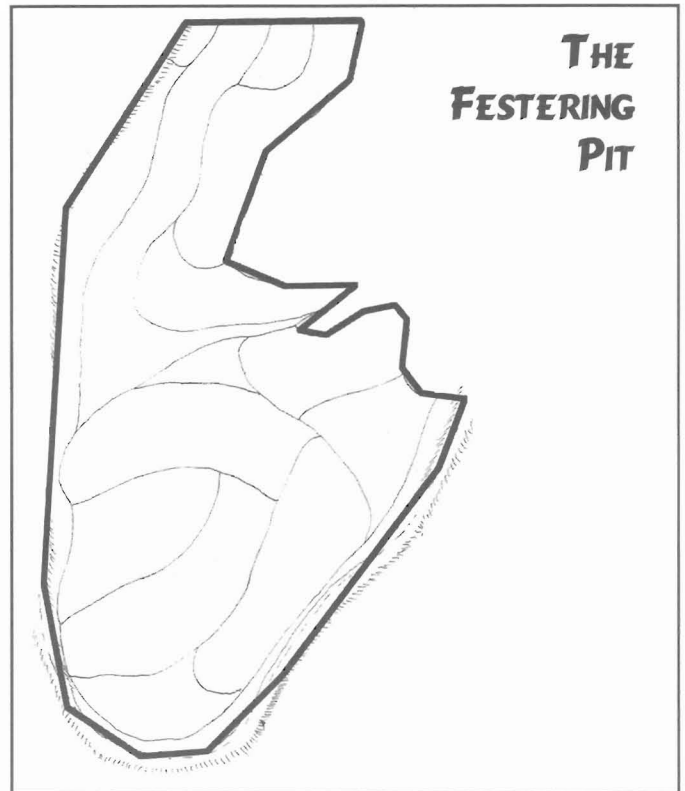
Challenge: A body washes up on shore – a *strange* looking body.

Focus: The *eta* don't want to touch it, since its skin and hair are strangely colored. They report it to Osako, who doesn't care; she tells the Emerald Magistrates that it might be a dead oni, so they should go check it out.

Strike: It's not an oni; it's a young foreign woman – possibly from Magda's country. No one from Teardrop Island is willing to identify her – so where did the body of a foreigner come from?



The neighborhood called "the Festering Pit" or simply "the Pit" lies in the southwest of the Leatherworker's Quarter. The aroma here is a great deal stronger, as this is where the stinkers (G1)



gather their wares before selling them to the local farmers or carrying them up the west wall of the city. (Night soil from the east half of the city is sold on that side, but there is no centralized collection point; it has to be hauled at least a mile from a city gate before it can legally be sold to farmers.)

This is the neighborhood of the *kageshiru* – those who haul trash for money. In addition to feces, these *eta* also carry off everything else that gets thrown out in the Noble Quarter. (In other Quarters, the local beggars usually make short work of anything of possible value.) Consequently, these leatherworkers often have the finest goods in the Quarter – even if they are damaged or crudely repaired. Some envy the *kageshiru* because they can get cast off samurai property that other *eta* aren't allowed to even buy – anything that gets broken and can't be burned is tossed out for the *eta*. However, they pay for their wealth with very real danger – at least a dozen *eta* are killed by samurai every year for offenses real or imagined.

Locations

BLOSSOM HILL

This small hill is off to the west, actually outside the Quarter. It's not very tall, but it's upwind of the marketplace and it provides a magnificent view of the poppy fields when they're in bloom. Few farmers have time to take in such views, and consequently few even know about Blossom Hill's existence. Only the dung haulers come here.

THE MARKETPLACE

Almost everything that gets collected by the *eta* winds up here. The main stock in trade is fertilizer, and farmers bring carts from miles around to keep their clay fields blooming.

There's also a small but thriving trade in samurai cast-offs. What the *eta* don't want or can't fix, they sell to the farmers, who make do with what they can. (There's an amusing anecdote about a samurai who saw a farmer's horse using one of his old quivers as a feed bag. The samurai had a good laugh about it after he killed the farmer and the horse.)

Neighborhood Residents

CRAFTY/SHOKUKUIN

Crafty got his nickname because he's very skilled at repairing what has been thrown out. He's part carpenter, part weaver and part potter. Consequently, his services are in such high demand that he doesn't have to go out and collect – people bring him broken items and he repairs them in return for a fee or a large cut of the resale value.

His stationary location and prosperity have enabled him to do two things. One is become a local leader; he sees what's going on and has a chance to speak to most of his neighbors. The respect they have for his skill has led them to respect his opinion in most matters.

The second thing he's done is to become a local opium supplier. This has made him wealthier yet; he has started thinking about sneaking down river and becoming a moneylender, taking up life as a *heimin*. His plans will probably come to nothing, though; he's begun taking opium himself.

DREAMER/YUMIKO

Dreamer was never a very practical girl, but she did have a good eye for broken things. As one of the cleaners for the Noble Quarter she did fairly well, and expected little out of life. She certainly never expected a nobleman to talk to her (other than to order her around) but one did.

That nobleman was Asako Kinto (P31), who spoke to her as if she were his equal. No one had ever spoken about spirituality with her before, or anything other than the concerns of daily living. But Kinto claimed to have a new way, a path of ancient wisdom, that was open to any who would walk upon it.

She was one of the first converts to Kinto's snake cult, and has slowly brought along a few of her friends. Some of them are in it only for the largesse of a samurai patron (even the food Kinto throws out is better than much of what an *eta* can buy) but a few have become true believers.

Those in the neighborhood have noticed a change in Dreamer lately. She's more confident – almost commanding – without losing her otherworldly quality. She acts like one who is learning to make her dreams into reality.

Neighborhood Concerns

The biggest area concern is money lending. Several local families have discovered that farmers are willing to swallow their pride and take loans from them at interest. Many traditional *eta* are dubious about this idea, but the families that are lending money have been doing well for themselves. Their only problem has been collections, but they've found a few burly lads willing to see to that end of things.

The moneylenders are encouraging their neighbors to get into the business (figuring that the more people involved, the easier collections will become). The conservatives are terrified that the magistrates will find out and start taxing them heavily – or worse yet, punish the whole community for the greed of a few.



This is the neighborhood bordered on the west by the city cemetery, and on the northeast by the city wall. The smell here is not so much of excrement – more of smoke and wind. The smoke comes from the crematorium – a three-story building that dominates the landscape.

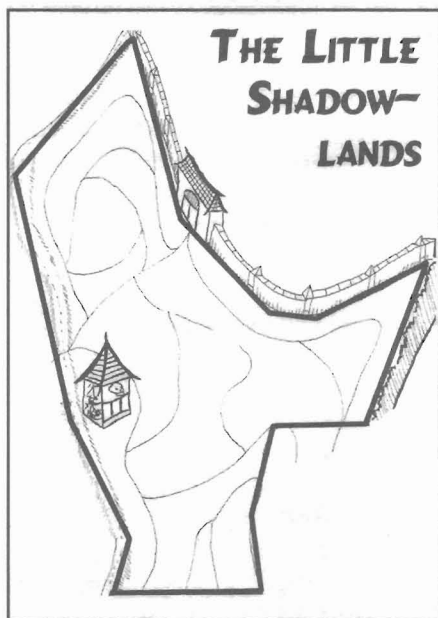
It's a quiet neighborhood. This is partly because the mortuary families who dominate it are taciturn by nature, and partly because opium abuse is more open here than in any other part of the Quarter (though it is just as frequent in the Pit).

The mud huts of the *eta* make a sharp contrast with the stone crypts and vaults where the noble families put the ashes of their deceased. These elegant buildings lie to the north of the cemetery, where nobles can visit them through the Peasant's Gate during the Bon Festival. The farther south and west one goes in the cemetery, the simpler the structures and monuments become, until one finds the wooden stumps where the leatherworkers have tried to memorialize their deceased kin.

Locations

THE CREMATORIUM

This is the center of the mortuary families' business. Those who aren't bringing the bodies here are laying them out, or



burning them, or interring them once they're ashes. It is a tall and austere structure – one of the few stone buildings in the whole Quarter. It dates from after the Lion conquest, and has a long, plain flight of steps that mourners can ascend to the second floor, where bodies are viewed and prepared. The third floor is storage, both for bodies and for funeral trappings. The lowest floor

houses the great furnaces, and it is said that no noble has ever set foot in there.

THE BURNING GATE

The area right outside the Wretched Gate (L27) is called the Burning Gate by area residents, for the predominance of opium smoking that happens there every night, right out in the open. The gate guards don't care about opium, but they chase off any uppity *eta* who tries to enforce the law within their sight.

THE HOUSES OF THE TORTURERS

This is a tiny part of the neighborhood – just a small cluster of nondescript homes – but even the mortuary families shun it. This are the homes of those who make their living as torturers, either for Osako (P10) and the Thunder Guard (G10), or for the Emerald Magistrates. Every morning they can be seen making their way towards the Dragon Bridge – the six city torturers walking, and Pitiful (P55) pulling himself along with his hands. They do not talk, and their tread is slow and measured.

Neighborhood Residents

Pitiful (P55), the torturer for the Emerald Magistrates, resides here.

VISION/SHIRYOKU

The old woman called Vision is regarded with respect bordering on fear. The oldest member of the oldest mortuary family, she knows the residents of the area better than anyone else, and has the ear of Raspy (P54) as well as Pitiful (P55). She has been a strident opponent to drug use in “her” area, and those who've defied her have paid for it – often, it is whispered, with their lives.

Some people say she has dark powers. They're right. Vision's family has worshiped Lord Moon for generations, and she is prominent within his cult. She believes that one day the new moon will blot out the sun, and then the children of Hantei will pay for the indignities they have heaped upon her. Until that day, however, she is patient, meek, respectful... and unforgiving.

Neighborhood Concerns

The biggest neighborhood concern is opium, specifically as it affects the opening or closing of the Wretched Gate (L27) at night (see above). Many area conservatives are in favor of closing the gate, arguing that it will keep the impure influences of the city away from leatherworker youths. Others argue that shutting the gate only emphasizes what the *heimin* and samurai have believed all along – that the *eta* are a disease to be quarantined.

Yemon's Legacy: Part Three

Challenge: The magistrates have learned from Joji or Mina that the mysterious map is in the funeral urn of Shosuro Sanzo. When they arrive at the cemetery, they may find some (or all) of Bokusui's cabal waiting for them (if you're in the mood to run a big fight scene). Or they may find them lying in the cemetery vault – all dead. If Joji is along, he may also cause trouble for the magistrates – either right away (if he alone survived to get to the crypt) or later (when he tries to destroy the map).

Focus: Once the conspirators are taken care of (either by the magistrates, Joji or the tomb's trap), the magistrates can take a crack at it. Sanzo's urn is concealed behind a door with nine panels on it. Closer examination reveals that they're built to be pushed in. Each panel has a short phrase on it. Written across the top of the door is the question “What Is The Measure Of A Noble Soul?” This was a question that Shinsei asked the seven *Kami* – a question that none could answer to his satisfaction. The nine panels offer different answers.

1. “Courage”
2. “The Deeds It Accomplished”
3. “Its Lies”
4. “Honor Is The Measure”
5. “Power”
6. “Measure A Soul By The Quality Of Its Enemies”
7. “The Secrets It Kept, And Those It Gave Away”

8. "Wisdom"

9. "Each Soul Sets Its Own Measure"

Strike: The correct answer is #3 – measure a soul by the quality of its own lies. Pushing button #3 reveals the urn.

One chance is nine seems pretty slim, and any dead bodies around would argue against poking at random. Hitting the wrong button results in a spray of poison gas from one of the cracks between bricks in the walls. (Different poisons come from different cracks, so good luck trying to plug them all.)

Anyone who breathes the poison (meaning only the person who hit the switch, for simplicity's sake) has to make a TN 15 Earth roll or drop three Wound Ranks. Additional effects from different poisons are given below – along with a roll any character might make to get a clue that it's wrong.

1. "Courage". This was Akodo's answer to Shinsei's riddle, as anyone who makes a TN 15 Theology roll would know. The additional effect of this poison is vomiting; anything the character tries for the next ten minutes or so, have them roll a die. If it's a 1, they puke instead of taking their action.

2. "The Deeds It Accomplished". There's no historical anecdote here, but anyone who looks close and makes a TN 15 Perception roll notices that the dust on this button has been smudged. (This assumes that someone before the PCs is dead on the floor.) The additional poison effect is extreme pain; take 1 die of Wounds, which return after an hour.

4. "Honor Is The Measure". There's no clue for this one (other than it's the last thing a Shosuro would believe). The poison effect is hallucinations – the victim has -2 Awareness for an hour or so.

5. "Power". Anyone who makes a TN 15 Heraldry roll knows that when Bayushi Anjo destroyed a rebellious monastery in the reign of Hantei the Fifteenth, he had a sign erected over the rubble that said "No quality of soul matters more than power" – a slogan that's appeared (rarely) on Bayushi war banners ever since. Anyone who pushes this button gets inflicted with a terrible panicky sensation, and cannot spend Void points for the next half hour.

6. "Measure A Soul By The Quality Of Its Enemies". This is a quote from the play "The Floating World" by Yasuki Satsume. It's spoken by a corrupt shugenja from the Yogo family. It's a TN 20 Bard roll to remember this, or TN 10 if anyone has Theater Lore. Pushing this button results in a terrible headache, which gives a -1 Perception penalty for about a day.

7. "The Secrets It Kept, And Those It Gave Away". A TN 20 History roll lets someone remember that "judge me only by the secrets I kept, and those I gave away" were the dying words of Soshi Sawako. This difficulty is reduced by 5 for Scorpions, and by 10 for Scorpion Shugenja. This button's venom also causes facial tics and uncontrollable tremors, giving a -1 Agility penalty for twelve hours.

8. "Wisdom". This was Shiba's answer to Shinsei, as a TN 15 Theology roll would reveal. Those who push this button anyway are afflicted by a severe fever for several days until the poison passes. During this time, their Intelligence is at -1.

9. "Each Soul Sets Its Own Measure". The monk Rikohai proposed this reply to Shinsei's classic koan in his commentary on the *Tao of Shinsei*. Knowing this trivia tidbit requires a TN 20 Shintao roll (TN 15 for Dragon clan characters, or TN 10 for any monk). Anyone who picks this button is afflicted with dim, blurry vision for 6–8 hours, giving them -1 Perception.

Naturally, the most dramatic solution to this trap is to have the PCs plotting and poking at the buttons, but canny magistrates may take an easy way out. The most obvious easy ways out are (1) press gang some luckless peasant and make him push the damn buttons or (2) hire Builder (P44) to dismantle the crypt.

These are easier said than done, and the biggest barrier is the Shosuro family. (Remember them? They kind of run the city?) Hyobu (G9, P1) isn't going to be crazy about the idea of peasants poking around in her holy family crypt, and she's going to be even less amused if they're in there taking it apart. Furthermore, she'll definitely be curious about what the Emerald Magistrates are seeking...

Assuming they can find a way around that problem, there's also the ghost. Did I mention the ghost? Oh, there's a ghost; specifically, the *Yorei* of Shosuro Sanzo. There are two ways Sanzo will appear.

1) If Peasant NPCs Were Poking The Buttons While The Magistrates Took Their Leisure Outside.

Any peasant NPC who sees *Yorei* Sanzo dies of fright on the spot. (You can make exceptions as you see fit; Pitiful (P55) and Eyebrows (P55) are certainly too tough to be scared dead like that.) The PCs hear a terrified scream from inside the crypt. Then they see *Yorei* Sanzo stalking out, scroll in hand and contemptuous sneer on his face. He gives them some kind of lecture about being cowardly, and then challenges one of them to an iaijutsu duel for the map. (He's got Void 3, Agility 2, Iaijutsu 3.) *Yorei* Sanzo can't be hurt by mortal weapons, but if he loses he says the following:

"Despite your caution, you have proven an able warrior. Therefore I lay on you this charge; defend the map, and the vault it defends, from all who would despoil it. Guard it well, for a terrible doom shall befall Rokugan if the secrets within are revealed!"

If *Yorei* Sanzo wins the duel, give the loser a painful icy scar on his throat (where Sanzo's sword hit) and turn his hair permanently white. Then Sanzo tells the duelist that because he lost the duel, he has to protect the map from all who would despoil it, etc. Later, if someone steals the map or copies it, you can have the neck wound start bleeding (a little – not enough to do damage) until the crisis is over.

2) If The Magistrates Picked the Right Button Themselves.

Yorei Sanzo appears and demands to know who dares disturb his grave, and why. He then charges them with the defense of the map. If any of the magistrates are from the Shosuro family, he gives it to that person specifically.

In any event, the map should end up in the hands of the Magistrates.

Two Gates

SOUTHERN TREASURES

MERCHANT QUARTER

UNICORN GATE (L19)

MOMENT'S EDGE
BRIDGE (L24)

NORTHEAST WHARF

The Wharves

IRON WHARF

GATE OF
INCREASING
FORTUNE (L18)

SEVEN CORNERS

GRAND WHARF

DAIKOKU'S
GARDEN (L17)

BRIDGE OF
DRUNKEN
LOVERS (L16)

SPEED OF THE
NORTHLANDS

LITTLE
GATE (L15)

STAR OF SILVER

LITTLE
WHARF

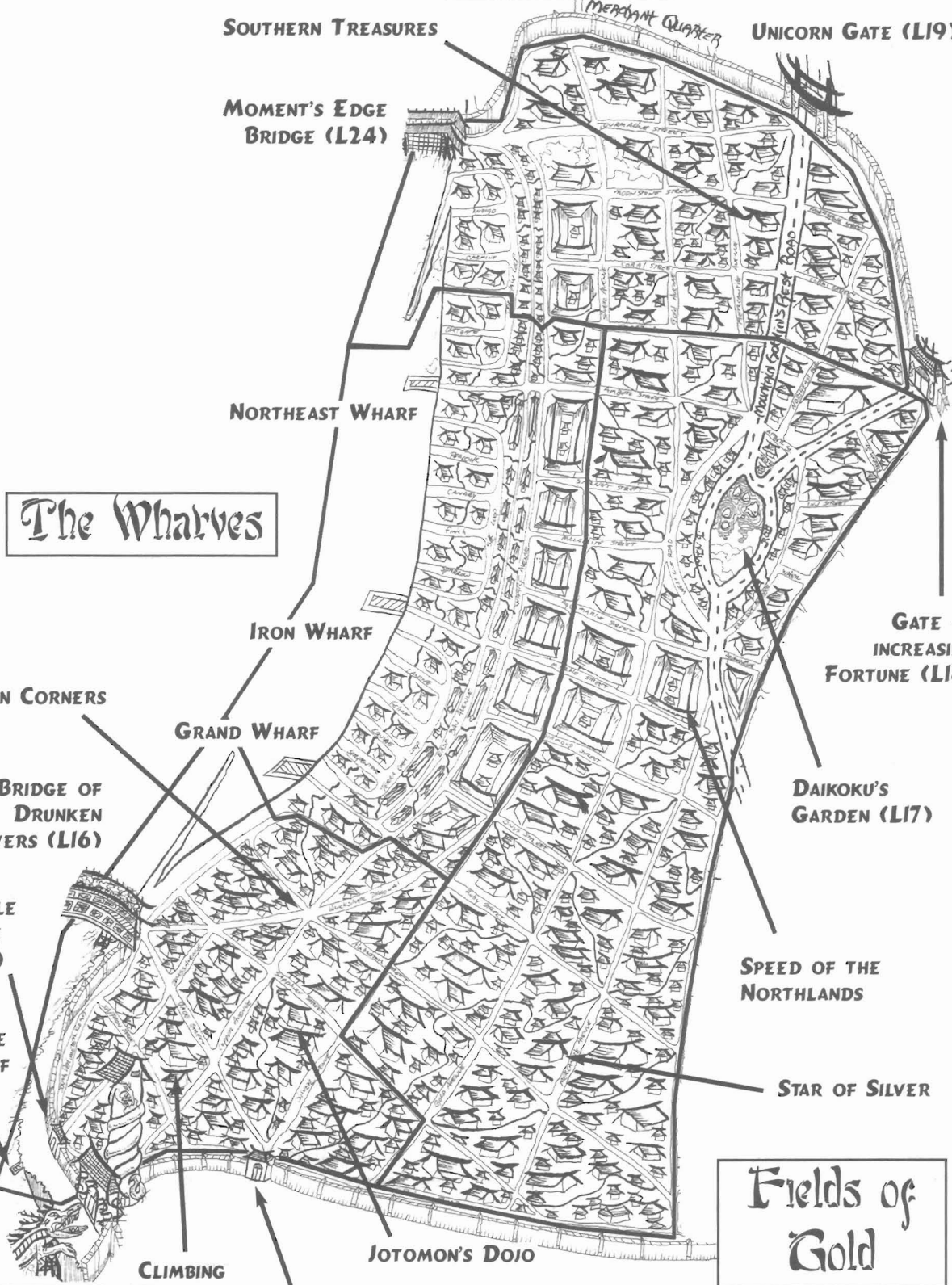
Fields of Gold

CLIMBING
TOWARDS
HEAVEN

JOTOMON'S DOJO

GATE OF
CONDESCENSION (L9)

Downhill





***Chapter Three:
The Merchant
Quarter***

It's as loud as the Fisherman's Quarter, yet with a different, more urgent pitch. Musicians play in front of shops in order to lure patrons within. All around, merchants cry out promising health, beauty and good fortune – all at bargain prices.

The pace here is quicker, the people brighter, even the air itself seems to hum with a tone that vibrates between hope and greed. There is a confusion of scents – the perfume of ladies and the sweat of their bearers, the tang of cooking oil and the mellow smoke of a tea stall's oven, layered over countless other exotic aromas.

The buildings are tall, with dramatic curves of roof that carve the visible sky into sharp crescents. Some shops prefer a sedate and classic look – the oldest establishments show no sign nor indication of the wares within (since those who need to know already do). Other, newer, brasher merchants hang brilliant placards to catch the eyes of passers-by.

The merchants themselves provide as many contrasts as their stores. The wealthiest are carried in palanquins draped with gorgeous cloth – more vivid and opulent than any noble's. But for every successful merchant in elegant silk there's a hundred sets of hungry eyes, envying what others have and scheming to get their share. These newer merchants dress as well as they are able, but the seedy air of desperation and greed clings to their features as they hustle, scheme and above all sell, sell, sell.

Quarter Concerns

The greatest local concern is, and always has been, taxes. Import taxes, export taxes, Hyobu's (G9, P1) city taxes, Shoji's provincial taxes, Hantei's Imperial taxes – a web of taxation that stretches from the emperor to the lowliest noodle seller, tying them together with the strands of tax assessors, tax collectors and (when needed) magistrates.

The general feeling is that Hyobu's taxes are fair – which should indicate just how low they are. No one speaks out against Shoji's taxes, either, though they're higher than Hyobu's. No, the grumbling, moaning and whining arises around the subject of Imperial taxes. Not that anyone blames the Emperor; no, the anger of the merchants is reserved for the Emerald Champion.

Magistrates are unlikely to hear such complaints directly, of course; but through intermediaries (geisha, ronin, gossiping servants) they may learn that the widespread perception is that Doji Satsume, Emerald Champion, *hates* the Scorpion clan in general, and Ryoko Owari in particular.

The merchants speak in admiring tones about the maneuvering in court (though they are, in truth, almost completely ignorant of the real situation), and they cheer each story of Bayushi Shoji cleverly out-maneuvering those pompous, hypocritical Cranes. They think that Satsume is lashing out at the Scorpion's vassals and peasants, using taxes as a weapon, because he's too foolish to out-think the Bayushis and too cowardly (or too realistic) to attempt a military assault.

Quarter Residents

As could be expected, the bulk of the merchant class resides here. The merchant **Sharp (P40)** and his cousin **Subtle (P41)** both have homes in the Fields of Gold (see page 32), where Subtle keeps his shop. The merchants **Builder (P44)** and **Horse (P43)** reside there as well, close to where they work.

Most samurai visit the Merchant Quarter infrequently, but there are three nobles who can be found there most days. **Shinjo Sanefusa (P12)** is often found in the Fields of Gold and the Downhill neighborhood (page 29) trying to gain new merchant vassals – and keep the ones he still has. **Yasuki Nobuko (P24)** also spends a great deal of time in the Merchant Quarter, but she stays up in the Two Gates region (see page 27). Finally, **Kitsuki Jotomon (P28)** has a dojo in the Downhill area, where she spends her days training and teaching.

Nobuko's primary vassal, the merchant named **Whisper (P45)** keeps his shop in the Two Gates neighborhood. That same area is home to **Watchful (P42)**, the vassal of Soshi Seiryoku (P9). However, Watchful spends her days in the Fisherman Quarter, and only returns to the Merchant Quarter in the evenings.

Adventure Hook

Challenge: Doji Satsume raises taxes once again, eliciting howls of protest from area merchants. Unrest mounts as tax season draws near. Several assessors and collectors are threatened, and a few are actually beaten by merchants. A bad harvest complicates matters.

Focus: Even if the merchants guilty of the beatings are punished, the unrest doesn't subside. The Emerald Magistrates can make pleas for tax relief to the Champion, but their arguments have to be convincing – otherwise, he suspects that Hyobu has "gotten to them".

Strike: During the first Day of Generosity, a group of farmers march up the Mountain Goblin's Rest Road, incited by someone they call "Tokiuji". They've come to protest their tax burden. Osako and the Thunder Guard shut the gates, but are unwilling to mow down their own peasants when they're protesting imperial taxes. When the merchants hear about the peasant mob, a similar mob forms inside the city and marches to the Gate of Condescension (L9). Osako insists that this is an Emerald Magistrate problem; not only is it the imperial tax they're protesting, this clearly qualifies as "civil unrest" under Part One, Section Six of their charter...

Do the magistrates put down the protest (which is currently peaceful) with bloody force? If they do, the Thunder Guards may be reluctant to obey them. Do they promise a tax abeyance – hoping that the Emerald Champion will grant it? Or do they try to talk the peasants down with courtly speech? Of course, a third option is to simply buy them off – 150 koku per crowd would be

can often be found here. It is large and cluttered, and (as Whisper likes to tell people) it “specializes in general merchandise”. What this means is that Nobuko buys up anything that’s plentiful downstream and hauls it upstream to try to sell it here. Sometimes she’s successful. (For example, when she got a shipment of live, glowing eels from the Mantis Clan. They weren’t selling because they tasted terrible and would stop glowing after two or three days away from their native fodder. Nobuko spread the rumors that these eels had been blessed by Lord Moon, and that anyone who ate them would have “night-time potency” – and after all, wasn’t Lord Moon the father of the *Kami*? So a lot of men bought them, ate them, got sick and were too embarrassed to complain about it.)

Some of the wares that can be purchased include:

- “Oni blood” potions from the Kuni family. Whisper guarantees that this black, sludgy stuff is actually oni’s blood that has been sterilized with jade. (Everyone knows jade turns sludgy and black when it works, right?) Paint it on your door and oni (along with lesser evil spirits) will think you’re a powerful shugenja and leave you alone. If you’re attacked by an oni in your home with this stuff on every door and window, then you get double your money back!

- “Pearls of the Naga.” Or, more accurately, balls of chalk that have been dipped in glass and made into necklaces.

- Copies of various pillow books (including “Memoirs of an Opium Eater”) and the latest plays and prints from Otsan Uchi.

- “The Dueling Secrets of the Kakita School.” Supposedly this manual was written by a disgruntled Crane clan samurai who became disgusted by the effeminacy and hypocrisy of his clan and decided to share their bushido secrets with everyone. (Anyone from the Kakita school can instantly recognize this as a fraud.)

- Bizarre and foreign musical instruments bought by the Mantis Clan.

Neighborhood Residents

Whisper (P45) lives here above “Southern Treasures”.

Watchful (P42) also resides nearby, though she conducts most of her business on the other side of the river.

THIRD/DAI-SAN

Born the third son of a middling-successful merchant, Third knew from an early age that there would be no inheritance left for him when his father passed away. He grudgingly set out to make his own fortune, and soon fell in with the Strong Arm *kajinin*, who appreciated his pitiless, no-nonsense attitude towards violence.

During Matsu Shigeko’s tenure as Magistrate, Third engineered a confrontation between the Strong Arm and the Moment’s Edge gangs (see page 6 in “City of Lies”) and made sure that the leaders of the Strong Arm were removed. He has now

become the leader of the gang and takes sadistic delight in shaking down his two older brothers.

His biggest concern is the “Ryoko Ninja”. He’s too pragmatic to believe stories about shapeshifting shadow walkers, but he recognizes ambition when he smells it. He’s offered a reward for anyone who can lead him to the “ninja”, but so far no one’s dared take him up on it.

Neighborhood Concerns

Strangely enough, the biggest neighborhood concern is fire protection. Third doesn’t really give much thought to actually fighting fires in the area – he’s too busy trying to expand his turf, shake merchants down more efficiently, and track down the “ninja”. Consequently, there have been some bad fires in the last eight months. This has caused some dissent within the Strong Arm ranks, especially among older members who can remember when the armbands meant something.

Neighborhood Plots

Challenge: A fire breaks out among the warehouses. The Strong Arm Firemen don’t respond until it’s too late and the blaze is out of control.

Focus: The Firemen of Daikoku’s Garden assemble to get the fire under control – and the Strong Arm gang fights them to keep them out of their turf.

Strike: Can the magistrates get the *kajinin* to fight the fires instead of each other? Alternately, can they put out the fire themselves without alienating the Strong Arm? Was it a normal fire – or “ninja” arson, intended to discredit the Strong Arm?



The docks on the south and east sides of the Bay of Drowned Honor (L2) are larger and deeper than those on the other side. No fishing vessels dock here, only large merchant barges. The smell

of the river and the tar of the boats rinses through the other scents in the air. The buildings here are large and imposing, but spaced far apart to allow for wide wagons, leaving the area well lit by day.

The Wharf neighborhood stretches back to Silver Avenue, and includes some of the largest warehouses and dwellings in the Merchant Quarter. This area is “protected” by the Strong Arm firemen.

Locations

THE NORTHEAST WHARF

This is the wharf where the greatest volume of merchant ships dock and debark day by day. Usually they are smaller vessels with varied cargoes – livestock, trade goods, silks and other imported items. They carry away the products of Ryoko Owari – mostly *sake* and pottery, but the occasional legitimate shipment of medical opium.

THE IRON WHARF

It's not made of iron; rather, this is where shipments of iron from the Crab lands downstream are unloaded to serve the needs of a growing city. The Crab vassal sailors who frequent this area have given it a bad reputation for crude pleasures and vicious fights. It's particularly rife with unlicensed *sake* houses.

THE GRAND WHARF

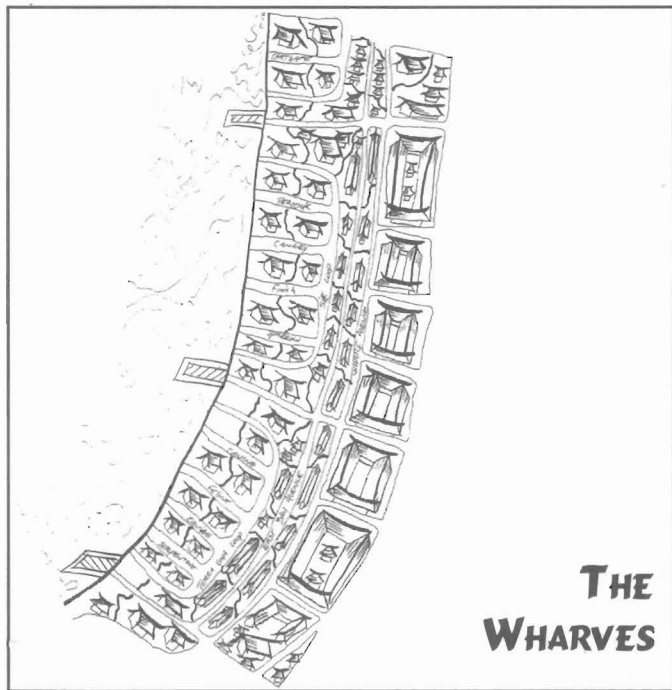
This is where the largest and most expensive barges dock – not only merchant vessels, but the luxurious pleasure craft of Scorpion and (much more rarely) other clan nobles. Consequently, this area is well policed by the Thunder Guard. The Strong Arm Firemen still make their profits here – just not when any nobles are in town.

Neighborhood Concerns

The biggest neighborhood concern is usually the spring floods. A great deal of water comes downstream at that time, and thaw from the Noble Quarter and the Downhill neighborhood tends to collect here, turning the area into a swampy mess. There are persistent rumors that engineers had a choice between draining the area around the Little Dock (page 30) and the Grand Wharf, and the nobles chose to protect their access to the Licensed Quarter.

Neighborhood Plots

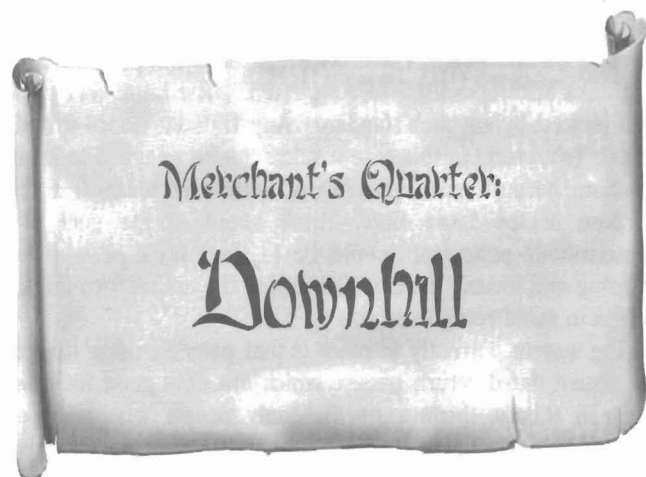
Challenge: Shosuro Ichiro – only son of the Emperor's sister-in-law, Okuni – is coming to visit Ryoko Owari on a barge,



despite repeated admonitions that this has been a rainy spring and flooding might be a problem.

Focus: He arrives and, in spite of Hyobu's (G9, P1) attempts to woo him, is most interested by the Emerald Magistrates. He's fairly straightforward (for a Scorpion) since he (like Hyobu's daughter Kimi (P3)) was raised by Cranes for half his life. He may cause trouble tagging along with the magistrates. Still, he could be an important ally to have.

Strike: Sure enough, the neighborhood floods. His barge is isolated behind walls of swiftly rushing water, and is in danger of being swept downstream. He'd be terribly grateful to anyone who could help him save it...



This is the most coveted and affluent part of the Merchant Quarter, because it's closest to the Noble Quarter. The streets are

clean, the merchants prosperous, it has street lamps lit promptly every night and shows every sign of being orderly and well kept.

However, appearances can be deceiving. Since the Little Wharf is here, and samurai go through this area on their way to and from the Licensed Quarter, there is a certain tension. The samurai don't want to be seen going. The residents don't want to see them coming back (when they're often drunk and sometimes abusive). Yet both have to coexist in the same space. Conflicts are unavoidable, and sometimes result in the blood of the wrong merchant being spilled. The merchants have no official redress – but money talks with a loud voice in Ryoko Owari.

The *kajinin* of Downhill are known as the Little Gate Firemen, and they are the most honorable and dutiful of Ryoko Owari's fire fighters (see page 6 in "City of Lies"). They are led by a man named Hiroshi (see page 31) who takes his duty to protect the area very seriously. The Little Gate Firemen never ask for bribes, although they will accept gifts that aren't too lavish. They keep an eye open for criminals and troublemakers, who are quickly turned over to the Thunder Guard. Unlike most other *kajinin*, the Little Gate Firemen are only "on duty" part of the time – the rest of the time they work in shops like everyone else in the neighborhood. Membership is by invitation only, and it's a great honor to be selected.

Many of the merchants in this area specialize in services or crafts that are of interest to samurai – sword polishers, saddle-makers, fine tailors and sculptors of *netsuke*.

The Downhill neighborhood stretches from the Gate of Condescension (L9) to somewhere around the Grand Wharf. Its southeast boundary is Gold Avenue.

Locations

THE LITTLE GATE (L15)

This tiny gate is very thick, with a slender door in the center called "the needle's eye". Only one person at a time can pass through the needle's eye, and it's a tight squeeze for people like Ashidaka Michitaka (P26) or Ample (P32). The Little Gate is not well policed, by anyone's standards. Any Thunder Guard who did a *good* job watching this gate would soon be assigned to a new position, because good policing is inherently inimical to the purpose of the Little Gate. Think about it; the goal of a conscientious policeman would be to keep track of who was entering and leaving the city. The goal of the nobles who use this gate is to avoid recognition.

The system currently in place is that people exiting the gate are issued dated return passes, which are only good for a few days. In theory, this means that only people who went out through this gate can come back through it, but in practice this is unenforceable. Anyone with a recent pass can come through the Little Gate (which has led to a fairly lucrative black market in some downstream villages). Also, since these guards are lazy or incompetent almost by definition, they tend to be open to bribes.

On top of the gate is a great iron bell. If there's ever a serious attack on the Little Gate, the guards are supposed to ring this bell to summon help from the Dragon's Gate (L10). Drunken samurai have rung it as a joke on a few occasions, but once Jocho (P2) and Osako (P10) caught one culprit and executed him, the joke lost much of its flavor.

THE LITTLE DOCK

This is the cleanest dock in Ryoko Owari, and also the smallest. Larger boats would run aground before reaching the pier, which excludes all barges and most other merchant vessels from docking here, even in an emergency. The purpose of this dock is not profit, however, but pleasure. This is where the nobles keep the small skiffs they use to commute to Teardrop Island.

Some nobles are quite open and up-front about their boats; they don't care who sees them going to the Licensed Quarter (which does, after all, have legitimate establishments). Others, more conscious of their reputations, are careful to conceal their identities, even from the employees of the harbor. The ownership of some vessels is verified only by password.

It's tended by a mute harbor master who directs a staff selected for maximum skill and minimum curiosity. He's well paid by someone; most people think it's Hyobu (G9, P1), but no one knows for sure. The more paranoid nobles suspect that he keeps tabs on everyone who comes and goes, reporting only to his mysterious patron. Most of the dock's clients, however, only care that their boats be well tended and handled without questions.

SEVEN CORNERS

The intersection of Copper Avenue, Quicksilver Diagonal, and Alabaster Street provides a six-cornered intersection, and the terminus of a footpath towards the Grand Wharf (page 29) makes a seventh. This is arguably the busiest intersection in Ryoko Owari, with daily traffic jams and weekly clog-related brawls. It is thick with noodle and tea merchants all hours of the day; after all, people who are stuck in traffic often need refreshment.

JOTOMON'S DOJO

Kitsuki Jotomon's (P28) school of *bushido* is located on Sapphire Street, between Copper Avenue and Silver. It is a low, unassuming structure, notable only for the quality of the horses tethered in its courtyard.

Jotomon insists that her students respect each other only for their level of skill while within the walls of her dojo. (This hasn't caused too much confusion yet, since her noble students are universally better trained than her peasant students – so far.)

She teaches a two-hour class each day. The first third of the class is grappling and jiu-jitsu practice. Then there's a period of meditation and discussion of philosophy or martial theory. The last half of the class is swordplay, usually with *boken* (wooden swords). She has been known to take her students outside the city walls to practice fighting on different terrains – on hills, on stones, in water and on uneven ground.

CLIMBING TOWARDS HEAVEN

This is the office of Builder (P44), renowned as the finest carpenter in Ryoko Owari. He has dozens of plasterers, timber cutters and roofers in his employ, and is (consequently) one of the wealthiest merchants in the city. Unlike many others he does not flaunt his wealth. Nonetheless, his home is as tasteful and rich as a nobleman's – finer than many.

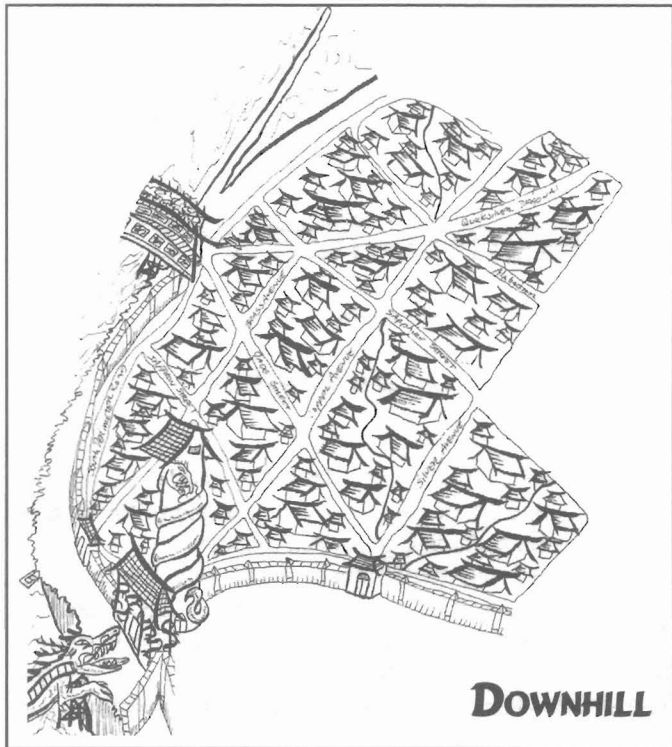
Neighborhood Residents

The merchant **Builder (P44)** lives here, near his office.

HIROSHI

Hiroshi is the current chief of the Little Gate Firemen. He's scrupulous and honest almost to a fault, and he takes his duties very seriously. He can frequently be seen wandering the neighborhood, checking for fire hazards and making sure that there are adequate water supplies available for fires. The Downhill residents adore him for his honesty and obvious concern, and are deeply grateful that they don't live under the oppressive rule of thugs like the Strong Arm or Fire Eater gangs.

He takes a proprietary interest in the entire neighborhood, which has caused a great deal of trouble and embarrassment for local opium dealers. He's completely invulnerable to bribes, but area criminals are hesitant to attack him – Hyobu (G9, P1) has put word in the grapevine that the Little Gate Firemen are not to be messed with. If he continues to irritate the opium trade, however, Hyobu may revoke her protection.



RUMOR MILL NO. 4

(MALE CHARACTER) (FEMALE CHARACTER)

"HAVE YOU NOTICED THAT Male Character IS ACTING
FUNNY THESE DAYS? I HEAR IT'S BECAUSE HE'S WORRIED
PEOPLE WILL FIND OUT ABOUT HIS TORRID AFFAIR
WITH Female Character !"

Hiroshi isn't an impressive figure. He's in good shape, but rather short and plain in speech, manner and dress. His brow is permanently furrowed, and he always seems to be looking around the area with a mien of concern.

Neighborhood Concerns

The biggest neighborhood concern is the "ninja". Since the assassination of Hiroshi's predecessor, the merchants have lived in fear of black-clad assassins. Hiroshi, the *kajinin* and the Thunder Guard have done all they can to persuade people that the ninja are a myth, but their increased presence have undone the effect of their reassuring words. After all, no one sends guards to defend against an imaginary enemy...

Neighborhood Plots

Challenge: A samurai of a minor noble family is found murdered – struck through the belly with his own wakizashi. Apparently he died after a night of revelry; he reeks of *sake*, and his face and body bear traces of geisha makeup.

Focus: His brash son harasses the magistrates about finding the lowborn cur who killed his father, and begins haunting the Downhill neighborhood interrogating passers-by at random, roughing up "suspicious" or "uncooperative" residents and generally making a big nuisance of himself. All this despite a few odd facts about the murder, to wit; the man was killed by his own weapon, which was left with the body. In fact, nothing was taken, which would seem to rule out a common theft.

Strike: The killer was, in fact, the samurai's wife, a proud woman who got fed up with his shameless carousing. She confronted him on his way home, and when he shoved her out of the way, she grabbed his wakizashi and killed him. The son, of course, won't believe it even if she confesses to him, and he becomes an even bigger pain when the truth comes out. If she's arrested (or worse, executed) he swears a vow of perpetual vengeance on the magistrates. He also convinces himself they're covering up for the real killer.



This area got its name by being the wealthiest *heimin* neighborhood in Ryoko Owari. The neighborhood stretches from the Garden of Daikoku (L17) all the way down to the wall around the Noble Quarter. It's bordered by Monk's Edge Avenue to the southeast and by Gold Avenue on its opposite side.

This is the domain of the Firemen of Daikoku's Garden, led by the stylish Takai-san (see below). These *kajinin* strut through the neighborhood without flashy uniforms or gaudy decorations; they're known by reputation and attitude. They skim a little, but their territory is so large and so wealthy that it doesn't take many hand gifts (G1) to make for a good living.

In such a large area, there's a broad cross-section of businesses, ranging from huge granaries and timber mills to tiny shops where generations are spent crafting bonsai trees.

Locations

DAIKOKU'S GARDEN (L17)

This elegant garden has gone downhill a bit since it was first built. While the monks of Daikoku keep the Garden of Contemplation in good shape, the Poppy Garden has gone slightly wild.

The two gardens provide a study in contrasts. The Garden of Contemplation is an austere zen garden, where the works of nature and the works of man blend and harmonize, providing a tranquil setting for relaxation. The Poppy Garden is bright and striking, with a riot of blooms and weeds mixing together to flop over onto the paths and creep up through cracks between paving stones. Though both have their attractions, it's clear which one is favored by the merchants; the Poppy Garden is thick with visitors at all hours of the day and night, while the Garden of Contemplation is almost always quiet and serene. This could, of course, have something to do with the presence of the local firemen, who make the Poppy Garden their unofficial office.

STAR OF SILVER

This silver smithy is run by Shiho, a peasant who was the vassal of Shiba Shonagon. Shiho was the "Dear Friend" referred to in "Memoirs of an Opium Eater", and it was Shiho's business acumen that allowed Shonagon the leisure time and money to indulge in a decadent lifestyle.

Star of Silver has an excellent jeweler working for them – a young woman named Takako, who learned the craft from her father and wasn't allowed to work anywhere else because of her gender. Shiho recognized her talent, however, and in a few years Takako's designs were in great demand – not only in Ryoko Owari, but in Ootosan Uchi as well.

Lately, business has not been as good for Star of Silver. Their current patron is Asako Kinto (P31) who couldn't possibly care less about providing them with mercantile advantages. Shonagon, whatever her other flaws, was seen often, and often wore Takako's designs, providing the shop with valuable exposure. The principal reason for the shop's decline, however, is Shiho herself. Shiho has read the "Memoirs" and feels deep guilt and distress that her patroness (whom she admired and liked) died a shameful death. Shiho is aware that Shonagon couldn't have fallen so far, so fast, without the money raised by Star of Silver. She's haunted by the idea of "Daikoku's Curse" as expounded by Abbot Okawa (P37) in the "Memoirs", and wonders if the curse is on her as well.

SPEED OF THE NORTHLANDS

This is the shop of the merchant Horse (P43), who used to be patronized by Shinjo Yoshifusa (P11) but is now the vassal of Bayushi Korechika (P5). Horse still feels kind of guilty about abandoning the old man, but she knows that Korechika is making her far richer, far faster than her Unicorn patrons would have. She has no idea that Korechika is involved with the opium trade.

This is, without a doubt, the finest public source of horses in Ryoko Owari. The private stables of the Ides may produce stronger steeds, but they have only a few foals a year, while Speed of the Northlands produces up to thirty.

Neighborhood Residents

Shiho (see "Star of Silver," above)

Takako the Silversmith (see "Star of Silver," above)

The merchant woman called **Horse** (P43)

TAKAI-SAN

Takai-san is the leader of the Daikoku's Garden Firemen – a position that's been in his family for generations. He's a good looking man in his forties, genial and confident.

His organization operates on a model very similar to the daimyo-samurai-peasant hierarchy. He's the "daimyo," commanding a group of soldiers who obey him without question. They, in turn, have authority over the area merchants, who pay for their protection. Takai-san lives as well as many samurai – he

has an opulent home, a couple mistresses, two daughters and four sons (acknowledged). He provides protection to Hyobu (G9, P1) and Subtle's (P41) opium business, and that alone gives him all the clout and money he needs to run a tough gang. The graft he takes from the merchants in the Fields of Gold is just icing on the biscuit.

HENJO (SEE PAGE 16 IN "CITY OF LIES")

Henjo lives in an opulent house not far from Daikoku's Garden (L17) where he often goes to sit in the Garden of Contemplation. He's well known as a wealthy timber merchant, though he's not particularly social. He has a reputation for privacy and poor health – sometimes he isn't seen for weeks on end, and conducts all his business through servants. (This is actually when his serpent scar has crawled out and become visible on his face.)

Lately he's made a point of telling his business contacts that he's very ill, and considering a move back to his home territory in the Unicorn lands. This is, of course, false; he's actually planning to liquidate most of his money in preparation for another rebirth. His faithful servant Suzuko will "raise" him until he's sixteen or so, and then he'll buy into whatever business suits his fancy at the time.

At least, that's the plan; the Scorpion Coup may well interfere. Now, however, he's just starting to sell everything he owns. He's in no hurry; he'll wait years to get a good price. After all, he's got all the time in the world.

Neighborhood Concerns

The rivalry between Korechika (P5) and the Shinjos (P11, P12) has occasioned a great deal of comment in the Fields of Gold. There are two schools of thought – basically a conservative faction and a radical faction.

The more conservative merchants believe that there's more to a vassal/patron relationship than mere fiscal advantage. It should also be a sacred trust, a joining of mutual concern – not just mutual advantage. Often these merchants regard their patrons with deep admiration, and their feelings are colored with considerable sentimentality.

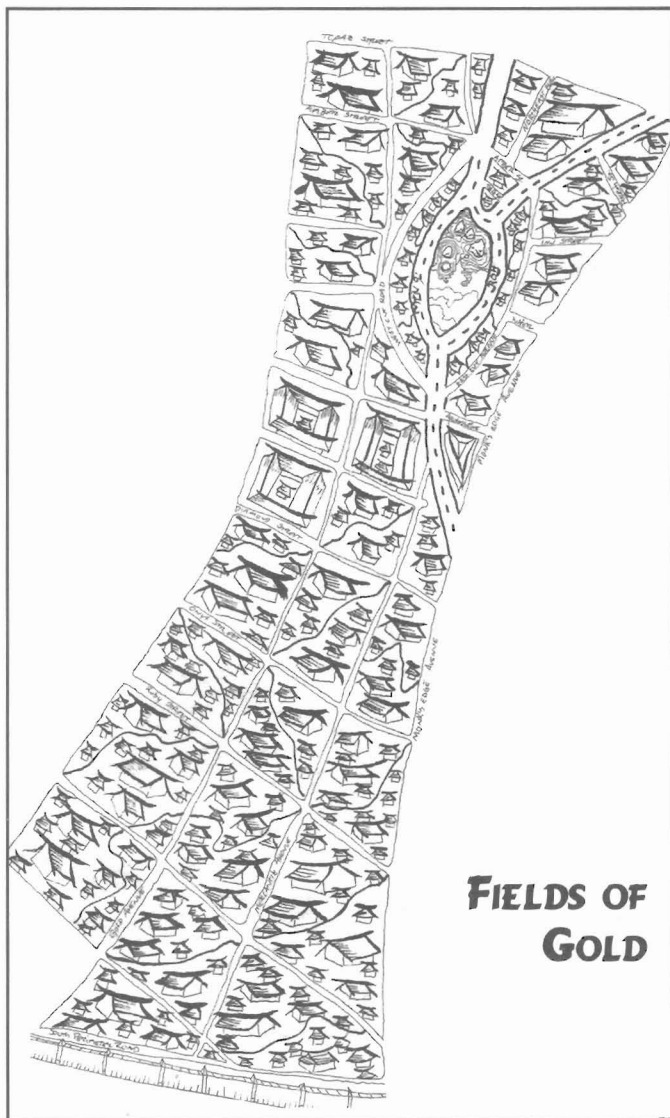
The radical merchants (who are usually those with newer wealth – those who've only moved to the Fields of Gold in the last few generations) believe their purpose in the Celestial Order is to make money – period. If they can make more money with one patron than another, it is their duty to do so. As for saying that one samurai is "good" and another "bad" – who is a merchant to judge? Certainly the samurai wouldn't appreciate being evaluated by mere *heimin*. It is the duty of a *heimin* to choose a patron humbly – by strict financial criteria.

Neighborhood Plots

Challenge: The magistrates are passing through the Fields of Gold when they spy a lost young child...

Focus: ...who's spattered with blood from head to toe. The child is well dressed, but without clan colors or *mon*. She's mute with shock and terror.

Strike: The child is the youngest daughter of Takai-san. A group of Ryoko Ninja tried to kidnap her and a nasty fight ensued between them and her bodyguards. Now the bodyguards (who are good fighters but kind of dense) want to get her back from the magistrates without revealing who she is or who they work for – ideally, they want to do all this before Takai-san finds out. If the dumb bodyguards attack the magistrates and get killed, or get caught trying to spirit the girl away, Takai-san may think they're after him, or trying to extort him, unless things get cleared up fast.



**Daikoku's
Shadow**

**THE TEMPLE OF
DAIKOKU (L12)**

**THE TEMPLE
OF AMATERASU
(L13)**

**THE TEMPLE
OF BAYUSHI**

**THE PIOUS
GATE (L8)**

**THE TEMPLE OF
SADAHAKO**

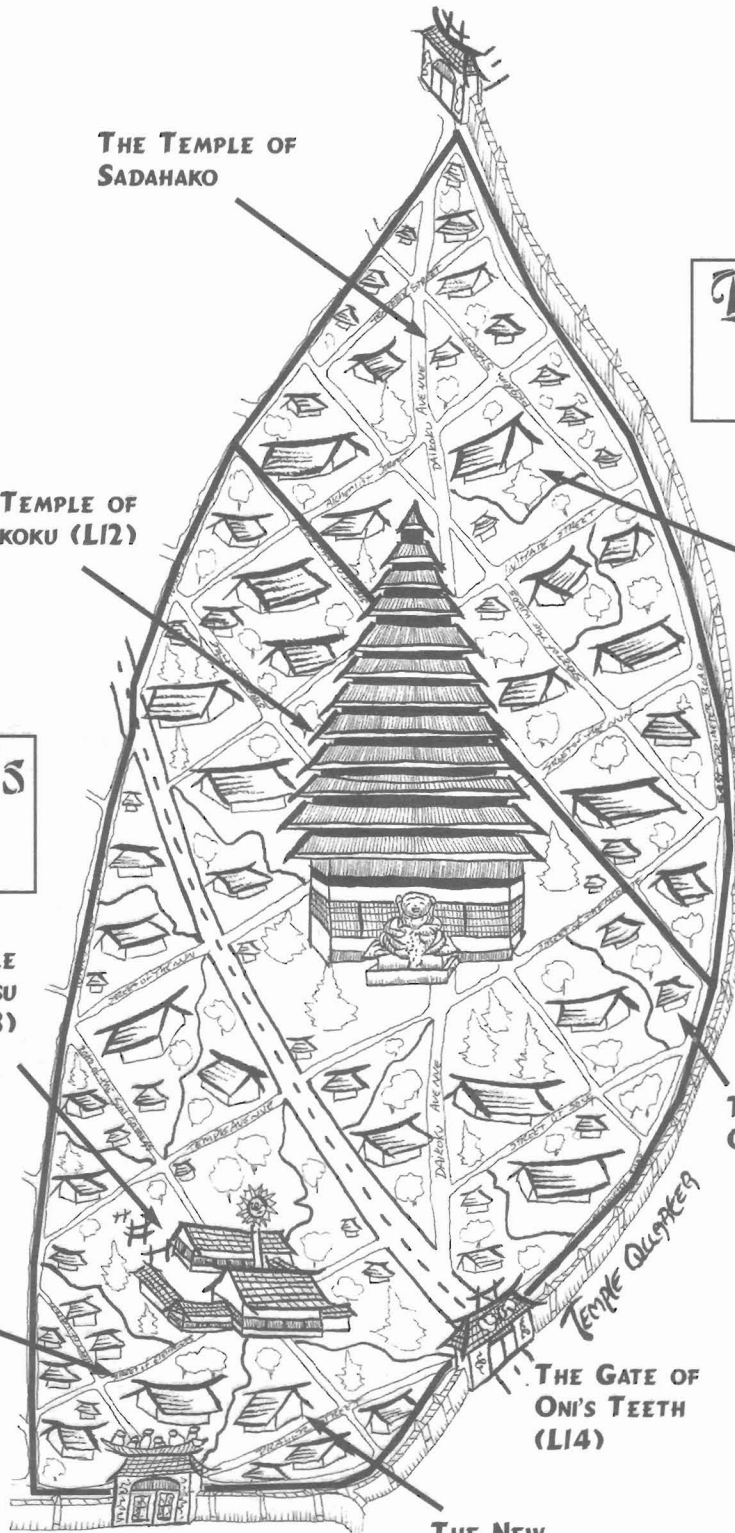
**The Small
Holes**

**THE OLD
TEMPLE OF
SHOSURO**

**THE TEMPLE OF
OSANO-WO**

**THE GATE OF
ONI'S TEETH
(L14)**

**THE NEW
TEMPLE OF
SHOSURO**





**Chapter Four:
The Temple
Quarter**

This is one of the quietest of the city's Quarters. Merchants here are not pushy and aggressive, but sedate and serene. Even the street-side food vendors wait for customers to come to them, instead of crying out incitements. The muffled chimes from the temples, the songs of birds from tranquil gardens, and the soothing chants of monks weave a subtle music that permeates the area. The wind from the Merchant Quarter sometimes brings in an aroma of horses, spice and avarice, but the gentle scents of incense quickly quell such breezes. Wide sunlit streets wind their way between the shrines, the monasteries and the few merchant houses that service them. The buildings are classic and graceful, relaxing to the eye that rests on them.

Generally speaking, the placid surface of the Temple Quarter accurately reflects the spirits of its residents. The Temple Road Firemen are an honorable bunch, and *kajinin* from other neighborhoods are either too busy (Strong Arm) or too respectful (Daikoku's Garden) to make trouble here.

Spaced throughout the Temple Quarter are large brass bells, which were placed to summon firefighters in case of conflagration. The strict penalties imposed for false alarms, along with strict community policing, keeps abuses infrequent.

Quarter Concerns

Most residents in the Temple Quarter can be considered either worldly or ascetic – even those who aren't monks or shugenja. Instead of describing an approach towards worship, these terms can be expanded to describe an individual's general approach towards life. (Okawa (P37) and Jirohei (P38), the two chief monks of Daikoku, provide fine examples of the two philosophies.)

The ascetics believe that the world of the senses is the world of *maya* – deadly illusion that distracts the soul from its true mission. Such people are definitely “unworldly” – they trust the fortunes to supply them with their few physical needs and spare little concern for the questions of position and acquisition that occupy the rest of the city.

The worldly ones, on the other hand, believe that our destinies depend on our will and involvement. These people – many of whom are extremely pious and devout – are nonetheless concerned that the temples be well tended and look prosperous. They are the ones who give large donations – or ask for them. They're the ones who worry when a temple's congregation dips, or when a wall around a shrine gets overgrown with ivy. In many cases, they believe that the outward appearance of a temple reflects the respect and esteem that its *kami* receives. They are therefore very concerned with appearances.

Quarter Residents

The great Temple of Daikoku (L12) gives its name to the neighborhood Daikoku's Shadow (see page 37), and it is home to

Abbot Okawa (P37) and his assistant Jirohei (P38). This same area holds the temple of Amaterasu, where Meiyō (P39) lives.

Many of the noble shugenja of Ryoko Owari do not live in this Quarter, but are frequent visitors. Their number include Ide Nakatada (P17) and Kitsu Senshi (P30). Ikoma Yoriko (P29) is frequently found at various temples, while Ide Shikibu (P18) has become a frequent visitor since the death of her son (P15). Asako Kinto (P31), however, has been seen in the temples with decreasing frequency. Surprisingly, the shugenja Soshi Seiryoku (P9) does not visit the temples very often at all.

Adventure Hook

Challenge: A burly man claiming his name is Osano-Wo is waiting for the Emerald Magistrates when they emerge from a temple one day. He insists that they are to clean his house. He is extremely stubborn, and any magistrate who tries to get away from him is seized and thrown to the ground.

Focus: He *really is* Osano-Wo, Fortune of Thunder. He knows something's wrong with one of his nearby temples, but he doesn't know what. If you're a god and you've got a mystery, who do you turn to? Only the best investigators in the area, right?

Osano-Wo doesn't hurt the magistrates unless they deliberately provoke him, but he won't let them do anything else until they figure out how to “clean his house.” He can tell them that it isn't “his house in the city” (meaning the local Temple of Osano-Wo).

The problem is that the Abbot at his main temple, on the Plains of Thunder, has become corrupt. He's been seduced by the daughter of one of the gardeners (or by someone who claims to be the daughter of one of the gardeners...) and no longer has flawless thoughts when he gives instruction to the monks. In a few years he'll be so firmly under her thumb that he'd be willing to unfairly disqualify a contestant in the Test of the Emerald Champion...

Strike: As soon as the Emerald Magistrates set out for the Plains of Thunder, Osano-Wo leaves them. Or, at least he doesn't follow them in human form. Instead, a tiny and incredibly localized thunderstorm follows them wherever they go. (They can go inside a building and get dry, of course; the storm just falls on the roof.)

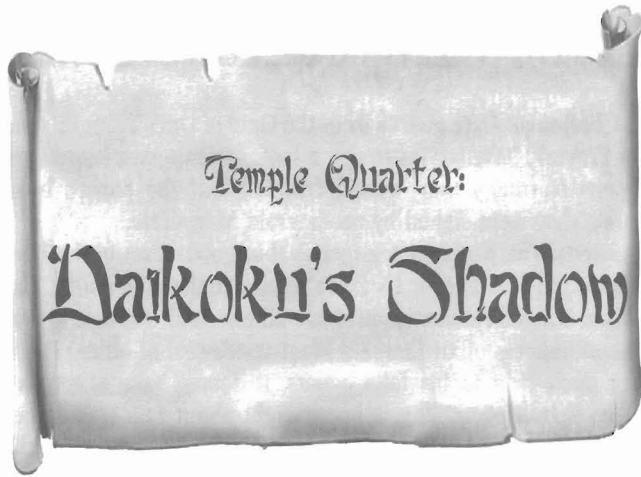
This floating storm is a pretty clear omen, and gets them an audience with the Abbot. When they tell him that his temple is corrupted, however, he flies into a rage and challenges them – “One at a time or all at once if you're cowardly!” He's as tough as you'd expect a head monk to the Fortune of Thunder to be, but if he's in danger of putting down all your magistrates permanently, you can have the last one standing (or a Crab magistrate, if one is present) be possessed by Osano-Wo and beat the hell out of him.

In any event, the surviving magistrates are given the blessing of Osano-Wo, in the form of a tsuba (sword guard) with the kanji for “thunder” on it. Any sword with the tsuba attached can strike

supernatural creatures, and its holder can add and keep an extra die for damage rolls. When such a sword hits a Shadowlands creature, lightning arcs from the tsuba down the length of the blade.

THE TEMPLE OF DAIKOKU (L12)

Over a hundred feet tall, the Temple of Daikoku is a magnificent testament to the Fortune of Wealth. Fronted by a twenty foot tall statue of Daikoku (carved from imported pink granite), this is the home of well over a hundred monks. Ryoko Owari's monks of Daikoku are known for eccentric or even bizarre behavior (P37, and page 11 in "City of Lies"). Stories of the monks include the following.



The massive Temple of Daikoku (L12) – the tallest structure in Ryoko Owari – dominates each skyward glance taken in this neighborhood, which stretches between the Pious Gate (L8) and the temple itself, and then between the city wall (L1) and the Monk's Edge Avenue.

This area holds the great temples of Ryoko Owari – those of the Seven Fortunes, the Temple of Osano-Wo, the Temple of the Sun, and the luxurious Temple of Bayushi Kami.

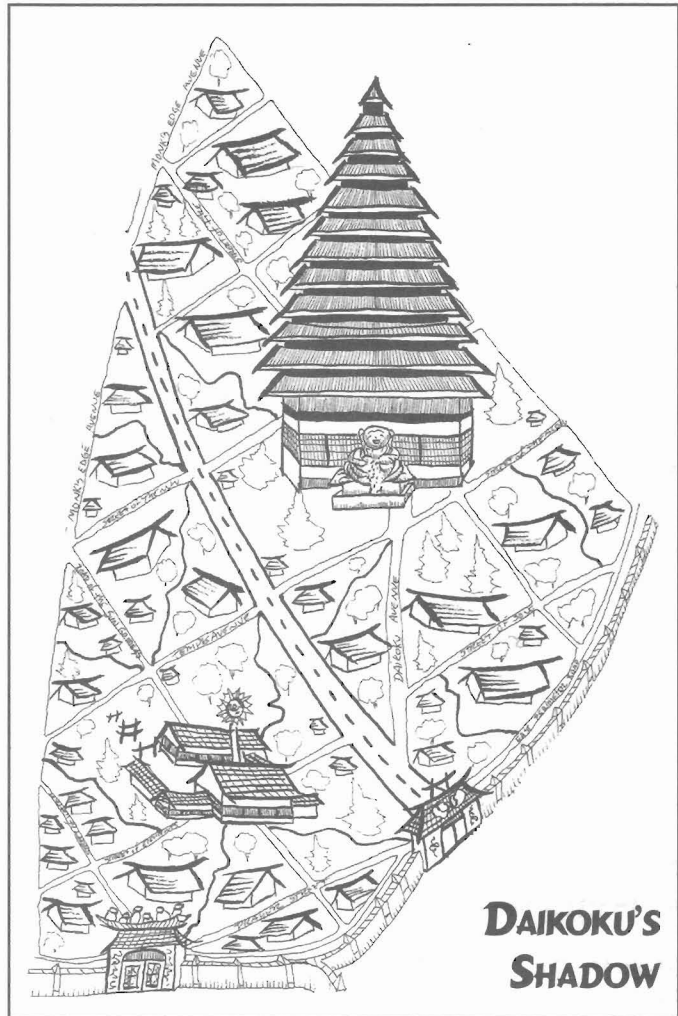
Daikoku's Shadow is one of the few areas in Ryoko Owari that is free from the interference of the *kajinin* (G12) gangs. Instead, the temples are protected by the monks of Daikoku – who, it is said, are able to quench fires by negotiating directly with the elements.

Locations

THE TEMPLE OF AMATERASU (L13)

This temple is a graceful structure built of a stunning white limestone – a type of stone unique in the city for its color and brightness. The temple grounds are expansive, making the compound an oasis of space and grace in the generally cramped environs of Ryoko Owari.

The central feature of the compound is a tall pillar upon which rests a dazzling golden mirror globe. Some claim that the globe is solid gold – a gift to the temple from the Dragon of Fire. It is further rumored that those foolish enough to try to steal it have been found burnt to death – consumed down to the bones by a terrible heat. It is more likely that anyone foolish enough to try to steal the sun globe has simply fallen off the pillar, which is slender, slippery, and seventy feet tall.



- One monk of Daikoku offered to trade silver coins for copper, but everyone who accepted his offer found that anything they bought with the coins was ruined or broken before they had a chance to use it. One man, however, offered the monk silver for copper – and the copper coins he accepted turned into gold.

- Once, a merchant offered the monks of Daikoku a hundred gold coins if they would show him enlightenment. Some of the monks tried telling him riddles, others showed him key passages in the "Tao of Shinsei," but he refused to pay them, arguing that he was just as anxious and confused as he'd been before. Then one monk told the merchant to meet him on the top of the city

walls, on Noble Hill, overlooking the poppy fields. He told the merchant to bring his koku, and the merchant did.

It was a clear, bright day, and the poppy fields to the south were at their fullest glory of color. The monk pointed out at the fields and said "Isn't it beautiful?"

"Yes, yes," said the merchant. "But what about enlightenment?"

The monk picked up the merchant's sack of gold, and with a heave of great strength scattered it out over the fields.

"Enlightenment means knowing you'll never see that beautiful moment again," the monk said. At that moment, the merchant's eyes were opened.

• Many years ago, an abbot took a group of monks to a gambling den in the Licensed Quarter. For hours, they simply sat and watched as the gamblers threw dice. Their stares made the gamblers uneasy, and soon the casino was almost empty. The owner approached the abbot and told him that he would either have to start playing, or leave. The abbot shrugged, picked up the dice and proceeded to throw the highest-paying combination – twenty times in a row. Having thus bankrupted the gambler, he told his monks to carry the gold away for him. As he left, he turned to the stunned gambler and said "I don't see what the fuss is about; it really is a very simple game." The gambler shut his mouth, and joined them as a monk.

THE GATE OF ONI'S TEETH (L14)

This elaborate gate is also one of Ryoko Owari's busiest. Commerce, not only from the Crab lands but from Beiden Pass, all comes to Ryoko Owari along Mountain Goblin's Rest Road. The tax assessors here are among the most vigilant and scrupulous (though, like everyone else, they're not adverse to the occasional hand gift (G1)).

Like most other city gates (except the Little Gate, of course) this one is supposed to be sealed from dusk until dawn. However, its closure is delayed almost every day by the demanding merchants who are the lifeblood of Ryoko Owari.

Neighborhood Residents

Abbot Okawa (P37) lives here at the Temple of Daikoku (L12).

Jirohei (P38) resides there as well.

The priestess Meiyo (P39) lives in the Temple of Amaterasu (L13).

Neighborhood Concerns

Many of the monks, nuns and shugenja of the Temple Quarter are frequently disturbed by the volume of traffic along Mountain Goblin's Rest Road. Purity of thought is a difficult task, and the cries of drovers provide a definite distraction. What they would like (ideally) would be a detour of the Mountain Goblin's Rest Road *outside* the city wall, up to the Gate of Increasing Fortune. (This is, of course, a terribly impractical idea; traffic is bad enough going through two gates – and travelers going straight to Yogo

Castle wouldn't even be taxed!) Failing that, they'd like to see an ordinance against noise in the Temple Quarter. Of course, if they get their wish, they have to deal with the noisy Thunder Guard needed to enforce such a difficult law...

Yemon's Legacy: Part One

Challenge: Gate guards from the Gate of Oni's Teeth (L14) ask the Emerald Magistrates to come look at some suspicious travel papers. Normally they wouldn't bother, but the paper's bearer claims they were signed by an Emerald Magistrate.

Focus: The papers are forgeries (but good ones) in the hands of Kaiu Joji – it takes a TN 20 to recognize them as phony. (Kaiu Yemon is a good stonemason above all else, and was able to carve a good likeness of an Emerald Magistrate's seal of office.) Even if they don't twig to his fake papers, it doesn't take a genius to notice there's something not-quite-right about Joji. He's a mess, he's incoherent, he mutters and snarls and grunts even more than is usual for a Crab clan bushi.

Strike: There are basically three ways the Magistrates can handle this; they can haul him in, they can ignore him, or they can follow him. If they haul him in, he gives them a barely-comprehensible account of his haunting and tries to tell them about Bokusui and his gang. If the magistrates let him out, he leads them to Bokusui and company in Part Two. Otherwise, he escapes by dint of his shadow-tainted strength (possibly injuring Pitiful in the process, or killing a guard or two) and still shows up for Part Two. There's a slight, but real chance that the magistrates will decide to kill him out of hand. (After, all, he does have the Taint.) If they do this, make sure he tells them all he knows about Yemon, Bokusui and the map. You can also have him give directions to where the conspirators are going to meet, and when (which links the magistrates right into Part Two, page 47).

If they ignore him, they don't hear about him until Part Two. Simple as that.

If they follow him, he leads them to Part Two. Also nice and simple.

RUMOR MILL NO. 5

(CHARACTER) (CHARACTER) (RARE OBJECT)
(LARGER GOAL)

"I OVERHEARD Character ASKING Character
WHERE, OR IF, S/HE COULD GET A Rare Object
IT ALL SEEMED VERY HUSH-HUSH, WHICH MAKES ME
THINK IT'S RELATED TO THEIR WHOLE INTRICATE PLAN
TO ACHIEVE Larger Goal ."



Temple Quarter:

The Small Holes

This quiet neighborhood is the territory of the Temple Road Firemen, a devout group who take their duties very seriously.

If you've looked closely at the map you may have realized that there's no "Temple Road" in Ryoko Owari. The *kajinin* didn't take their name from a physical place; instead, their name refers to a quote from the Tao of Shinsei: "The temple road is wisdom's golden path." The Temple Road Firemen have no uniform as such, though many of them like to wear clothing with a bell motif. The neighborhood they defend is dedicated to shrines and temples for lesser known deities. This is where temples to the patron Fortunes of *sake* brewers and jade carvers can be found, along with the shrines of the *Kami* and ancestors of families from outside Ryoko Owari.

Locations

THE TEMPLE OF SADAHAKO

(Based on an idea from K.C. Lancaster)

This small temple is dedicated to the controversial minor fortune Sadahako, who was declared divine by Hantei VII on his deathbed. Sadahako was a geisha of no small accomplishment – an expert musician and a woman of unparalleled beauty. It is also widely believed that she was Hantei VII's mistress. It is known for a fact that he mourned her untimely death with great sincerity.

The most orthodox Asako historians dismiss the story of Hantei VII's declaration as a myth and refuse to believe that Sadahako is a genuine Fortune. However, her worship is still practiced, especially in Scorpion lands.

THE OLD TEMPLE OF SHOSURO

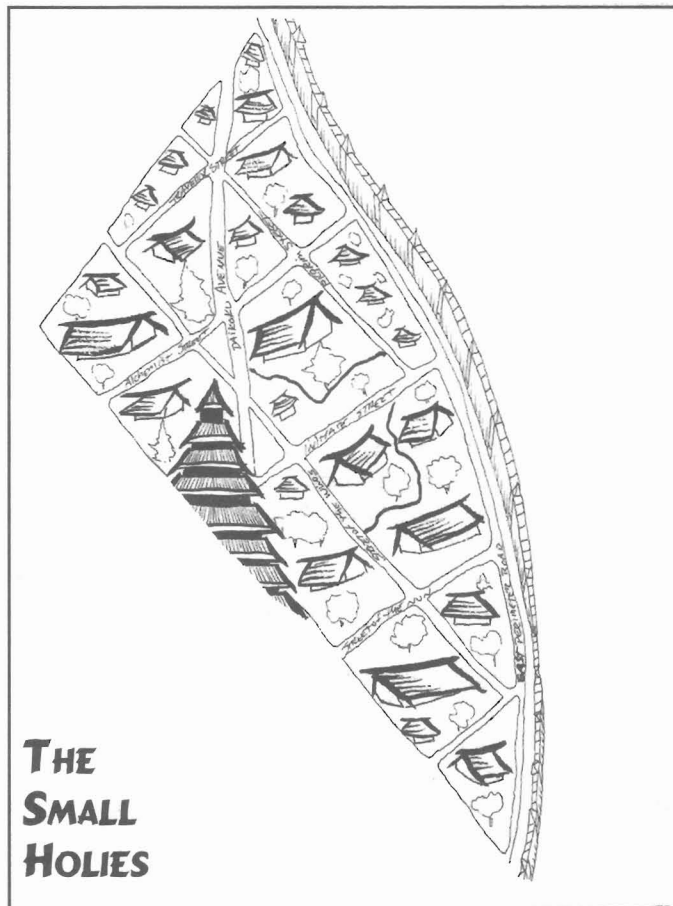
(Based on an idea from Rob Heinsoo)

There are two temples in Ryoko Owari that are dedicated to the founder of the Shosuro family – the old temple and the new temple. Both have their monks, but the new temple is well attended, while the old temple is crumbling almost into ruin.

The old temple was abandoned because it's haunted. The ghost of Shosuro Kohei haunts it and cannot rest until his name is cleared.

Many years ago, Kohei was the sixteenth Governor of Ryoko Owari. A conspiracy to assassinate Bayushi Jo (then the Scorpion Clan daimyo) was uncovered in Ryoko Owari, and Kohei was accused of being its mastermind. He denied it despite all the evidence and testimony offered to the contrary, and his execution was ordered. Furthermore, Bayushi Jo ordered that he be hanged by the neck like a commoner, as further punishment for his treachery.

This sentence caused a tremendous outcry among the Scorpion nobles, and it appeared that the Scorpion clan might be shaken by civil war. It was Kohei who prevented an armed insurrection, by asking Jo's permission to commit *seppuku* before his execution. Faced by a possible rebellion by the Shosuros (and possibly the Soshi as well), Jo agreed.



THE
SMALL
HOLIES

Kohei made his first cuts in the old Shosuro family temple in Ryoko Owari, in the presence of Bayushi Jo. When he had doubled over in agony, his second raised a katana to strike Kohei's neck. To the amazement of all those present, Kohei parried the killing blow and raised his head. Eyes bright with agony, he spoke.

"I am a dead man now, my lord, and I swear this: I never betrayed you, and I will not rest until this stain is taken from my name."

Then, with a great groan, he expired.

Since that time, there have been reports of Kohei's ghost walking the temple – even interrupting services. However, the ghost himself doesn't know who plotted against Bayushi Jo, and cannot rest until the truth is known.

Neighborhood Residents

EMORI

Emori is in charge of the Temple Road Firemen. His attitude is somewhere between the anxiety of Hiroshi (page 31) and the cocky swagger of Takai-san (page 32). He's a balding middle-aged man prone to pomposity, but he genuinely wants to be devout and pious. It's just that he also wants to be a big shot, and he's seen the fear and respect other *kajinin* leaders receive. He just doesn't understand that this deference is the result of violent brutality.

YUSRAH

(Based on an idea from Ken Hite)

Yusrah was born different. A tiny and crippled infant, she never grew properly, and her family sold her to a traveling show before she could speak. The traveling entertainers raised her, and eventually arranged a tour of Rokugan under the aegis of the Unicorn Clan.

While visiting Ryoko Owari, Yusrah discovered opium, and her habit became so bad so quickly that her fellow entertainers decided to abandon her when they moved on. Alone in a strange country, Yusrah took a great risk – a risk that paid off.

Since she's under three feet tall and only has one arm, Yusrah is able to hide in tiny spaces where no one would think to look. She hid herself under the floorboards of a brothel and was lucky enough to blackmail a few prominent merchants.

Once she got some money in her pocket, she began to expand her operation, and eventually she crossed paths with Ayako, the mastermind behind the "Ryoko Ninja" (T3). Ayako was quick to put Yusrah to work and found many uses for her intrusion skills. However, she decided that Yusrah would be better off clean and sober – so she imprisoned her until she'd gotten through a grueling withdrawal. Yusrah was indeed more alert, clear-headed and skilled once the opium was cleaned out of her system; the first thing she did was plan Ayako's death.

Once Yusrah had killed Ayako, she took over the Ryoko Ninja for herself, and has been their mastermind ever since. She operates through a series of "face men", none of whom know all the details of the operation. She herself stands out far too much to be perceived as the leader – in addition to her diminutive size and missing limb, she's also got very dark skin and peculiar, round eyes. She almost never goes out on missions any more; she stays in her house in the Small Holies and plots. The house is quite plain on the outside, but the interior is becoming increasingly lavish, decorated in the opulent style of her distant homeland.

Neighborhood Concerns

There are persistent rumors throughout the Small Holies that one of the many temples is a front – that while its monks and shugenja pretend to innocently worship one of the many Fortunes, they are in fact devoted to diabolical ceremonies celebrating Lord Moon.

Some believe the story and put a great deal of effort into ferreting out the hidden cult. Others think it's all hogwash, and that there is no Moon Cult in Ryoko Owari. Still others think there's a cult, but not in the Small Holies; the cultists just spread the rumor in order to sow dissension and mistrust...

RUMOR MILL No. 6

(CHARACTER) (NOTEWORTHY ACHIEVEMENT)
(MENIAL OCCUPATION)

"YOU KNOW HOW Character IS ALWAYS STRUTTING
AROUND BECAUSE HIS/HER FATHER ACCOMPLISHED
? WELL, S/HE WON'T BE ABLE TO
STRUT MUCH LONGER — NOT BECAUSE HE DIDN'T DO IT,
BUT BECAUSE HE ISN'T HIS/HER FATHER AT ALL! I'M
SURE S/HE WON'T BE BOASTING ABOUT THE GREAT
DEEDS OF HIS/HER REAL FATHER, THE GREAT AND
HONORABLE Menial Occupation ! COULDN'T YOU JUST
DIE LAUGHING?"

RUMOR MILL No. 7

(CHARACTER) (SERIOUS DISHONORABLE ACT)
(POSITION OF AUTHORITY) (MINOR DISHONORABLE ACT)

"I'VE HEARD THAT _____ HAS PROOF THAT
Character
SOMEONE COMMITTED _____ — BUT
Serious Dishonorable Act
S/HE IS AFRAID TO TELL THAT PERSON'S
Position of Authority
BECAUSE THE GUILTY PARTY KNOWS ABOUT HIS/HER

Minor Dishonorable Act

RUMOR MILL No. 10

(CHARACTER) (LOCATION OUTSIDE THE CITY)
(NONHUMAN CREATURE)

"YOU'LL NEVER BELIEVE WHAT _____ FOUND
Character
NEAR _____ — THE CORPSE OF A
Location Outside the City
Nonhuman Creature . S/HE THINKS IT WASN'T THAT OLD
EITHER — AND SO CLOSE TO THE CITY!"

RUMOR MILL No. 8

(MALE NOBLE) (NOBLE CHARACTER)
(FEMALE NOBLE) (MALE NOBLE)

"SURELY YOU NOTICED THAT _____ WASN'T
Male Noble
AT _____'S LITTLE GATHERING LAST
Noble Character
WEEKEND? WELL, IT WASN'T THE SNUB IT APPEARED.
HE JUST DIDN'T WANT TO SEE _____ THERE
Female Noble
— WITH _____!"
Male Noble

RUMOR MILL No. 9

(MALE CHARACTER) (CHARACTER) (INSULT)
(DUELING ADVANTAGE)

"IS IT TRUE THAT _____ ASKED HYOBU TO
Male Character
COUNTEANCE AN IAIJUTSU CHALLENGE AGAINST
Character
BECAUSE OF _____ ? IF THE
Insult
CHALLENGE IS APPROVED, HE'D BETTER BE CAREFUL —
I HEAR S/HE HAS ACCESS TO _____
Dueling Advantage

RUMOR MILL No. 11

(CHARACTER) (CHARACTER) (FAMILY)
(TYPE OF BUSINESS)

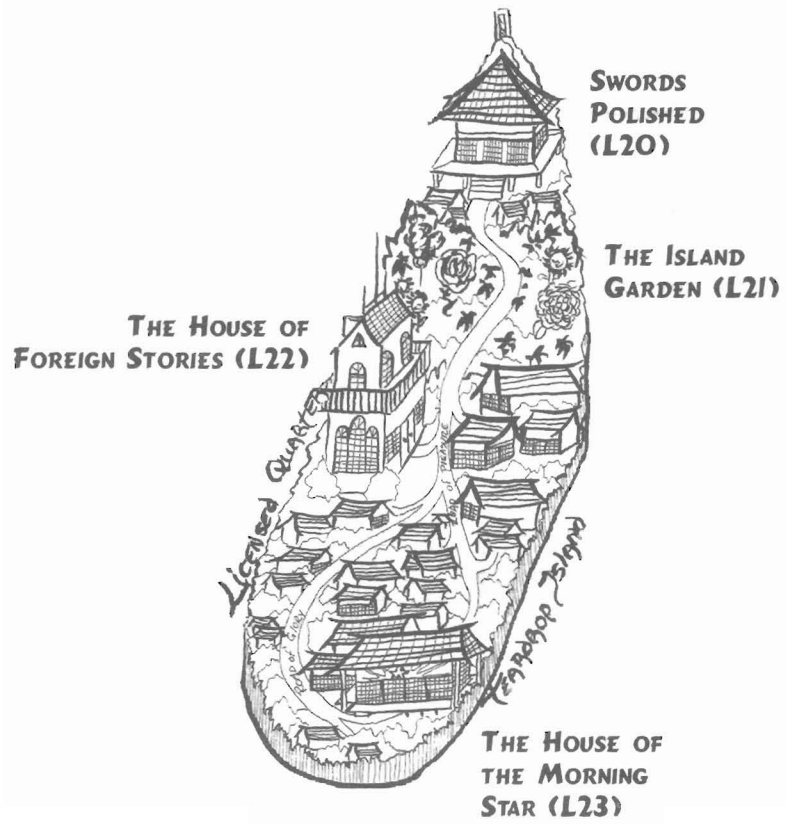
"DID YOU KNOW _____ HAS BEEN TALKING TO
Character
Character ABOUT GETTING PROPERTY OUT IN THE
Family
FAMILY'S PROVINCES? APPARENTLY HE'S
INTERESTED IN _____ AS THEY PRACTICE
Type of Business
IT OUT THERE, AND IS CURIOUS ABOUT INVESTING..."

RUMOR MILL No. 12

(CLAN) (TYPE OF MERCHANT)
(VALUABLE OBJECTS) (CLAN)

"THERE'S A RUMOR THAT THE _____ CLAN IS
Clan
AGITATING FOR LOWER TAXES IN RYOKO OWARI.
THEY'RE IN LEAGUE WITH THE _____ S,
Type of Merchant
OF ALL PEOPLE. THE MERCHANTS WANT TO ENCOURAGE
TRADE, AND THEY'RE PUTTING _____ BEHIND
Valuable Objects
THEIR WORDS. AS FOR THE CLAN NOBLES, THEY JUST
WANT TO GET ON THE BAYUSHIS' GOOD SIDE. WHAT DO
YOU THINK THE _____ S — THE ONES OUTSIDE
Clan
OF COURT, THAT IS — WILL THINK?"

**THE ISLAND
WHARF**





***Chapter Five:
The Licensed
Quarter***

Unlike Ryoko Owari's other Quarters, the Licensed Quarter does not have distinct "neighborhoods". Only one business is transacted on the island – the business of entertainment. Economic divisions are few, since the lowest class of establishments are restricted to the mainland. Similarly, social divisions are few, and slight enough (even the split between Magda (P47) and Jewel (P48)) to be contained in one neighborhood. There aren't even *kajinin* (G12) gangs to stake out turfs.

What you get, then, is a fairly uniform atmosphere on Teardrop Island. It's the only part of town where the air is rarely disturbed by the sound of horses' hooves. Instead, the sounds of the *fue* and the *shimase*n fill the air. This isn't the gentle music of the temples, however; it's the taut, exciting sounds of the great epics, mixing with the delirious notes of peasant dances and ribald ballads. Providing counterpoint to the music are the high, lilting voices of the women and the gruff, grumbling tones of the men.

The air is thick with scents – from the heavy, exotic blooms of the Island Garden (L21), from the expensive perfumes of the women. And underneath, never prominent but always present, the thick, earthy scent of opium smoke. Everything looks bright and proper in the Licensed Quarter. The signs in front of the theaters and tea houses are sedate, beautifully lettered. The *sake* gardens are graceful and flawlessly tended. Even when the sun goes down, a thousand paper lanterns are hoisted, like a sky of new stars, bathing everything in a gentle, soft glow.

It is easy to relax, enjoy, and believe nothing could ever go wrong here.

Quarter Concerns

A minor concern is a proposal to build a second dock. As matters stand, there's only one dock for both the samurai and the *heimin*, and bottlenecks are frequent. However, building a second dock protected by Swords Polished (L20) would be extremely expensive – if it can be done at all. Many samurai and geisha alike are in favor of a second dock somewhere else on the island, but this raises the specter of smuggled weapons – something that Gate (P46) has been spectacularly successful at preventing.

Gate is adamantly opposed to a second dock that's outside his control, but opposition to him is slowly mounting – now that the idea has entered the public consciousness.

The question of a new dock is insignificant, of course, compared to the prime concern of Teardrop Island. This key topic absorbs the interest of almost every resident of the Floating World. It is the one subject of which they never tire, about which they can always hold forth with interest. That subject is fashion. Next year, will sleeves be wide (after the Scorpion fashion) or narrow (as the Lion prefer)? Straight or tapered? Will Kachiko be wearing patterns, or solids? If it's patterns, multiple patterns or one pattern set off by color blocks? If it's solids, one color in different tones, or various colors complementing each other?

What about the theater? Ikoma Taru is almost finished with a new play, according to the rumor. Her last work was so disappointing; will this be the one that returns high military drama to fashion? Or will the gentle satires of Asahina Hiromasa continue to dominate the stage?

Jewel is predicting a return to tradition and austerity; she's already looking for a poet to grace her fans and umbrellas with verse. Magda just laughs; she thinks Rokugan has a hunger for the strange and foreign, and is said to be bankrolling a weaver in the Fisherman Quarter to provide gowns after the "mountain fashion" of her homeland. Who's right? Is there one style of *netsuke* that can be worn with either, in an emergency? And what about the hair question? Some samurai visitors simply snort with disgust at such transitory concerns, but others follow them keenly – and not just the fashionable fops. Jocho (P2) in particular claims that fashion predicts politics as surely as any oracle. "If Taru's play is good, you'll see honors accorded the Crabs for their military feats, and the Cranes for their traditions. The Lion, of course, will be honored most of all as the harmonious marriage of arms and honor. If the play is bad, or if Hiromasa writes a better one, the court will care for nothing but love, cleverness and intrigue. You'll see the Crabs and Lions dismissed as humorless fogies, while the Crane and Scorpion are commended for wit."

Quarter Residents

The ronin called **Gate (P46)** lives here, right by the dock. Not far from his sword polishing establishment is the House of Foreign Stories (L22), run by **Magda (P47)**. At the opposite end of the island is the House of the Morning Star (P23), where **Jewel (P49)** and her daughter **Precious (P48)** hold court. Few other people of note actually reside in the Licensed Quarter, but many prominent nobles are frequent visitors. **Jocho** and **Kimi (P2, P3)**, the Governor's offspring, are often found on Teardrop Island during the evening. **Bayushi Otado (P7)** is frequently their companion. Although Ide Asamitsu (P16) used to visit, he has largely stopped coming since the death of his brother (P15). His cousins **Genshi** and **Naishi (P19, P20)** still make the trip at least once a week, and **Michisuna (P22)** is present almost every day. Ashidaka Michitaka (P26) was a notorious sybarite, but he too has been notably absent since a family death (P25).

Ronin, merchants and other ruffians are no strangers to the shores of Teardrop Island. **Ample (P32)** and **Jaw (P35)** visit as often as their finances allow. **Shrimp (P34)** can sometimes be found in the gambling halls, while **Dove (P36)** only comes to the island on bodyguard duty. The mysterious Captain **Yellow (P52)** always visits when she's in town, and the merchant cousins **Sharp (P40)** and **Subtle (P41)** often take their leisure here as well.

All in all, a cosmopolitan mixture.

A few individuals who do not have their own entries in other books are described below.

SYRUP (SEE PAGE 65 IN "CITY OF STORIES")

Poor Syrup has become something of a joke in the Floating World ever since the publication of "Confessions of an Opium Eater." Not only has Shonagon's highly unflattering (if accurate) description become common knowledge, it is also insulting that whoever censored the book didn't see fit to remove her nickname. The censor apparently figured that since she's just a lowly geisha, it doesn't matter if she's humiliated. This attitude has spread throughout the Floating World, leaving Syrup desperately unhappy. The sad thing is, she's really a nice girl. It's a common story; a farmer's daughter, sold to get daddy out of hock. Syrup works for the House of the Breaking Wave, which has ironically seen a slight increase in its business from people coming to see Syrup for themselves. Naturally, the madam of the Breaking Wave isn't sharing her new profits with Syrup. Instead, she berates her for bringing shame on her house.

Syrup would like nothing better than to get off the island and return to the life of a peasant farmer. This is unlikely; she would be hard put to get a pass out of the city, her mistress doesn't want to release her, and farmers would be suspicious of someone from the city anyhow. She's considering saving up her money for poison instead.

GINAKO

Ginako comes from the same background as Syrup, but she's taken to geisha life like a fish to water. Her conversation is refined, her gestures are delicate and her appearance is always highly artistic. In fact, Ginako is the "G." mentioned in Ashidaka Naritoki's journal (entry dated "Month of the Rabbit, First Day").

Ginako is sharp, and knows that Magda (P47) has big plans for her. She's determined to make the best out of her situation, and even though she presents a soft and maidenly surface, underneath she has a leathery heart as tough as any bushi's.

OKO (SEE PAGE 65 IN "CITY OF STORIES")

Even as Syrup has suffered from Shonagon's description, Oko has benefited. From her perspective, being named was no great shame – after all, only samurai are concerned with denying what everyone knows is true. The book just told the truth – that Oko is clever and pretty.

Oko is very pleased with her notoriety, as is Jewel (P49), for it has reflected well on the House of the Morning Star (L23). In fact, Oko is developing something of a swelled head.

Her only concern is what to do or say if she encounters Michitaka (P26) again. She believes he's too humiliated by the book to return to the Floating World. (In her self-absorption, she never thought to consider the effect his cousin's death might have had on him.) She's begun fantasizing about laughing right in his fat face – if he dares show himself again. Given his currently unstable emotional state, this might be the last mistake she ever makes...

JITSUYOTEKI MASATO

Masato is the *Koshiki* (basically "captain") of the Thunder Guard (G10) on Teardrop Island. He comes from a very minor noble family subordinate to the Shosuros, and has served in the Thunder Guard all of his adult life.

Koshiki Masato is briefly described on page 5 of "City of Lies", but a fuller description is in order here. He's a man of middle age, getting stout but still fairly fit. His nose shows the signs of a great deal of *sake* drinking, and his eyes are bagged by the effects of too many late nights, but all in all he appears competent and courteous to all who approach him.

Masato tries to be nice to everyone. He's even polite to people while beating them and throwing them off the island. "A kind word costs nothing but can buy much," is a favorite saying of his. He's comfortable in a network of substantial bribes, but he doesn't let that get in the way of his pursuit of justice. As far as he's concerned, there are laws of convenience (such as the law against opium) which are good for appearances but really don't matter. Then there are the laws of necessity (such as the law that forbids peasants to mouth off against samurai) which do matter and which he enforces as much as is practical. Above those, however, are the laws of justice – many of which are unwritten. He'd be hard put to describe them to you, but he knows that there are some things that are just wrong, no matter how lowly the victim or how exalted the criminal. He doesn't run across many transgressions of the laws of justice, but when he does, they obsess him.

He has heard the vaguest rumors about the House of the Plum Blossom (see page 46). Nothing concrete, like a name or a location. Just disturbing stories about deeds and desires. A less experienced magistrate might dismiss them as hysterical imaginings – but Masato is experienced enough to know the depths to which human beings can sink.

Locations

THE ISLAND DOCK

This is how almost everyone arrives at Teardrop Island. It's a small, shallow dock, clean and well kept. Nonetheless, it's the site of frequent scuffles. The worst of these are between samurai arguing about who has the right to depart first. (Arriving samurai are generally much more courteous.) Since these samurai are usually armed, these conflicts can get deadly.

Far more often, the fights are brawls between the servants of different businesses. The dock is always busy, since everything that comes to the island has to go through it – all the food that's eaten on the island, all the tea that's served and the *sake* that's drunk comes through one small dock. That's not even considering the clothes, decorations and entertainers arriving. Add to this anxious samurai who have the right of way, and it makes for a tense situation. The most notorious brawls have been between servants of Magda (P47) and Jewel (P49), of course.

The Thunder Guard are perpetually present at the docks, doing their best to make sure things go smoothly. It's a job they do fairly well, but it would take a superhuman effort (or a second dock) to calm things completely.

SWORDS POLISHED (L20)

This building is much larger than the average sword polishing establishment. In fact, it serves as an efficient bottleneck between the Island Wharf and the rest of the island. On one side, there's a broad gate that is always watched, and which is only for servants and supplies. (Gate (P46) is careful to keep this area filthy and unpleasant, to dissuade samurai from sneaking through it.) On the other side is a tall wall, behind which is a "scrap heap" which is coincidentally full of sharp and rusty objects; anyone who attempts to go over the wall does so at extreme peril. In between lies "Swords Polished".

Those who enter are greeted courteously, often by Gate himself. They are asked to surrender their weapons "for polishing", and those who do are courteously shown out the back door. Those who refuse are courteously shown out the front door. Anyone who makes trouble learns that Gate is remarkably skilled at disarming techniques – and that he has a good dozen brawny assistants who can show up in an instant, followed by the Thunder Guard within minutes. Gate also keeps a small stable at the back of his house (the part which faces the island itself), where he rents space to the Thunder Guard, and to any magistrates who play their cards right. (Osako (P10) keeps a horse there, as does Masato.)

THE ISLAND GARDEN (L21)

As described in "City of Stories", this area is chaotic, lush and full of action every hour of the day. A samurai's reaction to it is likely to depend somewhat on that individual's opinions. A noble who's extremely conventional will find it distasteful, disorderly – possibly even disturbing. On the other hand, an iconoclast who's less bound by tradition (or one of those flaky monks) may see a certain savage beauty in it. Some people have found it nearly intoxicating – honest, wild and almost dangerous in a way that the tidy gardens of the Noble Quarter can never be.

Regardless of aesthetic opinions, this is also a trouble spot. The garden is laid out like a maze, with narrow tunnels winding this way and that. The foliage is so thick, close and tall that it's rarely possible to see for more than a few feet in any direction. This makes the Island Garden a favorite spot for smugglers, smokers and secret lovers to meet and indulge their various proclivities.

THE HOUSE OF FOREIGN STORIES (L22)

This tall, odd structure has three stories to it. Most of the first floor is a wide, open area broken up by low walls and decorated pillars. It's lit during the day by tall, wide windows whose colored glass forms images of women from distant lands. By night, paper lanterns and great bottles of glowworms send shadows onto the

high ceilings and exotic statues. (The rest of the first floor is kitchens and storerooms serving the open dining hall.)

There are no chairs in the great hall – only low tables surrounded by sumptuous embroidered cushions. Here one may dine on strange dishes, sample liquors that have crossed distant oceans, and listen to the songs and stories of far off lands – often sung or spoken by natives of those lands (as long as they're attractive). A great deal of old-fashioned Rokugan *sake* is consumed here as well, and pipes fill the air with tobacco and opium smoke.

The rooms upstairs are smaller and more intimate. A square central hallway divides those rooms into interior rooms (which have no windows) and exterior rooms (with large windows, and doors out onto a balcony that encircles the building). People go upstairs for quiet or privacy. The exterior rooms provide space for smaller groups – perhaps people who wish to converse apart from the hubbub of the lower chamber, or who desire a friendly game of *go*. Nothing too outlandish occurs in the exterior rooms, since the balcony is open to everyone, and it looks into these chambers. Many people stroll along the balcony – not only because it provides a view of the Island Garden (L21) and a long stretch of Pleasure Road, but because knowing who is closeted with whom in an exterior chamber can spark a good deal of gossip.

The interior chambers are entirely private. A smaller stairway goes up to a third floor, which is where Magda and the other women of the house reside. Their chambers are quite plain, compared to the rest of the house – perhaps decorated only with a shrine to a foreign god, or some memento of their homeland. Magda's chambers, however, are both spacious and luxurious.

THE HOUSE OF THE PLUM BLOSSOM

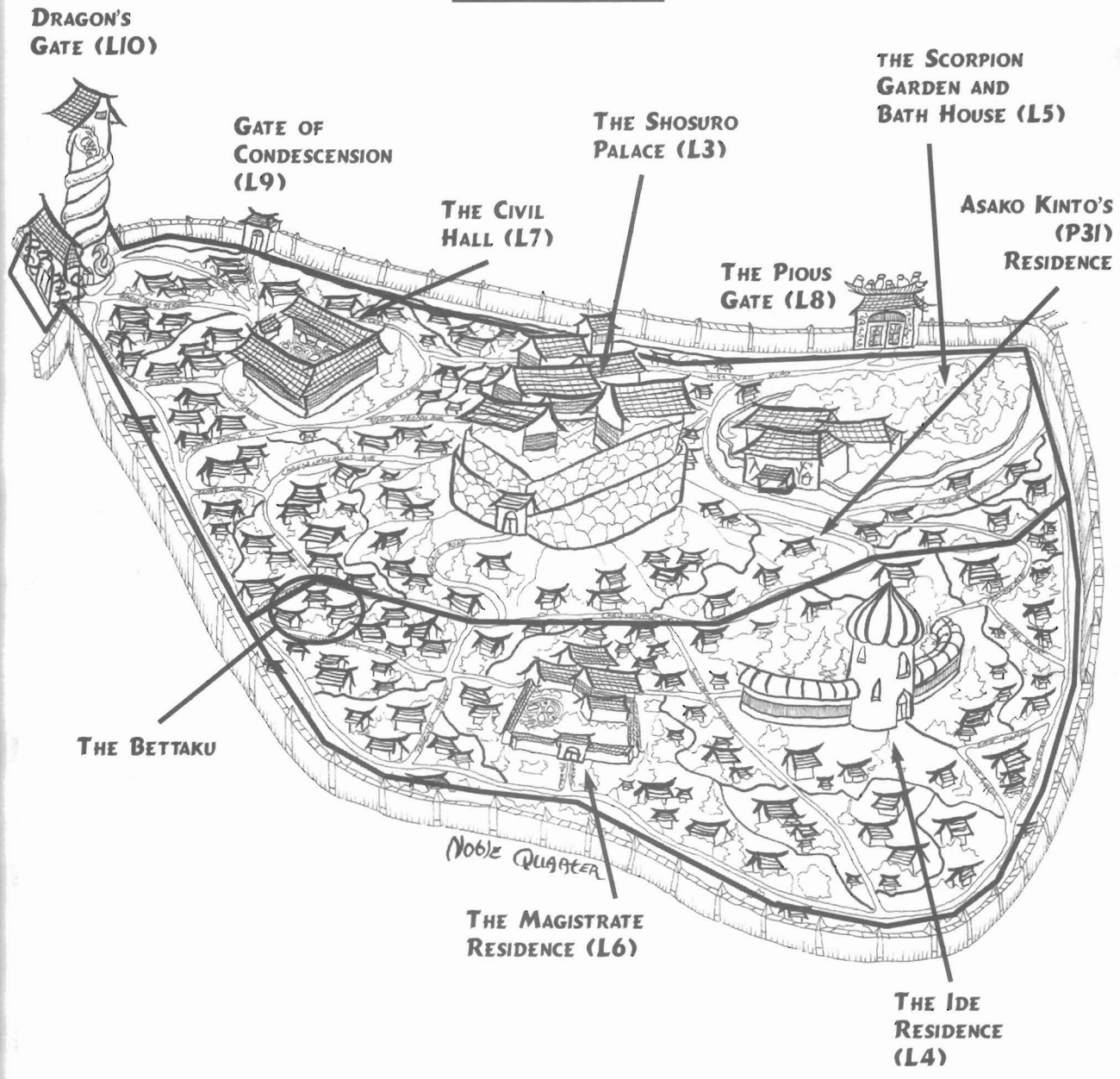
This small building is set back from the road. It is dim, plain and easy to ignore. Usually, only those with directions find it. (It isn't indicated on the map of the Quarter. Locate it wherever on the island you wish.)

The Licensed Quarter exists as a place for people to allow expression to "*ninjo*" – human feelings, desires and urges that would show weakness if indulged publicly. Many of these desires are harmless – a desire for a conversation with no political meaning, where words can be chosen carelessly and forgotten as soon as they're spoken. Other desires are harmful, but only to he who partakes. Opium blunts the senses and weakens the body, but rarely makes a man violent or insane.

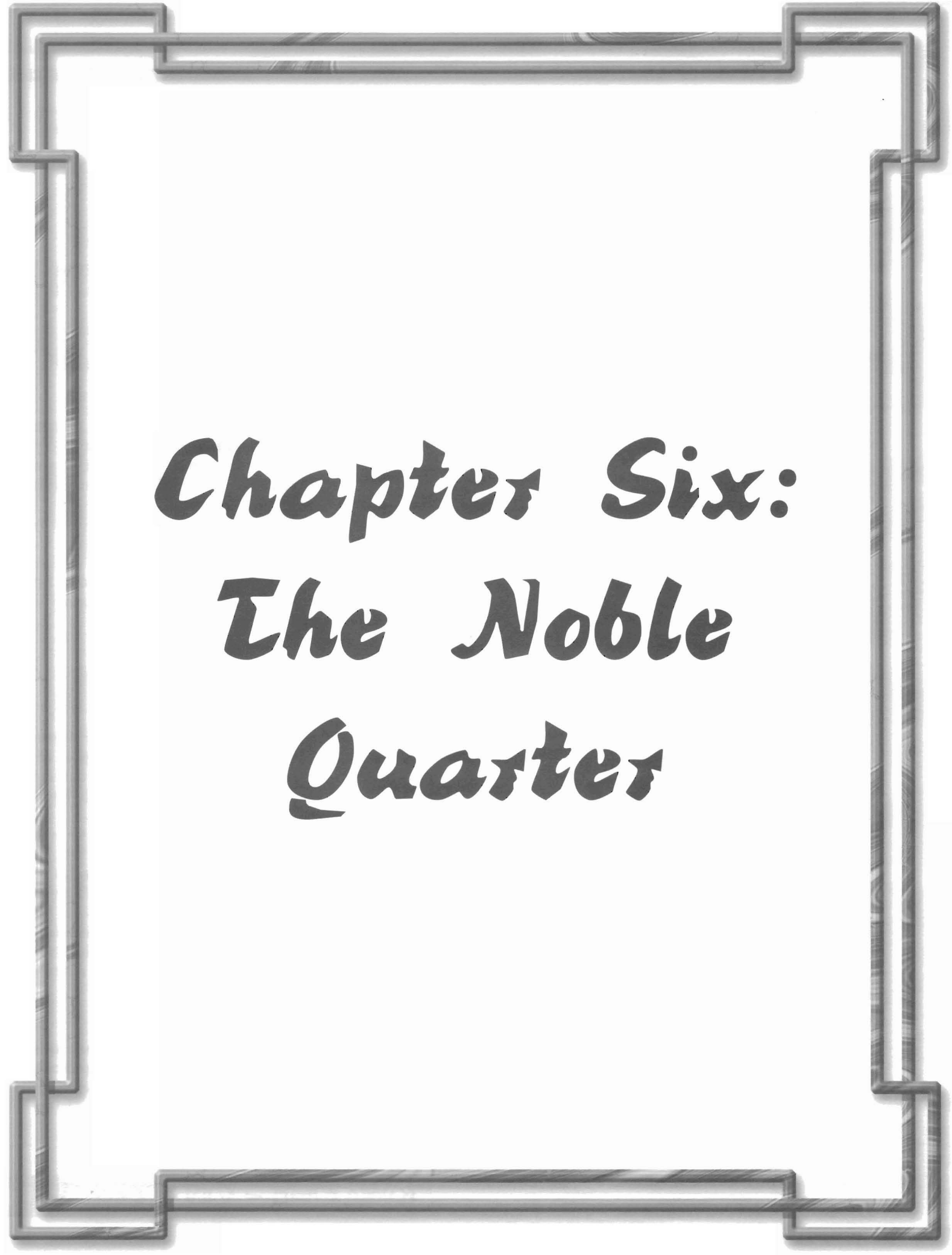
There are darker passions too. Passions too bizarre for the House of the Morning Star (L23), too dangerous for the House of Foreign Stories (L22), too disgusting and degenerate to be discussed with anything but loathing and repugnance. These passions – the deep, ugly, violent passions – find their expression in the House of the Plum Blossom. There is a steady influx of young innocents into this house. Many are never seen again alive – or if they are, their faces cannot be recognized.

The House of the Plum Blossom is a house of brutality, savagery and unspeakable cruelty – all mixed and mingled with

The Old Section



The New Section



***Chapter Six:
The Noble
Quarter***

High on its hill, the Noble Quarter looks out over the mottled glory of Ryoko Owari. On a cloudless night, the lamps hung from the trees of the Licensed Quarter look like glowing jellyfish, while the golden globe of the Sun Temple is like a beacon of hope on every clear morning. When the poppy fields bloom, the walls to the south show of miles of glorious color, and when the snow falls every graceful roof and lumpish hut alike is brightened and detailed by pure white light.

All the smells of the city seem to commingle in the Noble Quarter. Every delicacy from the clever minds of merchant cooks finds its way here when perfected. The incense of the shrines clings to the coats of pious youngsters returning from family temples. The odors of fish, water, and opium drift subtly through the Quarter as well. When the wind is right, one can even scent the harsh smoke of the crematorium.

Here the houses are the biggest, the buildings are the most graceful, the gates and gables and gardens are flawlessly kept. Even the paving stones are smooth and even, comfortable beneath the feet of the nobles and the shiny hooves of their steeds.

If a thing is good in Ryoko Owari, eventually its best goes to the Noble Quarter.

Quarter Concerns

Banditry, betrayal, clan politics, equestrianism, family politics, fashion, finance, honor, iaijutsu tournaments, Imperial politics, literature, mercantile competition, military strategy, the opium market, revenge, romance, rumormongering, seduction, taxes on all levels, true love, and the persistent debate over who has the best chef.

Quarter Residents

All the nobles (P1-P31) live here. The Scorpions (P1-P10) generally live in the Old Section (see page 50) along with the more conservative Lion, Crane and Phoenix families (P26, P27, P29, P30, P31). The New Section is dominated by Unicorn clansmen (P11- P22) and also provides homes for the few Crabs (P23, P24) and Dragons (P28) who live in Ryoko Owari.



This neighborhood, which stretches along the wall between the Noble and Merchant Quarters, is the oldest part of an old city. Back when Ryoko Owari was just a village, the fort was on this hill – in fact, the old fort was part of the Civil Hall, until the Lions burned it down.

Actually, a great deal of the Old Section was burned down by the Lion Clan; most of the buildings are newer than those in the New Section. The names “Old Section” and “New Section” predate the Lion invasion, which makes them a little anachronistic – but everyone in the city knows them by those names, so Old and New they stay.

Locations

THE ESTATE OF ASAKO KINTO (P31)

Kinto's home is not terribly large; while luxurious by peasant standards, it's modest for a noble, and not as well kept as the stately residences around it. His few visitors often find it cluttered and untidy. However, it does boast a huge garden, which thrives under Kinto's personal attention.

Recently he has begun shoring up and repairing the wall around his estate, leading to head-shaking and shrugs from his neighbors. They've been subtly hinting to him for years that he should spruce up the place; now, what does he do? Build a wall that hides his garden – the only presentable part of his home. His neighbors have also noticed that he seems to be building some kind of shrine or structure in his garden. It can only be dimly seen through the foliage, but its architecture seems radically different from Rokugani norms...

THE SCORPION GARDEN (L5)

The paths and promenades of this garden set the finest parts of Daikoku's Garden (L17) to shame. A small army of gardeners and attendants goes over the garden every single day hunting for the slightest imperfection. Even the bizarre blossoms given by the

Unicorn Clan are tended carefully according to their needs (at least one of the plants eats meat).

There is also a small zoo of exotic creatures. It includes small grey sand crabs that can jump up to two feet in the air; a family of brown haired creatures that look like giant rats, except they have long slender snouts used for rooting out insects; quick little lizards from the desert with tails that look like their heads, so that you never know if they're coming or going; and large birds who can change the color of their feathers to match the foliage around them. All this serves to highlight the glorious green limestone bath house. Once a week the attendants get up at dawn to scrub down its walls, leaving it clean and bright – almost like jade.

Inside is the traditional Rokugan bath house – only a great deal larger and more opulent. Here both sexes come to scrub themselves, have their skin scraped by professionals and be pampered with shiatsu massage. Once they're thoroughly clean, they also have the option to go soak in large pools (where temperatures vary from cool to almost boiling). Naturally, these issues of luxury and hygiene are often secondary to having privacy to discuss schemes, scandals and society.

THE SHOSURO PALACE (L3)

Built on the hill's summit, the Shosuro Palace is tall enough to dazzle the mind, ornate enough to puzzle the eye, and definitely large enough to confuse the feet.

Its structure appears simple enough from the outside; a stately, symmetrical building, graced with countless baroque decorations. Once inside, however, one finds endless curving and bending passages, connecting rooms whose shape and function seems random more often than not. Tiny pantries and reading rooms

bud off great dining halls and libraries, in spaces that don't seem big enough to fit them. Many rooms are oddly shaped, and some which appear square on first glance are built on disquieting angles, providing gaps for hidden, pointed chambers within their walls.

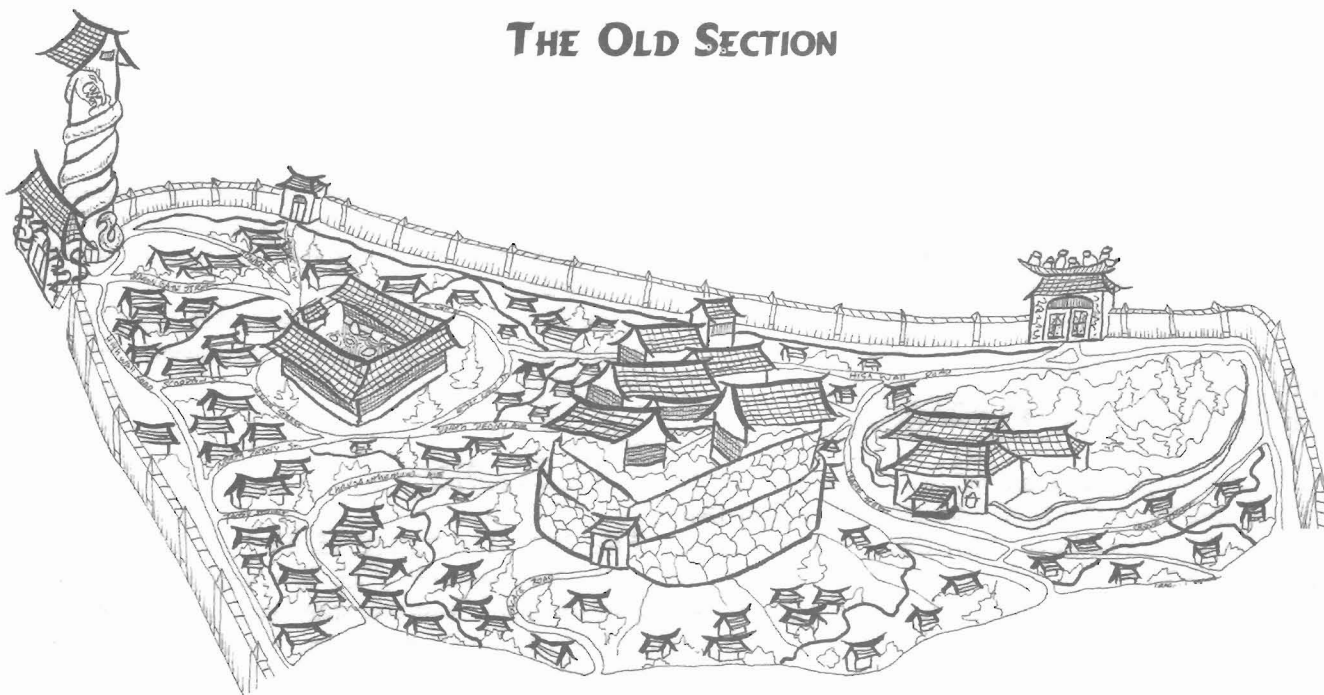
Naturally, there are trick doors, hidden rooms and secret passages. In fact, there are so many that the Shosuros make a game of showing a few to their visitors. One panel in a hallway, if raised and nudged, opens up to a private balcony with a stunning view of the Merchant Quarter. Jocho (P2) has shown a number of his contemporaries the spiral staircase that cleverly rises from the floor of a small shrine, leading up to a tiny but sumptuously appointed bed chamber – installed by some early resident for quick trysts with a lover (or series of lovers). There are rumors of subterranean chambers holding caches of weapons in case of invasion, oubliettes for political prisoners, and laboratories where deadly brews are mixed. The Shosuros laugh at all this of course; they insist that the secret doors and passages are just a joke, meant to entertain.

No one fully believes them.

THE CIVIL HALL (L7)

This imposing (if graceless) building is the heart of politics in Ryoko Owari. Three stories tall, it contains a garden that is meant to be stately and contemplative, but which manages only to be sterile and impersonal. In addition to the courtrooms described by Shigeko (see page 32 of "City of Stories"), there are also chambers where Hyobu (G9, P1) holds court, listens to complaints, adjudicates, legislates, proclaims her decrees and generally tinkers with the structure of her *polis*.

THE OLD SECTION



A discreet distance away is the prison, with cells that range from fairly comfortable and well lit (for noble prisoners) to lightless holes that haven't been cleaned. Ever. (These dismal chambers are reserved for *heimin* and *hinin* criminals who have deeply disturbed the social order, or anyone who's irritated Hyobu.)

The well-equipped torture chambers are present as well. Care has been taken to ensure that the groans and howls of the tormented are not heard by the magistrates and legislators in the rest of the building. Equal care has made sure that said cries are easily audible by the other prisoners.

THE DRAGON'S GATE (L10)

This gate and its tower are the headquarters of the Thunder Guard. Along with the Towers of the Eyes (L28, page 55), this is the center of Thunder Guard operations. Banners from the roof-mounted flagpole direct Jocho's (P2) elite Lightning Squad (G10, see also page 4 in "City of Lies"). This tower also contains a number of ballistae and catapults, whose missiles can reach the Little Gate (L15), the Gate of Condescension (L9), and a stretch of the River of Gold.

It is likely that the architect Kenchikuka applied his great cleverness to more than the roller system in the gate. Some of his rumored innovations include:

- Underground chutes that emerge under the Bridge of the Dragon (L11), allowing stones and flaming oil to be dropped on ships that pass beneath it.
- A mechanism that causes the floor to drop out of the Bridge, dumping any invading force into the water beneath.
- A switch that can collapse the entire Bridge, cutting off the gate, dropping many tons of stone onto any ship beneath and temporarily damming the river's flow.
- A time delay device that collapses the entire tower. (The supposed use of this is to allow an invading force to occupy the tower before it crumbles, crushing all within it.)

Most people dismiss such stories as peasant talk. They argue that Kenchikuka would surely know that any building built to collapse from within would be easier to destroy from without. Furthermore, would any artist of Kenchikuka's caliber design one of his greatest works to self-destruct? It's more likely that these rumors are spread by the Shosuros to interfere with the war plans of any aggressive neighbors.

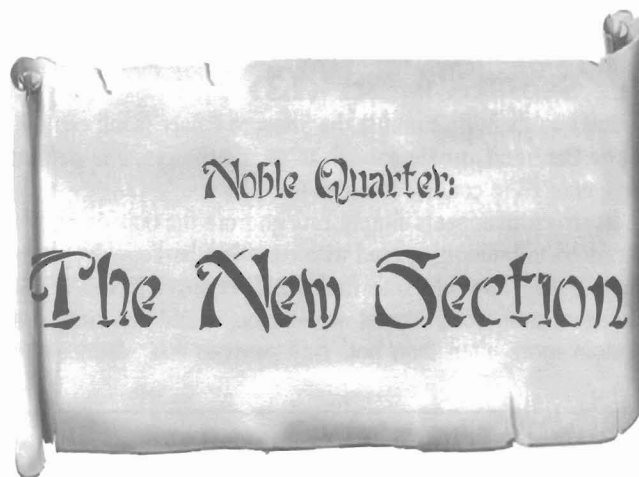
Neighborhood Residents

As mentioned previously, all the area Scorpions (P1-P10) live in this neighborhood, as do Ashidaka Michitaka (P26), Doji Sukemara (P27), Ikoma Yoriko (P29), Kitsu Senshi (P30), and Asako Kinto (P31).

Neighborhood Concerns

Kitsu Senshi (P30) has never been shy about her opinions, and she started calling the Ide Residence (L4) an "eyesore" the first time she ever saw it. With more and more Unicorns moving into Ryoko Owari, she's concerned that their foreign influences will become more prevalent. Therefore, she's proposed a law that would only allow structures with "traditional Rokugani architecture" in the Old Section.

This idea has met with more resistance than it otherwise might. Not only are the Unicorns unhappy with it, Hyobu herself has received the suggestion tepidly. (At this time, she's trying to mend fences with the Ide family.) Still other people are worried that the law would require the destruction of the exotic parts of the Scorpion Garden. Asako Kinto (P31) is surprisingly loud in his opposition, but Korechika (P5) is in favor, as is Doji Sukemara (P27).



The name "New Section" is a bit inaccurate. This section was new in the reign of Hantei the Nineteenth, when the growth of the city necessitated the expansion of the Noble Quarter. When the Lion clan attacked a few decades later, they burned a lot of the Old Section, but spared the New Section (because few Scorpion residences were there).

The houses here are a little smaller than in the Old Section, and the streets aren't quite as wide and generous, but it's still a beautiful part of town, full of cozy streets and tidy gardens.

Locations

THE IDE RESIDENCE (L4)

This building stands out among its neighbors – not only for its great size, but for its strange style. Many visiting nobles go out of their way to see the Ide Residence, with its bulbous roof and encircling wings.

It is as exotic within as it is without. The floors of one room may be covered with woven rugs of dazzling design, while another chamber is decorated with alien furs, in colors and patterns that don't seem natural to Rokugani eyes. Paintings and sculptures in dozens of styles decorate walls and pillars, while the ceilings themselves are arched and painted in foreign fashion.

THE MAGISTRATE RESIDENCE (L6)

From the outside, this building appears formidable and imposing – a tall, stark building that's a fitting repository for the Emperor's justice. The doors are stout, the windows are heavily shuttered and the walls are made of heavy stone. Most houses in Ryoko Owari aren't built with a siege in mind; this one was. Each of the previous magistrates has left traces behind from their tenure. Shigeo's legacy is the solemnity of the business rooms and the garden in the courtyard. They have an austerity that is almost stark, but which still has a definite grace and an unyielding beauty. The garden has one delicate touch – the tree that Ide Shikibu (P18) gave to Matsu Shigeo. It is a tall, lacy tree, with slender limbs gracefully twined and twisted. In the spring, it bursts forth with a profusion of bright red flowers. Oddly, this aberrant tree does not disturb the garden; it completes it.

Naritoki's influence can be seen inside, in the private quarters of the magistrates. These rooms are nothing short of opulent, decked out with lacquer screens, tapestries, ornate lamps, and a profusion of fine furniture. Much of it is decorated with the colors or motifs of the Crane clan. (If Naritoki's widow Yoshino is consulted, she says she left it behind on purpose and mentions

nothing about how Naritoki could have bought so many fine things, even on a magistrate's salary.)

The house is very comfortable – well lit, well heated, and well designed. Only an ascetic would be unhappy there – and even an ascetic could be made comfortable simply by throwing away the furnishings from one room.

THE BETTAKU

(Based on an idea from KC Lancaster)

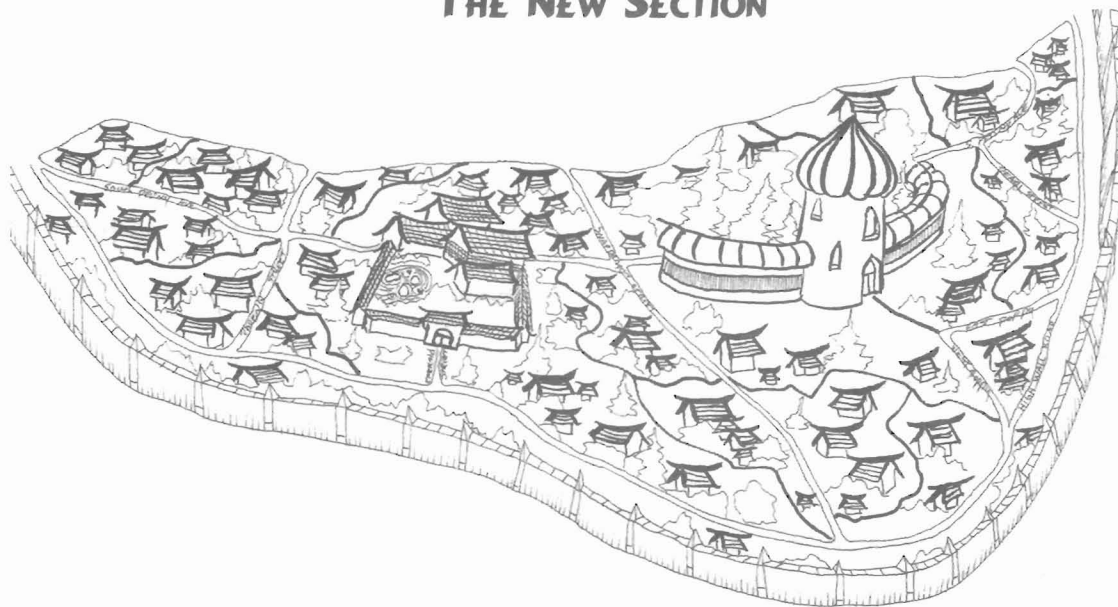
This is not a specific building; it's a cluster of small, modest houses near South Peony drive. The people who live here (mostly women, but a few men as well) are generally from families of minor noble status. They aren't merchant patrons, they take little interest in court intrigues or the romantic affairs of other nobles; instead, they stay close to their homes and have little to do with other samurai.

The residents of the *bettaku* have one thing in common; they're all the lovers or mistresses of prominent nobles, who want them convenient, but out of sight. They're given homes, adequate funds for their needs and desires, and a secure future (as long as they avoid attention). All that's required in return is that they be available at any time, and that they be completely subordinate in all matters when their patron (or patroness) is present.

Neighborhood Residents

The **Ide, Shinjo, and Otaku families** from the Unicorn clan all make their residences here (P11-P20) as do their fellow

THE NEW SECTION



Unicorns **Iuchi Sadako (P21)** and **Iuchi Michisuna (P22)**. The Crab **Kaiu Shinya (P23)** lives here with his wife Sakyō. (Sakyō is almost to term, so she hasn't been seen around much lately.) **Yasuki Nobuko (P24)** lives here as well, though she spends most of her time in the Two Gates region of the Merchant Quarter (described on page 27). **Kitsuki Jotomon (P28)** lives in this area as well, in an unadorned little house. She spends most of her time at her dojo in Downhill (see page 30).

The ronin Ample (P32) used to live here before Naritoki's death. **Dove (P36)** lives here, in a small home not far from Jotomon.

Neighborhood Concerns

The Unicorns have spent some time and effort trying to convince Hyobu (G9, P1) that a second bath house is desirable in the Noble Quarter. The truth is, some people from the Unicorn clan don't feel completely welcome in the Scorpion Garden bath house (L5) and would like one closer to their own home.

While Hyobu is in a conciliatory mood towards the Unicorn clan, a bath house would not only be expensive, it would (in the eyes of some people) imply that something was wrong with the existing bath house. While the question of the location for the proposed bath house is also unsettled, it's an idea favored by many in the area. (Jotomon, for one, wouldn't mind a smaller and simpler bath house where she could relax her sore muscles without having to contemplate a two mile ride home.)

Adventure Hook

Challenge: A local music competition has garnered national attention. This year, Bayushi Kachiko is going to attend and the Crane clan poet, Kakita Yogoso, will debut a new verse. The judge is the famed Asahina Okuni. Of course, everyone is hoping local favorite Iuchi Michisuna (P22) will take the laurel. Well, almost everyone.

Focus: This is a big deal; if it gets enough attention, maybe next year Kachiko will return, possibly even with heavy hitters like Kakita Shijin or even Doji Hoturi. It's essential that everything go smoothly. Yogoso is uneasy, however. He insists that the Emerald Magistrates serve him as bodyguards, and seems terribly nervous (even though there's no sign of any threat). Meanwhile, Michisuna tells the magistrates he's worried – he thinks someone's been following him. He's asked Osako (P10) for help, but she claims she's busy guarding Kachiko, Okuni and other visiting dignitaries.

Strike: Do the magistrates protect the jumpy Yogoso, or the jittery Michisuna? Or do they split their forces? Either way, things get messy as some unknown person tries to poison or assault *both* of them before the competition. To complicate matters, Yogoso's poem ("Fruit of the Spurned Love Tree") is about Shiba

Shonagon's suicide over her unrequited affection. Several of her friends in the city consider it insulting to her ghost and clamor for the right to get at Yogoso long enough to challenge him.

Then there's the matter of the assaults before the contest. Was it an envious competitor? A gambler trying to fix a wager on the outcome? Or perhaps a friend of Shonagon trying to get a double revenge?

RUMOR MILL No. 14

(CHARACTER) (AUTHORITY FIGURE)

"DID YOU KNOW THAT Character **KEEPS HAVING TO DENY RUMORS ABOUT HAVING A LOVE CHILD — BY A LEATHERWORKER? OF COURSE S/HE'LL PROBABLY KILL THE NEXT PERSON WHO MENTIONS IT — S/HE'S DEATHLY AFRAID THAT** Authority Figure **WILL FIND OUT."**

RUMOR MILL No. 15

(NOBLE CHARACTER) (LOCAL SHUGENJA)
(BODY PART) (VALUABLE OBJECT)

"IS IT TRUE THAT Noble Character **IS ASKING FOR** Local Shugenja **'S HELP WITH AN EMBARRASSING ILLNESS OF THE** Body Part **? ME, I WOULDN'T ASK FOR THAT SCROLL-SQUINTING QUACK'S HELP IF MY HEAD WAS ON FIRE AND S/HE HAD THE ONLY BUCKET IN THE PROVINCE, BUT SICK PEOPLE GET DESPERATE SOMETIMES... APPARENTLY S/HE WAS TOLD S/HE'D HAVE TO SACRIFICE A** Valuable Object **— THOUGH I HAVE MY SUSPICIONS ABOUT WHERE IT WILL ACTUALLY END UP."**

RUMOR MILL NO. 16

(MARRIED COUPLE) (NOBLE CHARACTER)
(BREAKABLE OBJECTS) (NOBLE CHARACTER)
(INTOXICANT)

"HAVE YOU HEARD THAT Married Couple HAVE BEEN
FIGHTING AGAIN? THIS TIME IT'S OVER SOMETHING HE
SAID TO Noble Character . SHE WAS JUST LIVID —
APPARENTLY IT WAS AN UGLY SCENE, Breakable Objects
WERE FLUNG AND SO ON. THEY WOUND UP ASKING
Noble Character FOR ADVICE, BUT S/HE JUST LOADED
THEM UP ON Intoxicant AND THEY WOUND UP
FIGHTING EVEN MORE."

RUMOR MILL NO. 17

(RECENT CRIME) (NOBLE CHARACTER)
(MOTIVE FOR CRIME)

"YOU KNOW Recent Crime ? WELL, Noble Character
KNOWS WHO DID IT, BUT ISN'T TELLING. WOULDN'T EVEN
TRUST ME. ALL S/HE SAID WAS THAT IT WASN'T ABOUT
Motive for Crime — IT WAS ACTUALLY SOME KIND OF
BUNGLED ACCIDENT, OR THAT'S WHAT S/HE BELIEVES."

RUMOR MILL NO. 18

(CHARACTER) (COMMENDATION OR AWARD)

"ALL RIGHT — DO YOU KNOW FOR SURE IF Character
IS REALLY GOING TO GET Commendation or Award ?
BECAUSE S/HE CERTAINLY DIDN'T EARN IT, AND I'M
DYING TO FIGURE OUT WHAT INDISCRETION S/HE'S
COVERING UP IN RETURN."



The area around Ryoko Owari is crowded with farmer's fields and a few thin stands of forest. The poppy fields all lie within a ten mile radius of the city (as required by the terms of Hyobu's (G9, P1) charter). After that, rice fields predominate close to the river, and wul fields out where it's drier. About forty miles to the southwest is Shinomen Forest. About fifty square miles of the forest is titled to Hyobu, and she lets nobles from Ryoko Owari hunt there, with a few restrictions (G3).

THE TOWERS OF THE EYES (L28)

These sturdy mementos of the Crab clan's year long occupation are central to Ryoko Owari's defensive strategy. They provide a long view down the river, giving plenty of time to establish defenses against any floating invasion force. A strong cord can be strung between them in time of war, and the Thunder Guards (G10) within often practice coordinating their fire based on signal pennants hung from the cord.

In addition to advance warning and a fire platform for the river, the eastern tower provides a much needed defensive bulwark to the southwest section of the wall around the Noble Quarter. Any force that attacks that area is pinned between the wall and the tower, and vulnerable on a third side to forces emerging from the Gate of Oni's Teeth (L14). A direct attack on the gate, on the other hand, would allow forces from the East Tower to flank quickly on the Mountain Goblin's Rest Road — and even if an assault were successful, the attackers would still have to penetrate the Pious Gate (L8) before getting into the Noble Quarter.

Incidentally, there are tales of a tunnel under the river, between the two towers. Reports vary, with some saying the passage is big enough to gallop a horse through, while others say soldiers have to crawl single file through pitch black dank, pushing their armor before them. The Crabs insist they built no such corridor. On the other hand, Scorpion engineers could probably teach the Crabs a few things about secret tunnels, even if they don't have the acclaim of the Kaiu family..

THE GREAT LUNAR CAVE (L30)

The cave is about fifteen miles from the city gates, hidden in the foothills. It's not far from a small village, where a guide to the cave can be found. The other villagers don't seem terribly happy with these guides, however. They are generally crude women and men, of uncouth aspect. But perhaps any villager would appear so to an urban noble. Perhaps the other villagers are only envious that the guides get to walk with nobles, instead of stooping in the fields to plant rice.

The cave has a narrow, cramped opening, but once inside it is spacious, with winding passages going in all directions. Inside are many wondrous pillars and columns, shaped like frozen waterfalls. Some of the guides tell stories about the mischievous spirits that shaped the stone, and of the tricks they play on unwary visitors to their domain. (These stories usually have gruesome endings.) Incidentally, the village and its environs are held directly in fief by Yogo Castle, which is less than ten miles from the cave. One group of visitors heard a story from one of the villagers. They were told that all the guides come from the same family, and that sometimes the guides take people from Yogo castle into the cave for days on end. But that's probably a fable. After all, no one's ever heard anything from that particular peasant again...

THE NORTHERN GOBLIN'S REST ROAD

This road is not well kept by any measure – let alone the usually exacting standards of the Scorpion clan. This is probably because it doesn't really go anywhere. At least, not anywhere most people want to go. It ends at Soshi no Shiro, and serves to carry the products of the Soshi family's farms and villages south to the Shosuro's castle and beyond. Anything from beyond the castle (meaning Unicorn country) comes down the river, which becomes narrow, rapid and dangerous going through the mountains.

THE SOUTHERN GOBLIN'S REST ROAD

In Ryoko Owari, the Mountain Goblin's Rest Road improves dramatically. Whereas its northern branch goes only between Ryoko Owari and the Soshi castle, this leg carries the commerce of three families – the Shosuros, the Soshis and the Yogos, not to mention the products going to those families through Beiden Pass. In short, the road here is well kept, even, in good repair, frequently watched and attended by many comfortable inns and accommodating tax collectors.

THE ROAD ONCE HIDDEN

The road to Yogo castle and Hidden Watch Keep is also well kept, but for a different reason. No one's sure exactly what that reason is; perhaps the Yogos have a fetish for tidy roads. But that wouldn't explain why the money to repair the road comes from the Bayushi coffers, would it? It's almost as if the Bayushis want the road open so that they can move a large fighting force into the area if they need to. But why would they need to? After all, there's no nearby pass through the mountains, except the

dangerous river and the fortified Beiden Pass. Although if there was some kind of SECRET PASS it would be very handy for the Scorpions to be able to rapidly dump a body of troops in the middle of the Way of Righteous Vengeance, in a position to quickly move on either Humility's Lesson (something the Bayushis surely wouldn't mind reclaiming) or the Matsus' ancestral homestead (which would be an even sweeter payback for Kenson Gakka). But all this assumes there's a pass... surely the Scorpions wouldn't keep up the road as a ruse, to make people think there was a pass when there isn't? Such a puzzlement.

RUMOR MILL No. 19

(NOBLE CHARACTER) (NOBLE CHARACTER)
(DISTANT AREA) (FORTUNE OR MYSTICAL BEING)
(OBJECT YOU CAN HOLD IN ONE HAND)

"I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! YOU MUSTN'T TELL ANYONE — I'LL
LOOK QUITE THE FOOL IF THIS GETS OUT AND ISN'T
TRUE. I HEARD IT FROM _____, FOR
Noble Character
WHAT THAT'S WORTH. ANYHOW, THE STORY IS THAT

Noble Character IS PLANNING TO MOVE ALL THE WAY TO

Distant Area — AND SOON! APPARENTLY _____
Fortune or
Mystical Being APPEARED TO HIM/HER IN A DREAM,
HOLDING OUT A GOLDEN _____
Object You Can Hold In One Hand
AND PROMISING SOME GREAT REWARD IF S/HE WENT.
DO YOU THINK THAT COULD BE ALL THERE IS TO IT?"

RUMOR MILL No. 20

(CHARACTER) (RIVAL OR ENEMY CHARACTER)
(MERCHANT ENDEAVOR) (REASON FOR FAILURE)

"WELL, IT'S ALL OVER FOR _____
Character Rival
or Enemy Character REALLY HAS HIM/HER OVER THE HOT
COALS NOW. APPARENTLY S/HE WAS TRICKED INTO
INVESTING IN _____ HEAVILY. NOW
Merchant Endeavor
THAT ITS _____ HAS BEEN ENGINEERED,
Reason for Failure
S/HE IS NEARLY BANKRUPT."



City of Green Walls™



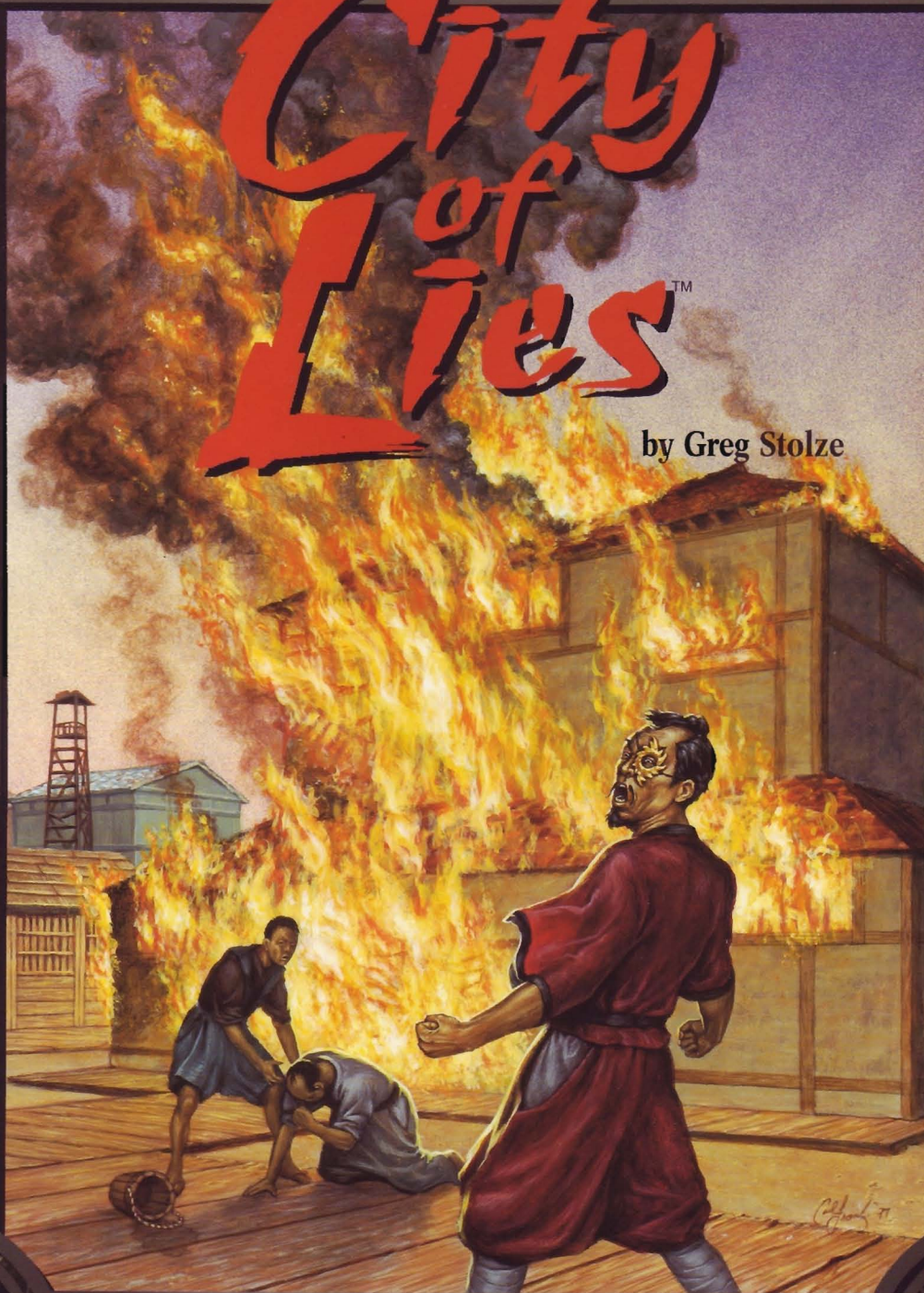
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Legend of the Five Rings™

City of Lies™

by Greg Stolze



L-1

The City of Lies

The GM's Guide to Ryoko Owari



Legend of the Five Rings

City of Lies

The GM's Guide To Ryoko Owari

*"The primary goal of an Emerald Magistrate is to maintain civic order.
In many ways, a reliable criminal is preferable to an unpredictable 'hero.'"*

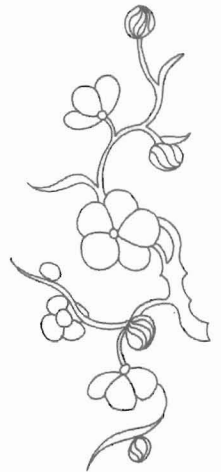
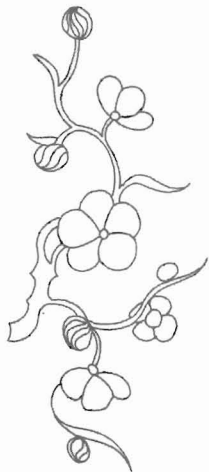
–Daidoji Yayoi

Emerald Champion to Hantei XI

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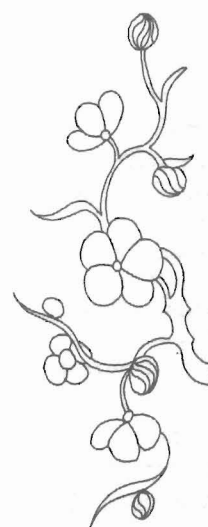
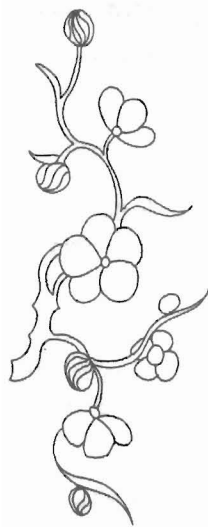
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RANK-AND-FILE THUNDER GUARD

EARTH 2

WATER 2

FIRE 2

AIR 2

VOID 2

Attacking: 3k2

Damage: 5k3

TN to Hit: 15 (Light
Armor)

Wounds: 4: -0; 8: -1;
12: -2; 16: -3; 20: -4;
24: Down; 28: Out; 32: Dead

Notable Skills: Archery 1;
Defense 1; Naginata 1

Honor: 1

Glory: 1

LIGHTNING SQUAD THUNDER GUARD

EARTH 2

WATER 2

Strength 3

FIRE 2

Agility 3

AIR 2

VOID 2

Attacking: 4k2

Damage: 5k2

TN to Hit: 15 (Light
Armor)

Wounds per level: 4: -0;
8: -1; 12: -2; 16: -3; 20: -4;
24: Down; 28: Out; 32: Dead

Notable Skills: Archery 3;
Defense 2; Horsemanship 3;
Kenjutsu 3

Honor: 2

Glory: 2

The Truth Behind The Lies

Governor Hyobu

G9, P1

Shosuro Hyobu is a complex and intelligent woman. She loves her children, her clan and her power – but perhaps more than that, she loves Ryoko Owari.

This may seem odd to say about a woman who masterminds the biggest chunk of the nation's opium trade – but it's true. The city is like her child – to be corrected and molded as she sees fit. It's also like her parent – every day, she learns something new from it. Finally, she sees it as her lover – it's what she knows better than anything or anyone else.

This explains why she is so resistant to change; she likes her city just the way it is. Dissent and disorder are seen as unnatural – a disease on the body of her beloved metropolis. (Even opium, remember, is a drug that keeps people calm and immobile.) She's vaguely insulted by those who rock the boat. After all, rebels implicitly believe they can change the city for the better. Hyobu knows only *she* can make the tiny improvements necessary.

This explains her reluctance to employ violence right away; her perfect vision of the city precludes violent unhappiness. It also explains why her violence is so brutal and extreme when she does employ it. She wants it over as quickly and completely as possible. She's not interested in punishing or reforming those who aren't on her side; she wants to completely destroy them.

Right now, she's working on forging ties to the Ide family – the bickering between two noble houses offends her sense of propriety. She'd also love to get the Imperial Taxes lowered.

(See also page 21.)

The Thunder Guard

G10

The Thunder Guard appear to be the private army of Jocho (P2) and Hyobu (G9, P1) – and this is true. However, they are also the defenders of the city, its beat cops and the fire fighters for the Noble Quarter.

As mentioned in the player book, the Thunder Guard is broken into several categories. They are, naturally quite different.

THE RANK AND FILE

These are the standard foot sloggers. They walk their beats, guard gates and make sure nothing terribly untoward happens. They're usually mildly corruptible – willing to overlook tax evasion and minor cons for a kickback, but unwilling to cover up a murder or really big theft. Exceptions exist on both ends of the honesty spectrum, of course.

Generally, their demeanor is world-weary and a bit cynical or surly. They pride themselves on being better than most of the "civilians" around them – but since they're contemptuous of most civilians, that doesn't amount to much. They resent and envy anyone with more training and reputation, except (in many cases) for the Lightning Squad, who are widely admired.

Sometimes these soldiers get ponies to ride to their destinations, but these aren't war horses. These soldiers are not trained to fight from horseback.

THE LIGHTNING SQUAD

This is an elite unit of fifty men, trained rigorously to obey Jocho instantly and without question. They are above the normal patrol and guard duties, spending their time at training and drills. They are incorruptible – except at Jocho's orders.

THE SAMURAI SQUAD

Far less elite than the Lightning Squad, the Samurai Squad is rife with cynics, younger sons and ambitious samurai who didn't want to put up with the work of the Lightning Squad. They're meaner than the average Thunder Guard, and they have superior attitude to spare.

They're also one of the most corrupt components of the Thunder Guard. They're on the take almost to a man and will only hesitate to "fudge" their duties a little if they think they'll get in trouble if caught.

They might even be insolent to Emerald Magistrates, though a sulky, dawdling compliance to requests is more likely.

THE OFFICERS/KOSHIKI

The twenty-five officers of the Thunder Guard are harder to pigeonhole. There are few of them, so sweeping generalizations are less useful. One of the officers in charge of the Merchant Quarter is completely corrupt and self-interested; another officer in the same Quarter is above reproach and strictly disciplines any officers he catches requesting hand gifts (G1). (Unfortunately, corruption is so rife that he's hard pressed to keep up. Also, he doesn't believe accusations from commoners. "If they were all true - well, it would mean the whole Thunder Guard is suspect.") The officer on Teardrop Island views corruption as just part of the job - he believes that law, justice and integrity are completely separate. He supports the law as much as he has to, seeks justice as much as he can, and makes as much dishonorable money as he can get away with.

Their abilities are also widely different. Feel free to increase or decrease those listed below.

The Firemen/Kajinin

G12

The firemen of Ryoko Owari are fairly unique; most other cities delegate this important task to official city employees. However, the "freelance" situation imposed by the sixth governor has worked well enough, and Hyobu (G9, P1) takes the attitude that "since it isn't broken, why fix it?" She pays the local "fire departments" a small stipend yearly, but it's much less than she'd have to pay for a formal fire department, and that helps her make up the shortfalls caused by heavy Imperial Taxes. She also finds it useful to have street-level allies who aren't afraid of a bit of shady business.

Some *kajinin* are like street gangs; others are more like a neighborhood watch. Their attitude towards crime varies widely from group to group. There are two things every fire-fighting group has in common, however. First, they are good at putting out fires, and they take their job seriously. It's a point of pride and honor for even the most debased and thuggish of the firemen to be able to

SAMURAI SQUAD THUNDER GUARD

EARTH 2
WATER 2
FIRE 2
AIR 2
VOID 1
Attacking: 4k2
Damage: 5k2
TN to Hit: 15 (Light Armor)
Wounds: 4: -0; 8: -1;
12: -2; 16: -3; 20: -4;
24: Down; 28: Out; 32: Dead
Notable Skills: Archery 2;
Defense 2; Jujutsu 2;
Kenjutsu 1; Kusari-Gama 2

Honor: 1

Glory: 1.5

THUNDER GUARD OFFICER

EARTH 3
WATER 2
Strength 3
FIRE 2
Agility 3
AIR 2
VOID 2
Attacking: 4k2
Damage: 5k2
TN to Hit: 15 (Light Armor)
Wounds: 6: -0; 12: -1;
18: -2; 24: -3; 30: -4;
36: Down; 42: Out; 48: Dead
Notable Skills: Archery 3;
Defense 2; Horsemanship 3;
Kenjutsu 3

Honor: 1 to 3

Glory: 2





TYPICAL FIREMAN

EARTH 2

WATER 2

FIRE 2

AIR 2

VOID 1

Attacking: 3k2

Damage: 4k2

TN to Hit: 10

Wounds: 4: -0; 8: -1;

12: -2; 16: -3; 20: -4;

24: Down; 28: Out; 32: Dead

Notable Skills: Defense 2;

Fire Axe 1; Hand-to-Hand 2

Honor: 1

Glory: 0

UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF OPIUM

Note: although the rules on the following pages cover opium use by characters, we don't recommend that your PCs go running around in an opium haze. These rules are provided so that you can inflict opium usage on an NPC – especially one that the players have come to trust, so that they can be sold out for a bottle of liquid void.

Opium is the most powerful painkiller known to Rokugan. When under its influence, a character can ignore all wound penalties.

("I'm sure it will hurt tomorrow.") However, it also impedes all physical, mental and spiritual activities. To reflect this, simply keep one fewer die on *every roll*. (This does make it possible to keep no dice.) An opium high can last anywhere from an hour to eight hours, depending on how much was taken and how potent it was.

quench a blaze quickly and efficiently. It also makes the rest of their activities more palatable to themselves and their victim/clients. Secondly, they are loyal to Hyobu, but even more loyal to each other. After all, if someone's going to be your backup in a fierce conflagration, you want to trust the guy, right?

Keeping those two factors in mind, here's a brief breakdown, group by group.

LITTLE GATE FIREMEN

Hyobu insists that the *kajinin* closest to the Noble Quarter be honest and law-abiding. Unfortunately for her, she's succeeded too well. After the assassination of their previous leader by "ninja," (T3) a new leader was installed. This leader has begun interfering with the opium trade – and the Little Gate neighborhood is a rich one for opium, being the conduit between the Noble Quarter and the Licensed Quarter. Hyobu is reluctant to remove him outright (and alienate the firemen) but might not be averse to a scheme in which he was injured or discredited by Emerald Magistrates. After all, the peasants already blame the Emerald Magistrates for the heavy taxes...

THE FIREMEN OF DAIKOKU'S GARDEN

This street gang is like the mafia in old movies. They're violent when required, but they're also honorable, generous and genial as long as you don't get in their way. They honestly see themselves as community leaders and protectors. Bribes are just their due for protecting their inferiors – much like the taxes samurai take. They may have to rough up a merchant occasionally, but it's done in the interest of the larger good.

STRONG ARM FIREMEN

During the transition of power to Matsu Shigeiko from her predecessor, there was a large and violent clash between the Strong Arm Firemen and the Moment's Edge Firemen. Many of the then-leaders of the Strong Arm were killed, and a younger, more aggressive leader took control of the gang. There are rumors that this leader arranged the fight to chop off some deadwood and enable his own rise. The leader denies this; and if some of the old leaders died from being struck in the back, that just proves

they were running away and didn't deserve to rule.

The Strong Arm are a vicious and ruthless gang, intent on expanding their territory and exerting greater control over what they already have.

THE TEMPLE ROAD FIREMEN

While they're not above asking for a bribe here or there, the Temple Road Firemen are much more respectful of those they protect than the Strong Arm or Daikoku's Garden gangs. They're closer to a neighborhood watch – though a self-righteous and judgmental one. They're not averse to a bit of mob justice against a criminal who offends them, but they're very respectful of religious authority – and Emerald Magistrates.

FIREMEN OF TEARDROP ISLAND

These are the only *kajinin* in Ryoko Owari who do *nothing* but watch for fires. They are exactly what they appear to be: fire fighters and hirelings. They may look longingly at the swaggering rights held by other firemen, but they haven't done anything about it and are content (for the moment) to be pampered specialists.

THE LEATHERWORKER FIREMEN

Fighting fires in the Leatherworker Quarter is a community effort. Raspy (P54) appoints "fire watchers" every year who are in charge of fire fighting. Disobeying the orders of a fire watcher during a fire is a serious offense against the community and is dealt with harshly. It is a great honor to be a fire watcher.

THE FIRE EATERS

If strut and attitude were silver and gold, the Fire Eaters would be the richest men in Ryoko Owari. They follow a code of retribution that demands revenge for any insult and denial of any and all weakness. (A brash samurai would understand the Fire Eaters very well.) They get away with their tough pose by being genuinely tough; unfortunately, they haven't adopted any other tenets of *bushido*. They engage in all manner of illegal operations without hesitation or compunction. Fire Eaters may have slightly higher Agility or Strength than other firemen.

THE MOMENT'S EDGE FIREMEN

They're far more subtle than the Fire Eaters, but just as dangerous. Just because they don't

glory in violence doesn't mean they don't take it seriously. They are equally serious about making profit off their prostitutes, opium dens and gambling dives. Unlike most other corrupt *kajinin*, who are content to monitor such activities and skim off the top, the Moment's Edge Firemen like to be directly involved. If someone sets up competition, they prefer to simply destroy the offending operation – but if a competitor were sufficiently well protected, they might rat him out to the Emerald Magistrates instead. (Although it would be Osako's (P10) job, the Moment's Edge Firemen might be reluctant to have her perceive them as sending her into a trap.)

Two other groups also have fire-fighting duties. The Thunder Guard put out fires in the Noble Quarter, while the Monks of Daikoku patrol part of the Temple Quarter. Both are detailed elsewhere in this book.

The Opium Situation

G14

Perhaps your magistrates have swaggered into town and openly declared that they're

going to bring the opium trade to its knees. Good luck to 'em. Matsu Shigeiko said the same thing.

If you're going to run a game involved in the opium trade, you'll need some background first.

Opium is not native to Rokugan. The Unicorns brought it back from their lengthy sojourn because it was the best painkiller they'd ever discovered – not to mention its other uses. (Just so you know, opium can be used to alleviate the effects of hunger and thirst, it can calm down severe coughs *and* cure diarrhea.)

The Scorpion clan quickly decided that opium was wasted on the sick; why use something as a medicine when it can be sold much more profitably as a recreational drug? It was the Shosuro family that discovered how much better opium made you feel if you smoked it instead of taking it in a dilute pill form.

There was a big wave of addiction about 170 years ago, before the Emperor declared opium illegal except for medical purposes. (To get it legally, you have to find a fairly large temple of the Sun Goddess and convince the chief shugenja there that you need it.) Smokable opium is completely illegal. When the Shosuros found a way to purify opium and suspend it in an alcohol solution (making a drinkable form that was even more potent), that too was banned.



OPIMUM OVERDOSES

Any time a character ingests large quantities of opium (three or more pipes in a couple hours, one pipe when really drunk, more than two bottles of liquid void (G1) – GM's judgment), that character runs the risk of an overdose. Make an Earth roll and beat a TN to avoid instant death. The TN is based on the following:

Three pipes in a short period of time: +5 TN

Each additional pipe after a previous check: +5 TN

Ingesting an opium pill after a previous check: +1 TN

Drinking more than two cups of sake as well: +10 TN

First bottle of liquid void consumed: +5

Each additional bottle of liquid void: +10

Note that these are cumulative. For example, when Shiba Shonagon killed herself, she started out with one bottle of liquid void. She beat her TN of 5, so she drank another. That made a total TN of 15 (+5 for the first, +10 for the second). She was out of liquid void, so she lit up a pipe at TN 20 (+5 for the first liquid void, +10 for the second, +5 for another pipe) and *still* succeeded, so she had a couple glasses of sake to raise her TN to 30 and died reaching for some opium pills.



OPIMUM ADDICTION

The first time a character smokes opium, have them roll Willpower and beat a 3.

Easy, right? Next time they try it, have them beat a 6. The time after, it's up to 12.

Just keep doubling it until they fail (although if they're taking it often enough to get really high TNs, they're apparently already addicted psychologically). Liquid void is stronger stuff; its first TN is 5, and then it doubles normally (10, 20, 40, 80...).

As soon as they fail their Willpower check, they've got the "Chemical Dependence" flaw (and no, they don't get any character points from it) described on page 76 of the main book. It basically means that they want to smoke about once a day, and they feel like they *have* to smoke around four times a week. If they don't get their regular fix every couple days, they roll one fewer die on *every* attempt at anything. If normally they'd roll four dice and keep two, they roll three and keep two instead. On the other hand, if it's an unskilled roll where all the dice rolled are kept, they still lose a die. The only exception to this is Honor rolls to beat addiction.

Becoming an opium addict costs a character 2 Honor, unless he's already at Honor 0.

Although opium addicts are an ugly stain on the social fabric, they rarely hurt anyone but themselves (and their families). As vices go, it was regarded as a comparatively benign one.

This leads us to the current (fairly stable) situation in Rokugan. Opium is officially condemned and unofficially indulged in frequently. As long as you don't do anything stupid (like overdose, or run out of money) it's a tolerated vice.

The Scorpion clan runs most of the opium trade, both legal and illegal. In fact, the legal opium trade provides a beautiful cover for the illegal side; since opium isn't illegal until it's made into smokable or liquid form, it can be grown and stored openly. Most of this growing and storing occurs in and around Ryoko Owari. It's processed, shipped throughout the country, and sold to various geishas, merchants and even samurai who then sell it to the public.

The Scorpions have sliced the country up into distribution zones for different families. The Shosuro cartel, led by Shosuro Hyobu (G9, P1) has the biggest slice of pie; they get to sell pretty much everywhere east of Ryoko Owari, south of the Drowned Merchant River and northeast of the Spine of the World Mountains. In other words, the Lion and Crane territories, along with Otosan Uchi. Bayushi Korechika (P5) runs the Bayushi cartel – they get everything south of the city and west of the mountains. This means they sell to the Scorpions and the Crabs (where there's a heavy demand among samurai on the border; opium is one of the few things that can put a Shadowlands nightmare on temporary hold) as well as the minor clans. The runt's portion goes to the Soshi cartel, run by Soshi Seiryoku (P9); it includes Unicorn, Dragon and Phoenix territory. The Unicorn are decent consumers,

but the challenges of just getting the product into the Dragon provinces eats up profits, while the Phoenix are distant and have a fairly moderate demand.

(Actually, the Soshi cartel is no longer under the control of the Soshi family; there's been a rather brutal Kolat *coup d'etat* – and no one even noticed...)

The Mantis clan is something of a bone of contention; the Shosuro family has traditionally supplied them through Otosan Uchi, but the Bayushis think that supplying them through Earthquake Fish Bay would be more direct and economical. The Shosuro cartel is unwilling to give up the Mantis because (1) it's traditionally a high demand market (what with long, boring sea voyages), (2) it's the key to foreign markets and (3) they suspect that once the Bayushis get an ocean-going distribution network, they'll move on Otosan Uchi. The Soshi cartel has been backing the Shosuros, suspecting that if the Bayushis got the Mantis clan, they'd have a better route to Phoenix territory as well.

Note that there is usually *no* competition in the opium trade. Maybe down at the street level different dealers squabble and kill each other, but the distributors stay on their own lawns and don't





disturb the monopolies. After all, there's too much money to be made. Lately, however, there have been rumblings of discontent. Bayushi Korechika and Soshi Seiryoku are both comparative newcomers, and both want a bigger share of the pie. The Lions and Cranes don't consume any more opium than anyone else (or any less, despite what they'd have you believe), but their lands are the most heavily populated in the country. Even if the samurai aren't partaking, the peasants often are. As cities go, Otsan Uchi is the second biggest single consumer of opium in Rokugan (behind Ryoko Owari itself). Furthermore, there's the Mantis question; if the Bayushis are accused of wanting the Mantis to smuggle opium outside their district, what's to stop the Shosuros from doing the same thing? (In fact, it's happening; part of the reason demand in Phoenix territory has appeared so flaccid is that Shosuro opium is making its way to Otsan Uchi, getting put on boats and zipping up the coast to Phoenix territory in less time than it takes the Soshis to cart it all the way around Lion and Crane territory. This makes it cheaper, so the Shosuros can undersell the Soshis and still make a tidy profit. They're doing the same thing to Crab territory, sailing it in and up the river – and there's a lot greater demand in those parts. Incidentally, this border breaking was against Hyobu's wishes, but her family daimyo commanded her...)

That's the national situation; here's how the cartels are set up in Ryoko Owari, which is the fountainhead for 80% of the nation's opium.

All three families have licenses to raise, store and process edible opium for medical purposes. These warehouses and farms are completely legal, and any violent move against them would justify imprisonment, torture, maiming and possibly death (if anyone of consequence was killed in the raid). The opium doesn't become illegal until it's been processed into liquid or smokable form.

Shosuro Hyobu has that done in a dozen small processing shops all over town (and a couple out in the countryside) so there's no single illegal target to attack. The more processing shops any rival or magistrate rubs out, the more she'll be able to concentrate her defenders (usually firemen (G12) and ronin so that she can deny knowing about the "illegal misappropriation" of her poppies) on the remaining shops. As for attacking her distribution network – it's a huge job.

Magistrates might get one big opium caravan, maybe two – but after that, Hyobu will simply break up the shipments into scores of tiny parcels going out constantly. It cuts into her profit margin and annoys her personally, but she can still make a pretty penny.

The Bayushi setup is more vulnerable, since most of Korechika's opium is moved on barges. On the other hand, if the magistrates attack him, he won't hesitate to try to assassinate them with poison, hired ronin or any other dirty trick you can think of. An attack on his distribution will force him to start caravaning sooner than he had planned, and his caravans will be vulnerable as well. His farms and warehouses are legal, just like Hyobu's. However, his illegal processing is not split up; it's centralized in a village outside town. (This centralization reduces his overhead substantially.) The village is named Hitsuyo Mura – Necessary Village. It's about ten miles downstream and five miles inland. Opium is openly harvested and gathered at Ryoko Owari; then the (still legal) raw opium crop is sailed down to the village dock and dropped off to be processed, while the boat is loaded with the previous week's processed opium.

Necessary Village is highly fortified, of course, and is distant enough that the magistrates will be noticed if they set out for a little jaunt there. Also, don't forget their lack of authority to enforce laws there.

Soshi's network is the smallest and most paranoid. Like the rest, she's licensed to grow and store "medical" opium, but she doesn't centralize her stores in one big warehouse. Her stores and processing plants are spread out all through the city, and are largely independent of each other.

However, there is one weak link in her operation; the merchant Watchful (P42). Everything goes through her and she's the only one who knows the full extent of the operation. In theory this is to keep Seiryoku protected from squealing underlings; in practice, the Kolat have steadily put more command burden on her so that Seiryoku's operation can be easily destroyed when the time is right. If the PCs try to convert Watchful, Seiryoku will not only kill her, she'll saw her head off and keep it alive as a gift for her replacement to (1) tell the replacement all the details of the operation and (2) remind him of what happens when you screw up. Killing her, however, will put a whole lot of hurt on the Soshi cartel (which won't hesitate to return the favor).

RECOVERY FROM ADDICTION

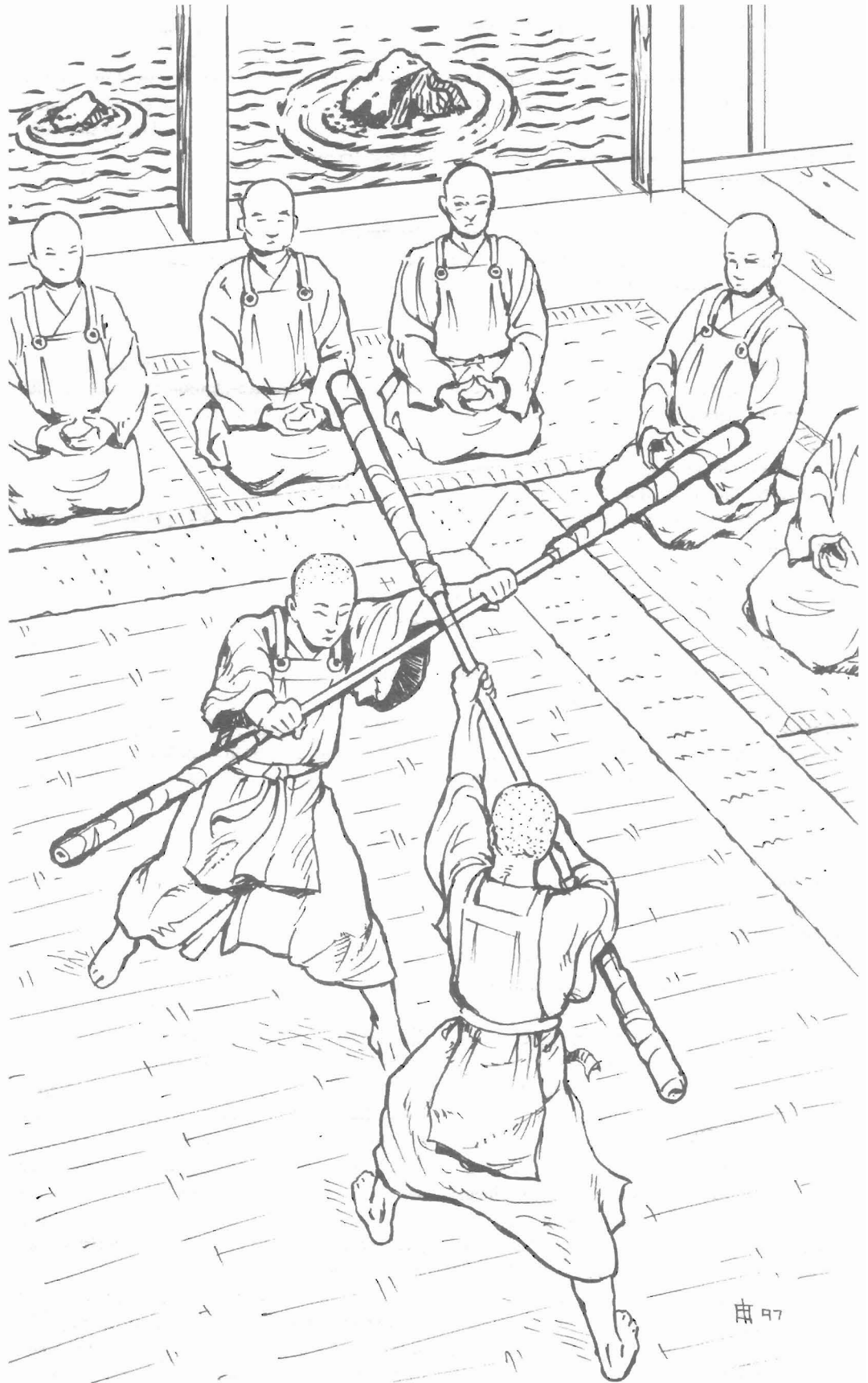
It's possible to kick the habit. All you have to do is spend a month sober. Easy, right? Just thirty days of terrible torment and screwed up die rolls. (There aren't any twelve step programs around, buddy.) After thirty days, have him roll Willpower against a TN of 25. If he makes the roll, he's lost his addiction. If not, he has another month before he can try again. If he fails, he can still try an Honor roll to beat it (and the Honor roll doesn't have -1 die penalty – this is the kind of task that Honor is for).

The TN of the addiction never gets any easier, no matter how long he's off the stuff. Furthermore, if he ever voluntarily takes opium again, in any form, he's addicted again. Period. If he's given it against his will, he has to beat a Willpower roll of 15-20 (depending on how long he's been clean) to avoid becoming addicted again. The first time a character beats addiction, give him 3 honor points. If he backslides and beats it again, that's not worth any honor (since he shouldn't have given in in the first place.)



THE AVERAGE MONK OF DAIKOKU

EARTH 2
 WATER 2
 FIRE 2
 AIR 2
 VOID 3
 Attacking: 3k2
 Damage: 4k2
 TN to Hit: 15
 Wounds: 4: -0; 8: -1;
 12: -2; 16: -3; 20: -4;
 24: Down; 28: Out; 32: Dead
 Notable Skills: Bo Staff 1;
 Defense 2; Shintao 2
 Honor: 2 to 3
 Glory: 0



97

The Temple of Daikoku

L12, P37, P38

The great Temple

of Daikoku is possibly the richest temple in Ryoko Owari. Only the Temple of the Sun Goddess could possibly have more wealth.

While most residents of Ryoko Owari would be pleased to be so rich, many of the monks of Daikoku are disturbed. They see the new wealth as a burden – and a warning.

It should come as no surprise that those who seek both money and enlightenment have rather offbeat ideas about both. To a monk of Daikoku, the sole purpose of money is to provide opportunities for wise spending. The poor man is distracted by hunger and chill, but has a keener view of the immaterial values such as honor and courage. The rich man, however, is wrapped in a comfortable blanket of wealth that can smother the senses of the soul even as it pampers the body.

The monks believe that money exists to transform experience, and the only thing worth buying is meaning. To them, anything can be wealth, anything can be a burden, and the only treasure worth having is a store of wisdom and good deeds. Therefore, a sudden increase of wealth is a sign from their Fortune that they're soon going to need it – that tough times are coming and that money will be required to protect virtue.

The central paradox – their great wealth, coupled with their disdain for the material – is what makes the monks so mysterious to those around them.

The Leatherworkers

G13

The truth about the Leatherworkers is that Ryoko Owari is just about the best thing that's ever happened to them. They provide a necessary service (as explained in the PC book)

that no one else is willing to touch, and they're amply rewarded for doing the dirty work.

This results in *eta* who are comparatively non-poor. They're not as well off as the average samurai or merchant, but they have more economic stability than most farmers and fishermen.

They also have the advantage of a very tight community. Maybe everyone else despises them, but *eta* hang together in Ryoko Owari.

Raspy (P54) is the informal leader of this community, and Eyebrows (P53) and Pitiful (P55) are its chief cops. Not that there's a lot of crime to deal with in the Leatherworker Quarter; most of its inhabitants regard each other as family. There may not be friendship, but if an *eta* has the urge to steal or get into trouble, they usually take it to another Quarter. After all, in the Leatherworker Quarter, everyone knows everyone else. In the rest of the city, an *eta* criminal is just another *eta* to be ignored – they all look the same, right?

The biggest problem facing Raspy and the Leatherworkers is, ironically enough, a result of their location and comparative wealth. *Eta* with money to spend really don't have that many attractive options; buying luxury goods will occasion comment from merchants, and it's frowned upon by the Leatherworker community (who don't want anyone to realize how good they've got it and take it away). The only luxuries that *eta* can buy without comment are booze and opium – and Ryoko Owari is a city where both are cheap.

Raspy is deeply concerned by increasing consumption among the younger Leatherworkers. He's canny enough to know how important opium is to Ryoko Owari's economy, but he still wishes there was some way to protect his people from its pernicious influence.

"Fade"

T2

Four years ago, a Scorpion samurai named Bayushi Tomaru publically humiliated a young Unicorn scout named Otaku Isas, who responded with a challenge. The Scorpion accepted, but on the day set for the duel, Isas found himself tormented by dizziness and sharp, stabbing pains. He asked for a postponement, and was given one – becoming a laughingstock in the process.

FADE

Rank 1 Shinjo school bushi

EARTH 3

WATER 3

FIRE 4

AIR 2

Reflexes 3

VOID 2

Attacking: 10k4 (7k4)

Damage: 6k2

TN to Hit: 20 (Light Armor)

Wounds: 4: -0; 8: -1; 12: -2; 16: -3; 20: -4; 24: Down; 28: Out; 32: Dead

Notable Skills: Archery 2; Battle 2 (4); Defense 2; Horsemanship 4; Hunting 4; Kenjutsu 3; Naginata 1

Honor: 1

Glory: 0

Special Abilities:

Bushido's A Joke. Because he knows how bushi think, Fade gains a +2 to his Battle skill when facing a samurai with an Honor score of 1 or higher.





FADE'S AVERAGE BANDITS

About 30 follow him currently.

EARTH 2

WATER 2

FIRE 2

AIR 2

VOID 1

Attacking: 3k2

Damage: 6k2

TN to Hit: 10

Wounds: 4: -0; 8: -1;

12: -2; 16: -3; 20: -4;

24: Down; 28: Out; 32: Dead

Notable Skills: Archery 1; Defense 1; Horsemanship 1; Yari 1

Honor: 1 to 2

Glory: 0

Isas was convinced that he had been poisoned, but was unable to prove it. Before the second date for the duel, he took great care with everything he ate or drank – but still, on the morning he was to fight Tomaru, he found himself nauseous and half blind. Although barely able to stand, he was ordered to fight by his family daimyo.

Otaku Isas refused and fled – a ronin, in disgrace. He is widely believed to have left the country.

He hasn't.

Isas has had a brutal awakening; he has realized that everything he learned about honor and duty in the Shinjo Bushi school is a lie. *Bushido* is a screen, a lie that conceals vile motives and disgraceful injustice. Disgusted equally with the Scorpion's abuse of *bushido* and the inability (or unwillingness) of other clans to catch them at it, Isas has repudiated the entire philosophy.

Many ronin have become disgusted with *bushido*'s strict code in the past. Some become amoral and cynical; others drink themselves into an early grave. Isas is one of the rare ones who chose only to give up on one philosophy – not on philosophy altogether.

As a ronin and a hunted man, Isas came into contact with peasants and criminals for the first time in his life. Although they scoffed at glory, he saw that they had loyalty and a type of honor. They were not loyal to nations or families or great causes; they were loyal to each other. Their loyalty was not a blind obedience to a philosophy that demanded their lives, but was earned by trust and sacrifice and friendship.

Isas began to speak to the criminals and peasants around him – telling them the samurai's contempt for them, of the foolishness of *bushido*'s warrior cult, of the weakness of samurai warfare.

Many were interested in his ideas – interested enough to follow him on a few daring raids. The samurai they assaulted reacted exactly as the young ronin had foretold.

Taking the name "Fade", Otaku Isas has declared a subtle war on what he sees as a dead philosophy – and especially on those Scorpions who callously manipulate it for their own gain.

Fade is a fine tactician and has become adept at gaining and keeping the loyalty of his followers. In some ways he acts like a bandit; he ruthlessly raids with little concern for honorable combat. However, he does not spend his money on comforts or luxuries; instead, he invests his

take in increasing and improving his forces. In this, as in his emphasis on discipline and tactics, he is like a soldier. But unlike a soldier, he puts no emphasis on personal glory; he wants only force to get money, and money to get more force.

He has one close supporter within the samurai class; his cousin Otaku Genshi (P19). Even as children they were best friends, and she is heartbroken that her favorite has been humiliated and made to run. At some level she questions his valor, but rationalizes it with her certainty that Tomaru was as much of a coward by poisoning Isas, instead of fighting honestly. Genshi gives him some of the information he uses to plan his raids; the rest comes from peasant spies.

Fade has at least a half a dozen hideouts within two days ride of Ryoko Owari. Some are guarded with elaborate traps and snares, and are fairly comfortable. Others are little more than shacks or holes in the ground.

Fade has also made allies in some of the villages of the area. These farm villages usually see samurai only at tax time. Fade has taken to robbing tax collectors and giving part of the tax proceeds back to those from whom it was taken.

He currently has about forty followers – mostly peasant bandits, but also a few ronin with genuine combat experience. Under his training, they have all learned to fight as a cohesive unit.

No follower knows the location of all his hideouts; he keeps a few completely to himself.

The Ryoko Ninja

T3

About eight years ago, a shady merchant with big ideas came to Ryoko Owari and begin building. This merchant (named Ayako) had seen the way some firemen operated – taking a percentage off the top of businesses, both legitimate and illegal, in return for protection. In many cases, part of what they were offering protection from was (of course) themselves. Ayako thought this was a splendid situation, except for two things. One was that the business of extortion was split up among many groups in many areas. The other was that the money was going to other people and not to her.



Luckily, Ayako had a ready answer for both problems; fear.

Fear made people willing – even grateful, pathetically enough – to pay for protection. Fear could redirect their payments, and fear could protect Ayako from reprisals by the firemen.

How to generate the fear, however? Ayako knew that force was impossible; she had some followers, but they were too few and too weak to confront even the weakest of the *kajinin*. (Well, they could confront the fire fighters in the Licensed Quarter, but doing so would entangle them with the powerful samurai protectors and patrons of the geisha houses, not to mention the Thunder Guard. Definitely not worth it.) A direct confrontation was out of the question.

Fu Leng and the Shadowlands were fearsome, but she was leery of acting in their name. The ninja, however, were perfect. Everyone believed in them, and everyone denied it. No magistrate would take a report of “ninja” seriously – but merchants would. So would the superstitious and poorly educated *kajinin*.

Thus, Ayako began to set up a city-wide crime network, extorting merchants with the threat of torture and murder at the hands of the ninja. She made good on her threats often enough to keep them honest – but more than that, she discovered that her “ninja” could take credit for clever or

daring crimes, and no one would contradict her. After all, if the real criminals were upset that someone was claiming their triumphs, they were equally glad of a smokescreen to throw the magistrates off the trail.

The problem with success, however, is that it gets noticed. Ayako was noticed, in short order, by the Emerald Magistrate, by the firemen, and by the *genuine* ninja.

The Emerald Magistrate at the time was Matsu Shigeko, and was initially not a problem – Ayako intuited that Shigeko was highly honorable, and therefore highly predictable. However, when Naritoki (P25) came onto the scene, she quickly realized she was dealing with a different type of opponent.

The *kajinin* were also upset to learn that someone else was skimming off “their” merchants. The ninja mystique worked for a while – until a group of ambushed firemen discovered that ninja arms break just as easily as normal arms. When five firemen chase off and injure nine ninja, it goes a long way towards dispelling the fear. The firemen even began talking about banding together to deal with the ninja.

As for the true ninja – they were amused. Amused and intrigued; after all, they might have cause, some day, to perform an operation in

FADE'S SUPERIOR BANDITS

About 10 are with him now.

EARTH 2

WATER 3

FIRE 3

AIR 2

VOID 1

Attacking: 5k3

Damage: 6k2

TN to Hit: 20 (Light Armor)

Wounds per level: 4: -0; 8: -1; 12: -2; 16: -3; 20: -4; 24: Down; 28: Out; 32: Dead

Notable Skills: Archery 1-2; Defense 1-2; Horsemanship 1-2; Kenjutsu 2; Naginata 1-2

Honor: 1 to 2

Glory: 0

If the plot demands it, superior bandits may have first rank abilities from one of Rokugan's bushi schools.





AVERAGE "NINJA"

EARTH 2

WATER 2

FIRE 2

AIR 2

VOID 1

Attacking: 3k2

Damage: 3k1

TN to Hit: 10

Wounds: 4: -0; 8: -1;

12: -2; 16: -3; 20: -4;

24: Down; 28: Out; 32: Dead

Notable Skills: Defense 1;
Shuriken 1; Stealth 2; Tanto 1

Honor: 0

Glory: 0





Ryoko Owari. When they did so, wouldn't it be handy to have a bunch of black garbed "pretend ninja" running around to confuse matters? The ninja's greatest trick was convincing people they didn't exist; now the many who suspected they *did* exist could be shown that the ninja were just a bunch of criminals masquerading as fake bogeymen.

The first layer of deception – "the ninja are a myth" – was sufficient for most people. Intrepid investigators might penetrate that layer, however. For them, a second level of lies would await – "the ninja are just mundane criminals using the myth as a cover." Most magistrates would be content with that argument – never suspecting that the *real* ninja were hiding behind the mundane criminals.

However, to be an optimum smokescreen, the phony ninja would have to be a bit more obvious. With great patience and foresight, the real ninja went about making it so.

Meanwhile, Ayako was finding herself increasingly pressured, caught between Naritoki and the firemen. She was becoming deeply disturbed when Naritoki made a surprising offer.

His offer was this; he would lay off the ninja. They would be allowed to continue to operate, and he would even help strengthen their reputation. In return, they would agree to two things. One was that they would be more subtle in the future. The other was that they would help him arrange a few spectacular arrests so that he could look really good to his boss.

This was done. Soon Naritoki and Ayako had a cozy arrangement. Naritoki had influence with a city-wide criminal mob to help offset the advantage Hyobu had with her fireman connections. Ayako had an easy way to dispose of inconvenient underlings – simply offer them up to Naritoki, secure that he would follow their lead no higher than she allowed. He was also quite skillful at stirring up old rivalries between the *kajinin* gangs, who were easily lead to believe the ninja were taken care of.

Everyone was happy. The firemen were duped. Naritoki looked good to his boss, was getting bribed and had access to information. Ayako and her ninja could subtly spread through the city. Everyone was content...

...except the real ninja. They arranged for Ayako to be assassinated and replaced by a much less subtle (but more cunning) leader. This leader (guided, without her knowledge, by the real ninja)

quickly strengthened the Ryoko ninja and begins marshalling her strength to eliminate the firemen one by one.

Her assassination of the leader of the Little Gate Firemen earned her the displeasure of Naritoki, who shaved a few layers off the organization as a lesson. The lesson went unlearned; instead, the ninja began to operate in the Noble Quarter for the first time.

At this point, the Ryoko ninja begin to learn their own lesson in fear. They had assumed Naritoki was the stereotypical corrupt, lazy, bullying magistrate. They were wrong. Naritoki might let crimes against peasants slide, but commoners acting against the nobles was not only repugnant – he was personally offended by their violation of their deal with him.

Naritoki sprang into action, and was far more efficient than they feared. Any ninja, or suspected ninja, that he captured could expect brutal torture with death at the end – and anyone known by the ninja could expect to be ruthlessly interrogated for any information that might lead to others.

The real ninja have quietly withdrawn their support of the Ryoko ninja; after all, Naritoki's attacks on them supported the true ninja agenda. His arrests proved that there's nothing mystical about the fake ninja; therefore, no one will suspect *real* ninja of having mysterious powers.

So, as the new magistrates enter town, the situation is as follows. The ninja have a thin web of extortion and fear over the city, but their roots aren't deep. Some of them have been unmasked and killed, and many more have fled from fear of the same. However, Naritoki's death will give them a great deal of hope and encouragement, since the ninja will be quick to take credit for it.

The Wind

T4

A few years ago, a Mantis clan sailor was ambushed and robbed inside Ryoko Owari. Being drunk, he tried to defend himself and, unsurprisingly, was killed in the struggle. His assailants grabbed his purse and sword and ran, never suspecting what was inside his wicker backpack. That treasure was found by a curious young *eta*.

Inside the backpack was a baby monkey. It was badly hurt – the sailor had fallen on it when assaulted. The young *eta* heard it crying and,

WHO KILLED NARITOKI?

Funny you should ask. It's not who you might think. There's a longer discussion of Naritoki's demise on page 71, which gives you not only a pointer to the true villains, but also a big pile of red herrings to throw at your hapless investigative PCs.



thinking it might be intelligent, has nursed it back to health. In the process, the girl and the monkey have become quite attached to each other.

The *eta* (who is called Brisk or “Genki”) named her new companion Hiccup (“Shakkuri”) after the curious sounds it makes. She quickly learned that while Hiccup was not as bright as a person, it was clever with its tiny hands and could fetch her things from around the house if she pointed to them and told Hiccup to get it.

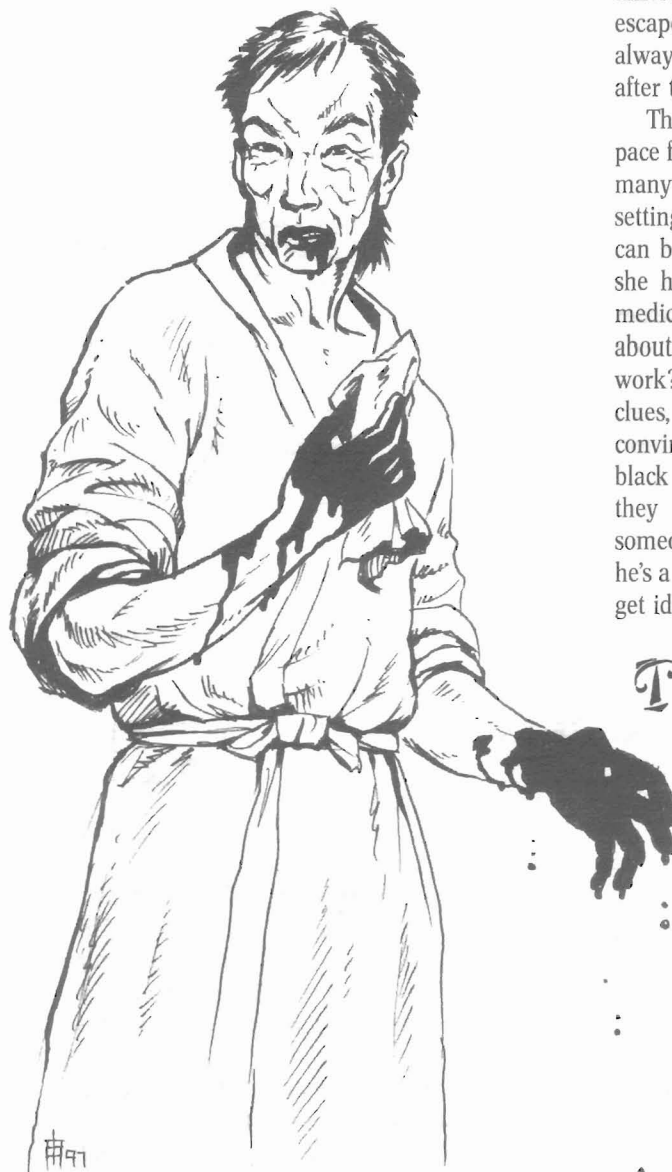
Brisk is one of the *eta* who hauls excrement from the Noble Quarter, and one afternoon she decided to hide Hiccup in a basket and show him

the sights. As one noble lady walked by wearing a beautiful *netsuke*, Brisk unthinkingly pointed it out to her little friend, who immediately leapt out of the basket and began following the noblewoman.

Brisk tried to follow, but had to stop outside the woman’s estate. To her surprise, Hiccup emerged within an hour – carrying the *netsuke*.

Perhaps the murdered sailor had trained the animal to steal; perhaps it is just naturally clever and wants to please its mistress. In any event, Hiccup has become an accomplished burglar. Brisk was initially afraid to rob the wealthy, but she tells herself that they have plenty of nice things and won’t really miss one or two. Once she saves up enough money, she plans to move to a different city and set herself up as a merchant and escape the life of an *eta*. To do that, though, she always needs one more heist... and one more after that...

The case of the Wind can provide a change of pace from the blood and thunder tone common to many of the adventures and situations in this setting. Depending on how you want to play it, it can be tragic (what if Brisk’s father gets ill, and she has to do more jobs to pay for fraudulent medicines?), political (what if the “ninja” find out about her and coerce her into doing their dirty work?), humorous (perhaps some red herring clues, or testimony from hysterical witnesses, convinces the magistrates the thief has dangerous black magic powers – imagine their surprise if they learn the truth) or exasperating (maybe someone catches a glimpse of Hiccup and thinks he’s a *mujina* – and real *mujina* hear about it and get ideas?).



The Immortal Kenjo

Over in the Burning Lands, there are sorcerers who never age. The immortality procedure has been perfected in only the last 400 years. Before that, cruder methods were used by those who wanted to live forever.

One such magician with ambitions of immortality called himself Hab-Utet (which means “hidden begetting”) because he had mastered a method of withdrawing his own reproductive powers into himself. (Trust me, you don’t want the details.) Instead of



using his vitality naturally, to father children, he used it to selfishly prolong his own life. Unfortunately, he learned (after about ninety years) that by becoming his own father every forty years or so, he was suffering the effects of inbreeding.

Terrified by the deformities he was developing, Hab-Utet realized he was missing the female component of life. A few magical experiments later, he had found a way to steal the vitality from a female “donor” who (sadly) did not survive the operation. In this way he became mother and father to a new self, dying and being reborn in his quest for perpetual life.

Hab-Utet’s tribe (who are called the Senpet) was not pleased when they found his first few victims (he had to kill several women before he perfected his spell). He was eventually discovered; after a fierce battle, he fled. Eventually he settled in Ryoko Owari, where he has lived for hundreds of years. Every fifty years or so he kills a woman, steals certain important organs, and is reborn as an infant inside his previous body. He then splits his old body open (killing it) and crawls forth – an infant with the mind of an ancient sorcerer.

Not just any woman will do for the sacrifice; since he’s going to become her son in a very real and physical way, he hunts only women who are healthy, intelligent and attractive. (In a strange way, he’s evolving himself.) His current pseudonym is Henjo, and he’s making a comfortable living selling timber to barges and caravans.

Other than his knowledge and spirit, only one thing follows him from body to body; a serpent shaped scar that slowly, torturously moves all over the surface of his body, eating its way across him. This was a parting gift from a mystic of the Senpet, and he’s never found a way to get rid of it. It can’t kill him, but it sure makes the years a lot less pleasant.

It’s time for him to kill and be reborn. It’s up to individual GMs to decide on a victim. Maybe he’s gotten cocky enough that he’ll attack an Emerald Magistrate who meets his needs. Maybe he’ll pick a nameless noblewoman who was visiting town. Or it could be one of the NPCs from this box. It’s up to you whether the players get to meet her first. (It would make her eventual death a lot more personal, of course.)

The scary clue will be if players realize that this girl was killed in the exact same fashion as Bayushi Genshi over a hundred years ago

(described in entry L9). A little investigation shows that a similar murder happened on the road between Ryoko Owari and Shiro no Soshi fifty years ago.

Once Hab-Utet/Henjo kills his victim, he’s somewhat vulnerable for nine months while his new body grows inside him. If the magistrates don’t find him in that span, he’s reborn and cared for by a fanatical servant named Suzuko. He bought her on the black market when she was just an infant, twenty years ago. She’s been brainwashed since birth to be his obedient slave. Just six months ago she had a baby at his command so that she could wet-nurse him after his transformation. (Incidentally, she won’t hesitate to give up her own son if magistrates demand Henjo after he’s turned into a baby.)

It should come as no surprise that Henjo has mystic powers up the wazoo. However, this isn’t Rokugani magic; he doesn’t need spell scrolls for it. It does take quite a while longer to cast a spell. For example, he has some kind of mind control shtick that he used on Bayushi Genshi, but he’s not going to be able to whip it on vengeful magistrates on a moment’s notice. If you have the rules for *maho*, feel free to equip him with whatever you think he might have learned in the last couple hundred years – but keep in mind that he’ll be reluctant to take wounds to power them, because he’s physically frail and he knows it.

Hab-Utet has six hundred years of experience in a fifty-year old body – one that’s wracked with the serpent curse, remember. To represent his unique physical (and mental, and mystical) circumstances, he’s got very low physical attributes, but a grotesque store of Void points. He cannot spend more than a single Void point on non-physical sub-traits (Intelligence, Willpower, Perception or Awareness) but can spend as many as he wants on the others (Strength, Agility, Reflexes and Stamina).

If cornered, he’ll try to escape, and with the Void points he has to burn, he has a good chance of making it. He’s likely to scare the hell out of the magistrates when your players see you routinely rolling and keeping huge quantities of dice; remember that he knows his limits and knows that his body will fail him eventually (his Void points will run out). It may be tempting to blow through ten Void points a turn, but Hab-Utet will be reluctant to run out of gas that quickly.

HAB-UTET/HENJO

EARTH 1

Willpower 4

WATER 1

Perception 4

FIRE 1

Intelligence 4

AIR 1

Awareness 4

VOID 20

Wounds: 2: -0; 4: -1;
6: -2; 8: -3; 10: -4;
12: Down; 14: Out; 16: Dead

Notable Skills: Archery 4;
Defense 4; Hand to Hand 4;
Maho 5; Tanto 4

Honor: 0

Glory: 0

Special Abilities:

Really Experienced:

Just assume that Henjo has a skill of 3 in any skills that aren’t listed. The exception is Meditation (which would make him pretty much unbeatable).

Really REALLY

Experienced: Henjo can spend as many Void points as he wants to increase his physical scores.

Disadvantages: If Henjo completes his transformation and becomes an infant, he’ll be unable to use most physical skills.



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**The People
of Ryoko
Owari**

Guide to the People of Ryoko Owari

SAMURAI

| I.D. No. | NAME | CLAN | PAGE No. | I.D. No. | NAME | CLAN | PAGE No. |
|----------|-------------------|----------|----------|----------|--------------------|---------|----------|
| P1 | Shosuro Hyobu | Scorpion | 21 | P19 | Otaku Genshi | Unicorn | 34 |
| P2 | Shosuro Jocho | Scorpion | 22 | P20 | Otaku Naishi | Unicorn | 35 |
| P3 | Shosuro Kimi | Scorpion | 22 | P21 | Iuchi Sadako | Unicorn | 35 |
| P4 | Shosuro Gobei | Scorpion | 24 | P22 | Iuchi Michisuna | Unicorn | 36 |
| P5 | Bayushi Korechika | Scorpion | 24 | P23 | Kaiu Shinya | Crab | 36 |
| P6 | Bayushi Saisho | Scorpion | 26 | P24 | Yasuki Nobuko | Crab | 38 |
| P7 | Bayushi Otado | Scorpion | 26 | P25 | Ashidaka Naritoki | Crane | 38 |
| P8 | Bayushi Omoto | Scorpion | 27 | P26 | Ashidaka Michitaka | Crane | 39 |
| P9 | Soshi Seiryoku | Scorpion | 28 | P27 | Doji Sukemara | Crane | 39 |
| P10 | Yogo Osako | Scorpion | 29 | P28 | Kitsuki Jotomon | Dragon | 40 |
| P11 | Shinjo Yoshifusa | Unicorn | 30 | P29 | Ikoma Yoriko | Lion | 41 |
| P12 | Shinjo Sanefusa | Unicorn | 31 | P30 | Kitsu Senshi | Lion | 42 |
| P13 | Shinjo Yoshiko | Unicorn | 31 | P31 | Asako Kinto | Phoenix | 42 |
| P14 | Ide Baranato | Unicorn | 32 | P32 | Ample | Ronin | 44 |
| P15 | Ide Michikane | Unicorn | 32 | P33 | True Word | Ronin | 45 |
| P16 | Ide Asamitsu | Unicorn | 33 | P34 | Shrimp | Mantis | 45 |
| P17 | Ide Nakatada | Unicorn | 33 | P35 | Jaw | Ronin | 46 |
| P18 | Ide Shikibu | Unicorn | 34 | P36 | Dove | Ronin | 46 |

Reversed type indicates a deceased individual.

NON-SAMURAI

| I.D. No. | NAME | QUARTER | PAGE No. | I.D. No. | NAME | QUARTER | PAGE No. |
|----------|-------------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|---------------|----------|
| P37 | Abbot Okawa | Temple | 47 | P46 | Gate | Licensed | 51 |
| P38 | Jirohei | Temple | 47 | P47 | Magda | Licensed | 52 |
| P39 | Meiyo | Temple | 48 | P48 | Precious | Licensed | 53 |
| P40 | Sharp | Merchant | 48 | P49 | Jewel | Licensed | 53 |
| P41 | Subtle | Merchant | 49 | P50 | Lean Meat | Fisherman | 54 |
| P42 | Watchful | Merchant | 49 | P51 | Shortcut | Fisherman | 54 |
| P43 | Horse | Merchant | 50 | P52 | Yellow | Fisherman | 55 |
| P44 | Builder | Merchant | 50 | P53 | Eyebrows | Leatherworker | 55 |
| P45 | Whisper | Merchant | 51 | P54 | Raspy | Leatherworker | 56 |
| | | | | P55 | Pitiful | Leatherworker | 57 |

What follows are the real stories behind the many inhabitants of Ryoko Owari described in the PC book. Some of them are exactly what they appear to be. Others have a few surprises.

Game stats have been provided for some of the NPCs – but not all. If I thought there was a good chance of the player characters fighting with the NPC, I statted him or her up. Otherwise, I didn't, and you can do so as you see fit. Nevertheless, everybody has Honor and Glory. Even the dead have Glory, although their Honor is no longer material.

The Scorpion Clan



SHOSURO HYOBU

Hyobu the Governor was explained on page 4 and in the PC book in entry G9. Now let's consider Hyobu the woman.

P1

She was born Yogo Hyobu about forty-five years ago. Raised in a dark house full of secrets and sorcery, she was not a pretty child or even a particularly happy one. She was intelligent, but her family had no shortage of bright offspring. What set Hyobu apart was her patience.

Her future husband, Shosuro Akitada, visited the Yogo family with the intention of making a politically adept match. Hyobu didn't think much of him at first – his clothes were bright and fine, but couldn't hide his thick features and portly

stomach. He, however, noticed her right away – because while the other daughters were busy trying to demonstrate to him their skills at cooking, or poetry, or seduction, Hyobu was working in her garden. Akitada ate the food offered, listened to the poetry with a smile, and may have indulged in other offers from Hyobu's sisters – but afterwards, he went to the garden and asked her why she had ignored him.

"It's harvest," she said. "I'm not about to throw away a year's work for one day's distraction."

Akitada smiled and knew he'd found the woman to marry. She left the darkness of her family home and the envious glares of her sisters and moved to Ryoko Owari – a city full of more beauty and energy and vitality than she could have ever imagined.

Their marriage was not necessarily an easy one. Hyobu had difficulty in childbirth, suffering three miscarriages and watching two children die before Jocho turned four. After giving birth to Kimi nearly killed her, Hyobu and Akitada agreed that they would have no more children.

During her troubled pregnancies, Hyobu found Akitada to be a kind and caring man. Once a pregnancy was over, however, he would withdraw again to his world of courtiers and magistrates and duty. For a time, Hyobu was certain he had another lover – one he showered with all the affection he had withdrawn from her. In time she realized that his other love was the city, and she became terribly jealous.

She tried everything in her power to distract his affection from the city – pampering, tantrums, even a few infidelities of her own. He ignored them for a long time, but finally he simply said to her, "When did you become as shallow as your sisters?"

Hyobu thought long and hard about this, and then she asked him to teach her about the city. This he did, and eventually she fell as deeply in love with governance as he had. When he died eight years ago, it was natural for her to take over in his stead. Although she is technically only a regent until Jocho decides to become Governor, he shows no interest in doing so.

When playing Hyobu, remember that she holds the cards, and she knows it. She is respectful of those who fulfill their function within the city – be they magistrates, smugglers, geisha or nobles. Those who don't fit irritate her, but she doesn't show it; instead, she tries to gently fit them in. If they continue to cause friction, she





SHOSURO JOCHO

Rank 5 Bayushi School Bushi

EARTH 3

WATER 3

FIRE 4

AIR 3

VOID 4

Attacking: 8k4

Damage: 6k3

TN to Hit: 25 (Heavy Armor)

Wounds: 6; -0; 12; -1; 18; -2; 24; -3; 30; -4; 36; Down; 42; Out; 48; Dead

Notable Skills: Archery 3; Athletics 3; Commerce 3; Courtier 4; Defense 4; Etiquette 4; Horsemanship 3; Iaijutsu 4; Kenjutsu 4; Law 4; Meditation 2; Poetry 3; Poison 1; Shintao 1; Sincerity 4; Stealth 3

Honor: 1

Glory: 5

Special Abilities:

Clear Thinker

Fine Katana and Armor: these are the weapons and armor his family has had for generations. The sword has a DR of 3k3, while the heavy armor is so well made that it does not give the normal TN penalty of heavy armor.

has them destroyed, but she is always reluctant to take such measures. After all, she is, above everything else, extremely patient.

Role-playing Hyobu: Smile. Be courteous and proper. Take your time. Think about everything carefully. If someone confronts you or is rude, ignore it or act like it's a mistake. If they push you too far, dismiss them – and then have them crushed by the Thunder Guard as a warning to other rude individuals.

Honor: 2

Glory: 6



SHOSURO JOCHO

No one knows for sure about Jocho. He cynically manipulated Shiba Shonagon into his bed, but wept openly at her funeral. His command of the Thunder Guard shows a taste for leadership, but he refuses to become Governor. He is the leader of both the disciplined and scrupulous Lightning Squad and the corrupt and dissolute Samurai Squad. His dedication to samurai discipline is unchallenged, but he has also behaved like a drunken ronin at times – gambling, wenching and smoking opium. He is well liked by his peers, but no one calls him a close friend.

Only one man has had the temerity to ask him about these contradictions. It was Abbot Okawa (P37), when Jocho came to speak to him about his assault on Shonagon. Jocho just smiled and said

P2

“Do you think monks are the only ones who appreciate paradox?”

The truth is, Jocho is both the cynical manipulator and the starry-eyed romantic. He is equal parts noble warrior and corrupt official, tireless leader and lazy sybarite.

Jocho can switch between attitudes and points of view with ease, adopting whatever “truth” is most useful, entertaining or powerful at the moment. He can do so because he long ago decided what the center of his life was. He has chosen one thing as the key to his identity. With that as a foundation, he can move with ease between countless viewpoints and beliefs – scoffer, worshipper, cynic, idealist, gentle lover and callous seducer. He has one thing in his soul that is secure, and that defines the real Jocho.

No one but him knows what it is.

Role-playing Jocho: Smile with your mouth, but not your eyes. Be willing to talk about anything – as long as you can ask difficult questions. Take tremendous delight in head games and manipulation, but don't let it show. Never let anyone know what you're really thinking, feeling, or planning. Always surprise people and contradict their expectations (unless doing so would show weakness).



SHOSURO KIMI

When Kimi was a young girl – about nine or ten – her father came into her chamber with a serious look on his face.

P3



“Kimi,” he asked her, “Do you love this city?”

Any child of Shosuro Akitada knew enough to say yes, even if she was unsure of the answer. It was not until she was older that she understood completely what she had agreed to.

Her father had wanted taxes lowered on his city, and had been arguing (in the roundabout, indirect, non-argumentative fashion that Kimi would soon become dreadfully familiar with) for years with the Emerald Champion. One of the gambits in their endless angling for position had been a question of trust. To prove his trust, Akitada offered to place his daughter in the care of the Doji family for six years, as a sign of the esteem he held for them.

Years later Kimi realized she'd been a hostage. An elaborately pampered hostage, but one nonetheless. At first, however, all she knew was that she'd been taken to a distant place – a beautiful place, but with a light and alien beauty. She was used to the intricate ornaments of the Scorpion clan; the feathery grace of the Crane architecture seemed like it might blow over or float away at any moment – and that went double for the people.

In the Doji court, she was treated well, but always a little differently. She had friends, but they always admired her for being tricky – even when she wasn't being tricky. Everyone was so kind and polite that it took her years to realize what it meant to be a Scorpion in a Crane palace.

Then the time arrived for her to depart. She returned home and found it greatly changed. As a little girl, she'd felt safe and comfortable and included – as if she could crawl into the center of a warm nest of secrets and fall asleep safe. Now the secrets were closed to her and she was on the outside.

It was not the city that had changed, of course; she had. Returning, she was graceful, polite, beautiful, accomplished in the courtly arts – but no longer completely trusted by those around her. After all, who knew what else had changed after six years with the Crane?

Kimi found herself adrift; her own clan no longer trusted her completely, but she was unwilling to confirm their suspicions by associating with the Cranes. That was when she met Ide Michikane (P15) and Ide Asamitsu (P16).

At first Michikane was her favorite. There was little room in his world for the shadowy nets of trust and deceit that held her bound. He brushed them aside like cobwebs, took her hunting, got

her drunk and showed her that life could be fun. No complications, no double meanings, no hidden purposes; just fun.

After a while, though, Michikane's appeal became brittle to her. While he was lighthearted and entertaining, he seemed to lack a certain gravity that the Scorpions and Cranes shared. One day she asked him if fun was all there was, and he was flustered for an answer.

The answer came from Asamitsu, who told her that he thought honor and family were more important than mere happiness.

Something about his simple, sincere answer opened Kimi up to him, and out came all her doubts, fears and weariness with the schemes of the Scorpions who bore her and the Crane who had raised her. Asamitsu replied that everyone had their own path to follow – he just liked his more direct. They spoke for hours about honor, duty and many other things besides. When the sun came up, they were in love – though neither realized it until Kimi was engaged to Asamitsu's brother.

Both knew their duty was clear; the demands of family and honor far outweighed their love – their “mere happiness”. They had resigned themselves to a life of uncomfortable longing when Michikane died.

Now Kimi doesn't know what to think. She finds herself horrified by the relief she feels when she thinks about marrying Asamitsu instead of Michikane. It's like a strange dream; her dearest wish has come true in the worst possible way.

Sometimes she catches herself wondering if Asamitsu killed his brother. She knows it can't be true – but she can feel the webs of deceit entangling them again.

Role-playing Kimi: When you're in a formal situation, or with someone you don't know very well, be extremely polite and formal. Watch every single word you say – speak slowly and with great caution, so you don't give anything away or accidentally offend. When someone has gained your trust, speak much more casually, smile a great deal and be much more relaxed and happy.

Honor: 2

Glory: 6



SHOSURO GOBEI

Gobei always gets a smile on his face when he hears that someone suspects him of being a secretive mastermind. He knows that he is simply a straightforward, honest businessman – and that the more he acts like one, the less people will believe it.

P4

His life has no hidden criminal activities, no connection to smugglers or ninja or Kolat. He brews sake, and does a very good job of it. He sells it for a fair price. Perhaps he takes advantage of his connection to Hyobu (G9, P1) to get his taxes assessed with a light hand, and perhaps a few casks of sake find their way to Thunder Guard captains in return for selective blindness during tariff assessments – but compared to many businessmen in Ryoko Owari, he's honest as Shinsei.

If he smiles when he's suspected of being a criminal, he has to suppress a loud laugh when he's suspected of being Hyobu's lover. Nothing could be further from the truth. The reason he's never taken a wife is that he likes men instead of women. This is a secret he's careful to keep – not so much out of shame (homosexuality carries much less of a stigma in Rokugan – the only reason it might be considered bad is that it might make a samurai less loyal to his daimyo) but because he does enjoy having one secret at least.

Role-playing Gobei: Always look a little bit amused. Don't ask many questions. When asked

a question, give a short, noncommittal answer in a friendly tone of voice. Always appear to be cooperative – without actually volunteering anything or cooperating all that much.

Honor: 2
Glory: 2



BAYUSHI KORECHIKA

Korechika sees himself as a man of honor. This might seem a little odd for the second-biggest smuggler of drugs in Rokugan, but Shoju ordered him to do it well, so he does his best. He understands very well the funds and the power that opium gives his family over the Crab (who are normally difficult to control because they lack the refinement to be embarrassed by the few indiscretions they have time to commit).

P5

Since assuming command of the Bayushi cartel in Ryoko Owari five years ago, Korechika has labored unceasingly to expand, streamline and improve his operation. His plans took a large step forward when he acquired the services of Horse (P43) from the Unicorn clan. It is his ambition to use Horse's stables to build a secondary distribution network on land, to supplement his well developed channels down the River of Gold. He is tireless in his agitation to get the Mantis clan placed under his cartel's authority, and he has been audacious in trying to get the Soshi cartel to support his accusation that



the Shosuros are stealing trade from both the other suppliers.

On the surface, he appears to be another deeply dedicated samurai with a firmly held goal. The truth, however, is more complex.

Bayushi Korechika was one of those fortunate few in Rokugan who married a woman he loved. His marriage was blessed by a beautiful daughter (P8) whom he and his wife both adored. As the little girl grew, it became apparent that she would one day be a beauty to rival or even surpass her mother. Both were terribly proud.

Omoto was always a cheerful child, and if she didn't seem to be the brightest of babies, well, her natural appeal and happy disposition more than compensated. After all, a good match could be made with a beautiful daughter where a smart daughter would be rejected – and who wouldn't prefer to be happy than wise?

Saisho and Korechika wanted to ignore the truth, but they could only fool themselves for so long. When Omoto was thirteen, they had to confront the fact that she had less intelligence than her nine-year-old brother. In greatest secrecy they consulted the shugenja of the Soshi and Yogo families, who flatly told them their daughter was retarded. No scrolls could fix her condition. Unwilling to believe, they turned to Asako Kinto (P31). He examined the girl and said that while her mind would never advance past its current stage, she was in all other respects a healthy and attractive girl – one who seemed better off and happier than most he knew.

Korechika believed the Phoenix shugenja was mocking him, and threatened to kill him if anyone ever learned about their daughter. Asako said that he saw no reason to keep it secret, but that if her parents thought it wise he would tell no one; and he hasn't.

Saisho asked her husband if maybe the Phoenix wasn't right, but Korechika denied even the idea. Perhaps for the Phoenix such... aberrations... were acceptable, but not for him. He had enemies – enemies who wouldn't hesitate to take advantage of an infantile daughter.

He never admitted it, but Korechika was in torment. His beloved daughter had become monstrous in his sight, and there was no cure. He had to make the problem disappear.

This he has done, with the admirable skill of his clan. The story of her illness and death checks out, and the secondary lie of the enamored servant has been firmly established to quell

further questions. Omoto, of course, is still alive, but she never leaves the Bayushi estate. Only the members of the family, and their most trusted servants, know the truth of the matter.

They locked her up nine years ago, and that was when Bayushi began paying more attention to the business of the cartel than to his home life. It was not a conscious decision; but being at home, knowing that his grown daughter was playing with children's toys in the garden – even just hearing her footsteps above his head, caused him terrible sorrow. He threw himself into his work simply because it was less painful.

Taking control of the cartel five years ago gave him even more excuses to stay away from home, and he has taken them. He still loves his family deeply, but the only way he will let himself express it is through his dedication to the cartel. He has convinced himself that by excelling there, he is bringing honor and power to his family – including Otado, Saisho and even Omoto.

His household deceptions have given him a great strength for concealing his fears, hopes and hatreds. His sorrow and impotence to help his daughter have given him a bottomless well of rage to spill out at his enemies – who will never see a drop of it until he's ready to unleash a deluge.

Role-playing Korechika: Be a stereotypical Scorpion – smooth and polite, but with an air of menace underneath. Say everything as if it has a threatening double meaning (even if it doesn't – force of habit). If openly defied, either withdraw into an icy rage with some kind of vague threat ("You'll regret this, magistrate – my vengeance may be slow, but it will last 'til the end of your days") or fly into a rage of shouted threats, accusations and challenges.

BAYUSHI KORECHIKA

Rank Three Bayushi
School Bushi

EARTH 3

WATER 3

FIRE 3

Agility 4

AIR 4

VOID 3

Attacking: 8k4

Damage: 6k2

TN to Hit: 20

Wounds: 6; -0; 12; -1;

18; -2; 24; -3; 30; -4;

36; Down; 42; Out; 48; Dead

Notable Skills: Archery 2;

Courtier 3; Defense 3;

Etiquette 2; Horsemanship 2;

Iaijutsu 4; Kenjutsu 4;

Poison 3; Sincerity 4; Stealth 3

Honor: 2

Glory: 5

Disadvantage: Dark
Secret (his infantile
daughter is still alive in
captivity).



BAYUSHI OTADO

Rank One Bayushi school bushi

EARTH 2

WATER 2

Strength 4

FIRE 3

AIR 2

Reflexes 4

VOID 2

Attacking: 4k3

Damage: 7k2

TN to Hit: 20

Wounds: 4: -0; 8: -1;

12: -2; 16: -3; 20: -4;

24: Down; 28: Out; 32: Dead

Notable Skills: Archery 1;

Defense 1; Iaijutsu 1;

Kenjutsu 1; Poison 1;

Sincerity 1; Stealth 1

Honor: 2

Glory: 2

Disadvantages: Brash,

Dark Secret (same as

Korechika's)



BAYUSHI SAISHO

Saisho's parents taught their daughter that life was supposed to follow a certain course. If you were a good person with a good fate, the more you worked, the better your life would become. If you were a bad person, you would never be able to escape the punishment fate had in store for you. They also told her that she was a good girl; hard work would pay off with a happy life. It sounded simple.

Now that she's grown and has children (P7, P8) of her own, Saisho finds it much more complicated, because she is definitely not happy. She was for a while, back when she and Korechika (P5) were newlyweds. Then they were blessed with beauty, fortune, social status and love.

Korechika doesn't know that she can't sleep at night unless he is beside her; when he stays out late working or politicking (never playing; she knows he has no place in his life for frivolity) she always pretends to be asleep when he returns. He doesn't suspect a thing.

Lying there awake, Saisho finds herself wondering why her life, which was so good, became so bad. Once her two children were the joy of her life; now one is a shameful secret she can never reveal, and the other is turning into a surly stranger before her very eyes.

Sometimes she thinks that she must have made some dire mistake somewhere. Perhaps

P6

their daughter was born wrong because she held secret resentments against her husband's work. Perhaps her son smokes opium and brawls like a common ronin because she was not devout enough at the temple. Maybe it's impious to keep foreign birds in the house. She spends hours, night and day, wondering which of her failures is carrying away the good fate she was supposed to have – worthy children and a loving husband.

Other times she wonders if destiny is cruel enough to give her a taste of happiness, to let her think she had a good fate, before it slammed shut the cage of misery around her.

The quietest voice – the one that only comes latest at night – is the one that says she is unhappy because she has failed her daughter. It speaks to her in the voice of Asako Kinto, saying that her daughter is a happy child – not a shame to be hidden away.

Role-playing Saisho: Always be polite and proper, but a little withdrawn and distracted. You're not very sure of yourself, and it's a great effort for you to be happy even for a moment.

Honor: 2

Glory: 3



BAYUSHI OTADO

Otado is a brash, angry young samurai – quick to find insult, eager for any dare and unwilling to forgive anything that might even be considered a slight.

P7



His parents are appalled; Korechika (P5) wants him to be a subtle manipulator – for that he needs self-control. Saisho (P6) simply remembers what a happy child he used to be and shakes her head.

The only member of Otado's family who still finds him kind and pleasant is his sister Omoto (P8) – and then only when they're alone. In front of other people he can be impatient and embarrassed by her, but when they're alone he's always sweet and patient and loving. Omoto doesn't understand why he's mean to her sometimes, but she always forgives him.

Otado hasn't really thought much about why he acts the way he does; it's too painful. All he knows is that he's confused (which is bad – a samurai is supposed to be certain) and angry (which is good – a samurai is supposed to be aggressive).

For a while, his parents were happy people, and Otado was a happy son. Then they learned the truth about Omoto – and that's too bad, but did it have to change how they acted towards Otado, too? He's still the same; he hasn't become a freak, an idiot, a stain upon the family. He didn't change, but they did. They became sad and withdrawn. Worse, they aren't proud of him any more. Any time he did something good, it only hurt them, because it reminded them of the infirmities of their other child.

To spare them, Otado has worked hard at becoming just as much of a disappointment as his sister. He doesn't realize it and would deny it to the death, but it's the only role that makes sense to him in his new, revised family.

Half of him hates his sister. In his mind, he knows she's the fountainhead of his family's ruin. Sometimes he's even wondered what would happen if she, say, happened to eat something lethal. His parents would mourn, of course; but eventually they'd stop mourning. Wouldn't that be better than this perpetual secrecy and sorrow, with her around to remind them all the time?

The other half of him loves his sister. It's irrational; she really isn't good for anything... but he can't watch her chasing butterflies through their garden (the inner garden, the secret one, the one where she plays and no outsiders see) without smiling. It's a painful pleasure, fitting for his painful love. He knows he can't kill her; he'd die for her.

Maybe if he died for her, his family would be proud of him again.

Role-playing Otado: Sneer. Swagger. Mock. Make threats. In general, be a brash, bullying young SOB. Note that your threats and mockery don't have to be particularly intelligent or witty; in many ways, a cruel – and dumb – joke at someone's expense is what Otado is all about.



BAYUSHI OMOTO

The emotions of the Bayushis of Ryoko Owari swirl and storm like a hurricane. Korechika's (P5) sorrow, Saisho's (P6) guilt and Otado's (P7) anger all move around a single point: Omoto. Like the eye of a storm, she is untouched by the turmoil around her.

P8

At the age of twenty, Omoto is at the peak of her beauty. When she was about seven or eight years old, she reached the peak of her intelligence, and there she has stayed.

She is only allowed in the family part of the house, and is taken out of the garden any time there's a chance a visitor might see her. This confuses and sometimes upsets her – more than one visitor has heard the cries of a sobbing woman echoing distantly through the house, but has been mollified with the lie that it's simply one of Korechika's exotic birds.

Usually, however, Omoto is happy. Problems and disappointments flit quickly from her mind, and all it takes to make her happy is a clever toy, a pretty gown – even just a smile.





SOSHI SEIRYOKU

Rank Three Soshi school shugenja

EARTH 5

WATER 3

FIRE 3

AIR 3

VOID 4

Attacking: 6k3

Damage: 6k2

TN to Hit: 15

Wounds: 10: -0; 20: -1;

30: -2; 40: -3; 50: -4;

60: Down; 70: Out; 80: Dead

Notable Skills: Athletics 3; Bard 3; Calligraphy 2; Courtier 4; Defense 3; Etiquette 3 Kenjutsu 3; Locksmith 3; Maho 3; Meditation 4; Shintao 4; Shadowlands Lore 5; Theology 3

Honor: 1

Glory: 3

Spells: Biting Steel, Blessing of Purity, Call Upon the Wind, Castle of Water, Cloak of Night, Command the Mind, Earthquake, Elemental Ward, Evil Ward, Fist of Osano-Wo, Fury of Osano-Wo, Know the Mind, Mists of Illusion, Reflective Pool, Sympathetic Energies, Strike at the Roots, Secrets on the Wind, Tomb of Jade, Torrential Rain, Wind-Borne Slumbers

It's only those around her who suffer because of her handicap.

Role-playing Omoto: Smile a lot. Be very friendly. You don't understand much, but you like new people because you don't get to see them very often. You're fascinated by pretty things, new things, and you have a *very* short attention span.

Honor: 2

Glory: 0



SOSHI SEIRYOKU

Seiryoku's teachers had great expectations of her. They didn't know that she was destined to take control of an opium house, but they knew something important was going to happen to her. They also knew she was a talented shugenja, well loved by the spirits.

The praise and privilege that surrounded her made Seiryoku a little careless, but it didn't really matter; it would have taken a heroic feat of paranoia to save her from her fate.

The fate she suffered started with a simple journey to Ryoko Owari to take control of her family cartel. An easy ride of two days, she thought. One night in a roadside inn – everything was prepared.

When she woke up, she wasn't in the inn. She was chained, naked in a damp and lightless hole. At first she was enraged, and tried to escape with her magic. Nothing worked. Then she tried

cunning. The locks were too stout, and she had nothing to work them with.

Then three people came and they tortured her. They asked no questions and did not listen to her pleas. They handled her like a dead body.

The next day, they did it again. And the day after that.

On the fourth day, they gave her a choice; she could be tortured again, or give her name to an oni. She refused.

She refused the next day too. And the next. Eventually, she broke – but she had a plan. She figured her mysterious captors would not suspect that she knew more than she let on about oni and the deals with them. She bargained with her spirit – bargained silently, promising it her name and more if it would free her from her captors.

When Oni no Seiryoku was born, it carried her away from those who had kidnapped her, and she laughed as she swore vengeance upon them.

She awoke in her own house, in Ryoko Owari. For a moment, she hoped it might have all been a dream – but she could feel the mark of the oni on her; a tiny second face, growing on the tip of her tongue. In return for her escape, she had given that second face an eye. The demon now had part of her face upon it. When it got all of her, she would be done. But an eye wasn't very much – not for freedom. She arose intending to marshal her family against those who had dared take such liberties with her person.

That was when the real nightmare began. It didn't take her long to realize her servants hadn't missed her. They clearly recalled traveling with her from Shiro no Soshi, staying at the inn (without incident), traveling to Ryoko Owari and spending an uneventful week there with her.

Seiryoku was terrified – was she going mad? There were no marks of torture on her body – and yet the face on her tongue assured her that she had pledged her soul to dark forces.

It was at that moment that her most trusted servant turned to her and spoke in an unfamiliar voice.

"Have you figured it out yet?"

Seiryoku stared, aghast.

"I would surmise by your shiny-jawed gaping that you haven't. Very well, I'll spell it out. We took you from under the noses of your retainers, and replaced you with a duplicate so convincing that the servants who've been by your side for years didn't even notice. Then, when you were home, we replaced one of your servants – and

P9

you didn't notice. We can do that. Keep that in mind if you ever decide to betray us; anyone you ask for help could be one of us."

"Who are you?"

"Still guessing? I'll give you a hint; the knots of lawgivers are triumphant."

Seiryoku's eyebrows drew together in puzzlement, then rose back in fear as she whispered "Kolats"

"Very good; I knew you were bright enough to be an effective tool. Here's a fuller explanation; knots – the strands of manipulation we weave together. You'll be one of our strands, so don't forget who pulls you. Lawgivers – we make the rules, we decide the future of nations, we dictate the course of history. Triumphant – we never lose. If you don't believe me, just try to tell someone what happened. See how long it takes a Phoenix inquisitor to learn who you're sharing a name with..."

"What do you want from me?"

"Slavery. Get used to it"

Since that day, Seiryoku has done the bidding of her Kolat controllers. Under their direction, she has rebuilt the Soshi opium cartel, giving increasing authority to Watchful (P42) and terrifying her underlings to ensure obedience, just as her obedience is enforced by fear of her masters – both the Kolat and the oni.

So far, Seiryoku has been successful in fighting off the oni's attempts to control her – most of the time. The tiny face on her tongue has gained a second eye, and a mouth is forming. She has complained to the Kolat who rules her, and learned that her mistress is also linked to an oni – a demon much more powerful than the one which haunts Seiryoku's dreams.

She frequently contemplates suicide, but the Kolat have sworn that the mark of the oni will be seen if she does it. Even now, she is too proud to disgrace her family; and the Kolat have promised her an honorable death at least.

Role-playing Seiryoku: Glower. Stare. Make veiled threats to those with power, and simply erase those without it. Deny any wrongdoing in a flat, unconvincing tone of voice. Look like you're about to burn down the city at any point, and don't let any event make you look any more or less upset.

ONI NO SEIRYOKU

EARTH 5

WATER 4

FIRE 6

AIR 5

Attacking: 6k6

Damage: 10k4

TN to Hit: 25

Armor: 7

Wounds: 30: -1; 60: -2; 90: -3; 110: Dead

Special Ability: Whenever a spell is cast near Oni no Seiryoku, the TN is increased by 15. Whenever a spell fails near Oni no Seiryoku, she eats up the energy of the spell and can use it for her own purposes. To represent this in game terms, set aside a die each time a spell fails near her; she can use these dice like Void dice, except she does not get them back.

Soshi Seiryoku is aware of this ability, and is willing to deliberately fail spells near the oni in order to give it strength.

Note: This is the original and primal Oni no Seiryoku. Since it has not consumed Soshi Seiryoku, it cannot reproduce. It is a unique creature currently, and its offspring would be much weaker (as described on page 201 of the *L5R RPG*).



YOGO OSAKO

No one knows much about Osako; she's a very quiet woman. She was not a spectacular success at the Bayushi bushi school, but she graduated adequately. No one's quite sure how she got a position as one of Hyobu's (G9, P1)

P10



SOSHI SEIRYOKU (CONTINUED)

Maho Spells

Curse

Stealing the Soul

Head In A Jar: Seiryoku must have a helpless victim for this spell. To work it, she has to perform a day long ritual which ends with the sacrifice of the victim. Seiryoku cuts off the victim's head and rolls against a TN of 20. If the spell works, the head remains alive in a jar. It has all the memories and mental faculties it ever possessed, and can see, hear and feel what goes on around it. It cannot speak, however, unless air is pumped through its throat. (A bellows can be attached to make this easier.)

Summon Oni no Seiryoku: Soshi Seiryoku can summon the oni to whom she is bound at any time – but it costs her, because it automatically brings her one step closer to total enslavement. (To represent this, the face on her tongue – which is a miniature of her own face – becomes clearer or gains another feature, as does the version of her face which graces the oni's tongue.)



YOGO OSAKO

Rank Four Bayushi School
Bushi

EARTH 3

WATER 4

FIRE 3

AIR 4

VOID 3

Attacking: 7k3

Damage: 6k2

TN to Hit: 20

Wounds: 6: -0; 12: -1;

18: -2; 24: -3; 30: -4;

36: Down; 42: Out; 48: Dead

Advantages: Clear
Thinker, Death Trance

Notable Skills: Archery 3;
Athletics 3; Courtier 4;
Defense 3; Horsemanship 1;
Iaijutsu 2; Investigation 4;
Kenjutsu 4; Poison 3;
Sincerity 5; Stealth 4

Honor: 2

Glory: 3

magistrates, but she quickly distinguished herself as an investigator. This being Ryoko Owari, however, mere competence was not enough to ensure her promotion; that waited until she showed her willingness to bend the laws for Hyobu. (She did this by “overlooking” the fact that a crate marked “medical opium” was in fact full of smoking opium.) Hyobu trusts Osako as much as she trusts anyone outside her own family.

Osako rarely displays her emotions. Even when she’s beating someone to make a point (either as a magistrate or as an unofficial enforcer for the Shosuro opium cartel), she does so in a disinterested, methodical fashion.

The fact is, Osako is deeply alienated from her own feelings. She has concentrated so hard on being logical, reasonable and self-controlled that half the time she has literally *no* idea what she’s feeling. No matter what happens to her, she ignores and compresses her emotional reaction into tiny, dense dots.

This has two effects. One is that she can pursue her duties in a clearheaded, unemotional fashion. The other is that her emotions periodically explode to the surface in an unexpected and extreme fashion.

The most recent explosion has been a passion for Jocho (G10, P2). She admires Jocho for the usual reasons – he’s handsome, he’s of high birth, he’s a fine warrior – but more than that, she has sensed that Jocho has a center of identity that allows him to control his emotions instead of having to deny them. He knows who he is, and that makes him strong. Osako envies this, and has decided (at some deeply emotional, irrational level) that if he falls in love with her, she can gain this same sense of identity.

Role-playing Osako: You’re a bored, cynical cop on the take. Still, you’re competent, and when politics don’t interfere, you take a certain intellectual satisfaction in pursuing the law. You’re very observant – don’t hesitate to let people suspect that you’ve figured out all their dirty little secrets.

Never show your emotions – except around or about Jocho, and then only a little bit unless someone suspects or is in your way.

The Unicorn Clan



SHINJO YOSHIFUSA

Shinjo Yoshifusa is a man with admirable tenacity and willpower, traits which served him well in his youth. Now, however, they have calcified into stubbornness – a truculence that prevents him from seeing unpleasant truths.

Yoshifusa is sixty-eight, and he should have stepped down when he was fifty. His refusal to surrender his position has cost him face (behind his back, of course) and has stymied the lives of his son (P12) and daughter (P13). Convincing him of this, however, would be a heroic task.

Role-playing Yoshifusa: Be a crotchety, opinionated old man. Act like you’re listening to reason, but don’t really listen. No matter what, you know better – and if anyone finally breaks through your shell of self-delusion and shows you how pathetic you’ve become, collapse. You might even die on the spot.

Honor: 3

Glory: 3

P11



SHINJO SANEFUSA

Sanefusa is jumpy and exasperated. All his life, he's been controlled by his father (P11) – and now that he's a man, he can't make a move without being contradicted and second-guessed by an old man who should have stepped down years ago. He's incredibly frustrated and blames his father for his business woes (notably the loss of the merchant Horse (P43) to the Bayushi (P5) family). This is only partially correct; while his father's interference has hurt their business, so has Sanefusa's indecisiveness. He's become so nervous about being criticized and reprimanded by his father for every decision that he's afraid to make any decision at all.

Role-playing Sanefusa: Be flustered and a bit of a chatterbox. Explain what you mean, then go back and correct yourself. Always ask other people their opinions, then express your doubts and concerns. Then express your doubts about your doubts. Favorite phrase – “But on the *other* hand...”

Honor: 2

Glory: 2

P12



SHINJO YOSHIKO

Yoshiko was never ambitious; she just wanted to make a good marriage and be a good wife. Instead, she sees herself getting old in the service of her father (P11), who sometimes treats her like a servant instead of a daughter. When her looks started to go, she comforted herself that her dowry would be large enough to attract a husband. Then her family's businesses started to suffer from competition with Korechika (P5) – but she comforted herself that as the daughter of the local family authority, she still had status. Now Baranato has become the leader of the local Unicorn, leaving Yoshiko very little indeed. She's becoming a sad, frightened and desperate woman.

Role-playing Yoshiko: You try very hard to be sophisticated and intriguing, but your underlying anxiety sometimes bleeds through. You're a little flirtatious with anyone who might rescue you from life with Yoshifusa – but your flirtations are often interrupted by another one of his imperious demands for your assistance.

Honor: 2

Glory: 1

P13

IDE BARANATO (P14, PAGE 32)

Rank Three Iuchi
Shugenja School

EARTH 2

WATER 3

FIRE 4

AIR 2

VOID 4

Attacking: 6k2

Damage: 6k2

TN to Hit: 10

Wounds: 4: -0; 8: -1;

12: -2; 16: -3; 20: -4;

24: Down; 28: Out; 32: Dead

Notable Skills: Courtier 4; Defense 3; Etiquette 3; Herbalism 3; Iaijutsu 1; Kenjutsu 2; Medicine 5; Meditation 4; Opium Lore 5; Shintao 4; Theology 3

Honor: 3

Glory: 4

Advantage: Higher Purpose

Spells: Biting Steel, Blessing of Purity, Calling the Elements, Calm the Mind, Force of Will, Fury of Osano Wo, Hands of Jurojin, Inflammation, Katana of Fire, Know the Mind, Path of Inner Peace, Reflective Pool, Sympathetic Energies, Way of Deception, Wind-Borne Speed, Wings of Fire





IDE ASAMITSU

Rank Three Shinjo School
Bushi

EARTH 3

WATER 3

FIRE 3

AIR 3

VOID 4

Attacking: 7k3 (10k3)

Damage: 6k2

TN to Hit: 15

Notable Skills: Archery 3;
Courtier 2; Defense 2;
Horsemanship 5; Hunting 4;
Kenjutsu 4; Naginata 1;
Shintao 3; Sincerity 3;
Meditation 2

Wounds: 6: -0; 12: -1;
18: -2; 24: -3; 30: -4;
36: Down; 42: Out; 48: Dead

Honor: 3

Glory: 2

Advantage: Clear Thinker



IDE BARANATO

Ide Baranato prides himself on being a generous, kind and honorable man. It is his pride, and his unfailing belief in the higher justice of his cause, that will lead him to engineer the events described on page 80 – the “Opium War”.

His motivations are described there, but suffice to say that Baranato is a good man who’s been pushed too far by his son’s death.

Role-playing Baranato: Be generous, helpful, courteous and pleasant. You honestly believe in decency and goodness, even though you see the opposite every day. You used to be quite jolly, but this has faded since your son’s death. Still, sometimes the old Baranato shows through.

If someone mentions opium, change your whole demeanor; become self-righteous and intense – almost fanatical.

P14



IDE MICHIKANE

Michikane was a decent and honorable man. Generous, big hearted, honest – maybe a bit shallow, but he certainly didn’t deserve to die thinking his own brother had betrayed him. (See the intro to “The Opium War”, page 80.) Michikane was genuinely friendly, and people could sense that he wasn’t a fake. That’s rare in Ryoko Owari, and it won him a lot of friends.

Honor: –

Glory: 0

P15



IDE ASAMITSU

P16

Quiet and serious Asamitsu always dwelt in the shadow of his popular older brother Michikane (P15). It wasn't what he would have chosen, but he had accepted that Michikane was his parents' favorite. In some ways, he found his brother's shadow comforting. A bit shy, Asamitsu was relieved to have Michikane to meet people and introduce them. The idea of being the local family head did not appeal to Asamitsu – he felt Michikane was better suited for the politics involved.

Now, however, that shadow is gone. Asamitsu knows that he can never replace his brother, but he is determined to avenge him.

His love for Kimi (P3) is a terrible complication. When his brother was alive, he could never hope to take her away from Michikane. Now, however, he is stepping into his brother's place to marry the girl he loves. He finds it hard to believe his good fortune – and hard to accept that it's a result of great tragedy.

Role-playing Asamitsu: Be quiet and reticent. Think carefully before you say anything. Be content in the background. It's very hard to anger you – not because you hold it back, but because you have a philosophical approach to life.



IDE NAKATADA

P17

Nakatada is a very distracted and absent-minded individual. Ever since childhood, his head has been in the clouds; when he began his studies of magic, he threw himself into them with a passion which pleased (and sometimes astonished) his instructors.

Now that he's on his own, nothing pleases Nakatada as much as working through the esoteric problems of magical theory and theology. He still maintains friendships and is very loyal to his family (his theological studies perpetually harp on the importance of filial loyalty), but his most selfish pleasure is a new scroll or a good debate on theological principles.

Role-playing Nakatada: Only pay half attention, stroke your chin a lot, and try to direct conversations to sacred matters. Generally be quiet and easygoing – but every once in a while, say something completely unrelated to the conversation, revealing that you've been thinking about something else entirely.

IDE NAKATADA

Rank Three Iuchi School
Shugenja

EARTH 2

WATER 4

FIRE 3

AIR 4

VOID 4

Attacking: 3k3

Damage: 7k2

TN to Hit: 20

Wounds: 4: -0; 8: -1;

12: -2; 16: -3; 20: -4;

24: Down; 28: Out; 32: Dead

Notable Skills:

Calligraphy 1; Defense 1;
Herbalism 1; Horsemanship
2; Hunting 1; Iaijutsu 1;
Meditation 4; Shintao 4;
Theology 3

Honor: 2

Glory: 1

Spells: Amaterasu's

Blessing; Calm the Mind;
Castle of Water; Cloak of
Night; Elemental Ward; Evil
Ward; Fury of Osano-Wo;
Heart of Nature; Inflammation;
Jade Strike; Mists of
Illusion; Path of Inner Peace;
Reflective Pool; Secrets on
the Wind; Strike at the
Roots; Way of Deception





OTAKU GENSHI

Rank Two Otaku Battle Maiden (See below)

EARTH 2

WATER 3

FIRE 4

AIR 3

VOID 2

Attacking: 6k4

Damage: 6k2

TN to Hit: 15

Wounds: 4: -0; 8: -1;

12: -2; 16: -3; 20: -4;

24: Down; 28: Out; 32: Dead

Notable Skills: Archery 3; Defense 1; Horsemanship 5; Hunting 4; Iaijutsu 4; Kenjutsu 2; Naginata 1; Poison Lore 5

Honor: 2

Glory: 2

Advantage: Poison Resistance. Genshi has been studying poisons – even obtaining them on the sly and consuming tiny amounts to build up a resistance. If she is successfully poisoned, she can make an Earth roll against the poisoner's skill x5 to resist the effects of the poison.

Disadvantages: Brash, Bad Reputation

Otaku Battle Maiden School Techniques:

Rank 1: Riding In Harmony. Whenever Genshi makes a skill roll while riding, she keeps an extra die.

Rank 2: The Void of War. After everyone rolls for initiative, Genshi may choose to switch the values of her initiative roll and her TN to Be Hit for the rest of the combat round.



IDE SHIKIBU

Shikibu has spent so much of her life celebrating happiness that she was unprepared for tragedy to strike so close to her heart. The loss of Michikane has hurt her deeply, not only because she has lost her son, but because of the shameful way in which he died. She feels that she must have been a terrible mother to have an addict as a son, and she blames herself every day for not doing better. The kindest thing anyone could do to her would be reveal that her son had been murdered. Unfortunately, learning that would take an incredible feat of detection...

Role-playing Shikibu: Don't speak unless spoken to. Be very distracted, slow and confused. Remember that nothing brings you joy because your son's suicide is all your fault.

Honor: 3

Glory: 1

P18



OTAKU GENSHI

A lot of what drives Genshi is explained in by story of Fade (T2; see page 11). To put it bluntly, she's ashamed of the stain on her family honor and doesn't want to admit it. Consequently, she's got a huge chip on her shoulder. She won't argue that Isas was right to refuse the duel after he'd been poisoned by that cowardly Tomaru, but deep in her heart she believes it – and therefore she thinks the *only* reason to refuse a duel is because of cheating. She's become very strict about family honor – both for herself and for those around her.

Her hatred of Tomaru has spread across his whole family and his whole clan. If she can find any way to harm or inconvenience a Scorpion, she'll do it (within reason, of course). She's already gotten into one fight with Otado (P5) and brawled with Korechika's retainers (P5). She can't wait to stick it to them again.

Role-playing Genshi: Sneer. Talk tough. Swagger. Glare openly at those Scorpion scum and accuse them of all sorts of evil right to their faces. *Always* keep your word.

P19



OTAKU NAISHI

Rank One Shinjo School
Bushu

EARTH 2

WATER 2

FIRE 4

AIR 3

VOID 2

Attacking: 6k4 (10k4)

Damage: 6k2

TN to Hit: 15 (20)

Wounds: 4: -0; 8: -1;

12: -2; 16: -3; 20: -4;

24: Down; 28: Out; 32: Dead

Notable Skills: Archery 2;
Courtier 3; Defense 2;
Etiquette 2; Horsemanship
4; Hunting 1; Kenjutsu 2;
Naginata 1

Honor: 1

Glory: 2

OTAKU NAISHI

If not for Genshi (P19), Naishi wouldn't have nearly the good reputation she does. However, because she isn't a rude, vicious brawler like her sister, no one has noticed that she's sneaky, self-interested and greedy.

P20

To be fair, Naishi does have her good points. She's often willing to help others if it costs her nothing. She's a good peacemaker and has helped settle things between her sister and almost everyone else in the city at one time or another. She's clever, farsighted and has a good grasp of economics.

Unfortunately, she's got a merchant's heart in a noble body. This will lead her to tragedy during the Opium War scenario (page 80).

Role-playing Naishi: Smile. Be very friendly and polite to everyone. Apologize for your sister a lot. Schmooze and make deals. Offer to help everyone out on whatever they're doing. Ingratiate yourself.

IUCHI SADAKO

In a city defined by its conspiracies, Iuchi Sadako is the inevitable conspiracy theorist.

P21

Iuchi Sadako has the misfortune to see the world differently than most people. She has a clearer view of some things and a foggier view of others.

What she can see clearly are the connections formed by secret interests, the trails of evidence disguised as coincidence – in short, she can track the footprints left by covert groups.

Unfortunately, she is considerably less aware on the individual level. In short, she lacks social skills, and frequently comes across as a grating, obsessive kook. This doesn't mean she's not right – but it makes it a lot harder to take her seriously.

She also has trouble staying on task. This isn't surprising if you think about it; she's investigating mysterious activities with no way of knowing which events are connected to which conspiracy.

While Sadako is unsophisticated about individuals, she is extremely perceptive and intelligent (in an abstract way). If used judiciously, she can make a nice GM clue dispenser. For example, she can point out inconsistencies in the explanations offered during "The Opium War", (page 80) or reveal Ryoko Owari's history of periodic, gruesome murders when Henjo strikes again (page 16). Just be sure to counter every real clue with one or two false ones so that the magistrates don't take her words as gospel.



KUMO GAKI, THE SPIDER GHOST

Rank One Hida School Bushi

EARTH 3

WATER 2

FIRE 4

AIR 2

Attacking: 8k4

Damage: 8k3

TN to Hit: 20

Wounds: 15: -1; 30: -3; 45: Dead

Notable Skills: Archery 1; Battle 1; Defense 1; Jiujutsu 1; Kenjutsu 4; Maho 3; Shadowlands Lore 5; Tetsubo 1

Honor: 0

Glory: 2

Shadowlands Taint: 2.5

Special Abilities: Kumo Gaki can spit poison like a normal Gaki, as described on page 195 of the *L5R RPG*. He can also change into the shape of a giant spider and use the web rules on the same page.

Maho Spells: Dark Divination; Summon Swamp Spirits

Here are just a few of her theories...

- The ninja (T3) are alive and well and working in Ryoko Owari. Their criminal activities (extortion, etc.) are only a coverup for their more dastardly deeds – primarily the opium trade.

- There is a cult in the city that worships Lord Moon, and they periodically engage in human sacrifices.

- There is another cult in the city that worships a strange snake god, and they are rivals with the Moon Cult.

Note: The Kolat really, *really* hate nosy conspiracy theorists. If Sadako gets close to them, they'll try to co-opt her. Failing that, she'll be killed – and replaced.

Role-playing Sadako: Be very excitable, and immune to sarcasm. Make outlandish statements as if they were obvious facts. Every once in a while, reveal a flash of Sherlock Holmes level insight.

Honor: 2

Glory: 1



IUCHI MICHISUNA

Michisuna is working on a lengthy ballad about the troubles of being a happy man in an unhappy world. It's a bittersweet piece and it fits perfectly with his recent experiences. Two of his closest friends – Ide Michikane (P15) and Shiba Shonagon – have died within four months of each other last year, and both of opium overdoses.

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Shonagon's looks suspiciously like a suicide, and Michisuna is no fool. He knows that she was in love with him and killed herself because he didn't feel the same way.

All this is having a predictable depressing effect on his naturally buoyant and easygoing nature. However, he's well aware that he was honest with her about his feelings; he has to believe that he would have hurt her as badly if he'd lied to her... but given her death, he can't help feeling he could have handled it better.

Of late, Michisuna has become far more withdrawn and melancholy than usual. His many friends offer him a great deal of support, and this is slowly drawing him out of his shell.

Role-playing Michisuna: Be friendly and respectful, but with an edge of sadness to what you say.

Honor: 2

Glory: 3

The Crab Clan



KAIU SHINYA

About six years ago, Kaiu Shinya graduated from the Hida bushi school. Though a talented weaponsmith, Shinya knew his clan would respect him more (and give him more business) if he had blooded himself in the Shadowlands. He planned

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to make a quick foray and come back with a goblin head. They'd laugh, but they'd respect him.

It didn't work out as planned. He became trapped in a giant web – one that seemed immaterial and ghostly. He couldn't really feel it, but it still held him motionless.

Then a great spider appeared to him and said "I am the ghost of a *kumo*. In my life, I had a great deal of secret wisdom – I will share this with you in return for your name."

Terrified, Shinya refused. The spider shrugged, said "As you wish," and bit off his leg. Soon, Shinya's screams summoned several large creatures, who drooled at the scent of his blood.

"You will surely die by their jaws – and painfully, too," said the spider ghost. "Too bad I'm not strong enough to drive them off for you. Although, if you were to give me your name to make me more real, then I could get rid of them."

The frightened samurai agreed. Before his eyes, the spider turned into a mirror image of him and frightened away the other monsters. Kaiu Shinya's torment was only beginning, however.

The spider ghost – who now looked a great deal like Kaiu Shinya – kept him imprisoned in his web. Every day he would steal a little bit more of the samurai's spirit and identity. When he was confident that he could pass for the real Kaiu Shinya, the spider ghost left his prisoner firmly trussed up and went back through the wall, where he was gladly welcomed as a returning hero.

The real Shinya knew that his double intended to return and finish stealing his identity, so with a final, desperate effort he escaped his bonds. Immediately, however, he was captured by a goblin shugenja called the Exalted Ugu. Ugu and his followers intended to make a meal out of Shinya, but he made a deal with them instead; he led them to the ruins of Hiruma Castle and, in exchange for his freedom, helped them find a secret passage into it. This allowed the goblins to surprise the Nezumi tribe that had taken up residence there, massacre them, and claim the castle. Shinya escaped them in the confusion and eventually made his way around the wall to the south.

Poor Shinya's problems were not over; the spider ghost knew he had escaped and told the Crab forces that there was a phony Kaiu Shinya who would attempt to enter Rokugan for devious purposes. (This was, of course, completely true.) Because of this ruse, the real Kaiu Shinya has been pursued by Crab magistrates for years,

fleeing from village to village, always trying to find and kill the ghost which stole his name.

Meanwhile, the spider ghost moved to Ryoko Owari, set up a flourishing trade, and got married. It's currently making elaborate plans to flee the city; it knows its true nature will be revealed once his wife gives birth.

The hitch in his plans is the real Kaiu Shinya, who has finally tracked him down and is bent on revenge.

Note that if the magistrates get between these two, it will be very difficult to tell which is the real Kaiu Shinya. Both have a severe Shadowlands taint. Both can truthfully say "I am Kaiu Shinya." Both will say they were attacked by a personality-sucking ghost, and both will say the other is the ghost. Ruthless magistrates may just decide to whack them both, but the truly honorable thing to do (especially for Crab samurai) is to try to help the real Shinya and kill the imposter.

Role-playing the real Shinya: Incoherently gabble about the gaki that ate your personality and stole your memories. Get very excited. Shout and make wild gestures.

Role-playing the fake Shinya: Be very sedate and calm. You're not very forthcoming, but act as if you have nothing to hide.



KAIU SHINYA

Rank One Hida School
Bushi

The real Kaiu Shinya looks like hell; the process of getting his memories and personality sucked out has not only left him fairly incoherent and crazy-sounding; he's also been prematurely aged. While the fake Shinya looks like a healthy, robust forty year old, the real Shinya looks like a sixty-year old wreck.

EARTH 2

WATER 3

FIRE 3

AIR 2

VOID 2

Attacking: 5k3

Damage: 7k2

TN to Hit: 10 (15 when wearing damaged Heavy Armor)

Wounds: 4: -0; 8: -1; 12: -2; 16: -3; 20: -4; 24: Down; 28: Out; 32: Dead

Notable Skills: Archery 1; Battle 1; Defense 3; Jujutsu 4; Kenjutsu 2; Shadowlands Lore 1; Tetsubo 3

Honor: 1

Glory: 0

Shadowlands Taint: 2.5

Equipment Notes: Shinya has managed to acquire a tetsubo and some damaged heavy armor. He can still use the armor without penalty, but it only adds 5 points of protection.



NARITOKI'S JOURNAL

Ashidaka Naritoki kept a journal at Magda's residence – he only wrote in it when he was there, and made her swear that she would never show it to anyone. In fact, he hid it in her rooms and never let her see where it was concealed. (Specifically, he put it in a hidden compartment the specially-constructed body of a *shimases*, which he gave her as a present.)

Since Naritoki's death, Magda has been searching for his little book; she can find it at any time you'd like to drop a bombshell on your magistrates. Magda can't read it (she's illiterate) but strongly suspects that anything Naritoki took such pains to hide must be valuable.

Naritoki's journal is included in the box; don't give it to your players until they find it (you could build an entire adventure around that alone) or bargain it away from Magda.



YASUKI NOBUKO

Nobuko is nothing more nor less than what she appears – a dishonest, scheming merchant. She puts her own interests above those of everyone else, and she can't understand why no one likes her.

P24

Role-playing Nobuko: Try to be charming, but wind up being sort of sleazy and ingratiating instead. Offer bargains. Imply that you're open to underhanded deals from cooperative magistrates. Favorite phrase: "I could make it worth your while..."

Honor: 1
Glory: 1

The Crane Clan



ASHIDAKA NARITOKI

P25

The deceased magistrate who preceded the player characters was a complicated man. He had a secret deal with the Ryoko Ninja (T3), he accepted bribes to ignore the opium trade, and he took a foreign woman (Magda, P47) as a mistress. On the other hand, he genuinely tried to serve and protect the people of the city to the fullest extent of his abilities.

To the Emerald Champion, Naritoki was an effective and selfless public servant. To the ninja and the cartels, he was just another shameless opportunist. As usual, the truth lies somewhere in the middle.

Like most Cranes, Naritoki had a finely developed sense of appearances. This was balanced, however, by a healthy sense of realism. He knew it was important to look honorable, but also to have an effect. He felt he could have the greatest influence as an active participant, and he became one. In the process he feathered his own nest extensively, but it should be noted that he was far more effective in his job than Matsu Shigeko ever was – even if you take his various corruptions into account.

In the final analysis, Ryoko Owari may not have been much safer with Naritoki in charge – but it was certainly more stable and predictable.

Honor: -
Glory: 5



ASHIDAKA MICHITAKA

Michitaka is a highly atypical Crane, to say the least. He is not perceptive, nor subtle, nor gracious, nor tasteful. He's grown prosperous by engaging in tax frauds of legendary proportions – all of which were ignored by his cousin Naritoki. As a sideline, he collected a handsome assortment of hand gifts (G1) by peddling his influence with Naritoki.

P26

Needless to say, Michitaka was horrified by his cousin's death. Above and beyond the normal Rokugani passion for revenge, he's seen the collapse of his identity and social position. He was very comfortable as the cousin of an Emerald Magistrate; now he's the cousin of nobody.

When he learned of Naritoki's death, he locked himself in his house and drank for five days straight. During that time, he had a vision of his cousin, who made him swear to get revenge on his murderers.

Whether his vision was real or just a drunken hallucination, Michitaka has taken it seriously. Until his cousin's murderers are brought to justice, Michitaka will wear only white clothes. He's begun a brutal training regimen to prepare for the eventual showdown – by the end of the season, he'll have dropped ten pounds and turned another twenty pounds from flab into muscle.

The question remains, however: who did it? Michitaka is busy turning himself into an implement of revenge – but he'll have no idea

how to find the target for his wrath without the help of the magistrates.

Role-playing Michitaka: You're full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. Bluster to those you think are your inferiors and act craven and ingratiating to those who outrank you. Talk incessantly about your duty to avenge your cousin.

Honor: 2

Glory: 2



DOJI SUKEMARA

Sukemara is a man of his word who would rather kill himself than give a shameful impression. Not to say that he's above breaking the law or encouraging rivalries and misunderstandings when it's in his interests (or those of his clan); but he would never give a bad *impression*.

P27

In other words, Sukemara is the perfect Crane. Everyone likes him (or at least respects him), and he does, indeed, have many admirable qualities. However, he does know how the city works and is perfectly willing to get his hands dirty – as long as he knows he can wash them before anyone sees.

Role-playing Sukemara: Smile sedately. Always say the right thing. Never interrupt and don't lose your cool. Talk in a slow, confident tone.

Honor: 2

Glory: 1





The Dragon Clan

IKOMA YORIKO

Rank Five Akodo School
Bushu

EARTH 5

WATER 5

FIRE 6

AIR 5

VOID 4

Attacking: 10k6

Damage: 8k3

TN to Hit: 25

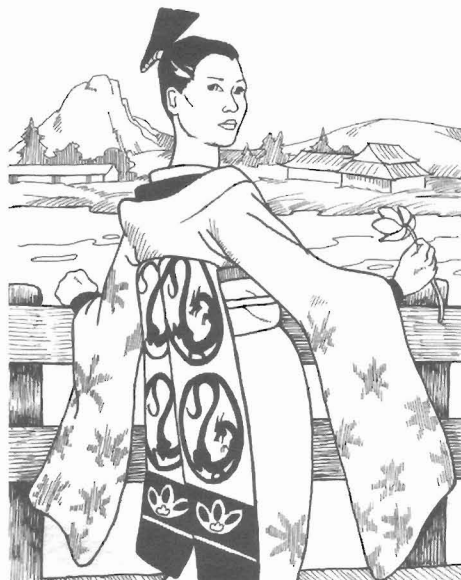
Wounds: 10: -0; 20: -1;
30: -2; 40: -3; 50: -4;
60: Down; 70: Out; 80: Dead

Notable Skills: Archery 5;
Bard 4; Battle 3; Courtier 5;
Defense 5; Etiquette 5;
History 3; Kenjutsu 5; Maho
5; Shintao 3; Sincerity 5;
Stealth 5

Honor: 0 (appears as 3)

Glory: 3

Special Ability: Oni's Disguise. Her pact with the oni shields her from detection of both her Shadowlands taint and her loss of honor. Anyone who attempts to detect taint will fail, and anyone who tries to perceive her honor will perceive it as Honor 3. However, any time such detection is magical in nature, the oni gets a little more of her soul.



KITSUKI JOTOMON

Jotomon is exactly what she claims to be; a *sensei* on a mission. She believes that *bushido* is a code that has value higher than simply making great soldiers. Jotomon believes it makes people into superior human beings, and (in her idiosyncratic, Dragon way) she sees no reason that this improvement should be denied to any who have the will and the persistence to follow her path.

Not only is *bushido* her passion, it is her *only* passion – the only thing she wants or needs is an opportunity to improve herself and others through the martial arts. This single-minded pursuit baffles many in Ryoko Owari who are accustomed to people who publically pursue one goal while secretly seeking something different. Such suspicious citizens look at Jotomon and wonder what she's up to, never accepting that there's no more to her than what can plainly be seen on the surface.

Jotomon wants to believe the best of people. While she is unsophisticated in the battles of words that make up the court, she is a keen judge of action. While an overly sincere sycophant might fool her for a while, once she saw him in the dojo (or in a fight) she'd know his true nature soon enough.

P28

Kitsuki Jotomon has achieved the highest rank in the Mirumoto bushi school, but instead of studying a different style, she has been working on developing a style of her own. (Although she is not statted up here, she has a 5 in Iaijutsu and Kenjutsu, along with a 3 in Jiu-jutsu. Her Insight is probably somewhere beyond the 300 mark.)

So far she has developed two levels to the Jotomon school:

The Hand Is My Sword. The samurai may use his Kenjutsu skill to throw a wakizashi (instead of Athletics). The damage rating of a thrown wakizashi is 1k2. (Many wakizashi are balanced for throwing in emergencies.) The samurai may also substitute his Kenjutsu skill for his Jiu-jutsu skill when unarmed.

The Cuts of Harmony. The samurai may forgo an attack and decide instead to redirect an attack made against him. The samurai rolls Water + Kenjutsu against his opponent's skill X5. If successful, he may redirect the attack to any person present, other than the original attacker. The samurai must have at least one hand free to use this ability. The original attacker's roll is used to determine if the redirected attack hits.

Only those who started out in the Jotomon school have learned her two new techniques; she insists that her noble students complete the paths of their first schools before they attempt to learn her ways. "As the great sensei Akodo Kage says, 'the hunter who chases two rabbits will lose both.'" Still, anyone who trains with her regularly will get an extra experience point every game session that can only be used towards iaijutsu or kenjutsu.

Role-playing Jotomon: You're a bit blunt, but never arrogant or short tempered. You give everyone the same attention, whether they're an *eta* or an Emerald Magistrate. Try to talk people out of rash challenges, but if a duel starts, strike to kill.

Honor: 3

Glory: 3

The Lion Clan



IKOMA YORIKO

The greatest liar in Ryoko Owari is Ikoma Yoriko. It's true that she's taken a samurai-ko oath of celibacy and sticks to it, and it's true that she remains untainted by opium or sake. These oaths pale, however, when compared to the dire oaths she has made to the Kolat.

As far as Yoriko knows, she is the commander of Kolat operations in Ryoko Owari – but of course, she cannot know for sure. She is kept in ignorance deliberately, just as she keeps her underlings ignorant for her own protection.

Yoriko is the only person that Seiryoku can identify for certain as a Kolat (not that she ever would; Seiryoku has made a pact and knows that she can be killed before she could complete a betrayal) and it is from Yoriko that Seiryoku gets her orders. Yoriko knows that one of the Kolat Masters was took part in Seiryoku's recruiting, but she has no idea if the Master is still in town watching her or not. She operates from the assumption that he, she or it is still around.

Yoriko's mission in Ryoko Owari is to cripple or take over Rokugan's illegal opium trade. She's chosen to go the "crippling" route; her complete plan is detailed in "The Opium War" on page 80.

Not only is Yoriko a Kolat, she's a *maho-tsukai* as well. She has bound herself to a particularly

powerful oni and uses its power to further the goals of her sinister masters. She knows that at some point she must either put the demon down or be killed by her bosses (before she becomes an oni-servant – and hence a liability). She is icily confident in her ability to free herself from the demon once its threat outweighs its usefulness...

Role-playing Yoriko: You are the perfect image of the dutiful samurai-ko. Never do anything to call your honor into doubt. Always be formal, distant and polite. Never even *go* anyplace where your honor might be called into question.

ONI NO YORIKO

Shugenja Rank 3

EARTH 7

WATER 7

FIRE 7

AIR 7

Attacking: 10k7

Damage: 8k8

TN to Hit: 20

Armor: 9

Wounds: 20: -1; 40: -2; 60: -3; 100: Dead

Special Abilities: A shugenja must spend a Void point to even attempt to cast a spell at Oni no Yoriko.

Whenever a shugenja casts a spell, Oni no Yoriko may give that shugenja four wound points automatically. This does not count as the oni's attack.

Spells Call the Elements; Call Upon the Wind; Castle of Water; Command the Mind; Cloak of Night; Earthquake; Earth's Stagnation; Fire From Within; Fist of Osano Wo; Fury of Osano Wo; Inflammation; Know the Mind; Path to Inner Peace; Reversal of Fortunes; Strike at the Roots; Ties that Bind

Maho Spells: Summon Swamp Spirits, Summon Revenant, Touch of Death

Note: As explained with Oni no Seiryoku, this Oni is unique at this point. If it completes its conquest of Ikoma Yoriko's soul, it will gain the ability to spawn lesser clones of itself.

IKOMA YORIKO (CONTINUED)

Maho Spells: Curse; Dark Divination; Stealing the Soul; Summon Swamp Spirits; Touch of Death

Summon Oni no Yoriko. She is hesitant to do this, but she can spend a Void point to call the demon to her side. When she does so, it gets a little closer to owning her forever...

The oni that has Yoriko's name has put its mark on her, though not in any visible way; if cut, she bleeds maggots.

Equipment Notes: Yoriko has a Fine quality katana.

P29



ASAKO KINTO

Rank Three Isawa
Shugenja School
EARTH 2
WATER 3
FIRE 4
AIR 4
VOID 2
Attacking: 4k4
Damage: 6k3
TN to Hit: 20
Wounds: 4: -0; 8: -1;
12: -2; 16: -3; 20: -4;
24: Down; 28: Out; 32: Dead

Notable Skills:

Calligraphy 1; Herbalism 5;
History 5; Investigation 1;
Meditation 4; Naga Magic 1;
Plant Lore 5; Shintao 4;
Theology 4

Honor: 2

Glory: 1

Spells: Biting Steel;
Blessing of Purity; Call
Upon the Wind; Castle of
Water; Command the Mind;
Courage of the Seven
Thunders; Elemental Ward;
Evil Ward; Fires From the
Forge; Fury of Osano Wo;
Know the Mind; Reflections
of Pan Ku; Hands of Jurojin;
Inflame; Reflective Pool;
Secrets of the Wind

Naga Spells:

Strike Blind; Building
From Strength



KITSU SENSHI

Senshi is a formidable woman who has tangled (in her day) with brigands, *maho-tsukai*, oni, and (though she'd never admit it) traitors inside her own clan. She's tough.

In fact, she's so tough (the word "crusty" isn't too harsh) that she never married and, while she has some allies who would gladly give their lives to help her, not many of them actually care to spend a lot of time in her company.

It's not just that she's humorless (though she is) and pushy (though she's that too); it's that she always thinks she's right and refuses to listen to anything contrary. It doesn't help that most of the time she *is* right.

Senshi considers Yoriko (P29) her closest friend in Ryoko Owari, but even Yoriko's apparently flawless discipline doesn't get Senshi's full approval ("the girl's too trusting!").

One might wonder why such a righteous and pious shugenja would choose Ryoko Owari in which to settle. She came because she had evidence of a black magic Moon God cult operating out of the city. In the years she's stayed in Ryoko Owari, she's never been able to pin them down, but has come close on a number of occasions. (This has resulted in a number of dead cultists.) Now she's concerned because a second heresy – some kind of snake religion – has sprung up as well. If only she could get some decent help...

P30

In reality, the Moon Cult is only part of the reason she stays. In some twisted sense, she's deeply gratified by how *bad* the city is. It does her heart good to see people being venal and base; essentially, she sticks around out of spite.

Role-playing Senshi: Frown. Criticize. Make disgruntled noises periodically. Explain everything, and always do so as if you're addressing a complete idiot who's wasting your time. Favorite phrase: "Well, when I was your age I *never*..."

Honor: 3

Glory: 2

The Phoenix Clan



ASAKO KINTO

On the surface, Kinto appears to be a harmless, flaky old man. Nothing could be farther from the truth; Kinto is a very dangerous, flaky old man.

Kinto has always been shy and withdrawn, preferring to peruse an obscure history in one of his botanical gardens. One day, while expanding his garden, he uncovered an ancient foundation. At first he thought it was just the forgotten remains of an old shed, but further digging unearthed artifacts – strange artifacts.

Soon it became apparent to Kinto that he had found relics that predated the fall of the *Kami* – items built and used by the mysterious Naga.

P31



Kinto told a number of his peers about his discovery, and soon they were investigating the site together. They didn't try to keep it secret; but because people were used to ignoring Kinto's nattering on about plants and history, they ignored this as well.

In fact, Kinto had uncovered the ruins of a Naga school of magic. He and his associates were fascinated by the documents and items within, but had a difficult time understanding them. Kinto mistakenly believes that he has found a temple to a Naga deity, and his painstaking, difficult translations of the information inside has been skewed by this assumption. He has found works of Naga philosophy (which is radically different from what he's used to) and assumed it's the theology of a superior race.

Kinto's mind was already burdened with the translation of an alien tongue when Shonagon died. That was hard. Then her journal was published – anonymously of course, but it would have taken a mind much weaker than Kinto's to not recognize himself in the pages.

It was a terrible blow to the man's self-image, and it pushed him over the edge. He began to misinterpret the Naga texts in a fundamental way.

The Naga would regard the Fortunes and spirits of Rokugani shugenjery as reflections of the desires of their communicants. In other words, the spirits are little more than mirrors who reflect what's expected, either by a single shugenja or by an entire society.

While the Naga did and do believe in a fundamental creator and a purposeful universe, those beliefs are largely kept in their religious texts – not their magical texts, which are largely technical. Kinto's misreading led him to believe that the gods have no real substance – that humanity created them, not vice versa.

Cautiously, Kinto began speaking about these ideas to those around him, and in some cases his ideas fell on fertile soil. People who felt unfairly put upon, or degraded, or downtrodden, were quick to listen to a man who told them that the systems that held them down were pointless and that they could seize power – not just political or physical power, but the power of the Fortunes – simply by understanding the truth behind the lies.

To back it up, Kinto has taught his followers what Naga magic he has been able to decipher.

Kinto's "Serpent Cult" is not really religious; they see themselves as taking a rational approach to the paranormal for the first time. They are not

going to beg power from the Fortunes and the *Kami*; they're going to seize it. They're not worshippers; they're atheist mystics.

Right now their goals are undefined; they are simply gathering power and trying to understand Naga magic and beliefs. However, it would not take much to convince Kinto that he should begin gathering physical or political power to protect his fledgling intellectual movement.

The cult has about fifty members. About half of those, surprisingly enough, are non-nobles – *heimin*, *hinin* and even a few Leatherworkers...

Role-playing Kinto: Stroke your beard and use a cracked, gravelly voice. Always be a bit hesitant – ask questions and make sure you understand a question before you answer it. If it's about history or plants, give long answers that go into needless detail. About anything else, give vague and imprecise information.

NAGA MAGIC

Kinto has mastered two spells: **Strike Blind** and **Building From Strength**. Both take one action to cast.

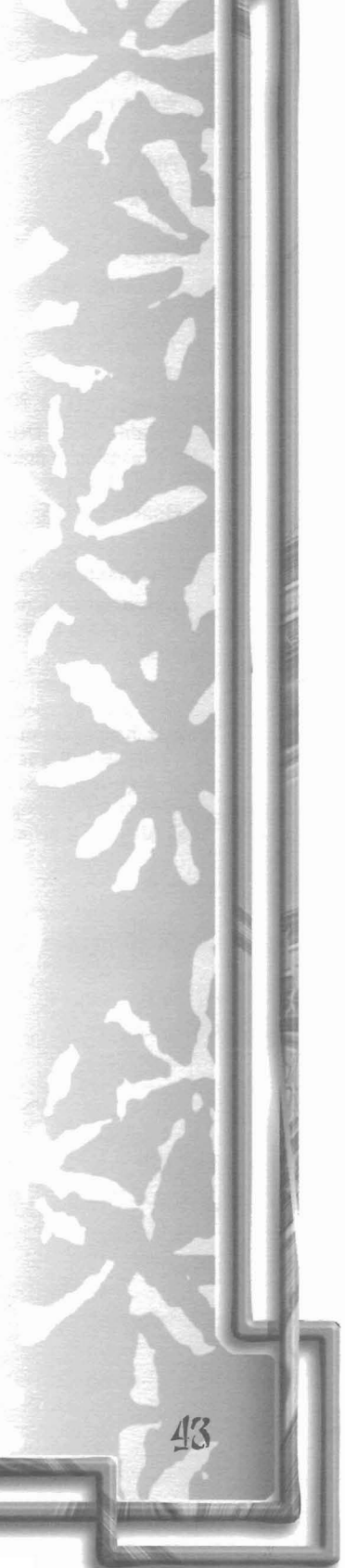
Building from Strength has a TN 5. When successfully cast, Kinto may base his next spell attempt on any of his elements. He rolls 3k2 to attempt this spell.

Strike Blind has a TN equal to the target's Water x5. Kinto rolls 3k2 to cast it. If successful, the target is struck blind for a number of turns equal to the caster's Air or Void trait (whichever is higher). All rolls involving sight are at -5 dice. This blindness can be increased by a turn for each raise.

AVERAGE CULTIST

- EARTH 2
- WATER 2
- FIRE 2
- AIR 2
- VOID 1
- Attacking:** 3k2
- Damage:** 3k1
- TN to Hit:** 15 (Light Armor)
- Wounds:** 4: -0; 8: -1; 12: -2; 16: -3; 20: -4; 24: Down; 28: Out; 32: Dead
- Notable Skills:** Athletics 2; Jujutsu 1; Naga Magic 1; Sincerity 4; Stealth 3

The cultists can also use **Strike Blind**; like Kinto, they roll 3k2 to attempt it. Since they're not particularly warlike, most serpent cultists will attempt to run rather than fight.





AMPLE

EARTH 5

WATER 1

Strength 4

FIRE 1

Agility 3

AIR 2

VOID 1

Attacking: 6k3

Damage: 8k2

TN to Hit: 10

Wounds: 50: -4;

60: Down; 70: Out; 80: Dead

Notable Skills: Defense 2;
Horsemanship 1; Jiujutsu 1;
Kenjutsu 3; Sumai 3

Honor: 2

Glory: 1

Disadvantage: Frail Mind

Advantages: Large;
Strength of the Earth (8
points)

Two Way Throw: When Ample uses this specific attack, he may do so as if his Jiujutsu skill was 3. This advantage is negated if his opponent is expecting it (or has fallen for it before).



SHIBA SHONAGON

As one can gather from reading her journal in "City of Stories," Shonagon was observant, talented, insecure, depressed, in love with the wrong man, and involved with an entirely *different* wrong man. She is remembered fondly by some such as Asamitsu (P16), Kimi (P3) and Michisuna (P22). Others, like Yasuki Nobuko (P24) and Yogo Osako (P10), privately think "good riddance." As for her lover Jocho (P2), who can tell?

Most opinions of her were drastically changed when her memoirs were anonymously published. While the names in it were censored and some effort was made to conceal identities (phrases like "the Governor's son" were changed or deleted), it's not hard to figure out who's being referred to – especially if it's yourself. Lots of people would like to know who published the book, and not a few would be interested in an unabridged version.

Honor: -

Glory: 3

Ronnin & Minor Clans



AMPLE/ONKA

Ample is a simple man; he wants (in no particular order) a full belly, a full purse and a full bottle of sake. He has no interest in abstract discussions of "honor" and "duty"; he just wants to get by.

Selfish? Yes, but in an easygoing and fairly benign way. It's true that he'll sell his sword to the highest bidder (he worked for both Lean Meat (P50) and Naritoki (P25) as an enforcer, and both were satisfied with his performance) but he does obey orders faithfully, stays bought, and avoids unnecessary sadism.

He liked being a magistrate's deputy quite a bit, and will certainly offer his services to the new magistrates. He is, sadly, too dumb to be of much use as an investigator, but he's a good barrier to stand behind when trouble starts.

Ample is willing to kill people who actively fight him, and he's not queasy about tracking people down for punishment (thumb breaking, severe beatings, etc.) but is unwilling to do anything permanent (such as chopping off limbs or killing someone) just for money. He can be hired for one koku per month.

Role-playing Ample: Always... talk... really... slow. Frown and scratch your head. Ask people to repeat instructions. Favorite phrase "Uh... what?"

P32

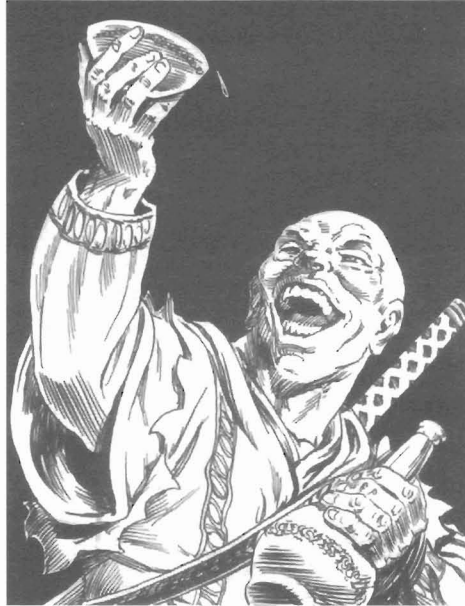


SHRIMP

EARTH 2
 WATER 3
 FIRE 2
 Agility 3
 AIR 2
 Reflexes 3
 VOID 2
 Attacking: 6k3
 Damage: 6k2
 TN to Hit: 15
 Wounds: 4: -0; 8: -1;
 12: -2; 16: -3; 20: -4;
 24: Down; 28: Out; 32: Dead

Notable Skills:
 Commerce 1; Defense 1;
 Iaijutsu 1; Kama 2; Kenjutsu
 3; Meditation 1; Sailing 4;
 Shintao 1

Honor: 1.7
Glory: 1



TRUE WORD/SHINGON

True Word was Naritoki's most trusted ally and deputy, but no one seemed to know much about him. He was a shugenja, but never was seen in the temples. He smoked opium, but not to excess; he could drink a great deal without it showing any effect. He enjoyed the Licensed Quarter – or at least he spent a lot of time there. However, he never seemed willing to let anyone find out too much about him.

P33

Only one person showed up for his funeral. She was from out of town and she left immediately after the service.

Honor: -
Glory: 1

SHRIMP/KOBEI

Shrimp is a fairly cheerful little man from the Mantis clan. He's lived a life largely unencumbered by relatives, marriage or responsibility; he owns his own boat and sails it up and down the river, occasionally making a trip up the coast. His vessel, the Whistle (Keiteki) is small enough that he can handle it solo, and he's made a fairly good living as a smuggler.

P34

Lately, however, he has given up carrying untaxed contraband, for reasons he himself doesn't fully understand. It began when he started studying with Kitsuki Jotomon (P28). Initially he intended simply to improve his bladework, but he quickly realized that Jotomon was much more than just a teacher of the sword. Under her intense scrutiny, he began to examine his own life, and was forced to admit how little he's actually accomplished.

If the money is right, Shrimp may sell his services as a bodyguard – but he won't start fights, only prevent or finish them. He certainly wouldn't accept pay as an assassin. He would ask for three pieces of silver a month, but would require substantially more to work more than a month.

Role-playing Shrimp: Be cheerful and informal. Make jokes about others and about yourself. Never lose your jovial composure, even if you're accused of crimes. The only thing you take seriously is your studies with Jotomon.



Jaw

EARTH 3

WATER 2

FIRE 2

Agility 4

AIR 2

Reflexes 4

VOID 1

Attacking: 7k4

Damage: 5k3

TN to Hit: 20

Wounds: 6: -0; 12: -1;

18: -2; 24: -3; 30: -4;

36: Down; 42: Out; 48: Dead

Notable Skills: Defense 2; Horsemanship 1; Kenjutsu 3; Sincerity 2; Torture 2

Honor: 0

Glory: 1

Disadvantages: Benten's Curse; Bad Reputation (irritating); Social Disadvantage (ronin)



Jaw / AGO

To hear Jaw tell it, the Fortunes have picked on him especially since day one. He never got any breaks. Others were unfairly promoted above him. His father drank away all the family's fortune. His master was a bad tactician, and that's why he's dead and Jaw has a smashed mouth.

Underneath the self-pity and the sniveling beats a heart as hard and remorseless as any in Rokugan. Jaw is an assassin, willing to kill anyone for the right price – as long as it's not too dangerous. His sword can be bought for a month for one koku, or he can be hired for “hits” for three koku each.

Role-playing Jaw: Moan and complain constantly. Be very defensive. Drip with self-pity. Favorite phrase: “Aw, why me? C'mon, what did I do to deserve this?”

P35



DOVE / HATO

The yojimbo named Dove has made a good name for herself as a bodyguard, and can command fees up to two koku a month for protection. In addition to being a skilled protector, Dove is something rare in Ryoko Owari: a person who's successfully kicked an opium habit.

Her story starts about ten years ago, when Hida Kisada heard rumors of a Shadowlands army forming. He began to gather an army, and while he did so he needed a small group to scout and harass the enemy force. Kisada wanted every Crab warrior he could muster in his main army (since they've been trained to fight as a team) so he hired some ronin to accompany his scouts. Dove was one of those hirelings.

What the group found was that the Shadowlands army was bigger and better armed than they had feared. The leader of the party insisted that they get closer to learn more, and that's how they were discovered by the leader of the army – a ghastly figure called Moto Tsume.

Dove alone escaped to bring warning, and her hair has been dead white since that day. She left the Crab lands and was doing her best to get as far from the Shadowlands as she could. Part of her route went through Ryoko Owari – where (she soon discovered) opium was cheap and plentiful. Opium was the one thing that could blot out the last thing Tsume said to her as she fled – “I'll be back for you.”

P36

Opium was a double-edged sword for Dove. Sure, it blunted the nightmares and pushed away the fear – but only for a while. She quickly built up a resistance, until the opium no longer cured her fear of Tsume – it only cured her fear of not having opium.

She reached her lowest point when she realized she was more afraid of missing a daily fix than she was of the demon knight Tsume. At that moment she knew she would either have to kill herself or quit opium.

She's been clean for a year now.

Role-playing Dove: Be very serious and grave. You've seen the worst life has to offer, and it shows. Be very confident – you've escaped from two deadly traps in your life. The first time was luck, but the second time was the strength of your will.

The Temple Quarter



ABBOT OKAWA

Okawa has a reputation for being a paradox, a simpleton, an enlightened master, a lunatic, Ryoko Owari's greatest saint and its greediest charlatan. He presents a different face to everyone he meets, and he's likely to act completely differently every time any given individual meets him. One thing everyone does notice is that he seems to be enjoying himself.

P37

Role-playing Okawa: Speak in riddles and paradoxes. Treat the most simple and everyday questions as if they were terribly profound (“How am I today? An excellent question, considering the unlikelihood of my parents even meeting – how did I come to exist, and on this particular day out of the countless days since the *Kami* fell...”). On the other hand, if someone asks you a genuine philosophical question, just snort and say “You know the words, but you don't grasp their meaning. You speak of philosophy the way a bird speaks of the bottom of the ocean.”

Honor: 4

Glory: 2



THE MONK JIROHEI

Jirohei is Okawa's (P37) opposite number in many ways. He is never obscure or mysterious; he means what he says and explains himself clearly and patiently. He is practical and pragmatic and (he believes) essential for the smooth functioning of the Temple of Daikoku.

His greatest flaw (in addition to humorlessness) is his extremely short sighted view of life. He loves money because he sees it as the purest expression of the physical world; to him, money literally represents all things.

Okawa sometimes despairs for Jirohei; despite his age and effort, Jirohei is (in some ways) farther from enlightenment than many of the rawest novices. He intellectually understands parts of the

P38

DOVE

EARTH 3

Willpower 5

WATER 2

FIRE 4

AIR 4

VOID 2

Attacking: 8k4

Damage: 5k2

TN to Hit: 20

Wounds: 6: -0; 12: -1;

18: -2; 24: -3; 30: -4;

36: Down; 42: Out; 48: Dead

Notable Skills: Defense 3;

Horsemanship 2; Hunting 3;

Kenjutsu 4; Naginata 3;

Sailing 1; Stealth 2

Honor: 2.5

Glory: 1

Advantage: Death Trance



Daikoku philosophy well, but in his heart he is a pragmatist. It is Okawa's belief that eventually Jirohei will go through some spiritual shock that will demonstrate to him that money has no intrinsic value and is worthwhile only as a religious metaphor.

Role-playing Jirohei: Roll your eyes whenever anyone mentions Okawa's erratic behavior. Be very patient and clear. Be organized, fussy and detail oriented. Concern yourself with the immediate pragmatism of every situation.

Honor: 2
Glory: 0



MEIYO THE SUN PRIESTESS

Meiyo has been serving the Sun Goddess for 55 years – since she was ten years old. It is the only life she's known and the only one she'd want. Mundane concerns such as money, health and even life itself are so removed from her consciousness that she has a hard time even remembering what they mean. Holiness is everything to her, and in a very real sense it's all there is to her.

In fact, Meiyo has become so attuned to the power of Amaterasu that she is no longer completely human. Her feet no longer touch the ground when she walks (though she wears long dresses to conceal this, of course).

P39

One way or another, she is probably not long for this world. Maybe old age will catch up with her; or maybe one day she'll just drift off into the sun.

Role-playing Meiyo: Be completely kind, wise and gentle. Always speak in a serene and thoughtful voice. If possible, avoid all use of the words "I" and "me".

Honor: 5
Glory: 2

The Merchant Quarter



SHARP / SURUDOI

Sharp is the frontman for the Bayushi opium operation, and as such he's a privileged and arrogant man. He has plenty of money, plenty of political influence and plenty of power.

The one thing that really frosts him is that he's not noble. No matter how much money he gets and spends, he's lower in the celestial order than the scruffiest ronin. He tries to be philosophical and remind himself that he's happier than a lot of nobles, but it still galls him that he has to grovel and kowtow. He gets a secret, mean satisfaction whenever he sees an addicted samurai.

Role-playing Sharp: Cover up your envy of the nobles by fawning over them constantly. Even

P40

though you hate yourself for it, you can't help but admire them desperately. On the other hand, treat your underlings like dirt.

Honor: 1

Glory: 0



SUBTLE / BIMYO

Subtle knows his cousin (P40) is eaten up with jealousy for the nobles, just as he knows that Hyobu (G9, P1) believes she's completely in the right and that Korechika (P5) has some secret sorrow that he tries to hide. Subtle knows; that is his greatest strength.

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He has had an extremely developed people sense ever since childhood. He's plain and soft-spoken and rarely gets noticed, but he notices everyone around him.

Subtle is a content man because he believes that *bushido* is crap. He's seen nobles torment themselves with this strange warrior philosophy, has seen it force them to not only give up opportunities but to actually harm themselves and their interests out of this abstract notion of "honor".

That's not for him. Subtle knows his place, is always modest to the samurai – and secretly pities them for being trapped in a life that's becoming outdated. To Subtle's way of thinking, it's the merchants and the geishas who live with the greatest freedom and pleasure. What's honor compared to that?

Role-playing Subtle: Always be polite and submissive to those of higher station and patient with your employees. You're comfortable around everyone, but not so casual that it's disrespectful.

Honor: 1

Glory: 0



WATCHFUL / JITTU

At first, getting into the opium trade seemed like a great idea. The profit margins were incredible, the market was solid as a rock, and a samurai patroness would (supposedly) ensure protection from magistrates. What Watchful never stopped to wonder was, who would protect her from her patroness?

P42

Watchful worked for Soshi Seiryoku's (P9) predecessor for a long time and was fairly content with her lot. They weren't the biggest opium cartel, but that only meant they were making tremendous profits instead of obscenely tremendous profits. They kept a low profile and stayed out of trouble. Everyone was happy. (Well, except for addicts who couldn't pay.)

Then Seiryoku showed up, and the management style changed drastically. Seiryoku had no patience for errors and inefficiency, and she expressed her displeasure in ways that still wake Watchful up in cold sweats sometimes. Seiryoku rules by fear, and has become more and more insistent that Watchful take more responsibility for the operation.





This puts Watchful in the unenviable position of having a great number of details to coordinate, and very little margin for error on any of them. No wonder she's a nervous wreck.

Role-playing Watchful: Look over your shoulder. Jump at nothing. Grin nervously. Sit with your back to the wall. Talk quickly and bite your nails a lot.

Honor: 1
Glory: 0



HORSE/UMA

It's an old story, Horse will tell you. You either get on the horse or you're under its hooves. In this case, the horse was Bayushi Korechika (P5). It's not that she *wanted* to give up the patronage of the Shinjo family; she really had no choice. It was clear to her that Korechika wasn't going to stop until he'd destroyed or consumed the Shinjo merchant assets in Ryoko Owari, and as one of those assets, Horse didn't fancy being destroyed. Maybe in the old days Yoshifusa (P11) could have protected her, but not now – not with his bumbling son (P12) in the way.

Truth be told, Horse feels guilty. She knows the Shinjos were counting on her and that she let them down. Still, she couldn't very well look her children in the eye and tell them about the deal she'd ignored from Korechika, could she? After all, it's not like she's a samurai. Duty and honor aren't assigned to her social station. She's a

P43

merchant, so she's supposed to make money – practically by definition.

Role-playing Horse: Be nervous around anyone from the Unicorn and Scorpion clans. Fuss with your hands a lot – rubbing them, wiping them, etc. Talk in a long winded, roundabout way. If the subject of your departure from the Shinjo family comes up, insist that you had no real choice.

Honor: 1
Glory: 0



BUILDER/TATERU

Builder acts humble at all times before nobles, and before those who employ his services. Nevertheless, he is secretly a proud man. He is proud of his success and reputation, and he is proud to be affiliated with the Crane clan.

Builder is really quite a bigot; he believes that the Crane are the most intelligent, tasteful, respectable and insightful of all the nobles, and that their decision to offer him a vassal position reflects very well on him. He is fawningly respectful of his patron Sukemara (P27) and is even somewhat blind to the flaws of Michitaka (P26).

Although he maintains a facade of being friendly and fair to everyone, he keeps his ears open for those who defame the Crane clan. He'll still work for such people – but somehow, their

P44



houses never seem to get the same careful attention given to those with “better” politics.

Role-playing Builder: Smile a lot. Be polite and respectful to nobles, but not smarmy. When you’re talking to a Crane, get a little too enthusiastic and eager – like a youngster with a case of puppy love. If someone says something bad about the Crane, frown briefly, then shrug your shoulders and get a little bit distant.

Honor: 2

Glory: 0



WHISPER/SASAYAKU

“Like attracts like” is the likeliest explanation for the relationship between Whisper and his patroness, Yasuki Nobuko (P24). Both are ingratiating, slimy, venal, dishonest, and more than willing to sell their own grandmothers for a quick buck. Magistrates who come by Whisper’s shop can expect fright from him (he still remembers getting pounded by the Thunder Guard), but if they try to reassure him they’ll just get offered bribes.

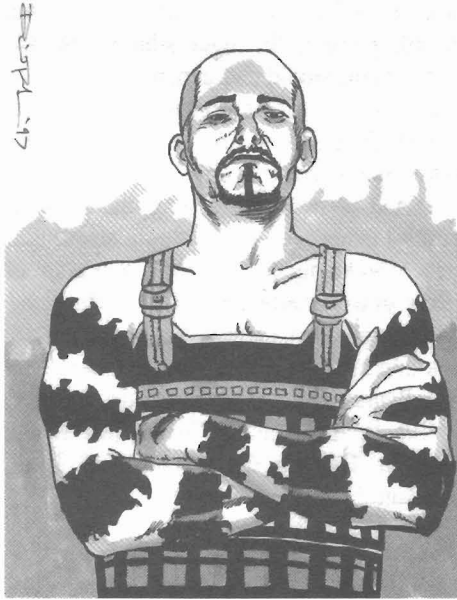
P45

Role-playing Whisper: Act like you’re always about to run away. Flinch, wince and stay at arm’s length – until a samurai gives his or her word not to harm you. Then be very friendly, to the point of being a nauseating lickspittle.

Honor: 1

Glory: 0

The Licensed Quarter



GATE/KADO

The story about Gate presented in the PC book is accurate, but incomplete. Finding out that his ancestor had lied about his numbers and left his own son to die was one reason that Akodo Yogodayu abandoned his family. The other reason was his love for a woman named Matsu Shigeko.

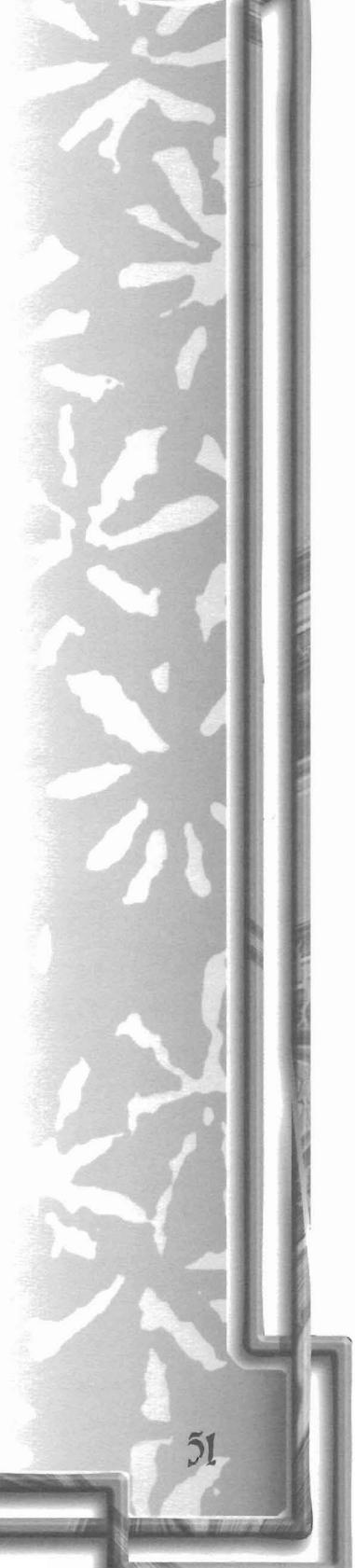
P46

They met after Shigeko had taken her vows, including a vow of celibacy. Like so many Rokugani romances, theirs was doomed. Although their passion was mutual, the foundation for that love was respect. If either violated a solemn oath, or suggested that the other do so, the respect would crumble.

Shigeko and Yogodayu found themselves in a terrible double bind. Desperately in love, they couldn’t do anything about it without removing the foundation of their affection.

The torment was too great; Yogodayu requested a posting somewhere far from his beloved, and was sent to Ikoma Castle. It was there that his self-image received its second blow.

Disgraced and disgusted, he went to Ryoko Owari to confirm his worst suspicions about humanity. His intention was to watch people degrade and humiliate themselves until suicide became more palatable. As it happened there was another surprise in store for him.





In the licensed district of Ryoko Owari – arguably the lowest flesh pit in the nation – Gate discovered that there was honesty and decency. It was a strange and personal kind of honor, but it was still present; the thief who might rob a drunken noble would give generously to a beggar, or fight to the death to defend a sworn friend. Like Fade (T2), Gate was unprepared to find basic decency among commoners. Also like Fade, Gate has rebuilt a new life among them. He still believes in *bushido*, but is deeply suspicious of anyone who loudly declares their dedication to it.

Role-playing Gate: Be tough, but charming in a rough-edged sort of way. Never get rattled or shook and always act like you know what you're doing. Remember that you gave up the love of your life in the name of honor. (An excellent model for Gate is the character of Rick in "Casablanca".)

Honor: 3

Glory: 3



MAGDA

Magda always liked stories when she was growing up. When a Unicorn caravan passed through her village, she was among the first to approach the strange foreigners; when they departed, she was hidden in one of their carts. Discovered, she begged to be allowed to stay with them – and was willing to prove her worth by working like a slave.

P47

Gradually the caravan discovered her ability to tell stories – a skill that served them well when it came time to deal with bored and mischievous mujina.

Magda still loves to tell stories, and nobles from all over the country have come to hear her. Some of her favorite yarns are about...

...Immortal mages from across the Burning Lands who can never be killed until you find their hidden hearts.

...Distant islands of giants where the natives sail on ships that are also men.

...A village where the people all have the tails of pigs as a punishment for the sins of their ancestors.

...The ghosts of great sculptures and paintings that have been destroyed, and which long to be recreated.

Magda claims that all her stories are true, but she makes up at least half of them. Actually, she's told them so many times that sometimes she forgets which she really heard and which she invented from whole cloth.

Ashidaka Naritoki was Magda's lover up until his death (in fact, he was returning from a visit with her when he was attacked). He assumed that she had seduced him so that he would renew her residence papers every year. In actual fact, she had a convoluted plan with the opposite goal.

See, Magda has become bored with Ryoko Owari and wants to see the rest of Rokugan – in style. She can't do that without travel papers (from an Emerald Magistrate) and the patronage of a great clan (presumably the Unicorn). However, the Unicorn like her right where she is, churning up a healthy profit in Ryoko Owari. They can't keep her there without the complicity of the Emerald Magistrate, but if she upsets the Magistrate too much, he can have her exiled. She's not anxious to cross the Burning Sands again. Therefore, she had to make Naritoki want to get rid of her without exiling her (and alienating the Unicorn clan). She planned to do this by introducing Naritoki to another beautiful geisha, then gradually becoming more demanding and bitchy until he was dying to dump her for another woman. He wouldn't exile her (for fear of the damage she could cause his reputation on the way out) but would hopefully want her out of the city.

Now that plan's ruined and she'll have to come up with something new for the new magistrates – or adapt her old plan...

As this shows, Magda is a complex and (if necessary) devious woman. She would lie to a Magistrate if it was in her best interest – but she's well aware of how dangerous getting caught in a lie would be to her.

Role-playing Magda: Laugh loudly and sometimes ignore Rokugani customs. Behave in a provocative manner (if you can carry it off). Pout. Treat everyone as if you're their spoiled (but sweet) little girl.

Honor: 1

Glory: 3



PRECIOUS/KICHO

Precious is beautiful, influential, wealthy and almost completely devoid of any personal ambition. Since childhood she has been raised to be what she is; the ideal geisha, the perfect mirror of others' desires. She always knows exactly what a client wants (even those wants he will not acknowledge himself) and acts appropriately. Note that this doesn't always mean gratifying the desire; it means responding to it the way the perfect geisha would.

P48

The only desires she cannot read are her own, for she has never been taught to even consider them. She is a mystery to everyone else because she is a mystery to herself. Shigeko found it hard to identify her "secret agenda" because even Precious does not know what it is. All she knows

is that she is expected to be cryptic and mysterious – and therefore, she is.

Role-playing Precious: Always behave properly and gracefully. Act like the perfect geisha – but also (oh so subtly) act as if you *know* you're acting.

Honor: 1

Glory: 4



JEWEL/HOSEKI

Shigeko's analysis of Jewel is dead on. She is intelligent, experienced and crafty, but essentially shallow.

P49

Ironically, it is Jewel's greatest tool that hinders her the most. This tool, of course, is Precious (P48), who has served Jewel since childhood. Now that Precious has grown up and taken the place that Jewel held in her prime, Jewel has become suspicious of her protege. This suspicion is reinforced by Precious' impenetrable demeanor. (In one respect, Jewel *wants* Precious to plot against her; it's part of Jewel's view of the perfect geisha.) Because she's constantly monitoring Precious for signs of betrayal, she has less time and attention to devote to crushing Magda. Of course, this may change now that Magda's lover Naritoki is no longer around to protect her...

Role-playing Jewel: Always be cheerful, gracious and modest to those of samurai class. Be slightly contemptuous of ronin, unless there's some reason to respect them. Always act regretful





when you have to say something nasty about someone, but don't let that stop you from saying nasty things.

Honor: 1

Glory: 2

The Fisherman Quarter



LEAN MEAT/AKAMI

Lean Meat has always had two things; good luck and a love of games. This didn't seem like much when he had his four younger brothers and three younger sisters to support, but he made do. He made hair-raising bets, gambling his whole stake on one pitch of the dice – and he lost it all a few times too, but was always able to get another stake and gamble it up again.

Lean Meat might have become just another high stakes gambler if he'd kept at it. Or his luck might have run out and left him another opium addict or virtual slave to fireman debtors. Instead, he was taken aside after one of his more exciting games by the *kajinin* who had arranged the game.

“Lean Meat,” the fireman said, “People like to play when you're playing. Win or lose, you bring people in and you make the game more fun for them. I like this; I want you to come to every one

P50

of my games, and I'll give you a quiet cut of the action if you don't go anywhere else. What do you say?”

Lean Meat thought about it; steady money wouldn't be as exciting as risking his income every night, but his family would probably prefer it, so he agreed.

In time, Lean Meat took over from his *kajinin* patron and began running the game himself. It's a good life; gamblers know and respect him, he rarely has to avail himself of the services of professionals like Ample (P32) and he's doing what he loves. Now and then, he'll even get in the game himself. If only those damn magistrates weren't always sniffing around...

Role-playing Lean Meat: Smile and shrug a lot. Deny everything, but don't get defensive. Only change your tune if a magistrate seems interested in getting into the game.

Honor: 1

Glory: 0



SHORTCUT/CHIKAMICHI

Shigeko's protégé Shortcut is all grown up and currently works as a rickshaw driver in the Fisherman and Merchant Quarters. He still keeps his eyes and ears open, and provided a number of good tips to Naritoki.

Shortcut has an interesting attitude towards the nobles; it's a sort of amused affection. While

P51

he recognizes that those of samurai class are high above him in skill, wealth and status, he also finds them oddly naive about the streets. He hasn't consciously thought about this "superior attitude"; he just knows that there are things he can do better than any samurai, and that while the samurai may not respect these abilities, they still value them.

Shigeko gave Shortcut a sense of justice and morality, but she could only encourage a love of adventure that was always present. The money he gets for helping fight crime is nice, and it gives him a warm feeling to think that he's serving the common good; but mostly he does what he does because it's so *cool*. Unfortunately, Shortcut has recently become interested in the Ryoko Ninja (T3) - a group which might provide him with excitement at fatal levels...

Role-playing Shortcut: Be boyishly enthusiastic, but with a tiny proportion of street-smart cynicism. Treat samurai with respect, but none of the fear and diffidence typical of most *heimin*.

Honor: 2
Glory: 0



YELLOW/KIIRU

Captain Yellow has a great racket: acting like a smuggler without being one.

Her patron, Shosuro Gobei (P4), is involved in petty, day-to-day smuggling, but she never carries contraband

P52

herself. Instead, she behaves suspiciously, complains loudly when her boat is searched, sweats profusely and acts scared of magistrates. In other words, she's a perfect decoy.

This is why she leaves town whenever there's an intense manhunt; not because she's smuggling out the perpetrator, but because it's one way to stay on the "suspicion list" of Emerald Magistrates. She knows that by doing so she probably helps the targets of these manhunts get away, but this only amuses her. She hates honest magistrates and is gratified by anything that makes their job harder.

Role-playing Yellow: Cringe, complain, wince and act terribly defensive and nervous when any magistrate wants to talk to you - no matter what the topic.

Honor: 0
Glory: 0

The Leatherworker Quarter



EYEBROWS/MAYU

Eyebrows is a bundle of contradictions. On one hand, he is highly respected among his people (and the opinions of the *eta* are those he most consciously values). On the other hand, everyone outside the Leatherworker Quarter regards him

P53





THE IMPORTANCE OF LEATHER

The Unicorn influence in Ryoko Owari is perhaps best illustrated by the steady erosion of one of Rokugan's most ubiquitous cultural norms: their aversion to leather.

The sense of unease and impurity that most Rokugani get when they touch dead animal skin has never been much of a problem to the Unicorn; in their long sojourn, there were countless times when the fastidious and squeamish perished, and only those who could adapt to changing circumstances survived. Given leather's obvious utility for saddles and riding clothes, the Rokugani prejudice against it was quickly glossed over with an explanation that the leather is "purified" during the curing process.

Since their return, their willingness to touch it has been one more mark against them in the eyes of hidebound traditionalists. On the other hand, leather saddles have become acceptable among several classes of nobility outside the Unicorn clan. First off, those who are pragmatic and not superstitious were quick to realize that leather really does make the best saddles.

as another faceless non-person. Eyebrows has a strong spirit and tries to ignore the snubs and automatic insults that are part of his everyday life – but deep down inside, they get to him.

Eyebrows is highly skilled at what you and I would call forensics, and he's not too bad at herbalism either (not that samurai class characters should have much chance to find this out). He also has the confidence of the Leatherworkers, which gives him eyes and ears throughout the city.

However, Eyebrows is unlikely to give his full support to new magistrates until he considers them worthy of it. He'll examine bodies and injuries if asked, but won't take any steps on his own unless the magistrates have either trusted him (or, more unlikely, treated him with respect) or shown that they are deadly earnest about pursuing crime.

He's reluctant because of the corruption he witnessed during the term of Ashidaka Naritoki (P25). While Naritoki seemed honest and upright at first, Eyebrows gradually came to realize it was all a sham, masking self-interest and greed. He's determined not to be burned twice, especially since he had to take tremendous personal risks to kill Naritoki.

Eyebrows discussed the matter thoroughly with Raspy (P54). When the older man was convinced that the opium situation could only get worse as long as Naritoki was in charge, their only course was clear. They had no political pull to get him removed, and no one would believe accusations from the mouth of an *eta*.

It was easy for Eyebrows to learn when Naritoki was making a date with Magda. He took several disguised Leatherworkers and sabotaged Naritoki's carriage with flammable pitch. Then they waited. While Naritoki was resting in the carriage and True Word (P33) was rigging the horses, Eyebrows approached him. True Word was surprised to see him, but not alarmed until Eyebrows sprayed his eyes with vinegar and lye. Blinded and unable to read his scrolls, True Word was cut down, the carriage was torched and Naritoki was kept inside at spearpoint until his death.

Role-playing Eyebrows: Always be diffident and quiet. Never meet the eyes of your "betters". Explain things in a plodding, thorough and methodical fashion.

Honor: 2
Glory: 0



RASPY/OIGOE

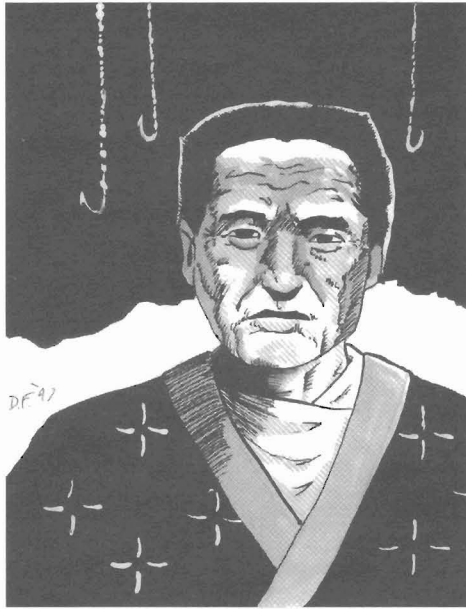
Raspy is responsible for a community that everyone else uses but no one cares about. In the absence of legal recourse, the Leatherworkers have formed something of an underground government; Raspy is the head of that government.

He got his position by being tough but fair. He builds coalitions between the various Leatherworker factions (yes, they're factionalized, even though they present a unified face to outsiders) by being beholden to no single group. He has spent most of his life in service to his community, and recognizes that the authority he has been given now is only a tool to let him continue to serve. He had grim forebodings about ordering Naritoki's death, but he believes that it was a necessary step in stopping the flow of opium into his community.

Role-playing Raspy: Speak in a hoarse voice and stay in a submissive posture. You're an old man – you're no longer strong and you can't move very quickly.

Honor: 3
Glory: 0

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THE IMPORTANCE OF LEATHER (CONTINUED)

Secondly, rebellious youths with an urge to outrage their elders found the “leather issue” a fine way to make a little trouble, without making too much trouble. Finally, leather saddles have been adopted by a number of horsemen who simply got tired of being beaten by the Unicorn and who want every advantage possible.

The saddle from spring’s first boar (G3; “City of Stories” page 13) is a case in point; any Unicorn who wins one is proud to use it as often as possible. Scorpions with these trophies tend to display them, but not actually ride on them.

Interestingly, the acceptance of leather in Ryoko Owari is sometimes cited as a sign of its decay. Crane and Lion courtiers who would never raise their voices against the city’s blatant markets for opium, prostitution and political power will loudly decry the working of “impure flesh” as a craft.

PITIFUL/ITOSHI

The *eta* are the lowest social class in Rokugan. Among themselves, the leatherworkers, morticians and garbage haulers of the empire look on one profession as the lowest of the low: torturer.

P55

Many *eta* believe that their best hope is to lead a virtuous life and be reincarnated as a *heimin*. These same *eta* often believe that someone who takes money to torture in this life is condemned to be an *eta* in the next life as well.

This is how Pitiful got his name; he is pitied even by his fellow *eta* because he cannot hope for better next time around.

Many outside the Leatherworker Quarter believe that Pitiful got his name because his legs were crushed by a cart when he was a young man. Unable to walk and untrained in any other trade, he could only get work as an assistant to the torturer.

Those who don’t know Pitiful are not surprised that he is skilled at his trade. “A man with no legs must have much envy of those who can walk; it’s no surprise that he torments them without mercy,” they say – unless one of them falls into Pitiful’s grip. Then they learn that his real secret is his compassion.

Pitiful does not like to torture people, although he recognizes it as a necessity. Many of his “clients” recognize this and try to gain his sympathy. Pitiful is quick to express his

condolences, but regretfully informs them that he must continue to torture them until they submit. He doesn’t like it; but it’s his duty.

Therein lies the secret of his effectiveness. He is not sadistic, so it’s hard for the prisoner to resist with rage and hate. Instead, Pitiful makes sure that the prisoner knows the torture will stop as soon as a confession is made.

Role-playing Pitiful: When dealing with your employers, always be modest, succinct and grave. You’re also exhausted by the effort it takes you to torture others; you try to hide it, but are not always able to do so.

When dealing with a “client,” sigh and shrug. You don’t want to do it, but their actions demand it. Favorite phrase: “I can’t stop this until you *let* me stop it.”

Honor: 2

Glory: 0



#97



**Things To Do
In Ryoko
Owari**



ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: Bayushi Otado (P7) is kidnapped by a large group of peasants. He and his guards kill six of them, but Otado is taken alive.

Focus: Eyebrows (P53) says that his fellow *eta* seem to know something, but they're more frightened of the kidnapers than they are of him. The magistrates will have to come personally to interview the *eta* who knew the dead kidnapers – causing all kinds of tension as they enter the Leatherworkers' Quarter.

Strike: Otado was kidnapped by the Moon Cult, who have spent the last seven years methodically kidnapping children from the Hida, Akodo, Shiba, Doji, Shinjo and Togashi families. (Well, the Togashi aren't a "family," but they got someone with "Togashi blood.") They've even been keeping a goblin child alive. Their ages put the children in the right age order, and they're the right genders; the Moon Cult plans to sacrifice and eat them in order to recreate the fall of the *Kami*. They believe that when they do this, the youngest Hantei will be compelled to come face their champion in personal combat. If their champion wins, (they think) then Lord Moon will become incarnate on earth to subjugate Hantei and all the children of Amaterasu.

Welcome,
New
Magistrates!

All the material in this book is based on the premise that your players are the new magistrates for Ryoko Owari. This is a position of great power and equally great responsibility. Not everyone's characters are going to seem tailor-made for this job, but there are any number of ways you can remedy this situation.

REMEMBER, IT'S NOT NYPD BLUE

The position of Emerald Magistrate is handed out by the Emperor and the Emerald Champion, and it need not have *anything* to do with the proven ability to solve crimes. It's a political appointment; it could be the result of political favors, it can be given out if the PCs have distinguished themselves in battle, it could be seen as a cushy reward for some other service. If the players seem completely inadequate, they probably got the job because some sneaky Scorpion decided that a bunch of bunglers would protect the opium trade.

BOOT CAMP

If your characters don't seem to be adequate as magistrates, run them through a few adventures that whip them into shape. Even better, handcraft a mystery that plays to their strengths, so that they look *really* smart when they solve it. (It may sound like pitching them a puffball adventure, but it makes it a lot more plausible for them to get this important appointment.)

FAMILIARITY

There's no reason their magisterial appointment should be their first time in the city. If you have them travel through Ryoko Owari a few times – or even make it their base of

operations before they're magistrates – then the Emerald Champion's decision suddenly makes a lot more sense. The last two magistrates were from outside the city, and they came to bad ends. This time, he wants someone on the inside.

All you have to do if you're pre-using the setting is develop your own, non-magistrate adventures set in the city (many of the Challenge/Focus/Strike seeds in this book can be modified for non-magistrates) and run those. Don't give them the PC book until Naritoki (P25) is dead and they've been appointed. As a bonus, this lets you introduce the players to Naritoki, Shonagon and maybe even Michikane (P15) before they die – meaning their deaths become more personal to the magistrates.

Once they've been appointed magistrates, they get called to Ootosan Uchi by the Emperor himself! They're told that due to their expertise (or familiarity, or whatever reason the Emperor has to make them magistrates) they're being given the task of policing Ryoko Owari. They're warned that the city is an unruly one, where the previous magistrate was assassinated. (That's why multiple magistrates are being assigned this time.) Then there's an elaborate ceremony in which they're given batons of office, along with the jade seals used to stamp official documents. (It's a good idea to play up the ceremony, to impress upon them what big shots they've suddenly become.)

Furthermore, each of them is given their first yearly stipend. (This can be spent as they see fit – see "Rank Has Its Privileges" on page 72.) They're sent off to Ryoko Owari, where they can expect to be greeted with an official parade. (Again, this should impress on the characters their new status.) Then it's off to the Magistrate's Residence (L6) and the war on crime.

The Charter of the Emerald Magistrate

Gosh, this is an impressive sounding document (pages 4–9 of the Player's Guide); but what does it mean? Here's a breakdown, section by section, for you GMs only. You can tell this stuff to your PCs if you want (either straightforward or by requiring various Law rolls to decode it), but it may be more fun to let them figure it out by roleplaying.



PART ONE

This basically lists the crimes they're supposed to fight. Section one covers your basic (and advanced) treason. Since everyone is technically a "servant of the Emperor" it's necessary to explain that they only have jurisdiction in crimes committed against direct servants of the Emperor, his court or his family.

Section two is fairly self-explanatory; if a crime has far-reaching effects (like the opium trade, for example) it makes sense for it to be handled by one national organization (the Emerald Magistrates) rather than a group of individual magistrates.

Section three not only covers Shadowlands creatures and *maho-tsukai*, it covers anyone who made any sort of deal with them. Note that it also means that if a *maho-tsukai* steals a loaf of bread, that theft becomes a national crime...

Section four is, again, one of those things better handled on a national level.

Section five is intended for use against organized cults, but could equally apply to foreign religions who are acting in a peaceful fashion. (This one could justify all kinds of foolishness after the rise of the Naga...)

Section six is a catchall - and a loophole big enough to drive a caravan through. Who decides when "general lawlessness" is threatened by a crime? Why, the Emerald Magistrates. This is *definitely* one you don't want to point out to the players.

PART TWO

Section one: yawn. Tax collection is boring, which is why there are special NPCs licensed to take care of it. The magistrates should only care about it if (1) someone steals the money that's been gathered, (2) someone threatens the tax collectors (not entirely impossible) or (3) they get a report (or better,

conflicting reports) about corruption among the tax collectors.

Section two can get the magistrates in big trouble if they authorize travel by someone (or something) that shouldn't be running around the country. After all, their names are right on the papers. Note that a passport that lets you go anywhere in the country for *five years* is a hot item. People would kill for one. In fact, they'd kill for a lot less. This is also a good way to introduce interesting foreign characters.

Section three is your excuse to do a personalized remake of "The Bodyguard" or "In the Line of Fire," depending on your tastes.

Section four just means that someone has to take the trip in once a month. It's 240 miles to Otosan Uchi, but about four times a year the Emerald Champion travels up to Mamoru Kyotei Toshi (89 on the map), then over to Kyuden Ikoma (68 on the map), then down to Kosaten Shiro (51 on the map) then home. He usually takes about 20 days to make this 350 mile trip, and it makes it a lot easier for magistrates in outlying regions to get in and report. (For magistrates in Ryoko





ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: One of Kitsuki Jotomon's (P28) *heimin* students is accused of selling opium. Jotomon asks the Emerald Magistrates to investigate because she fears that her student has been framed by one of the city magistrates' deputies.

Focus: Jotomon's suspicions are well founded – but are the characters willing to ram heads with the local authorities over one *heimin*? After all, the deputies say they drugs were found in the *heimin*'s shop, and their word carries much more weight. However, there are discrepancies – the accused hardly has the money to obtain that much liquid void (G1). If the Emerald Magistrates torture him, he maintains his innocence enough to satisfy Pitiful (P55). If the local magistrates get him, a “signed confession” turns up – even though the merchant can't write.

Owari, it means a jaunt upriver to Kyuden Ikoma – about 80 miles.)

Section five should be obvious; it can be interesting for a magistrate to report a crime and watch the local authorities stubbornly refuse to do anything about it.

Section six can get sticky if Hyobu (G9, P1) decides the magistrates are her enemies. If they're planning actions against her interests, a complete account can alert her; but if they don't alert her, she can accuse them of failing an element of the charter. (This could be grounds for dismissal from office.)

Section seven provides some of the same problems, though (in Ryoko Owari at least) it's less of a problem than the Governor.

PART THREE

Section one just absolves the Emerald Magistrates of beat cop duties. Section two means they don't have to worry about petty theft, shoplifting and other piddly stuff. Section three means they can't interfere with blood feuds one way or the other. Section four means they can't build their own version of the Thunder Guard, while section five means they're not supposed to be corrupt. (This one is really hard to enforce, of course; who's to say a gift was given in exchange for duties, instead of as a sincere expression of gratitude?)

PART FOUR

Here's the good stuff; permission to use all those Eliot Ness/Hat Squad/jackbooted storm-trooper tactics dear to the heart of every authoritarian cop. Section one means they can pretty much haul in anyone they want and have them tortured into confessing – as long as the victim is of lower social station. (You and I see the

vast potential for crypto-fascist abuse here; let's hope your players decide not to see it that way.) It also means they can grab *anyone* – if they're caught red-handed or if they get one of those tricky Orders of Appearance.

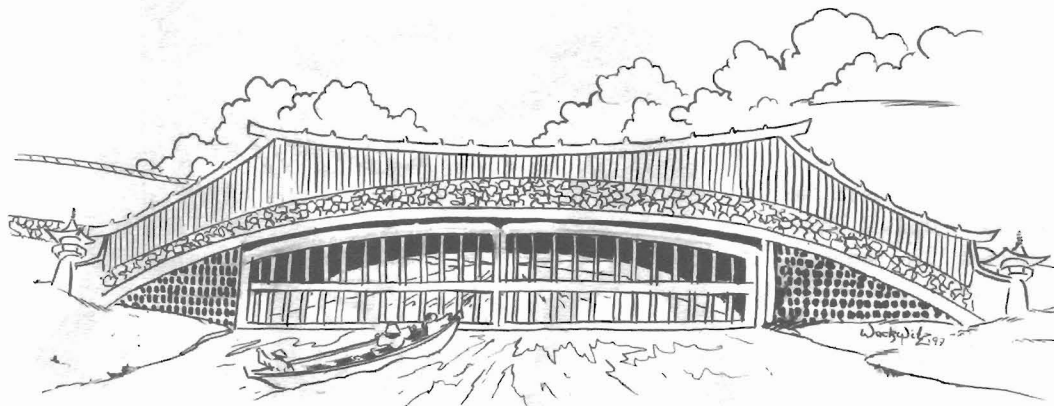
Section two may be even scarier. Once a confession's been signed, the magistrates have a great deal of discretion when it comes to deciding punishments. The only real restriction is that they can't pocket fines.

Orders of Appearance, described in section three, are basically subpoenas. Remember that the magistrates can't just write one of these out; it has to be backed up by Hyobu (G9, P1), Osako (P10) or the Emerald Champion. If they decide to bug Doji Sukemara for one of these, there's a considerable turnaround time (it's a 480 mile round trip to Otosan Uchi) and no guarantee he'll sign it. (Use your discretion; he won't sign one for small stuff, but he'll also know that it's serious if the magistrates are calling him in personally.) Note that the order must be used within one month of its final signature – meaning that with some stretching, you can set up an exciting chase scene with a magistrate riding hell for leather to get an Order of Appearance delivered before it goes “stale”.

Section four means that the Emerald Magistrates are supposed to get warned before anything big goes down. Hyobu will generally be very good about this – unless she thinks that the information isn't secure.

Section five means that magistrates can “borrow” troops if needed, but not keep them in a state of constant readiness. (For the prices on this, look on page 72 – “Rank Has Its Privileges”.)

Section six is a big one; Emerald Magistrates can call in crack soldiers with broad powers of enforcement and jurisdiction over the whole



country. Just remember that it's another long round trip to Ootosan Uchi – and that they'd better have a damn good reason for calling out the National Guard.

Section seven means that if there's a crime both the Emerald Magistrates and Hyobu's magistrates are investigating, the Emerald Magistrates can make them back off – at least officially, and at least for a little while.

Finally, there's section eight, which gives the magistrates the right to write travel papers. Note that if they're not picky about who they write papers for, and if they're willing to let Part Three, Section Five slide a bit, they can make a *ton* of dough off this.



One important thing for every magistrate is popularity. It doesn't matter how honorable a magistrate is, or how skilled with the arts of blade or scroll; if people don't like him or trust him, he's going to have a hell of a time getting anything done.

To help the GM track who's in favor with whom when, a handy chart has been included after this section (pp. 66–67). You should photocopy one of these for each of your magistrates and use it to keep track of whose asses they've kicked (or kissed).

Here's how it works; across the top you've got the different power groups in Ryoko Owari: the Shosuros, the Bayushis, the Unicorn Clan, Precious, Magda, the Leatherworkers, and a couple blank spots for various other groups of your convenience (firemen, criminal associations, the Monks of Daikoku, etc.) Down the side, you have rating for their attitude; hate, dislike, mild

dislike, neutral, friendly, ally and close ally. New magistrates will be regarded Neutrally by everyone, except as noted in the section on clan effects (pages 68 to 70).

Moving up and down is a simple matter; who benefits from the Magistrate's actions, and who suffers? Whenever a magistrate does something that earns or costs him Glory, look at that magistrate's chart and consider how the deed affected various segments of society. A magistrate who immediately tracks down Fade can expect to jump up a notch in the Scorpion clan's estimation – but may earn the enmity of the Unicorns if Fade's former clan affiliation is revealed.

Note that this is highly dependent on how a deed is presented. An action that cripples a Soshi cartel opium processing station may earn the magistrate the favor of the Bayushis and Shosuros (if they think he did it to help their cartels) or their dislike (if they think he's lashing out at the opium trade in general).

With those notions in mind, here's the major players in the popularity game – what they want, what they don't want, what they offer and what they can do if upset.

SHOSURO FAMILY

Hyobu wants her city to continue to run in a profitable, orderly fashion. She does not want her opium cartel disturbed, nor her city endangered. Anything that causes a fuss has a chance to upset her, though she understands that sometimes a few eggs must be broken. She'd be very pleased to see Fade (T2) or The Wind (T4) apprehended, or the Ryoko Ninja (T3) destroyed. If she's pleased, she can offer the magistrates valuable information, military muscle (in the form of Thunder Guards), public respect, gifts (which increase Glory) and bribes. If displeased, she can withdraw her support and protection (leaving the magistrates vulnerable to physical attacks), have the Emerald Magistrates harassed, or even frame them for corruption.

More subtly, she has a tremendous amount of influence with all levels of society. Whenever Hyobu changes her opinion of someone (for good or bad) change someone else's opinion of the same person one notch in the same direction. So, if Hyobu likes a magistrate, she may mention it in passing to Magda, who will figure the magistrate must be doing something right if Hyobu admires her. If Hyobu dislikes a magistrate, a carefully crafted slander can make the magistrate look bad



ADVENTURE HOOK (CONTINUED)

Strike: If the Emerald Magistrates can clear the heimin's name, they'll have his gratitude (big deal) along with Jotomon's and her school. On the other hand, they'll have made enemies among the city magistrates (although a few will be accused and convicted of corruption – serving as "little sisters" (G1) to protect the real crooks). However, if they don't clear him, the heimin commits *seppuku* to spare Jotomon from having to share his punishment (P28). In actual fact, it was a highly placed magistrate (maybe Osako (P10), maybe not) who framed the heimin, in order to discredit Jotomon.



ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: A beautiful noblewoman shows up in town looking for her lost brother, who came to Ryoko Owari three months earlier and hasn't sent a letter in weeks. (If you feel like it, you can set her up as a love interest for one of the PCs.)

Focus: She's got a strange karmic link with her brother; whenever he's in serious pain, she feels the same thing. That's what got her worried; she felt a terrible pain in the back of her head a week ago.

Investigation reveals that her brother was getting sucked into Ryoko Owari's demimonde, but even his sybarite friends haven't seen him for a week or so.

Strike: He's been kidnapped by the Moon Cult. They're planning to use him in a ceremony that honors Lord Moon by recreating the fall of the Kami. Unfortunately for their victim, the ceremony involves cutting off his hand and then disemboweling him. Can the magistrates find him and foil the cult's plans before he dies – taking his sister with him?

to almost anyone. When Hyobu talks, people listen...

BAYUSHI FAMILY

Korechika and his family want their cartel to expand without problems from the magistrates – with their help, if possible. He also wants to keep his daughter's secret (P8) and to achieve success as a legitimate merchant patron. What he doesn't want is for his plans to be delayed or derailed.

If Korechika ever reaches the level of "Hate" for a magistrate, he might consider arranging an assassination. He'll certainly try to corrupt the magistrate's retainers, disturb the magistrate's business and poison his reputation. However, Korechika does tend to have a one-track mind – meaning he'll tend to blame a single enemy for the actions of a group. Therefore, only one magistrate at a time will ever be in the Bayushi family's "Hate" category.

The Bayushis generally prefer to behave in a friendly manner until things become completely intolerable – in other words, they won't do anything at the "Dislike" or "Mild Dislike" levels.

If aided, the Bayushis can provide accurate information – usually about their rivals (the Shosuro and Soshi cartels) and enemies (the Shinjo businesses).

UNICORN CLAN

The Unicorn would like to see the opium business squashed; anyone who did that (or appeared to) would gain their favor. They'd also like to see an increase in law and order – anything from stopping the Ryoko Ninja (T3) to catching The Wind (T4) to curbing the corruption of the firemen (G12) and the Thunder Guard (G10). What they don't want to see is open complicity with the Scorpions, inefficient law enforcement, or (even worse) selective application of the laws to punish or suppress their trade interests.

The Unicorn clan can offer a surprising amount of information and influence outside the city (after all, no one travels faster). They are also quite wealthy and can put in a good word with Magda. If upset, they can put pressure on the Emerald Champion – possibly enough to get a magistrate yanked from office (a terrible humiliation) if they're given enough reason.

MAGDA

Magda's long term goal is to get out of Ryoko Owari with a ton of money and see the rest of Rokugan. Immediately, her goal is to continue to operate in peace without too many magistrates hassling her customers for getting drunk, paying prostitutes or hearing the dragons sing (G1). She'd also like respect – she knows a lot of people consider her a freak or a criminal (or both), and it bothers her, even though she never lets on.

Magda has an incredible ear for gossip, rumor and bad news. If she gets to the point of being an Ally for the magistrates, she can give them hints about the structure of the opium cartels (though she'd never come right out and tell all she knows – she values her life too highly), tell them how far certain ronin will go for money, and tell them who's sleeping with whom. If Magda becomes their close ally, she'll up and give them Naritoki's journal as a "thank you" gift. Magistrates who get her mad, however, can expect her to make their job a lot harder by turning the geishas, sybarites and petty gamblers of Teardrop Island against them.

PRECIOUS

Precious (and Jewel) don't quite have the extensive gossip network that Magda has, but they still overhear a great many things in the Morning Sun. They'd love to get rid of Magda, but failing that they just want to be left in peace to continue plying their trade. They are also quite arrogant about their place in the social order; anyone who says or implies that the House of Foreign Stories is superior to the Morning Star in *any* respect will get on their bad side.

In addition to the simple pleasure of her presence, Precious has decisive influence on the fashion of Ryoko Owari. If she likes someone, it's "cool" to have that person around (even if you personally can't stand her.) If a magistrate has Precious as an Ally, any time that magistrate is about to fall a notch in someone's estimation, there's a chance that they'll be given the benefit of the doubt. (This depends on the situation, of course; a magistrate who kills Ide Asamitsu isn't going to remain in Ide Baranato's good graces just because she's friends with some pretty geisha.) For example, if the magistrates arrest one of Bayushi Korechika's vassals for smuggling, Korechika would usually be pretty upset. However, if Precious calms him down, he's more likely to figure the magistrates didn't know that

he was the merchant's patron, and that the merchant wasn't that important anyhow.

LEATHERWORKERS

The Leatherworkers want an end to the opium trade; any magistrate who strikes a blow against it can expect their esteem. Conversely, any magistrate who goes along to get along will earn their dislike. They also want to have their (largely unwritten) rights to be left alone and to govern themselves respected. Magistrates prying into their business will annoy them.

The Leatherworkers have a surprising amount of indirect value to offer. One thing they offer is information; you'd be surprised what people let slip in front of *eta*, because they don't consider the *eta* to be (1) smart enough to understand or (2) human enough to care. You don't watch your mouth around a piece of furniture, do you?

They see a lot, too. Almost every other segment of society is chained to a single area.

Merchants rarely go to the Noble Quarter. Fishermen stay in the Fisherman Quarter. Monks rarely visit the Licensed Quarter. Only the *eta* go everywhere, every single day – because they're the city's sanitation workers. This (coupled with their remarkably close-knit society) means that they have a pretty good idea of the Big Picture in Ryoko Owari – a big picture usually available only to Jocho and Hyobu through the Thunder Guard. (They get a different Big Picture, to be sure; people behave much differently around a dangerous armed man than they do around a peasant with a wagon full of crap.)

That's the subtle advantage the *eta* can offer. If the magistrates annoy them? Well, so what, right? These are the abused, downtrodden and discarded of society. They can be annoyed with relative impunity.



Ryoko Owari, City of Lies

| | SHOSURO FAMILY | BAYUSHI FAMILY | UNICORN CLAN | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| CLOSE ALLY | | | | |
| ALLY | | | | |
| FRIENDLY | | | | |
| NEUTRAL | | | | |
| MILD DISLIKE | | | | |
| DISLIKE | | | | |
| HATE | | | | |



ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: Once the characters realize that Kaiu Shinya is actually a Shadowlands creature... what about all the weapons he's made? Are they tainted too?

Focus: Not everyone with a Shinya blade is willing to admit it, for fear that either (1) it will turn out to be tainted and they'll lose face for not realizing it or (2) it will turn out to be OK and they'll have to give up a nice weapon.

Strike: It turns out that Shinya made at least one cursed blade; it's a naginata in the possession of Yogo Osako. Normally a 3k4 weapon, it's 4k5 against people with Honor 3 or above.

When Osako hears that Shinya's weapons may be evil, she freely surrenders hers for examination and begins ruthlessly looking for others. Certain people within the city now realize they can cause plenty of trouble for their rivals by accusing them of hiding Shinya's weapons. Can the magistrates tell real accusations from false – and cursed weapons from normal ones?



Naturally, the reaction that the shiny new magistrates can expect in Ryoko Owari depends on their clan.

SCORPION

A Scorpion magistrate is not going to be a big shock to anyone, since this is a Scorpion-held city. The Scorpions in the city are overjoyed that someone “who understands how the world works” is finally in charge. They expect a Scorpion magistrate to be corruptible and biased – in other words, a real team player. On the popularity chart, the Bayushis and Shosuros will initially be “friendly.”

The Unicorns are as dismayed as the Scorpions are pleased. To them, it appears that the Emerald Magistrate is giving up on Ryoko Owari and condemning it to be an opium-soaked hellhole forever. It takes a lot of convincing to win them over – especially since they interpret any friendly gesture as a plot or a trick. On the chart, the Unicorn clan will have a Dislike of Scorpion magistrates.

Everyone else figures that the magistrate means “business as usual”. There's speculation on whether this means that the Imperial Taxes will be lowered, or whether the Scorpion magistrates are a concession to keep taxes high.

UNICORN

The Scorpion clan has long suspected that the Emerald Champion would like to take Ryoko Owari away from them and give it to his Unicorn Clan buddies. (Incidentally, they're right – that's why the Imperial taxes have been so high for so long.) A Unicorn Magistrate is going to be regarded as an enemy by the Scorpions until

proven otherwise (though of course it would be a shabby sort of Scorpion who would make their venom obvious). On the popularity chart, this translates to Dislike from the Bayushis and Mild Dislike from the Shosuros.

The Unicorn clan welcome the magistrate with open arms, many gifts, and countless stories about those bad, nasty Scorpions. They won't come out and say they expect a break on their taxes and tariffs, but Shinjo Sanefusa (P12) may imply that only a Unicorn knows the real value of imported goods and that other clan magistrates always evaluate them as having greater prices... They'll be Friendly on the popularity chart.

Those outside the two major clans perceive a Unicorn magistrate to be a little naive and unsophisticated – in many cases the worst interpretation is put on every action. However, he is also considered moderately honest, but not too honest to be effective.

CRAB

Thanks to the ancient efforts of Shosuro Sanekata (immortalized in the annual Liberation Day celebration (G4)), Crabs are widely regarded as buffoons in Ryoko Owari – ham-fisted warriors who can be distracted by a cup of sake and bought off with a geisha in a tight kimono. The Scorpions are openly very friendly, while laughing behind their masks. Criminals breathe sighs of relief and other citizens shrug their shoulders.

Only the Unicorn clan evaluates a Crab magistrate with objectivity – for once, their general ignorance of custom and tradition works in their favor.

On the popularity chart, the Unicorn are Neutral, while the Shosuros and Bayushis have a Mild Dislike (but act like they're Friendly).

Kaiu Shinya (P25) is a bit nervous, unless the magistrate is a shugenja – then he's *very* nervous. He acts friendly and welcoming, but privately he's plotting his escape – or trying to figure a way to remove or discredit the magistrate.

Yasuki Nobuko (P24), on the other hand, is delighted and quickly attaches herself to the Crab magistrate(s) as a general lapdog, toady and pest.

CRANE

The last Crane magistrate was a pleasant surprise for everyone involved. The Unicorn were impressed with his aggressive pursuit of the Ryoko “ninja” (T3), while the Scorpion were



pleased that he spoke the language of bribery and corruption. Both clans hope that a new Crane means things will stay the same – the Unicorn thinking that this means decent policing, and the Scorpion thinking it means indecent policing.

Once again, we see a Crane who gave everyone what they wanted, even when they wanted different things. Can the magistrates step into Naritoki's (P25) shoes? Even if they do, can they conceal their corruption from the Unicorn with the confidence that the crimes they do pursue don't have Scorpions behind them?

These high expectations extend beyond the two major clans. Everyone has high expectations of a Crane – except possibly the Lion clan (who have more experience with Cranes than most). The popularity chart of a Crane magistrate will start at the Friendly level with the Bayushis, Shosuros and Unicorns, *and* both the geishas. The Lions and Leatherworkers, however, will start at the level of Mild Dislike.

Any Crane magistrates can expect substantial aid, advice and information from Doji Sukemara (P27) – if they ask for it. (Offering help unasked would indicate that he thought them incapable of their task.) They won't have to ask for help from Michitaka (P26) – he's eager to find his cousin's assassins, but has no idea how to go about it. He's almost pathetically pleased that there are more Cranes around to help him against those sneaky Scorpions and oafish Unicorns.

DRAGON

No one knows what to make of a Dragon magistrate. Both the Scorpion and the Unicorn are tentative in their approaches and pause often to scratch their heads and ask themselves "what did she *mean* by that?"

A Dragon who is outgoing and friendly appears to the Scorpion as someone who is naive and easy to trick, while the Unicorn respond with friendship in return. A Dragon who acts mysterious and forbidding scares the Scorpion,



ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: Iuchi Sadako approaches the magistrates. She claims she's deciphered the "Memoirs of an Opium Eater" that have so scandalized Ryoko Owari.

She not only knows who wrote it, she knows who all the people in it are – the people who are often referred to only by letters. She is (of course) unaware that the magistrates have a decoded copy.

Focus: Can the magistrates shut her up? Do they even want to? Is she even right about who the people in the book are? Can they protect her from reprisals (of whatever sort) if she reveals what she's figured out?

Strike: She definitely figured out that the "Memoirs" were written by Shiba Shonagon – and now she suspects that Shonagon was killed by Yogo Osako. What if she's right?

who will waste plenty of time chasing their own tails and trying to figure out what the Dragon is really up to. However, a mysterious Dragon also seems very off-putting to the Unicorn.

To the surprise of everyone in Ryoko Owari, Kitsuki Jotomon (P28) neither asks for nor offers special treatment to Dragon magistrates.

On the popularity chart, a Dragon is universally Neutral.

LION

No one is pleased to see another Lion magistrate. Matsu Shigeko's steely honor and unwillingness to bend the rules annoyed the Scorpions. The Unicorns admired her principles, but were very aware that she was completely unable to cope with even the normal "background" corruption of Ryoko Owari – let alone the vileness of its master criminals.

In short, Lions are expected to be completely honorable and completely ineffectual – both in the most inconvenient ways possible. Everyone

on the popularity chart will start at Mild Dislike, except possibly the Leatherworkers.

Kitsu Senshi (P30) is happy to see new Lions in the city. She thinks Ryoko Owari needs a good spanking, and the Lion clan is the one for the job. Ikoma Yoriko (P29) is also pleased, because she's found that her clansmen are the easiest to jerk around.

PHOENIX

Given the less-than-sterling examples of Shonagon and Kinto (P31), people are likely to dismiss Phoenix magistrates out of hand, regarding them as helpless intellectuals unable to cope with the real world. If they're shugenja, their power is respected – but no one has any confidence in their ability to find the proper targets for their power. If they're samurai, they're regarded as pretty much useless.

The Scorpion hold a Phoenix in such contempt that he will largely be ignored until he proves either irritating or useful. The Unicorn treat him



with respect and courtesy, but make no exceptional efforts to be sociable.

The Phoenix magistrate's popularity chart starts with mild dislike from the Scorpions and Unicorns, and neutrality from everyone else – unless you expect the Monks of Daikoku (or any other religious figures) to be prominent. Any religious person or group starts out Friendly towards the Phoenix.

One friendly face a Phoenix finds in Ryoko Owari is Kinto, who may even try to interest them in joining his cult. The other is Iuchi Sadako (P21). Sadako hopes that the Phoenix clan, more than any other, are willing to give her investigations a fair hearing.



The assassination of Ashidaka Naritoki (P25, T1) has been given top priority by the Emerald Magistrate for good reasons; striking at an Emerald Magistrate is almost as bad as striking at the Emperor himself.

Who would do it? After all, what enemies did Naritoki have? He was protecting the interests of the powerful opium cartels; the Ryoko Ninja knew he could be reasonable if approached with bribes; and the firemen thought he was defending their interests from the Ryoko Ninja. He was politically astute, wealthy, and stable; perhaps the city wasn't measurably safer with him in charge, but it was certainly more orderly, and that was what everyone in power wanted.

The main suspects, with their motivations, follow.

• **Ide Baranato (P14).** Baranato accused True Word (P33), Naritoki's most trusted assistant, of complicity in his son's death (P15). Not long after that, he had a long talk with Naritoki, trying to

encourage him to pursue the opium trade. Naritoki refused, saying that opium was the city's lifeblood; destroying it would hurt more than it would help. (This conversation could have taken place at a geisha house and been overheard, at your discretion.) But Baranato's a powerful magician; why would he have needed to risk involving men-at-arms who might betray him?

• **An anonymous criminal (T2, T3, T4).** If Naritoki was getting too close to Fade, or The Wind, it might motivate either to remove him. This begs the question of how they knew he would be lightly guarded there and then, however. Besides, a criminal who could perform such an assassination would be well placed to perform much more lucrative crimes than those of Fade and The Wind. The Ryoko Ninja are a good possibility – except that Naritoki seemed to have them on the defensive.

• **Precious (P48) and/or Jewel (P49).** They are in direct competition with Magda's (P47) House of Foreign Stories (L22) and both stand to gain if she's removed. The biggest barrier to acting against her directly was her lover Naritoki. However, they would know that the death of an Emerald Magistrate would be investigated far more thoroughly than the death of even a famous geisha. Furthermore, if they could arrange the death of Naritoki, what has kept Magda alive?

Those are suspects with obvious motivations; any character in the city might have personal reasons for wanting Naritoki dead. Perhaps Yogo Osako (P10) knew about his deal with the Ryoko Ninja and was envious of the power he was amassing. Maybe Ample (P32) found out that Naritoki was making fun of him behind his back. Maybe Naritoki's own brother (P26) was tired of playing second fiddle, and his whole mourning and vengeance routine is just a big act. It could be that Korechika (P5) felt that Naritoki was allied with Hyobu (G9, P1) against him. Possibilities abound.

If you've read the end of the "Who's Who" chapter, you of course already know who arranged Naritoki's death and who carried out the command. It is a strange coincidence that this assassination would mesh so perfectly with the Baranato's timetable for destroying the opium trade – a timetable that may have been influenced by the diabolical machinations of the Kolat...



ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: A giant white rabbit, twice as big as a bull, is sighted in the Hidden Forest – where, as everyone knows, animals sometimes grow to monstrous sizes.

Focus: A rumor circulates that Bayushi Kachiko would pay a great deal, and bestow great honor, on anyone who could bring her such a huge rabbit pelt. If the magistrates have proved themselves capable, the Unicorn or Scorpion families (or both) might invite them along on a friendly hunting party.

Strike: This is actually a ploy by a group of mujina. They want to get a bunch of samurai out in the woods where they can lure them into embarrassing (but non-fatal) traps and snares. Once they've humiliated the samurai, they won't be able to resist revealing themselves so they can laugh, then run off to spread the word.



ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: A monstrous flying oni with a woman's face on its gigantic tongue suddenly arrives in the forest and begins making a horrendous nuisance of itself. It's clearly nastier than an ogre.

Focus: This is the oni that Soshi Seiryoku (P9), under duress, gave her name. She's called it closer, hoping that someone will injure it enough that she can get some relief from it, or power over it. Seiryoku has made her move because Ikoma Yoriko (P29) is out of town.

Strike: The oni is tough for the magistrates to handle while Seiryoku is alive. If they can find the oni's name giver, they can kill her to weaken it. If they do that, though, they won't find out about Yoriko. (Eventually, Yoriko returns, uses her own oni to banish the Seiryoku oni, and punishes Soshi Seiryoku in an abominable fashion.)



As mentioned earlier, each magistrate gets a yearly stipend, which can be spent at her discretion. This raises the question (of course) of what to buy? I mean, you can only purchase so many fine kimonos and fancy horses.


To determine how much each magistrate gets, divide 500 koku evenly among them, OR give them 100 a year each – whichever is more.

Since this is a game of high mystery and adventure, not double entry accounting, I'm giving you permission to assume that the characters make enough money from their regular holdings to keep them in a fashion befitting their station. (If this is substantially better than they were living before – well, there's nothing like a nod from the Emerald Champion to increase your family business.) The stipend is free to be hoarded, squandered – or used to hire assistants.

Most of the ronin and minor samurai (P32 through P36) are available for hire, at prices mentioned earlier. Remember, that's a price per month; some samurai may give a break to employers who hire for extended periods, or who pay in advance. Others may want more for long periods of employment.

Prices for other things magistrates might want to hire are listed below.

| SERVICE/ITEM | PRICE |
|---|--------------|
| Buy the friendship of a Fireman gang for a month | 5-10 silvers |
| Host a stylish, intimate gathering (5-10 guests) | 60 silvers |
| Host a lavish, massive party (all nobles invited) | 30 Koku |
| Hire a dozen peasant thugs for one raid | 10 silvers |
| Hire a dozen competent soldiers for a single raid | *10 Koku |
| Hire a dozen elite horsemen for a single raid | *20 Koku |
| Buy up 1/6 of Ryoko Owari's opium crop** | 1000 Koku |
| Purchase a small skiff (adequate for getting to Teardrop Island) | 5 Koku |
| Purchase a fast sailboat (faster than any barge; comparable to Fade's pirate ships) | 15-20 Koku |
| The average bribe for information, from an <i>eta</i> | 2 zeni |
| Average information bribe, from a <i>heimin</i> | 1 silver |
| Average information bribe, from a noble | 2 Koku |
| Bribing Yogo Osako (P10) to "forget" a crime committed by a magistrate | 10 Koku |
| Note; the price is what she'll accept; she'll initially ask for three times that much. | |
| Bribing Yogo Osako to forget a crime committed by the friend of a magistrate | 5-15 Koku |
| Again, she'll ask for three times as much – but she'll also accept payment in kind later on... | |
| Bribing Governor Hyobu to "overlook" a serious indiscretion | 500 Koku |
| She won't haggle – but might also consider repayment in "favors". | |
| * Note: these would probably be Thunder Guards, meaning magistrates would need permission from Hyobu (G9, P1) and Jocho (G10, P2). Or they could hire mercenaries at triple the price. | |
| ** If this were resold over the course of a year in Ryoko Owari, it would yield back 2500 koku – after the expenses of hiring distributors and processors. If distributed throughout the country, the profit would rise to 3000-3600 koku, depending on distribution, demand, etc. All this assumes, of course, that the opium merchant in question survives. | |



Ryoko Owari For Non- Magistrates

I assumed that most people using “City of Lies” would have player characters who are magistrates. However, it’s a big town and can fit many, *many* other styles of play. Groups united by family or clan may have certain objectives in Ryoko Owari. On the other hand, PC groups may get together with the intention of accomplishing a certain goal. Some possibilities for different clans and common goals are given below, along with suggestions for integrating the material in this book to its best advantage.

Note that many of these goals – especially clan goals – are not incompatible with duty as an Emerald Magistrate...

Reservoir Dogs

It’s good to be bad; why get your hakama in a bunch chasing crooks when you can *become* a crook, get rich, and look stylish doing it? This is a good option for ronin, or for any players who are burdened but lightly by the demands of honor.

Instead of being handed the Magistrate’s Dossier, they can be required to steal it, or get it through blackmail. As for Naritoki’s Journal, that’s worth well over its weight in gold to many, many factions in the city.

This will probably set up an antagonistic relationship between the characters and the new magistrate (whoever it is), so take care to build a magistrate (or group of magistrates) who provides good challenges to your player group. This doesn’t mean the magistrates should be able to counter or see through every ploy the players try; instead, the magistrates should be able to foil poor plans, but should be stuck by good ones. They’re not

there to beat the characters or to be beaten; they’re there to make it challenging.

Of course, criminal activity is a boom field in Ryoko Owari. If the PCs decide to start their own mafia, they’re going to have stiff competition from the *kajinin* (G12), the Ryoko Ninja (T3) and the opium cartels (G14), not to mention the Thunder Guard (G10). On the other hand, allying with one of the abovementioned groups provides an excellent way to produce conflict with the others. As icing on the cake, “The Opium War” can be run with little modification.

The Truth Is Out There

In this one city there’s a debased cult worshipping Lord Moon, a misled cult worshipping the Naga, persistent rumors of ninja, a Kolat conspiracy that’s taken over an opium cartel, and a spider demon who’s married and settling down. Characters who have an interest in the paranormal and secretive have plenty of motivation to come to Ryoko Owari; they could also be motivated by hatred of any of the above. Another option is curiosity; does Lord Moon answer prayers? How does Naga magic work? What are the secrets of *shinobi*?

The secret to running a campaign based on secrets is simple: *frustration*. Any fan of “The X-Files” knows that once you find out the truth, most of the fascination goes straight down the toilet. So don’t let your players find out the truth about the Kolat, the Ryoko Ninja and the various cults and conspiracies of Ryoko Owari. Give them hints. Give them ambiguous clues. Give them conflicting data and leads that are misleading. Give them big helpings of red herring sushi and then, when they’re ready to scream from frustration, give them a breakthrough.

In my personal opinion, no single group of characters, no matter how competent, should be able to ferret out the secrets of all the abovementioned groups in under ten years of game time (and at least a year or two of real time). Finding out the secrets of even a comparatively minor group, like the Moon Cult, should take a lot of digging and danger. Finding out the truth about the Kolat should take a lifetime. (Of course, the average lifetime of a Kolat investigator is about twenty minutes...)



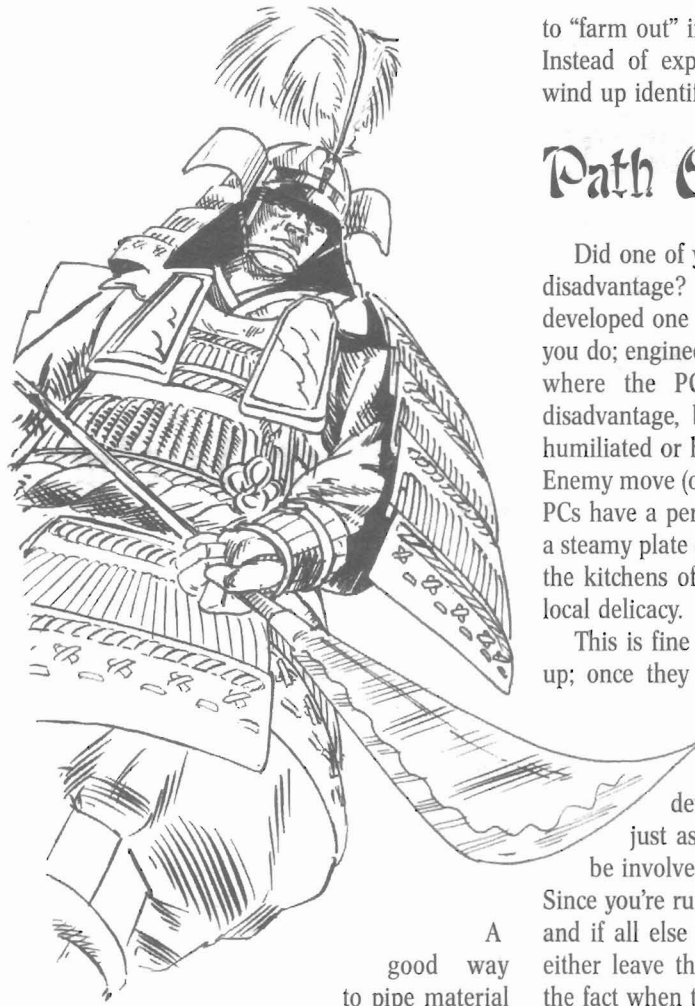


ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: Several young, minor samurai are seen around town with severe bruises and other injuries – but no assaults or robberies are reported. If asked, the samurai reply that they are studying with Kitsuki Jotomon, who lets her senior students ambush them at any time – day or night.

Focus: A group of 6–8 bandits (not Fade’s men – possibly the Ryoko Ninja) hears that some samurai won’t report attacks, and only fight back with boken. Several students are badly beaten and robbed.

Strike: The magistrates must find a way to sort out the “legitimate” attackers from the bandits – and find a way to protect the students without causing them to perceive an insult to their abilities.



A good way to pipe material from this box to investigative characters is by having Iuchi Sadako (P21) appointed Emerald Magistrate. This unlikely turn of events is engineered by the Scorpion clan, who are convinced that she’ll ignore mundane investigations (like the opium cartels) in pursuit of rarer game. If the PCs are interested in similar things and seem trustworthy, Sadako will be quick to share her dossier with them – and equally quick to ask their help on tricky or dangerous investigations.

If you go this route, be careful to avoid a “Lone Ranger and Tonto” arrangement where Sadako does all the thinking and the PCs just nod along. No stats are provided for Sadako; make her weaker than the PCs in a lot of ways, so that she comes to rely on them. Use her as clue dispenser, but have her unreliable – for every breakthrough she gives out, provide a wild goose chase as well. Alternately, you may set her up with a hard-headed partner (probably a Lion) who keeps her on task with mundane stuff. This means she has

to “farm out” investigations – to your characters. Instead of exploring the mysteries, she has to wind up identifying them for others.

Path Of Blood

Did one of your PCs take the “Sworn Enemy” disadvantage? Better yet, have any of them developed one in the course of play? Here’s what you do; engineer a confrontation with the Enemy where the PC is not only at a significant disadvantage, but where all the other PCs get humiliated or hurt in the bargain. Then have the Enemy move (or return) to Ryoko Owari. Now the PCs have a perfect reason to go there; they want a steamy plate of hot, fresh, payback soufflé – and the kitchens of Ryoko Owari consider revenge a local delicacy.

This is fine for giving them a reason to show up; once they do, you can lead them to other plotlines by using the Enemy as an agent. (This is considerably easier than developing a new hook for each plot; just ask yourself why the Enemy would be involved, or would appear to be involved. Since you’re running the Enemy, it’s not too hard, and if all else fails you can just not decide, and either leave them to wonder or just agree after the fact when the PCs “figure it out”.)

The actions of the Enemy can vary widely depending on his or her nature. A sneaky, manipulative Enemy is right at home in Ryoko Owari and is probably be trying to manipulate one of its many power groups (if s/he isn’t already deeply involved.)

On the other hand, an honorable, straightforward Enemy provides a very interesting possibility. What if the Enemy becomes Emerald Magistrate, and the PCs try to foil his every investigation and disgrace him before Emperor and Champion? Now their Enemy is armed with broad powers of enforcement, but they also have a wide array of potential allies. Of course, allying with Osako (P10), Korechika (P5) or Yoriko (P29) can certainly create as many problems as it solves. Get in bed with Scorpions and you’ll get stung...



Greed Is Good

Ryoko Owari's most obvious face is "major economic hub." There's a reason so many samurai are merchant patrons; it's because there's a lot of money to be made. Maybe your characters don't give a fig for the Emperor's justice; they're going to *buy* some honor by getting stinkin' rich.

Many of the hooks used for criminals (see *Reservoir Dogs*, above) can be used for honest businessmen with a little tinkering. After all, is a samurai from outside the city going to understand the working of the *kajinin* gangs (G12)? The question of cooperating with the opium cartels is also highly significant; during the Opium War scenario, being their friends can be almost as dangerous as being their enemies.

A successful merchant could become a third corner in the rivalry between Korechika (P5) and the Shinjos (P11, P12, P43), and wind up having to use politics, cash and any other strategy to keep merchants as vassals.

Here's the important thing to remember when running a group who are focused on merchant endeavors; give them something they don't want to lose. As soon as they've got mental value invested in something (or things) it becomes easy to motivate them by presenting threats or opportunities in financial terms.

Scorpion Clan

Scorpions (either individually or in a group) might go to Ryoko Owari to seek their fortune, because an ally (or enemy) lives there, or because it's a city where people commit indiscretions – making it a perfect place to establish a lucrative blackmail operation.

If you want to start a party of Scorpions in Ryoko Owari, you might have them assembled and sent off to "discover the truth about the opium situation and report it to me only." They could be sent by the family daimyo of the Bayushi, Shosuro or Soshi families – after all, any inspection announced beforehand would only show what the cartels wanted seen. If the PCs find out a lot, then Shoju (or whoever sent them) knows that the opium operations are vulnerable to investigation. If the PCs learn nothing, then

their patron knows they're expendable and can be sent on more dangerous missions.

SEE ALSO: *Reservoir Dogs*

Unicorn Clan

Ryoko Owari is the gateway to trade between the Crab and Unicorn clans, and is also a major juncture for getting Unicorn goods to the Wasp and Fox clans. As such, the Unicorns want things to go their way in the city – but there's been a big gap between what they want and how things actually go. Their influence in the city is significant, but they want more – so they'll send more people, hoping that new blood will not only give the Ides and Shinjos in the city a new perspective, but will also serve to remind them of their heritage in a city full of temptations.

SEE ALSO: *The Truth Is Out There, Greed is Good*

Lion Clan

The Way of the Lion is the warrior's path; and a critical step for the wise warrior is to know thy enemy. Therefore, a Lion (or group of Lions) can be sent to Ryoko Owari by their family or clan daimyo with orders to secretly answer the following questions.

- How critical is Ryoko Owari to a Scorpion military mobilization?
- What are the tactical assumptions of the city's defenders? How can these assumptions be subverted or circumvented?
- What are its defensive strengths? How can these strengths best be countered?
- What are its weaknesses? How can they most effectively be exploited?
- What are the defensive strengths and weaknesses of the nearby Yogo and Soshi castles?
- Develop and discuss three different invasion plans for the city.

The daimyo will stress the need to avoid entanglements in any Scorpion plot that could be used to control the character, and that it's absolutely imperative that the mission remain utterly secret. After all, if the Scorpions find out the PCs are spies, they won't be killed; they'll be fed false information that could cause incalculable harm to a Lion clan battle effort. So

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: The first night the new magistrates arrive, they find two invitations waiting for them. One is from the Shinjo family and the other is from the Shosuro family; both invite all the magistrates to dinner.

Focus: Both dinners are on the same night.

Strike: The magistrates can choose to either insult one family and stroke the other, or they can split up and divide the perceived loyalties of the party, or they can decline both invitations and earn the grudging and resentful respect of both.



ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: Strictly by chance (or destiny) the magistrates run into a man walking through the woods while they're out hunting.

Focus: He's dead. Keeps walking though.

Strike: This is a guy who tried to work for both a *maho* sorcerer and one of the power groups in the city (the Moon Cult, the Ryoko Ninja – whoever) and play them off against each other.

The sorcerer and power group agreed on one thing – this guy had to suffer. So now, every couple months or so, the power group slowly tortures him to death, then sends the body to the *maho* to get resurrected so it can be tortured to death again. If the PCs kill it, the group will look for its undead chew toy. If they don't, it will lead them to their hideout.

if the PCs screw up, it won't be their lives; it'll be the lives of their brothers.

Luckily, they can count on some help from the locals; Kitsu Senshi (P30) is wise and knowledgeable, and the honor of Ikoma Yoriko (P29) is unquestioned.

SEE ALSO: Path of Blood

Crab Clan

In the past year, two prominent Crabs have gotten into serious and public trouble with opium. Specifically, a Crab magistrate was revealed to be involved in the opium trade and was killed by Bayushi Saigo (see page 93), and one of the Kaiu family master engineers was found dead of an overdose while on duty in the Shadowlands.

Like an iceberg, the visible part of the Crab clan's opium problem is only a fraction. For each public humiliation, many samurai are addicted – and some of the addicted are being blackmailed as well.

No Crab likes to be weak. Opium makes warriors weak. Therefore, opium must be stopped. PCs may be sent to Ryoko Owari with specific orders to destroy the opium trade – a daunting task by anyone's standards. However, on the plus side, they don't have the complications and responsibilities of an Emerald Magistrate; beating someone's skull in with an iron club doesn't require an Order of Appearance.

SEE ALSO: Greed is Good, Path of Blood

Crane Clan

The Crane clan has a hundred mouths to whisper in the Emperor's right ear. The Scorpion has two mouths to whisper in his left – but those are the mouths of Shoji and Kachiko, which gives the Scorpions a powerful voice in determining Imperial appointments.

The Scorpions like to put a Crane in a powerful position – as long as it's a Crane they trust. (Of course, "trust" is a slippery concept when speaking of Scorpions. It usually means "can humiliate into *seppuku* in a pinch.")

Now, the Cranes want to beat the Scorpions at their own game of deception. The mission of the PCs is to go to Ryoko Owari and get blackmailed – or at least to engineer it so that the Scorpions

believe they're blackmailing the PCs. This is a difficult, dangerous and humiliating role – but if the PCs can endure it, the Crane will propose them for important government positions, and the Scorpion will ensure that they get them. Then, when the Scorpions rely on them to obey at a critical time, the PCs can betray them, reveal that the transgression for which they're being blackmailed is phony, and cause the Scorpions tremendous loss of face. As a bonus, any blackmailer who dropped the ball so obviously would be hard put to survive the wrath of his clansmen.

SEE ALSO: Greed is Good

Phoenix Clan

The Phoenix clan has its suspicions about the Scorpion clan. Actually, they have their suspicions about the Crab, Unicorn and Dragon clans too, but the characters only need concern themselves with the Scorpions.

The mission of the PCs, should they choose to accept it, is to evaluate and report on the Soshi and Yogo schools, providing preliminary information about rumors of corruption and dark magics. Should sufficient suspicion of wrongdoing emerge, an Inquisition will be held.

Ryoko Owari will serve as their base of operations; being a cosmopolitan city, it will be less likely for suspicious black sorcerers to strike at them directly. (The Phoenix are well aware a *maho-tsukai* pays for power with subtlety.)

As an addendum, the Phoenix clan would be pleased if the PCs could ascertain the truth behind the publication of the disturbing "Memoirs of an Opium Eater" – a book which casts a dark shadow of dishonor on the Shiba family, despite its dubious authenticity.

SEE ALSO: The Truth Is Out There

Dragon Clan

Aw, who knows why the Dragon clan does anything? If you want to have real fun with them, have Togashi Yokuni send them. Just say that he's told them "Your destinies lie at Journey's End." Give a slew of ambiguous clues about what they're supposed to do (all planned out in advance

to lead them to maximum trouble) along with some puzzling stuff that just sounds good.

SEE ALSO: The Truth Is Out There

The Cuckoo's Egg

WARNING: The following plot complication is recommended only for the most sadistic GMs and the most uncomplaining players.

Here's how it works; when the PCs come to Ryoko Owari, they'll probably meet Hyobu eventually. When they do, have her pick out one character and favor him (it has to be a him, and one without Benten's Blessing) especially. She won't give any reason for this mysterious "soft spot", but Jocho (P2), Kimi (P3), Gobei (P4), Sukemara (P27), Senshi (P30), Kinto (P31) or any of the local religious honchos (P37, P38, P39) can explain it if they choose. It's simply this; the character bears a resemblance to her late husband, Governor Akitada.

This is all very well and good; the PC knows that she's predisposed to like him, and as long as he doesn't push his luck he has some minor protection from her.

Then one day, the axe falls.

Hyobu's attitude reverses completely – even as Kimi and Jocho seem to become more interested in the character. It takes a bit of stretching and promising, but eventually one of the Shosuros (*not* Hyobu) can be convinced to reveal the reason Hyobu has become so cold towards the character.

She's got evidence that he doesn't just look like Akitada; there's a real chance that the character is Akitada's illegitimate child.

This opens up lots and lots of ugliness for the PC. I'm sure you can think of many problems that could arise, but I'll get you started with a few...

- Loss of prestige if the rumors about his ancestry get out.
- Confronting adulterous Mom.

- Confronting cuckolded Dad.
- Confronting confused siblings, who may now have inheritance issues. ("You're carrying the sword of my grandfather. Your grandfather's sword rests in Jocho's scabbard.")

- The suspicion that falls on those with "the Scorpion taint" – especially a suspected Scorpion in another clan's livery.

As I said, this brings up all kinds of issues – not only political and dramatic issues, but themes of identity as well. This is a plot line that can hack at the very root of a character's identity – am I who I am, or do I carry the blood of strangers? Do my deeds really matter, or does all my glory accrue only unto a Scorpion I never met?

Some players will really dig the conflict and opportunity for introspection and character development. Others want to keep their character's back story sacred and unchanged. It's up to each GM to decide if pulling this trick is going to increase a player's fun or unseat it. Handle with care.



ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: A menacing ogre swaggers out of the forest and starts snacking on fishermen, farmers, and anyone else who has the misfortune to run across it.

Focus: Kitsuki Jotomon (P28), Otaku Genshi (P19), Bayushi Otodo (P7) and Shosuro Jocho (P2) all want to be the ones to hunt the critter down – even though it's (technically) the job of the magistrates.

Strike: The two Scorpions pay off barge men not to carry samurai across the river while they're on the trail, and they arrange "accidents" that clog the bridges closest to the ogre sighting. Genshi, in turn, lets Fade and his bandits know that the Scorpions are heading to the woods – resulting in a humiliating ambush and retreat. Meanwhile, the ogre continues to rampage.



**"The Opium
War"**

**An Epic
Adventure in
Ryoko Owari**



The Opium War

Ide Baranato (P14) is an unhappy man. He had great plans – noble, idealistic plans, based on kind sentiments and a beloved son (P15). He worked hard, he sacrificed, he compromised, and it looked like everything was going to work out. He felt that the prize he'd labored for so long – acceptance for his clan, an end to the pointless feud with the Scorpions – was almost within his grasp. He was going to marry his heir to a girl (P3) who was not only politically advantageous – she was beautiful and honorable and liked the family! His son was well connected, admired, and more than that – strong. Baranato knew that Michikane had the courage that makes a man magnanimous, the honor that makes a man kind.

It was all so close; and it all came crashing down.

His son is dead – found in a geisha house, surrounded by drugs. Killed by his own greed for pleasure, Michikane has drowned his whole family in shame.

His plans are crushed. His wife (P18) won't leave the house any more – sometimes she locks herself, sobbing, in Michikane's chambers for days and won't even come out to eat.

He has one slender consolation; his other son, Asamitsu (P16) has surprised him. The marriage to the Shosuros has been salvaged – somehow. Still it's little consolation to Baranato. Without Michikane, it all seems like a farce.

Only one thing consoles him. He has a new plan.

This is not a plan based on optimism and peace. It is not a plan for reconciliation, and it won't end with a marriage. His is a plan based on treachery and deception and mistrust, and it will

end, he hopes, with the violent destruction of the opium trade that killed his favorite boy.

Ide Baranato wants revenge.

In this, as in so much, he is the tool of the Kolat.

Not really surprising. The Kolat have been engineering this for over six years, when they kidnapped and tortured Soshi Seiryoku to gain control over part of the opium trade. The plan proceeded apace when Michikane followed the man he thought was his brother into a back room of the House of the Morning Star – where he was restrained and force-fed liquid opium until he died. The next phase was to replace Baranato's most trusted advisor with the same devious agent who had masqueraded as Asamitsu. Together, Baranato and this master of lies have crafted a plan to destroy the opium trade in Rokugan.

Will it succeed? It's got a Kolat master behind it, and the only thing standing in its way was Ashidaka Naritoki (P25). Now that he's been conveniently removed (a removal, surprising enough, with no Kolat involvement), it's up to the new magistrates.

Act One

Baranato's plan (subtly molded by his "advisor") is to use the inherent mistrust of the Scorpion cartels against them. If he can start a gang war, all the gangs get hurt, and even the winner comes out bloody.

SCENE ONE

Baranato has gathered a group of his relatives and enlisted them to help him with his scheme. This group consists of his son Asamitsu, his nephew Nakatada (P17) and his nieces, Otaku Genshi (P19) and Otaku Naishi (P20). Genshi has told the others that she can "trick" the bandit Fade (T2) into helping them.

The first act of the conspiracy is the kind of daring plan that other clans would call "insane" and that the Unicorn clan calls "standard". Robbing an opium warehouse is hard; robbing three in one day sounds impossible, which is just what the conspirators are counting on.

The other conspirators believe Genshi tricked Fade into seizing a shipment of processed opium from Necessary Village (see page 9). In actual fact, she just asked him. Here's the tricky bit though; Fade and his bandits dressed up in stolen



Thunder Guard armor for the assault. (They bagged it just last month, remember?) So the report that Korechika gets is that a bunch of guys in Thunder Guard armor ripped off a week's supply of liquid opium for the Crab lands.

The same day Fade attacks the Bayushi cartel, Nakatada and Asamitsu pull off an audacious daylight burglary from the Shosuro warehouse. After ambushing the carters who usually pick up the unprocessed opium, Baranato used his "Know the Mind" spell to find out their passwords, then "Way of Deception" to make Nakatada and Asamitsu look like them.

In addition to loading up their cart with what they were expected to take, Nakatada used "Cloak of Night" to pile in a good deal more. Hauling a fortune in unprocessed opium, they drove away, waving at the guards. As a final coup de grace, Nakatada used "Command the Mind" to give one of the guards a strong, nagging impression that he had sounded suspiciously like Soshi Seiryoku...

While Asamitsu and Nakatada were stealing from Hyobu and framing Seiryoku, Genshi and Naishi were stealing from Seiryoku and framing Korechika. They did it the hard but simple way;

they dressed up in loose, billowing black clothes, masked their features, rode into one of her warehouses, killed three guards and scared the rest away. Then they hauled the opium to a waiting boat, scattering and trampling what they couldn't carry off.

The frame is in two parts; Baranato went to a great deal of trouble and expense to get a horse that looked a *lot* like Bayushi Otado's personal steed (P15). They also dropped a unique *netsuke* (a small decorative statue, usually hung off the end of a sash) that they had stolen from Otado a week earlier when he was in a drunken stupor.

So; Bayushi has reports that men in Hyobu's armor stole his drugs. Hyobu has a report that Seiryoku stole her drugs. Seiryoku knows that her drugs got stolen, but she doesn't know who did it. At the nudging of her fearsome patroness Yoriko (P29) (who's Kolat, remember), Seiryoku tells her merchant Watchful (P42) to call in the Emerald Magistrates.

SCENE TWO

Watchful reports that three of her guards were killed and her warehouse robbed. When the magistrates show up, she's there, acting



HUH? KOLAT?

That's right, the Kolat - shadowy masters of Rokugan's history so secretive that even I don't know much about them - and I'm writing the book. The "need to know" information I've been given indicates they're the ultimate political conservatives. They see Rokugan as their own personal pleasure boat; they don't mind steering it for hundreds of years to reach their goal, and they don't like anyone rocking it.

Opium rocks the boat; it makes for quick money and power, and the Kolat only like slow power - specifically, their own. They don't like the Unicorn clan either; they'd been edited out of the equations for Rokugan's future, and now they've rudely butted right back in. It's not lost on the Kolat that it was the Unicorn who brought opium.

So now they've built a plan to cripple the opium trade. In this, the Unicorn clan are their pawns; that way, if the plot is revealed, the only people hurt are their enemies.

It's a classic Kolat strategy; heads they win, and tails you lose.



spectacularly nervous, falling over herself, begging for their help, and making sure they can see her properly stamped license to harvest and store opium poppies for medicinal purposes.

On the surface, this seems pretty clear; a legitimate merchant of medical opium has had her raw materials stolen – no doubt by some slyboots who wants to turn it into illegal drugs. But who would do such a thing? Enter two clues...

- If the characters search, they'll find the dropped *netsuke* on a Perception roll of 10 (if they roll a 30 or higher, tell them that it seems surprisingly unlikely that it would be that obvious...). If they use "Commune" to talk to the *netsuke*, it can tell them that it was dropped there during the burglary, but not who dropped it or who owns it. (Earth spirits aren't very bright.)

- If the characters interrogate the witnesses, one of them will remember the bandit on a "huge horse – all black, except for white hooves and a white star on its head." This is, of course, a description of Otado's horse.

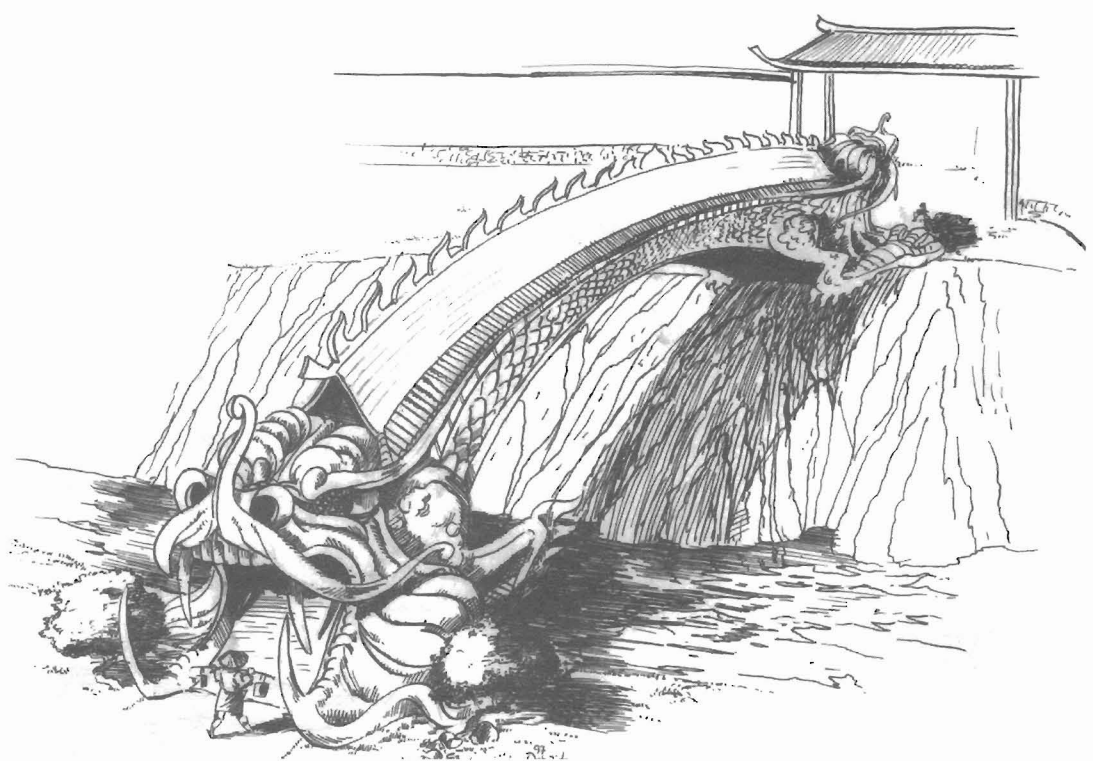
If Eyebrows (P53) is called in to look at the corpses, he'll just say that they were cut down with swords from a high vantage – consistent with being struck by mounted attackers. One was cut down from behind.

SCENE THREE

The players now have a few clues pointing to Otado. Their dossier implies that the opium trade is run by Seiryoku (Watchful's patroness) and Korechika (Otado's father). Looks pretty obvious, right? (If it doesn't seem obvious to them, recommend that they read the entry on Watchful, and make 'em beat a TN 15 Intelligence roll to remember the entry that describes Otado's horse (P15).)

It looks even more obvious if they go to talk to Otado or Korechika; both refuse to talk to the Emerald Magistrates. This is because the attack on Necessary Village has left them extremely jumpy and paranoid. Right now they're thinking "Is Hyobu making her move? It would be just like her to rip us off and *then* send those meddling magistrates to investigate the village! While we're preoccupied dealing with the magistrates, she'll use the Mantis to make up our shortfall in Crab country – probably with the opium she stole from us!" So naturally, they stonewall the magistrates.

The magistrates can try to draw up an Order of Appearance (basically a subpoena to drag Otado in for questioning) but they need a stamp from either Osako (P10), Hyobu (P1) or the Emerald Champion. Both Osako and the Champion will be hesitant to offend the Bayushis without some kind of significant payoff. After all,



it's the word of a *heimin* witness against the son of a Bayushi.

Hyobu may not agree, but she's interested by the request. She thinks Soshi ripped her off; if the magistrates show up claiming that Otado ripped Soshi off, she immediately thinks "Hm... either Bayushi is sticking it to both of us and trying to make us fight, or Soshi faked this robbery of her own stores to frame Otado and set the Bayushis up for another strike..." She holds off on signing the Order of Appearance until she's sure who her real enemy is.

In short, it should look to the magistrates as if they've almost got the goods on Bayushi Otado – but they can't quite make it stick.

SCENE FOUR

This is a short, ugly little scene that starts when the magistrates get a message from Watchful the merchant. She wants to see them as soon as possible – she's got something to tell them that may be really important.

If the magistrates invite her to come to their residence, she doesn't show up due to a detour to Eyebrows' slab. If they go to meet her at her house, they arrive just in time to see her running down the street screaming. Galloping behind her is a lanky guy on a horse, wearing a mempo and carrying an unsheathed no-dachi. He's getting ready to play polo with Watchful's head.

The masked assassin is the ronin Jaw (P35) (magistrates will recognize him on a TN 30 Perception roll – TN 25 if they're familiar with him) who has been hired by Subtle (P41) (Hyobu's merchant front). Subtle asked Hyobu permission to set up the hit. She agreed, having finally decided that breaking up the Soshi cartel might be in her best interests, regardless of whether the Bayushis were trying to trick her into doing it or not.

Rolls for initiative are made before Jaw has a chance to take a whack at Watchful. Jaw attacks Watchful on the first turn. If the magistrates attack him or try to stop him, he turns and flees on the second turn.

This is a fairly normal combat; it's quite possible that either Watchful or Jaw (or both) ends up dead.

If Jaw dies, there's no real way to find out who hired him. If he survives, he won't say a single word to them. (Looks like a job for Pitiful (P55)...)

If Watchful croaks, the magistrates never find out what she was going to tell them. If she survives, her big clue is that a tall, scary ronin has been following her. She's now really afraid, and begs the magistrates to help her flee the city. She's got plenty of money (she'll offer them 30 koku apiece if they're reluctant) but she needs travel papers – she's going to set off for Dragon country and join a monastery.

Magistrates may decide to sweat her for information on her cartel. She ponies up gladly – names, locations, schedules, all of it – if they just promise to protect her until she can get out of town. (No further assassination attempts are made on her while she's in the custody of the Emerald Magistrates. Hyobu figures that her capture by the law is as bad for the Soshi cartel as her death, if not worse. Seiryoku figures she's getting tortured, so she can wait until Watchful's more vulnerable.)

Once Watchful is gone (either dead or departed), most of the significant cartel workers bolt. They're terrified of Seiryoku and want to beat it while she's distracted. This includes the witnesses of "Otado's" attack.

Act Two

SCENE ONE

After the attack on Watchful, there's a period of nervous maneuvering. Street prices of opium have jumped considerably, and people are starting to get edgy. Rumors are flying, people are hoarding. Merchants are hiring bodyguards, and everyone is nervous.

Give your players a bit of free rein here to poke around and ask questions. Here are some answers you can dole out...

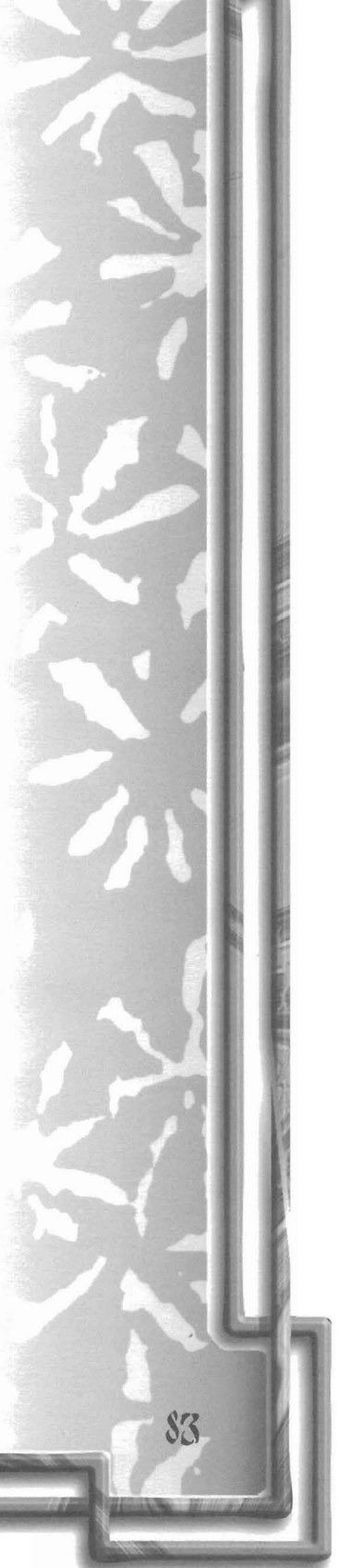
- Otado supposedly robbed the Soshi processing area, but he claims he was out riding with cousin Kimi (P3) at the time. Kimi supports this story.

- Sharp (P40) is particularly nervous and has hired the ronin Dove (P36) as his bodyguard.

- Sharp's men have been asking about movements of the Thunder Guard during the Soshi attack.

- Some Red Plumes have been sent out into surrounding farmlands to protect Hyobu's poppy growers.

- Watchful the merchant was sneaking out of town, hidden in the back of a grain cart, when something came down out of the sky and picked





her up. No one saw what it was, but pieces of her were found scattered for miles. (This is assuming that Jaw didn't get her.)

You can throw in a few fight scenes here, as opium addicts start to feel the bite. Nothing really dramatic happens until...

SCENE TWO

Fade's men - again, disguised as Thunder Guards - go out into Hyobu's opium fields and set them on fire. The real Thunder Guard try to stop them, leading to a merry chase which ends when Fade manages to get two units of Thunder Guard fighting *each other* while he rides off, laughing himself sick.

While this is going on, Nakatada and Baranato are sitting up on a hill, watching as the sailors and guards on one of Korechika's opium barges scream and jump over the side. They're doing this because Nakatada just pegged the boat with "Heart of the Inferno", while Baranato put a "Counterspell" on the "Counterspell" being cast by the shugenja on the boat. Once the boat has been blasted open, both the Unicorn Shugenja cast "Wind Borne Speed" and start levitating bales of unprocessed opium out of the boat. They get several before the boat sinks completely.

The Scorpion are still feeling uncommunicative; both suspect Seiryoku for these latest attacks. (Hyobu figures she used magic to burn the fields and confuse the Thunder Guard; Korechika knows magic was used to rob him.) Both also suspect that the magistrates are either actively in cahoots with their enemy, or are being used as blind pawns. The stonewalling continues.

This doesn't mean that the magistrates can't find out that there were more impressive and well-coordinated attacks. Precious (P48), Jewel (P49), Magda (P47) and Gate (P46) all know bits and pieces of one or both stories. Shortcut (P51) knows that a bunch of Hyobu's farmers got their fields burned, and Shrimp (P34) was sailing down the river just as the sailors on Korechika's barge started to regroup and try to recover what they could. (The Ides were long gone by then, of course.)

Plus, opium prices shoot up again.

SCENE THREE

This is an optional scene; play it out if the PCs decide to shake down Sharp and Subtle for information.

Both play dumb initially, but only Subtle will remain shut up if beaten up. Sharp cracks after the first smack, and also squeals if threatened with torture. Subtle only confesses after Pitiful goes to work.

Either merchant (if pressured sufficiently) will tell the magistrates the details of the attacks, and



DFE

about their various smuggling and processing enterprises.

Note, however, that while roughing up these merchants is completely within their rights, neither Hyobu nor Korechika likes it one bit. You might want to remind the magistrates that they cannot arrest or even accuse nobles on the say-so of *heimin*; they'll get laughed out of court.

Korechika won't immediately respond to this attack on his merchant (he's too busy trying to keep his opium empire together), but he makes sure to stick it to the magistrates good and hard as soon as he has a free minute. (Use your imagination.) As for Hyobu, she simply arranges to have the Thunder Guard beat the hell out of any *heimin*, *hinin* or *eta* that are known to be friends or allies of the magistrates. (Within reason; she won't hurt Precious, Jewel, Magda or Gate.) The Guards tell their victims that it's for "insolence".

SCENE FOUR

Things get extra ugly a few days later, when Shosuro Kimi is kidnapped. One minute she's in the temple praying, the next she's gone. Hyobu (or Jocho) demands that the magistrates find her, and even points them in the right direction; the house of Bayushi Korechika.

Korechika's spies on the street told him that Soshi's cartel was all washed up after the hit on Watchful. They also found out who hired Jaw to do the hit. Korechika figured his cartel was next in line and grabbed the unsuspecting Kimi as a hostage. He's holding her at his manor house – and (for added protection) he's got a troop of archers inside to defend the place.

Hyobu's daughter is being held hostage; but on the other hand, Hyobu can easily surround the manor house and burn it to the ground if any harm comes to Kimi. It's a classic balance of terror.

Hyobu decides to unbalance it by sending in the Emerald Magistrates. She wants them to go in and negotiate for Kimi's release – and she makes it clear that if her daughter *isn't* released, she'll sign an Order of Appearance for Otado and have *him* hauled in and tortured. If the Bayushis refuse to honor it, they'll officially be traitors in the eyes of the Emperor and bring shame on their whole family.

The threat of a loaded Order gets the magistrates in to see Korechika – who insists that Kimi was placed in his house for protection before

all this "civil disorder" began. He also baldly states that the magistrates have no authority to take her. (This is debatable, but make sure the magistrates know they're in a house full of Korechika's armed retainers...)

Korechika says that he is honor bound to protect her until the "unrest" is over. Two proofs are needed to convince him.

1. He needs to know the magistrates are on the trail of the "real culprits" – by which he means, not Otado. The magistrates must be willing to state (in writing, stamped with their jade seals) that Otado had nothing to do with any of the disruptions that have lately occurred. (Ironically, this is completely true – but by now the magistrates probably think he's guilty as sin.)

2. Hyobu must agree to end the idiotic struggle she's started. "I really believe that there is now a great deal of opportunity for both of us if we can just stop fighting and start negotiating."

When Hyobu hears this message, she asks them to take a return message back. "I never wanted this struggle, and have only been reacting to assaults on my interests. By all means, let's discuss." (You may want to play up this clue. Or not.) She also applies all her leverage to get the magistrates to sign the document absolving Otado. (She starts by arguing that they have no case against him, no witness any more, and that in any event, the gains to be had by ending the feud will outweigh him getting away with it.)

If the magistrates can get Kimi out, both Hyobu and Korechika are a little better disposed towards them – for now. Otherwise, the struggle goes on.

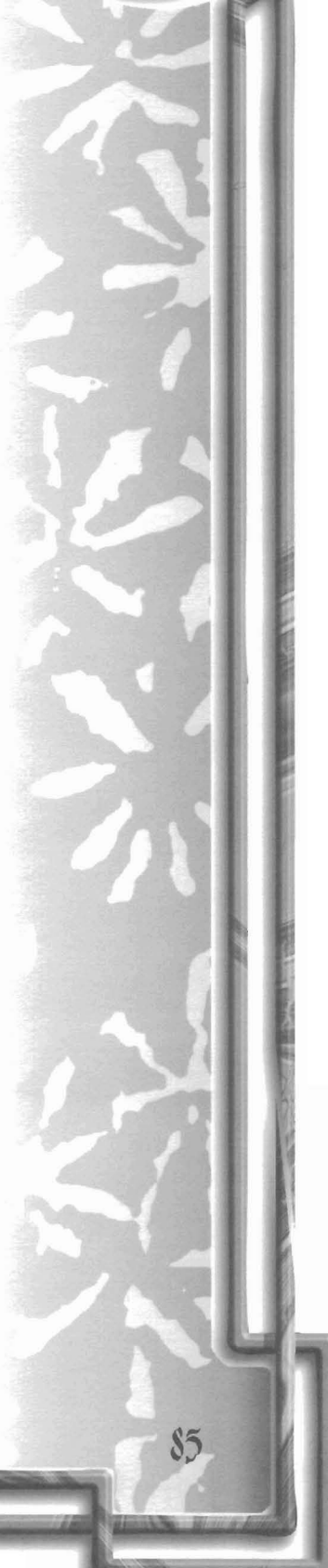
If (for whatever reason) they fail to negotiate a settlement, Hyobu grumpily ransoms her daughter and regards the magistrates as incompetent or (worse) deliberately obstructive.


SCENE FIVE

One way or the other Kimi gets out. At this point, she's not too crazy about going home. True, things are OK for now – but if they go sour, she knows the excesses Korechika is capable of. She'd feel much happier (and safer) with the Ide family.

If the magistrates successfully negotiated her release, she suggests this while they're escorting her out. If she was ransomed, she contacts them via messenger asking for their help.

This is a sticky wicket; Hyobu just got her out and isn't going to be crazy about letting her go again. On the other hand, Kimi is a genuinely





sweet girl, and the magistrates probably appreciate her fears. If she was ransomed (meaning the magistrates failed to get her out) Hyobu is unlikely to listen hard to their arguments. If they negotiated her freedom, she's much more open – but still takes some convincing.

An interesting clue is that Ide Asamitsu approaches the magistrates and practically *begs* them to help Kimi get out. He seems strangely certain that the peace between the two houses is only temporary...

Act Three

SCENE ONE

Things go along just fine – until Horse (P43), one of Korechika's main merchants, gets whacked. Apparently someone entered her stables, knocked the woman out, and then stampeded her horses out across her unconscious body. Not only is the merchant dead, all her fine horses have been dispersed throughout the city. (Not surprisingly, many are not returned.)

There are, of course, two suspects. Maybe it was Shinjo Sanefusa (P12) (after all, Horse was formerly his vassal and betrayed him to work for Korechika). On the other hand, decisive (not to say brutal) action is hardly Sanefusa's style. This looks more like Hyobu's work. She has a motive too, since Korechika's plans to compete with her depend on caravans – and thus, horses.

Actually, it's up to individual GMs to decide if the murder was done by (1) Sanefusa, who saw a chance to make his move during the civil unrest (and was so incompetent at arranging the hit that it only went down after things were calm again), (2) Hyobu, who decided to hamstring Korechika's plans or (3) the Ide conspiracy, who definitely don't want the Scorpions making peace (and comparing notes).

Things go into high alert. The magistrates may have their hands full defusing armed conflicts between the Thunder Guard and Korechika's retainers. (There suddenly seem to be a lot of samurai wearing the Bayushi family *mon* around.) There's also a continuing opium crisis making people crazy, along with general hysteria and lawlessness.

In the confusion, Kimi leaves town. Whoever she's with (Hyobu or Baranato) decides to sneak her to somewhere remote. If she got to the Ides,

she sends the magistrates a note so they don't worry.

SCENE TWO

A day or so after Horse dies, the Shosuro cartel's central warehouse gets burned down. It happens at night, when a group of men in Thunder Guard uniforms report for duty, claiming to be "increased security". At least one is a shugenja, because once inside, he opens up with some sort of fire spell and starts crisping everything.

The magistrates may get there in time to catch the end part of the fighting. It's a mess; in addition to the fake Thunder Guard (who are fleeing) and the real Thunder Guard, there are the local firemen (G12) (Fire Eaters, in this case). It's all a big mess.

SCENE THREE

There are a number of dead attackers at the warehouse. Several are badly burned, as are some of the defenders – there's a great deal of forensic evidence. There are also some attackers who were shot and not burned.

There are several important things that can be learned here.

- There are two dead attackers in Thunder Guard armor that *no one* in the Thunder Guard recognizes. For one thing, one of them has a beard (which is forbidden by the Thunder Guard dress code.)

- If "Commune" is used to interrogate the armor of the attacking "Thunder Guards", it might reveal that it was in a chest for a long time, then on someone who was riding for a long time. (Again, this is an Earth spirit – it only knows what it's felt, and it's not too bright.)

- The real winner of a clue is only going to be found on a close inspection of one of the burnt corpses (almost certainly performed by Eyebrows). This attacker had on a Unicorn clan medallion which melted into his chest.

Assuming Eyebrows has been called in, you can have him find this clue when it's convenient for your pacing. If you let it out right away, the PCs may think they have a chance of telling the warring opium lords who's really behind it all. Or you may not let Eyebrows find it until after the next big fight scene – and I do mean a *big* fight scene.

SCENE FOUR

Hyobu's philosophy is that you don't resort to violence quickly; you resort to violence *thoroughly*. She's decided that the gloves are off. Her first move is to rescind Korechika's license to store legal, unprocessed opium, effective immediately. ("I'm shocked, *shocked* to learn that illegal opium is being processed at Necessary Village!") Then Jocho and a gang of Thunder Guards are dispatched to the Bayushi warehouse with orders to seize everything and kill anyone who resists. Check and checkmate.

Normally this would be no contest; Jocho's forces outnumber the Bayushi forces (which are led by Korechika) at least three to one. However, there's another third side to this fight; Soshi Seiryoku has been told, "Since your incompetence has destroyed your cartel, you'd better destroy the other cartels as well. That way we won't be rebuilding at a disadvantage." Consequently, she's summoned an oni to engage the Thunder Guards. Just to make everything even more confusing, Ide Baranato catches wind of the whole brouhaha about the same time the magistrates do, and decides to work a couple "Inflame" spells on the warehouse.

The magistrates are going to hear about this battle when the Thunder Guard are sent out; if they have any allies at the Civil Hall (L7), they get word that way. Alternately, Yogo Osako might let them know so they can stay out of the way – either as a courtesy or as a warning. It also might just be that they see a column of Thunder Guards riding towards the Fisherman Quarter with Jocho at their head, and they decide to follow.

If they decide to just stand back and let theurfly, it gets ugly; all the Bayushis are massacred (along with Korechika), 22 of the Thunder Guard buy it (from fire, fight or oni) along with four firemen who were presumably just trying to do their jobs. Two nearby shops are also destroyed – in one case, the family that runs the shop is killed trying to escape the blaze. Oni no Robai escapes and terrorizes the town for a week or so. (It's not only a proficient swimmer, it can hide in spaces that someone who'd seen it from the front would deem impossible.)

The combat at the warehouse lasts ten grueling rounds. If the magistrates follow the Thunder Guard, they're present for the whole mess (lucky them). If they hear about it from someone else, they get there for round six.



On round one, the Thunder Guard charge in and start attacking. (There's no real attempt made at explaining things.)

Round two, Ide Baranato flies up. He uses "Wind Borne Speed" to find a secluded line-of-sight perch, and then starts casting "Inflame". Oni no Robai also shows up – seemingly from nowhere. The Bayushi forces have set up an archery position and are making life hard on the Thunder Guard, who can't get too close without being shot off their horses.

Round three, Baranato's "Inflame" goes off, setting pretty much the front wall of the warehouse on fire. Robai has engaged the Thunder Guard, who are understandably freaked out.

Round four, the Bayushis retreat from the burning front of the building. Caught between the



BAYUSHI WAREHOUSE FIRE

Here are all the nameless thugs who'll be battling at the warehouse. The material in parentheses are calculated for the combatants when they're high on opium. (This happens when the warehouse catches fire.)

40 THUNDER GUARDS (SAMURAI SQUAD)

EARTH 2

WATER 2

FIRE 2

AIR 2

VOID 1

Attacking: 4k2 (4k1)

Damage: 5k3 (5k2)

TN to Hit: 15 (Light
Armor)

Wounds: 4: -0; 8: -1;

12: -2; 16: -3; 20: -4;

24: Down; 28: Out; 32: Dead
(24: Out; 32 Dead)

Notable Skills: Archery 2;
Defense 2; Jujutsu 2;
Kenjutsu 1; Kusari-Gama 2;
Naginata 2



**BAYUSHI
WAREHOUSE FIRE
(CONTINUED)**

15 BAYUSHI GUARDS

EARTH 2
WATER 2
FIRE 2
AIR 2
VOID 1
Attacking: 4k2 (4k1)
Damage: 5k2 (5k1)
TN to Hit: 15 (Light
Armor)
Notable Skills: Archery 2;
Defense 2; Kenjutsu 2
Wounds: 4: -0; 8: -1;
12: -2; 16: -3; 20: -4;
24: Down; 28: Out; 32: Dead
(24: Out; 32 Dead)

**10 FIRE FIGHTERS
(FIRE EATERS)**

EARTH 2
WATER 2
FIRE 2
AIR 2
VOID 1
Attacking: 5k2 (3k1)
Damage: 4k2 (4k1)
TN to Hit: 10
Wounds: 4: -0; 8: -1;
12: -2; 16: -3; 20: -4;
24: Down; 28: Out; 32: Dead
(24: Out; 32 Dead)
Notable Skills: Brawling
2; Defense 2; Fire Axe 1

fire and the demon, most of the Red Plumes (and their horses) choose the fire and charge into the burning warehouse. Baranato starts a second "Inflame".

Round five, the Bayushis try to exit out the back way – just in time to get caught in Baranato's second "Inflame." Robai (who is fireproof) wades into the warehouse.

Round six, Baranato flies away. Most of the Thunder Guard are inside the warehouse, as are the Bayushi forces, as is the oni. The Fire Eaters show up. (Korechika has been paying them *real* well to make sure his warehouse doesn't burn down.) This is also when the magistrates show up (if they're not already there).

Round seven the firemen try to approach with buckets of water and are shot by various stoned and jumpy samurai. Robai (immune to opium as well) is having a ball inside the warehouse. Samurai are trying to jump out through the burning walls and are getting shot in the back as they do so.

Round eight the nearby buildings catch fire. Most of the Bayushi forces are dead, as are many of the Thunder Guard. Robai is still unharmed.

Round nine Jocho and Korechika face each other. They fight wherever the magistrates are (either in the warehouse, or they stumble out, burning, stoned and angry). Both will be really upset with anyone who tries to interfere with the grudge match.

Round ten, Jocho kills Korechika (if no magistrate interferes), the final few Thunder Guards escape the warehouse, and Oni no Robai casually strolls out through the flames, bellows, and runs off towards the river.

Act Four

SCENE ONE

The day after the warehouse fire is a bad day to be a magistrate. Robai is running around the city (assuming no one killed it at the fight), Korechika may be dead, there's *still* all kinds of civil unrest (it doesn't take long for opium smokers to realize the consequences of the burning fields and ruined warehouses).

Crank the pressure up on your players; there are little fights to go quell, rumors

that "so and so has opium for sale" which result in runs and riots – and the Thunder Guard is disorganized and surly after the pounding it took yesterday. Contrasting with all this unpleasantness is pressure from Hyobu to restore civil order (without protecting the Bayushi family, of course). Half the nobles are insisting that the magistrates restore order, while the other half are encouraging them to do nothing while the opium trade rebuilds itself. People tell them it's their duty to calm this down, since it's all based on opium cartels which are national in scope. Others tell them the civil unrest concerns only Ryoko Owari, and is therefore Osako's problem.



SCENE TWO

Into this stew comes Eyebrows, who tells them that one of the combatants at the *first* warehouse fight (the one with no demons, back at Act Three, Scene Two) was a member of the Unicorn clan. He explains about the medallion (Act Three, Scene Three) and also adds that the corpse was wearing pointy-toed riding boots favored by the clan. He also thinks that it was a male. He offers them the medallion (which is impure, since it's been in contact with a corpse – ewww).

Since it was their investigation that uncovered the involvement a Unicorn, it's their duty to tell the local head of the family about it. Leave it up to them to decide if they're going to tell Yoshifusa (actual head), Baranato (acting head), both, or neither. Yoshifusa will be indignant at the *suggestions* that anyone from his clan could be involved. Baranato will say "It's an appalling shock to hear this from you." (This is technically true, all you "Whispering Winds" users – he never dreamed that they'd be able to identify the burned body.)

If interrogated, Yoshifusa denies knowing anything (true) while Baranato pretends to be very helpful. If pushed around at all, he "remembers" that Ide Nakatada had (on occasion) confessed to Baranato that he blamed the Shosuros for the death of his friend Michikane. (Freestyle lying is often based on the truth; Baranato is just using Nakatada, whom he knows is dead and will tell no tales, to mask his own involvement.)

If the clan elders aren't interrogated, the magistrates can spend their day running around and checking on the remaining living male Unicorns in Ryoko Owari (meaning Shinjo Sanefusa, Ide Asamitsu, and Iuchi Michisuna). You can play this out if you wish; all three are busily running around, so it may take a while to determine by elimination that the corpse was Nakatada – the shugenja who always seemed so quiet.

If the magistrates want, they can accuse Baranato, Yoshifusa, or any other Unicorn they want of complicity and try to get an Order of Appearance (again). Remember that this needs a signature from Osako (who just flat refuses to make an enemy of the whole Unicorn clan based on the flimsy evidence of one dead Unicorn at the site) or Hyobu (who is certainly interested by the idea – but also hesitant to make any new enemies while her cartel needs such desperate mending)

or the Emerald Champion (who is six or seven days away in each direction).

Both Hyobu and Osako are far more likely to say "Isn't it more likely that Korechika just *hired* Nakatada – or blackmailed him – to do the dirty work? After all, Korechika certainly had the motivation to destroy Hyobu's warehouse; if Nakatada got caught, it would just embarrass the Unicorn clan – and there was no love lost between Korechika and the Unicorns. If Korechika wasn't involved, why would the Unicorn clan attack the Shosuros? After all, Kimi is about to be married into the clan; the Unicorns are becoming Shosuro *allies*."

Persuading either is a tough task, and should take more than a successful die roll. If a really compelling argument can be made, have Hyobu think it over for a day (while you take a break to marshal your thoughts about whether she'd really take the risk). If you decide that Hyobu signs the Order, Baranato cracks under torture, the Unicorns are humiliated and the adventure comes to a premature end with the Shosuros deeply grateful to the magistrates and the Unicorns their dedicated enemies.

SCENE THREE

While the magistrates are off trying to figure out the Unicorn angle, Bayushi Otado is trying to rebuild his father's drug empire. A few days after the Shosuro warehouse burns down, he's managed to find one of Seiryoku's old processors and is leaning on him to come to the Bayushi cartel.

While Otado is holding the merchant's hand down and preparing to chop off some fingers (Otado's rhetoric is anything but subtle), the merchant's new patroness rides up; it's Otaku Naishi. She draws, they fight and Otado is killed. Unfortunately for her, this melee occurs in front of dozens of witnesses, including some of the Strong Arm Firemen. It doesn't take long for word to reach the magistrates – both the player characters and Yogo Osako. (If you want to make this more realistic, have them receive a number of garbled and confusing reports that only agree on one thing; Otado was killed and Naishi was there.)

If Hyobu and Osako *don't* know that a Unicorn clan corpse was found in the Shosuro warehouse, they figure this is a classic case of the Unicorn kicking someone when they're down. They approve (one less Bayushi is one less potential cartel kingpin), so they won't throw her in jail.



BAYUSHI WAREHOUSE FIRE (CONTINUED)

ONI NO ROBAI

EARTH 2

WATER 1

FIRE 1

AIR 1

Attacking: 1k1

Damage: 4k1

TN to Hit: 10

Wounds: 10: -1; 20: -2;
30: Dead

Special Abilities:

Invulnerable to normal weapons; Fear 5

The Oni no Robai is known as the "Panic Devil" among the Crab forces. It has the strange trait of looking much bigger from the front; when it's facing you, it appears to be about twenty feet tall, with snarling teeth, serrated claws and many slippery tentacles.

From behind, it looks like a five-foot tall animal with a vaguely fishy, scaly appearance. In addition to being impervious to normal weapons it is also amphibious and fireproof.

As befits its name, it appears much more dangerous than it is. Often Robai are used by larger (and smarter) creatures to flush game (goblins or adventurous samurai). A Robai is very good at scaring things towards the waiting maw of a hidden monster.

(Continued)



ONI NO ROBAI (CONTINUED)

While the Robai is invulnerable to normal weapons, it doesn't *appear* to be invulnerable to them; when struck with a mundane weapon, it will appear to be slightly injured – but keep fighting with equal ferocity. Similarly, while it only has one attack, its flailing tentacles often appear to be threatening when they're not.

If Robai gets hit by something that can hurt it, it immediately turns and runs.

However, Hyobu is under a lot of pressure from the non-cartel Bayushis to stop messing with their family. (The official story in the Scorpion clan at this point is that Korechika and Soshi tried to unseat Hyobu – either together, or one using the other as a pawn, depending on who you ask. Hyobu's destruction of both is seen as a justified act – as long as it stops now that she's won.)

Initially, everyone is pretty much ignoring it. Magistrates who talk to Naishi are told a slightly adulterated story; Otado was threatening the merchant and Naishi asked him to stop. He turned and lunged at her. Only then did she draw and kill him. She sticks to this story (for now).

An out of townner named Bayushi Saigo arrives within days. He's dripping with attitude and has three ribbons on his scabbard – two yellow and brown, one blue-grey and red. (It's currently the fashion to tie ribbons on your scabbard to show duels you've won. The color of the ribbon indicates the clan of the loser. Thus, Saigo's scabbard says he's beaten two Lions and a Crab in single combat.) He's got a document signed by Shinjo Yokatsu and Bayushi Shoji authorizing a blood feud between him and Naishi. Hyobu tells him to show it to Osako and the Emerald Magistrates and then – happy hunting.

SCENE FOUR

Your magistrates should now have some serious questions in mind:

Why would a Scorpion and a Unicorn come to blows over a mere merchant?

Why did this Saigo person get clearance for his feud so fast?

Is there a Unicorn connection to this whole opium war?

Investigation (by sorcery, bribery or simple footwork) can reveal the following answers. Possible sources for these answers are in parentheses (but these are by no means exclusive; if your magistrates come up with a clever avenue of investigation, by all means reward them with information.)

The merchant Otado was leaning on was once part of the Soshi opium machine, and really only has value to anyone with an interest in the illegal opium market. (The Strong Arm Firemen, Osako, Sukemara, Ample, Dove, Sharp, Subtle, Gate, Magda, Precious, Jewel, Lean Meat, Shortcut)

Saigo never seemed particularly close to Otado before this. (Hyobu, Saisho, Gobei, Kimi, Jocho, Osako)

Saigo has spent the last couple months as the guest of Bayushi Shoji. (Saisho, Hyobu, Jocho, Gobei, Osako, Sukemara, Michisuna, Baranato, Sanefusa, Precious, Jewel)

The Crab that Saigo killed was formerly a magistrate. He was revealed to be taking bribes from opium importers and was disgraced, and Saigo baited him into a challenge. It is suspected that the Crab was either trying to harm the opium trade or establish his own cartel, and Saigo was sent to deal with the problem. (Magda, Precious, Jewel, Gate, Jocho, Gobei, Hyobu, Seiryoku, Osako, Asamitsu, Baranato, Sharp, Subtle)

These provide solid clues towards the answers to the first two questions. For the last, they have to find a leak in the Unicorn clan. Lucky for them, Naishi is terrified by the threat of Saigo.

Act Five

SCENE ONE

Saigo comes to the Emerald Magistrates first to pay his respects, schmooze, flirt with any women, and let them know about the blood feud. Then he asks where he can find Yogo Osako – and after her, Otaku Naishi.

Make sure the magistrates know they can (1) go warn Naishi or (2) let her hang – and possibly lose their best link to any Unicorn involvement in the whole mess.

Naishi's heard rumors that Bayushi Saigo is coming to town with blood in his eye. She's shocked and dismayed that he's here so soon, and wildly begs the magistrates for protection. She promises them that if they help her get out of town, she'll explain *everything*.

Who could resist a temptation like that?

SCENE TWO

Before she can rat out her conspiracy, they have to get her away from her family home. Just as she's leaving, her sister shows up and looks *furios*. Genshi has heard that Naishi was trying to retain the services of the opium processor. She's also very suspicious when she sees the magistrates there.

This is a tense scene. Naishi says that the magistrates came to warn her about Saigo. Genshi encourages Naishi to face him. "A true samurai doesn't value life. A warrior who does not fear death cannot be defeated – only



The Whole Story

"It all started with Michikane. He was... well, he was his father's favorite, for one thing. And we were all hoping that the marriage with Kimi would be some kind of new start between us and the Shosuros. So when he died... it was like his parents went a little mad. Shikibu (P18) just cried and cried - she's still a shadow of her old self.

"Baranato knew that it was opium that killed his son, and he decided he was going to put a stop to it. *All* of it.

"He asked us for help - me, Genshi, Asamitsu, poor Nakatada - and we agreed. He promised us vengeance for our cousin's death, and that we would be purging a cancer from the body of Rokugan. He said Osako and Naritoki were helpless - or complicit.

"It was bandits in stolen Thunder Guard uniforms that attacked the Bayushi's processing village - I don't know where they came from. When we first started the conspiracy, we got Asamitsu to steal the little decoration from Otado, and then Genshi and I left it behind after we attacked the Soshi producers. Baranato had found a horse that looked just like Otado's; everyone assumed it was him. The Shosuro robbery was done by Baranato, Nakatada and Asamitsu, using all kinds of magic to make people think it was Soshi.

"It was a brilliant plan, don't you see? He used the weapons of the Scorpion against them. They've always used secrets and lies for power, and he put them in a situation where only trusting each other would show them the truth. Of course it didn't happen. Bayushi assumed Shosuro was attacking him, while Shosuro assumed Soshi was attacking her, and Soshi assumed she was being attacked by the Bayushis. Soon they were chasing their tails, and we were amassing huge quantities of opium while ruining their stores. Any time it looked like they were going to come to an agreement, we just had to pretend to be one or the other and start the whole vicious circle again.

"Baranato wants to take over the opium market and make it completely legitimate - but that's insane. I've seen the opium trade now, and it's indestructible. Too many people want it. The legitimate opium market is a perfect basket hat (G1). As long as the two markets are mixed, and Hyobu writes the licenses, there will be an illegal opium market.

"The Scorpions had three perfect cartels and no competition. They kept opium profitable and available; but I thought, what if there was a fourth cartel? If you can't get rid of opium, why not at least make sure its profits are going to a virtuous clan?

"You can't unring a bell; now that opium is here, it will stay. With a fourth cartel, there will at least be dissent among the criminals. As it is now, it's a perfect machine for profit and power - and it's all going to the Scorpions."



destroyed." Naishi dithers, and Genshi erupts – calling her a sneak, a coward, and a traitor. Genshi tries to grab Naishi. (She's enraged by Naishi's cowardice, and plans to force her to face Saigo.) Naishi tries to hide behind the magistrates, who now have to deal with Genshi with either (1) persuasion (2) the force of law or (3) physical force.

If they can get Naishi away, they can take her to the Magistrate Residence, where they have time enough to hear the whole story.

That's her story on the previous page, and she writes it down and sign it – if the magistrates sign a document agreeing to protect her life to the best of their ability and to show leniency in return for her cooperation. After hearing her story, the magistrates have very little time to question her before Saigo shows up, along with Yogo Osako. He very pleasantly asks to see the magistrates, while Osako glowers in the background. If he comes into Naishi's presence, he discusses a time and a place for a duel with her, while she mutely cowers behind the magistrates. If she says nothing, he just grins and say "Very well then; I'll just wait outside. Emerge when you're ready and we can engage." He leaves, and Osako lets the magistrates know that she's got the house surrounded. "I won't stand in the way of a man avenging his relatives, even if you will."

Then she goes out and waits with Saigo. A crowd gathers fairly soon. Not long after that,

Otaku Genshi and Shinjo Yoshifusa show up. The crowd mutters and parts between them and Saigo, but Yoshifusa bows to him and then turns to the Residence.

"Otaku Naishi! I call you forth in the name of your daimyo, Shinjo Yokatsu! If you do not emerge and face this legitimate challenger immediately, you will be rejected by your family and clan for appalling cowardice!"

Naishi is terrified and begs the magistrates to find some way to sneak her out. What do they do?

- If they pump her up with various enchantments to make her duel better, she might just have a chance against Saigo. (It won't save her if her family finds out that she marked on them, or that she was trying to get into the opium business herself.)

- If they just kick her out, she at least dies with honor. They'll have to play their cards right to avoid some future reprisals from Saigo – he appreciates them shoving her out the door, but is still mad that they warned her in the first place.

- If they sneak her out of the city (somehow) she's a ronin and she tries to hook up with Fade. Fade hands her over to Genshi, who kills her for cowardice and treachery.

- If they try to take her out openly – claiming that she's a key witness and that the feud has to be delayed – they have an open fight on their hands against Genshi, Saigo, Osako and about ten Thunder Guards.



SCENE THREE

Whatever happens to Naishi, the magistrates now have a signed confession describing the conspiracy in detail – naming names and giving specifics. Since it was made by a samurai, it's legitimate grounds for a serious inquiry. If they show it to either Hyobu or Osako, both loudly proclaim their eagerness to sign an Order of Appearance – but neither will until Osako has arrested all the conspirators on her own first. The whole lot of them (Baranato, Asamitsu and Genshi) are hauled in, tortured, and executed after they sign confessions. The magistrates never even get a chance to ask them questions.

On the other hand, they can report this directly to the Emerald Champion – and wait at least twelve days to get an Imperial Order of Appearance, giving the conspirators time to get their stories straight, flee or take other actions. But at least Hyobu doesn't find out who was behind the opium war.

A final ploy would be to go straight to Baranato and confront him without telling Hyobu, Osako, or the Emerald Champion.

SCENE FOUR

If the PCs just go to Baranato and talk to him rationally, he's evasive.

“Let's assume this unlikely accusation is true. It came from a coward who was also a would-be opium magnate and a self-confessed traitor to her family. It assumes that the Scorpions, who are masters of duplicitous plots, could be led astray by a cabal of five Unicorns. But setting those aside for a moment, assume that the story could be true. What does it mean?”

“The Scorpion hold on the opium trade has been broken – for now. Dissent and mistrust have been sown, and that harvest will impede the rebuilding of the cartels. Unless, of course, a common foe can be found. If that happens, the Scorpions can set aside their differences and get back to business as usual – cutting up the country into separate domains to poison and rob. Is that what you really want to see?”

“Perhaps the accusation is true. For now, I deny it. But even if it is, the only thing you have to gain by revealing it is a rejuvenated opium economy – pumping more poison into the heart of our nation.”

“On the other hand, you can conceal it. You don't have to deceive the Scorpions – just allow them to deceive themselves. The cartels are weak

now – Hyobu has lost a harvest and all her stores, the Bayushis have lost their leaders and large quantities of their wares, and the Soshi followers are scattering in terror. You are the Emerald Magistrates! Tell the Champion that now is the time to strike! If you make it hard enough on the cartels, they may decide it's not worth rebuilding.

“I lost my son to opium, and nothing will bring him back. But if I know I spared some other son the same fate, it will ease my pain.”

Now it's up to them; they can squeal or stay shut up. Make sure they know this is an important decision, with pros and cons on both sides.

- **If they reveal Baranato's plan**, they look brilliant to the Emerald Champion and get lots of gratitude from Hyobu and Saigo. They also get the satisfaction of punishing a man who conspired against public order. (Let's face it; his plan did result in widespread chaos and many, many deaths.) However, they can also rely on the enmity of the Unicorn clan.

- **If they stay quiet**, they weaken the opium trade, possibly forever – and they protect a man who was only acting according to the dictates of his conscience. They have Baranato's gratitude (and he's certainly proved himself resourceful) and won't have made any new enemies. (As a Lion clan playwright once said “What the Scorpions don't know won't hurt me.”)

Those are the ramifications they can predict. If they squeal, they eventually set themselves up to deal with a rejuvenated two-cartel opium trade (the Bayushis and the Shosuros decide to blame the Soshis and punish them by taking away their share). Things stay pretty much the same in Ryoko Owari, and drugs continue to flow into Rokugan.

If they stay quiet, the opium trade is far less smooth and efficient; Saigo and Hyobu struggle constantly, and this struggle occasionally takes the form of violence. This is bad for civil order, it permanently raises opium prices, and it's bad for the economy of Ryoko Owari.

SCENE FIVE

There's a final way this can go, assuming the magistrates stay quiet in order to weaken the opium trade. When they report the situation to the Emerald Champion, he will ask them if they think they can prove that (1) the civil disorder in Ryoko Owari was due to opium trading and (2) that the



BAYUSHI SAIGO

Rank Three Kakita
School Bushi

EARTH 3

WATER 3

FIRE 4

AIR 3

VOID 3

Attacking: 10k4

Damage: 6k2

TN to Hit: 15

Wounds: 6: -0; 12: -1;

18: -2; 24: -3; 30: -4;

36: Down; 42: Out; 48: Dead

Notable Skills: Archery 1;

Athletics 1; Courtier 2;

Defense 2; Etiquette 1;

Horsemanship 1; Iaijutsu 5;

Kenjutsu 1; Poison 1;

Sincerity 4

Honor: 1

Glory: 3

Advantage: Different school (Kakita)

Saigo actually couldn't care less about Otado; he's been sent by Shoji himself to see if the Bayushi's share of the opium market can be salvaged.

Saigo is in his thirties, smooth and full to the brim with oily menace. (Imagine a Rokugani John Travolta in full-blown Bad Man mode.) If anyone is going to succeed at rebuilding the Bayushi cartel, it's this guy.



illegal opium trade was connected to the legitimate opium trade – or at least to Soshi Seiryoku (who isn't politically powerful) and Bayushi Korechika and Bayushi Otado (who are probably both dead).

“Shosuro Hyobu is too powerful and well connected to challenge directly; but right now Bayushi Shoju is probably uneasy with Hyobu being the primary opium lord, as well as being disenchanted with his own family's involvement. If you can pin significant social disorder on samurai opium trading, I think I can remove Hyobu's charter to license opium farming and storage. Shoju won't like seeing it taken out of Scorpion hands – I'll have to give him something in return. Something significant. But I'm willing to do that in order to get opium out of the hands of his clan. Do you think you can do it?”

If the magistrates take up the challenge, it's your ticket to dangerous busts of smugglers and processors. Seiryoku's handlers may hang her out to dry as a *maho-tsukai*. (Remember, they want the opium trade disintegrated – and her family would much rather have her executed for opium trading than black magic.) Finally, they may have a showdown with Saigo as he tries to rebuild and they try to reveal him. Shoju would hate to lose a valuable agent like Saigo – but if the magistrates can catch him, Shoju decides that he wasn't really that valuable.

The Emerald Magistrate can remove Hyobu's charter if the magistrates make a good case. Hyobu hates them forever if this happens – but she's extremely weakened by the loss of profit and (perhaps more damning) the loss of face. The license to produce medical opium is given to the Phoenix clan, who in turn fail to make a ton of money because they're too honest (and because the Scorpion decide that if they can't have an opium cartel, no one else will).

This has far-reaching effects on Ryoko Owari. Prices on everything go up (even though the Emerald Champion lowers Imperial Taxes – part of his deal with Shoju) which creates civil unrest. Nobles who would have previously gotten a nice, peaceful opium doze when they were bored get really drunk (and sometimes violent) instead. Without easy opium money, lots of former smugglers turn to piracy or robbery.

In other words – a magistrate's job is never done.

What's This Map Doing Here?

Well, we can't tell you that exactly. It's a prop for the Yemon's Legacy adventure found on pages 5, 38, 47, and 22 of the *City of Green Walls* book. At the end of that adventure, the party is given a map by the ghost of Shosuro Sanzo. He got that map by encouraging architect Kaiu Yemon, shortly before his untimely death, to explain to him exactly what he had built in the place he'd been spirited off to. Here's the relevant passage from the *City of Green Walls*:

About 500 years ago, Kaiu Yemon built a vault to protect something. Yemon didn't know where he built it, other than desolate granite mountains. (They blindfolded him for over a week while they traveled – sometimes by boat, sometimes on horseback). Yemon didn't know what he was protecting – other than something valuable. He didn't even know the details of the interior of the structure. He built the outside walls, and was told to spare no expense to making them secure.

Yemon was handsomely paid, taken home blindfolded, and promptly kidnapped by a man who refused to identify himself but whom Yemon recognized as a Shosuro by his accent. The Scorpion tortured Yemon until he'd drawn a map of his part of the project. Then the mysterious Shosuro killed him.

Now, when your players reach the end of this adventure, you can hand them this map (or a photocopy) and let them puzzle out what all its cryptic markings mean.

What do the cryptic markings mean? We promise we'll explain... in a future supplement.



Entrances to the
Hidden Heart

choose well
379
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HO

Walk the
ways
the drink
you

written
words
speak

Remember
your lessons
here

Feather
goblin

DO NOT
LOOK

???

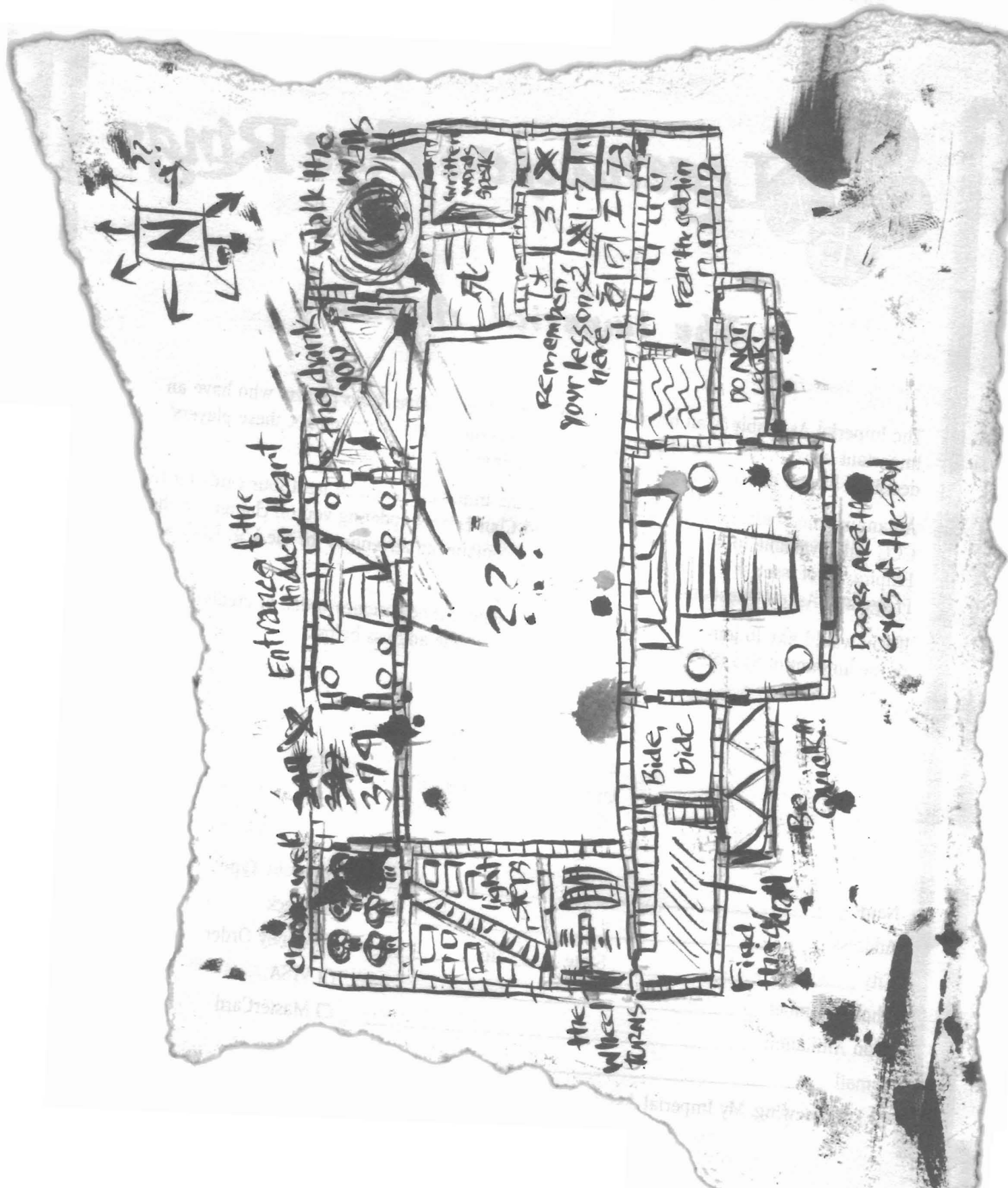
Bide
bide

Be
Quick!

Find
the
deal

the
wheel
turns

DOORS ARE THE
EYES OF THE SOUL



City of Lies™



Alderac Entertainment Group

City of Lies™

Amid the rolling hills and gentle plains of Rokugan rests a city whose walls are as green as jade. Located in the heart of the lands held by the secretive Scorpion, the city is Ryoko Owari Toshi, Journey's End City, the darkest lair of intrigue and villainy in the Emerald Empire. Behind the city's gleaming gates lie dark secrets, hidden treasures and poisoned knives. Geisha, sake works and even more sinister vices await the unwary traveler who dares seek his fate in the cold, black heart of the city. Brave her streets if you dare, but beware, for danger hides behind painted faces...

"Rokugan's most elegant cesspit; a monster of beauty, a seductive lie cast in limestone and gold, a treacherous maiden whose loveliness is exceeded only by her brutality – that is my home." – Shosuro Sokichi, Thirteenth Governor of Ryoko Owari.

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