

# MAKKURA





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**Calligraphy Text:** A Tanka (short poem) by Lady Ôtomo No Sakanoue. Poem 201 of the Man' yôshû ("The Ten Thousand Leaves") a compilation of Japanese poems from the 18th century:

*"Ipu kôtô No - Kasikoki kuni zô - Kurenawi No - Iro nor Na ide sô - Omopi sinu tô Mo"*

*"What is said - Brings dread, in this land: - In scarlet - Colours, don't go out - Die from your desire though you might"*

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# DEEPER INTO THE DARKNESS

*Issun saki wa yami (An inch ahead is darkness; the future is hidden)*  
– Japanese proverb

## INTRODUCTION

Makkura is a series of adventures for **Kuro**, but it is also more than that. As we mentioned in the **Core Rulebook**, **Kuro** has been designed for play at two different levels. The first, as described in the **Kuro Core Rulebook**, allows characters to investigate the supernatural horror lying under the surface of Japan in 2046. The second, **Kuro Tensei**, allows characters to battle the evil directly, with spirit powers of their own. So while **Makkura** is on one hand a selection of adventures, it is also the bridge that takes your player characters from **Kuro** to **Kuro Tensei**.

Obviously, **Kuro** players should not read any further, the book being designed for the Gamemaster. However, when they have played the adventures, players may still find some useful detail here.

As the Gamemaster you might run the adventures presented here as a campaign or as individual, standalone scenarios. However, whether you choose to move on to **Kuro Tensei** or not they work better as a campaign. The **Makkura** campaign is not limited to the scenarios presented here. Each adventure also offers synopses, snippets and ideas allowing you to expand the campaign at will and to develop certain aspects according to your tastes and needs. It is, as usual, up to you to either follow the set path or create your own saga using the ideas in the following pages as inspiration.

The **Makkura** campaign ends by offering the player characters a choice: to remain human or accept the burden of the kami. If

they choose the latter, they can move on to **Kuro Tensei**, the next and final part of **Kuro**. You are in no way obliged to adopt **Kuro Tensei**. The base **Kuro** setting offers more than enough detail to create many scenarios, campaigns and plots involving ordinary characters. On the other hand, if you wish to move to another level of the setting, allowing the characters to directly confront the creatures from Yomi with their katana or using devastating rituals, you should follow the **Kuro Tensei** path. The forthcoming **Kuro Tensei** sourcebook will have all the details you need to adapt your characters, including new rules, powers and backgrounds.

The streets of Shin-Edo are only the beginning...

## The Brightest Light is nothing without the Deepest Darkness

If you have already played the adventure **Origami** you will be wondering what is so special about the blood marker all the player characters have. So before we begin the adventures, we will reveal the secret of the 'Potentials'.

For hundreds of years the kami have fought against a powerful being known as Magagoto. After centuries of conflict, unseen by humanity, they finally cast the creature from the world into Yomi. Such a powerful Shinto demon was not easy to remove, and many of the kami had to imprison themselves with the demon, to bind it in an eternal prison. The kami managed this feat with the help of the Furinkazan sect who serve the powerful Shi Tenno guardian spirits. This sect vainly tried for years to free the trapped kami from their grey prison without freeing the Magagoto. They failed, but they continue to watch and wait, even though their fortunes have faded over the centuries.



Unfortunately, the tainted monster managed to return to Earth, miraculously escaping its invisible jail in the Yomi-No-Kuni. However, its escape also opened the way for the kami's return as well. The escape route was too narrow to allow these myriad gods to be reborn en masse, but it was enough to allow them to again involve themselves in human affairs. For five years the weakened Magagoto walked among men in a human guise, as the kami attempted to recover their strength from natural energy and the many shrines throughout Japan. Their gradual return had been noted among mortals. The Emperor himself is beginning to believe again in the power of Amaterasu that flows through his veins.

This fragile balance was shattered on 4th May, 2046. Light is nothing without darkness, and Good cannot exist without Evil. While both spiritual powers had seemed absent for a long time they were actually watching the affairs of mortals, and waiting for the other side to make a mistake. Understanding the devastation the Panasiatic missile would bring, the kami used almost all their power to neutralise it, saving the people of Japan. However, the spiritual backlash was equal to the power they called forth. The Divine Wind blew violently across Japan and further opened the breach to the beyond. Creatures from Yomi saw their chance and slid out of the invisible realms. Such was their right, to balance the huge amount of energy spent by the gods of nature.

As more Yomi spirits emerged, manifestations multiplied, and dark creatures compensated for their relative weakness by their sheer weight of numbers. The face of Japan was changed, heralding an era of supernatural horror. Invisible to most humans, these beings began to act chaotically, to hinder or set in motion elaborate plans in order to reach their goals. Overwhelmed, the kami could not prevent this invasion, watching impotently the violence, looting and disintegration of a blind society mired in modernism and selfishness.

However, not all the evil spirits have escaped Yomi. Even as the kami do their best to stem the tide, they know legions more await in the darkness. The most powerful spirits of Yomi work not only to corrupt Japan to their liking but also to find a way to break open the final seals of Yomi and drown the land in a tide of evil. Nevertheless, while the creatures of shadow gain in strength and power daily, the kami have found a way to fight back.

The Potentials are the descendants of heroes, people made into spirits, even gods, by popular belief. Samurai, invincible warriors, thinkers, magic manipulating monks, tea masters, all these historical characters have joined the kami pantheon and chosen the Potentials as their successors from birth. Some

are their true ancestors, others are chosen because their souls match the kami's philosophy and concept of humanity.

The marker in the Potentials blood is not some genetic flaw or any kind of mutation. It is a seal, a mystical marker allowing the kami to distinguish their heirs and to activate their abilities. At this point, the kami no longer have any choice but to put their hopes in the Potentials. The Yomi creatures are defeating the last soldiers of the kami, they will need a new army to prevent the creatures from invading Japan and, later, maybe the world.

Soon the ancestor Kami will merge with their successors, the player characters, to write a new page of their history.

## New Skill Specialisations

Makkura introduces several new skills, due to the first adventure Fugu being set on the Kaijin platform. These skills are not essential for player characters to acquire for the adventure (and there are options to gain training in the adventure) but they may well find skill in these areas helpful. These new specialisations are still covered by the basic skill, just like any other specialisation.

### Investigation

Torture: Using pain to interrogate a subject, but keeping them alive and conscious. This speciality is not recommended for player characters.

### Natural Sciences

Fish Farming: Expertise in fishing methods and farm management

Hydrodynamics: Energy systems relying on wave or tidal power

### Watercraft

Heavy Diving Suit: Operating an atmospheric diving suit

Submersible: Operating small submersible vehicles such as mini-submarines

### Mechanics (Prerequisite: Physical Sciences)

Heavy Diving Suit: Maintaining and engineering atmospheric diving suits

Sea Platform Maintenance: Maintaining and repairing the systems (especially the floatation ones) of a sea platform or oil rig.



# THE MAKKURA CAMPAIGN

**Makkura** contains six full adventures, designed to lead the player characters towards **Kuro Tensei**, or at least an understanding of their destiny. If you are not intending to move on to **Kuro Tensei** they may still be played as stand alone adventures. Only at the end of the campaign will the player characters have to make the choice to join the kami in **Kuro Tensei** or remain as they are. The campaign follows on from the adventure **Origami** in the **Kuro Core Rulebook** (pages 193-203). But don't worry if you have run other adventures since playing it. Whatever else they may have gotten involved in, the hand of destiny has been waiting to pull the player characters back along its path.

The campaign gradually involves the player characters in supernatural events, as they learn more of their heritage as Potentials. As they delve deeper into the mysteries around them they come into contact with the Shi Tenno, powerful guardian spirits who have watched over Shin-Edo for many years. They guard the four pieces of a key that will bring a sunken island called Ryugu to the surface. If this island should rise, the spirits of darkness will be able to open the gates of Yomi and bring forth the remaining evil spirits trapped there. As the player characters learn more of this ancient island, the forces of evil send seven thunder spirits, the Ika-zuchi-no-kami, to destroy the Shi Tenno, corrupt the player characters and steal the keys to Yomi. In the final adventure, it will be up to the player characters to stop them, and they will need all the allies and supernatural abilities they have gained to do so.

The Gamemaster might add further encounters and adventures between each main adventure if they so choose. Each main adventure is followed by a set of adventure outlines to allow the Gamemaster to do just that. There are also a few rumours that might become full adventures or just add background to the campaign. These additional adventures are purely optional, and might also be used to create a new campaign set in the aftermath of Makkura.

## The Japanese Days of the Week

Each adventure in Makkura links to a specific phase in the player characters' evolution, referring to the different days of the week. In each phase, certain themes will become evident, as the characters come to understand more of their true nature. We will detail more about each phase with each adventure, but here's a quick summary below:

Monday	Getsuyobi	Moon Day	Fugu
Tuesday	Kayobi	Fire Day	Mizuiro
Wednesday	Suiyobi	Water Day	Kujira
Thursday	Mokuyobi	Wood Day	Yukidomari
Friday	Kinyobi	Gold Day	Tsukurigoto
Saturday	Doyobi	Soil/Earth Day	Kami
Sunday	Nichiyobi	Sun Day	Kuro Tensei

## Creating Characters

For this campaign there is no set selection of skills or abilities the characters should have. As with most games, a broad range of skills among the player character group will be more than adequate. In fact, in many cases their skills will not be that much help against the darkness they are about to face! It is their will, resolve and quick thinking that will usually save the day.

Unlike most roleplaying games, characters in Kuro usually begin as very normal people. They do not appear to be anything special. It is the crucible of the adventure that is going to bring out their heroic attributes, and reveal to them their own true potential. So, don't be afraid to make them fallible and even weak. If they run from their first encounters, they will have to be all the braver to finally turn and face them. Remember, bravery is not about never feeling fear; it is about being afraid but standing your ground anyway. So the characters you create for Makkura need not be police, soldiers or elite scientists. They can just as easily be bank tellers, marketing assistants and cleaners.

What is important is that the players consider the background of their characters. The more detail the players give the Gamemaster about their characters, the more personal the Gamemaster can make the adventure for them. This will make the game more intense, frightening and memorable.



## The Ghost Weapons

During the adventure **Origami** (see the **Kuro Core Rulebook** pages 193-203) the player characters will have found two important documents. The first was the list of Potentials, the second details 'Ghost Weapons'. This file contains work based on the experiments of Unit 731. It details the deployment of a cadre of sleeper soldiers programmed to activate upon a subliminal video signal. The goal of the operation was to be able to turn the whole population into an efficient and servile army in order to achieve victory in 1945. Back then it didn't work; since then the plan has been perfected.

If the player characters didn't manage to find this document, the Gamemaster might let it fall into their hands from another source during the campaign, perhaps as a side adventure, because in **Kami** these soldiers will awaken.

## The Adventures in Brief

### Fugu

Several people have been murdered on the Kaijin platform out to sea. The police are having difficulty finding a link between the victims, even though it seems the work of a serial killer. However the player characters notice the victim's names all appear on the list of Potentials. Will they investigate or wait for the killer to find them first?

### Mizuiro

A group of students at a local university have disappeared, and one has committed suicide. What makes this especially interesting is that some of the names are on the list of Potentials. It appears the suicides might have something to do with a popular ritual where the participants tell ghost stories to each other. Have the students woken something, and if so why does it seem to be targeting the player characters?

### Kujira

A whale washes up on Shin-Edo beach, its skull engraved with strange characters. These characters are a map and instructions for opening the prison of Yomi. As the player characters try to unearth the mystery, a dark creature hunts them from the shadows. The only way to face it is to claim some old forgotten weapons, and unlock some of their power as Potentials.

### Yukidomari

Drawn to the remote village of Yukidomari, the player characters find a place plagued by hauntings and spirits of the dark. As bad weather traps them here, the strange atmosphere of the village begins to take its toll on them. At the same time, people are disappearing at an alarming rate. Here they may learn more about the truth behind the Kuro incident, but that will be no use if they cannot escape the village alive.

### Tsukurigoto

Seven agents of the dark appear to hunt down the Shi-Tenno and take the keys they guard. The player characters have helped them escape into hiding, but this means the agents are coming for them! As a blackout turns Shin-Edo into chaos, the player characters race to protect the secrets of the Shi-Tenno. But the dark Kami can be deceptive, as well as dangerous.

### Kami

The climax of the **Makkura** saga follows directly on from **Tsukurigoto**. The thunder spirits must be stopped before they can open the gates to Yomi and time is not on the player character's side. Fighting through a city in chaos, they must hunt down the tools they need to fight these powerful and near immortal spirits. But destiny has a plan and the Red Storm is coming. It will offer them only one choice, to live or to die.





# FUGU

*"I don't believe in death or in hell; my life never stopped being hell. I would only fear if I had to go to heaven."*

– Takeushi, *High and Low*

*"Saltwater games, spectres in sight..."*

– Ring 2

## Gestsuyobi — the Day of the Moon

This adventure follows on from **Origami**, found in the **Kuro Core Rulebook**. We recommend that you play that adventure first if you have not already done so. It is fine if you have run other adventures in the meantime, as long as the player characters have now met, and are aware that their names all appear on the mysterious list of 'Potentials'.

The player characters may still be getting to know each other, but do at least know they have something strange in common. They should have become (possibly reluctant) allies, but may not yet trust each other. They may not even realise there is anything supernatural going on around them, believing their names are on the mysterious list for political or even criminal reasons, and all they have seen has a rational explanation.

In this phase of the campaign they are working in darkness, having little idea of what is really going on around them, as they reach out blindly into the dark. But in the Gestsuyobi (Moon) phase they will begin to lift the veil. They will see glimpses of the supernatural inside the mundane. They are about to discover that nothing is quite what it seems and that the world is a lot stranger and more frightening than they have ever imagined.

## Overview

In **Fugu** the player characters are drawn to the Kaijin quarter after the discovery of several horribly mutilated corpses. These victims are all named on the list of 'Potentials' the characters retrieved in **Origami**. All of the victims have been murdered in the same way, over a very short space of time. There can be no doubt: someone has it in for anyone with the same blood anomalies as the player characters. The murderer has already killed four people in the last two weeks. If they investigate the murders, the player characters will follow the trail to the heart of the huge fish-farm platform of Kaijin. Once aboard they will attempt to capture him in the depths of the station.

## Naming Conventions

Throughout this book the names of Japanese, Chinese and Korean characters are presented in the proper way with family surnames placed before personal or first names. Western names are presented the other way around.



# PROLOGUE

*Countless odd religions too, it doesn't matter which you choose.  
One stubborn way to turn your back, this I've tried, and now refuse.  
– You Only Live Once, The Strokes*

After surviving the harrowing events of **Origami**, the player characters at least now know each other. Maybe they have stayed in touch, if only to communicate information on their mysterious 'ailment'. Some might have avoided the others, hoping to convince themselves that it all never happened. If they try to track down the other names on the list they will usually come up with too many options for each name. What will they say to people they contact anyway? They might choose to test their own blood. Even those with medical experience will discover very little. The blood marker is easy to test for if you know what you are looking for, but equally easy to overlook. If the player characters insist on tracking down the other Potentials, they might find that sinister organisations warn them off, or at least follow them hoping to be led to yet more Potentials.

Some weeks later, something else in the media grabs their attention. If they have been avoiding the media, Jiro might intervene discretely by sending puzzling messages or net links to their Pods. The item in question is making the front pages in the news: a serial killer is stalking Shin-Edo.

The killer has recently murdered a fourth victim, which follows the same gruesome pattern as the others. There is little to connect the victims except for the manner of their deaths, and that the murders have all occurred in the Kaijin district. In response, the media has declared that the murderer is a serial killer, one they have decided to call 'the Ogre'. The police refuse to issue any statements, which the media has interpreted as meaning they have no idea as to what is going on. With no clue where the Ogre will strike next, the public are getting nervous.

What attracts the interest of the player characters is that the victim's names are all on the list of 'Potentials' that they found. With this as the only link, it seems clear that the killer is targeting people with the same strange blood anomalies as the player characters. They could be the next victims on his list.

## Modus Operandi

A certain amount of gruesome information is commonly available to the media. The murderer kills his victims in the same way, using a kind of butcher's knife. He removes certain organs and then rips the skin off the body. The name the press gave the killer was ill-chosen, as he doesn't ingest anything from his victims. They are just disembowelled after an initial attack with the blade.

If the player characters have media or police contacts they might be able to discover a little more information that hasn't been released to the public.

- The murderer's blade is covered in poison, evidence of which has been found in the wounds. The poison is a powerful neurotoxin called tetrodotoxin.
- Tetrodotoxin is mainly found in poisonous fish, notably the pufferfish used for the famous dish 'Fugu' that must be prepared carefully not to poison the diner.
- The removed organs are the liver, the intestines and the gonads (testicles or ovaries)
- The police are floundering in the investigation; they have no clues and little idea as to where the killer will strike next.
- Originally the police believed these to be Yakuza killings, gangland murders designed to gruesomely warn off competition or take revenge. However, it has become clear that not every victim has Yakuza connections.

## The Victims

Given the high profile nature of the investigation, the media is full of speculation about the murderer and his victims. A lot of background information is freely available on all the victims.

### Victim 1: Itagaki Kimiko

The first murder occurred 16 days ago. Kimiko was a young woman living alone in Kaijin. She worked in a rather shabby restaurant called 'Three Flavours', rumoured to have Yakuza connections. Kimiko was killed in her small apartment room. There were no witnesses.



# KAIJIN

## Victim 2: Wada Hashiba

The second victim, killed four days later, was a labourer in an alimentary algae colourisation and processing factory. He was killed inside his home on the platform; his wife was present, but somehow spared. There are rumours that he was getting additional payments from the Yakuza, possibly for assisting their smuggling operations. Investigators immediately thought his death was due to him crossing his nefarious contacts, who decided to make an example of him with such an imaginative and macabre scene.

## Victim 3: Marubashi Ikaru

The third murder happened 6 days ago. The victim was a man in his forties, a third rate lawyer employed by a large fish processing company. He'd never had any problems with the law, climbing the corporate ladder little by little without breaking the rules. His lack of criminal contacts, unlike the previous two, was what made the police realise that the death was not necessarily part of a crime war.

## Victim 4: Omura Yumiko

The latest victim was a senior executive, killed two days before the adventure begins. Yumiko never had any connection with organised crime, and she had come to the platform three days before she was killed. It was from the third killing, that of Marubashi Ikaru, that the media began to pay real attention to this case. After all, a serial killer sells more newspapers than underworld slayings. Law enforcement agencies have also been forced to rethink their investigations.

## The Truth

The murders are being carried out by a vengeful water spirit who has possessed one of the divers on Kaijin. Normally it remains dormant, but like a fugu fish it can swell up its host with spiritual energy, turning him into a monster. The spirit simply plans to kill for its own entertainment, but when it discovered Potentials it made a point of targeting them. As they are descendants of the kami, it recognises their 'taint' and seeks to kill as many as possible, before they can become a danger. After having had some fun with murder, its current plan is to destroy a large part of the Kaijin district, for no better reason than it enjoys chaos and murder.

The most recent Special Ward in Shin-Edo is man-made; a maze of platforms and underwater walkways spreading over more than 12 km<sup>2</sup> called Kaijin district. Located some 30 km away from the rest of the megalopolis in the middle of the sea, Kaijin is a quarter that values and works for its autonomy. The inhabitants would sooner refer to their quarter as their city than Shin-Edo and many regard the people of the mainland with suspicion and a bit of disdain. It is not going to be easy for the characters to investigate the murders quietly and discreetly. They will be seen as outsiders sticking their nose in business that certainly does not concern 'tourists from the coast'.

The characters are free to find a cover story to wander through Kaijin's dusty metal walkways. They may come as simple visitors, although that still makes them outsiders, and few people will want to have much to do with them, although everyone will know who they are. Decent accommodation is expensive for out-of-towners. They might get a temporary contract working for one of the fishing companies. Such work usually comes with accommodation (just a sleep cube; but hey, it is a bed). The work itself involves packing or gutting fish, but the companies also recruit warehouse security and logistics (lifters and carriers) as well as deep sea workers. While fully trained deep sea divers command better salaries, most people can be employed as a deep sea worker. The deep sea diving suits have so many electronic systems that they almost run themselves. Most people willing to do the hard claustrophobic work that being a deep sea diver involves can sign on after completing no more than the company's half day training course (granting a character a free point in the Pilot skill specialisation 'Heavy Diving suit'). While there are agencies on Kaijin recruiting workers, several on-shore agencies book workers and then ferry them across to Kaijin.

Characters with a higher Kaisei or better contacts might come to Kaijin as businessmen looking to invest or sign a contract. Their cover will all depend on their glibness and the skills that they use to bluff who they're speaking to. If they are wealthy enough, they might come as tourists and assume that a few yen will get people to open up a little.

There are several ways to get to the platform of Kaijin. The cheapest is to take a boat. Plenty of fishing ships build their income by taking passengers across in times of poor fishing. With the sea fauna ravaged by pollution, almost every day is a poor fishing day. There are many ferry companies, allowing





trips with a little more comfort, but one must make reservations in advance because it is a very busy route. Kaijin has eight helipads, so wealthy characters might take a helicopter taxi. Air travel is the most expensive but fastest solution; it will only take 10 minutes to make the journey by helicopter.

Once the characters are there, the Gamemaster should take time to describe how different Kaijin is from the rest of Shin-Edo. Kaijin has a startlingly different environment to Shin-Edo, one of the reasons inhabitants think of the place as a separate city. For starters, seeing the sun is a luxury, even more so as you dive deeper below sea level. The upper floors are reserved for the headquarters of the big companies, as well as the visiting residences of the company leaders. The middle levels are filled with comfortable hotels, and welcome visitors, school trips and scientists, but the deeper you go the less luxury and comfort there is. Little by little the large climate controlled translucent walkways, with convenient Neo-Web ports and green plants for decoration, are replaced by narrow, shadowy corridors and gantries with rusty metal walls, exhaling an oppressive odour of seaweed and salt. Occasional leaks of orange water spatter onto the heads of passers-by, while the sound of metal creaking and rumbling is sometimes heard, as if the platform itself is growling.

Power becomes less reliable the deeper into the platforms you go. The way that the lifts creak and struggle, one wonders if they will manage to get back up again. The ever present advertising holograms initiate their programmes, but are often interrupted, as if they no longer have enough battery power. Personalised advertising is regularly short-circuited, offering completely inappropriate services and calling you by another name. The whole structure is hardly 20 years old, but the outside environment has prematurely aged, having suffered more abuse than expected, and received less maintenance than it needed. There was talk of building a second platform in the next 10 years, but the Kuro Incident changed everything and the project was shelved. The coalition government has at least agreed on maintaining Kaijin as it is. The cost of even building a smaller platform would be exorbitant under the current circumstances.

Accommodation comes in several forms on Kaijin, depending on the type of work the workers have. Most workers live in a sleep cube provided by the company. These cubicles are racked together in sets of 400 and are not much larger than a wide coffin (which is what most people call them). These cubicles are also available for out-of-towners. Each cubicle has a glass front that can become opaque, a Neo-Web port and an entertainment centre that offer several media channels (as well as access to erotic channels or 3D programmes).

There are also several more comfortable hotels and residences a little higher up. Most permanent workers live with their families or co-workers in small apartments, each of which consists of four rooms around a kitchen/common area. Hotels offer small rooms for rent as well, much like a small boarding house. The highest levels offer plush executive suites with views across the ocean and personal balconies, but these are rare as the platform is not a favourite destination of the billionaire jet-set.

There are several ways to pass the time in Kaijin on your off-hours. The place is littered with small bars, and some larger ones like the 'Smuggler's Den' that offer some of the best sushi for a modest price. There are several restaurants like the 'Sushi Sea' (see the *Kuro Core Rulebook*, page 46). A few clubs are to be found on Kaijin as well, the most exclusive, or rather expensive, is called 'Scales'. There are also a few small shrines for quiet worship or contemplation.

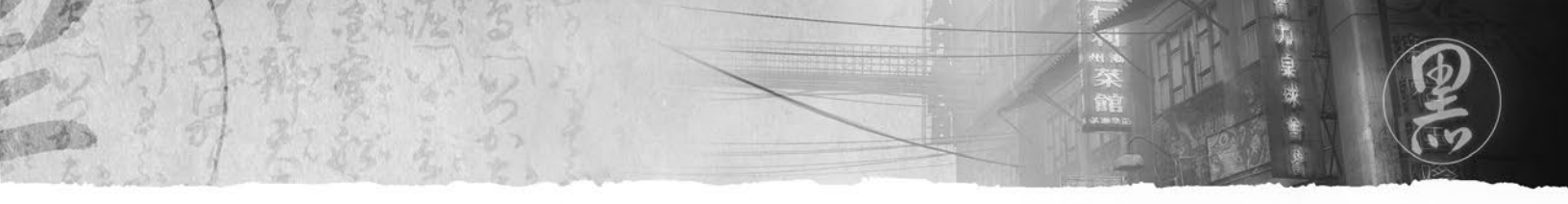
## What if the player characters don't go?

With a murderer on Kaijin seeking to kill Potentials, your player characters might be forgiven for running in the opposite direction. Surely only a gruesome death awaits them if they walk into the arms of the killer?

So the Gamemaster may wish to remind them that forewarned is forearmed. At the moment they know little or nothing about what might be coming after them and with the blockade still in force, they won't get very far if they run. Sooner or later the murderer will come for them, wherever they hide, and they will have no way to prepare a defence.

The more confrontational characters may also realise that they have a tactical advantage. At the moment the killer is in one district, where they might hunt it down and turn the tables. If it leaves the platform who knows where it might go?

Finally, there is the moral angle. People are dying and the player characters are not only connected to the deaths, but have information that the police do not. If they do not at least try and pass this detail on to the investigating officers, more people are going to die.



Kaijin has a thriving black market, often made up of people looking to make ends meet when they could not afford passage back to the mainland. Visitors who spend some time looking around the lower walkways will find a selection of illicit goods on offer, for a price of course.

## Investigations

Once settled into the district, the player characters will want to look around, but they are not the only ones on Kaijin looking into the deaths. There are two journalists on the station that they might talk to, and two investigating officers with their own pathologist. If player characters try to investigate the crime scenes directly, they are easy to find, but they will have to talk to a few contacts or locals to find out where to find the journalists and police.

## The Police

Two inspectors have come over from the mainland to investigate the case. While Kaijin has a police force it only has a very small detective department, usually more experienced with smuggling than murder. Given the higher profile of the case, it made sense to send over more experienced detectives. The two investigating officers have brought over their own pathologist who has hired a mortuary lab to keep the bodies and do his work.

The police will be suspicious of anyone asking about the murders, at first thinking them journalists, so player characters' covers had best be secure. If they reveal the list of Potentials and the link with the murder victims, the police will be very interested, especially if they can prove what they say. If they discover that the player characters are also Potentials the police will want to put them in protective custody.

### Kobayashi Tetsuo

An old cop not far from retirement, Tetsuo is a little over 60, with large dark circles under his eyes, almost a Japanese 'Columbo'. He is quite grumpy and, at first, will not be very nice. The old man has a weakness though: he loves booze and will be much more talkative over a bottle of sake or a glass of beer. The player characters may even run into him in one of the Kaijin bars.

### Hang Jin-Pyo

Tetsuo's partner, also an old cop, is much friendlier and talkative. Jin-Pyo is Korean, 59 years old, with a few locks

of white hair and a face full of wrinkles formed from warm expressions. Nevertheless, he will not spill the beans as soon as the player characters ask him. They will have to build a relationship with him, and show him that they are serious, in order to forge some mutual trust. Jin-Pyo and his partner are living on site for the investigation, only leaving once a week for a day off. It is possible to socialise with him at the Sushi Sea or in any other similar establishment.

### Nakahashi Tahei

Tahei is the medical examiner on the case, and not a police officer. He is a young doctor who has just qualified, and has a very dry sense of humour and a coffee addiction. Despite always keeping a straight face, he has a very black gallows sense of humour, not uncommon among pathologists.

If they befriend Tahei – bringing him freshly brewed coffee will help – he will bring the player characters up to speed on some of the medical clues. If the characters have not made the connection themselves, he can explain that tetrodotoxin (the toxin found on the wounds and that should cover the blade of the murder weapon) is the same as the one in the fugu fish. This famous toxic fish is prepared as sashimi, which is particularly fashionable and expensive, but for which preparation requires a state diploma and still results in a few deaths every year.

If the player characters play nicely with these three law enforcement officers, they may inform the characters as to the killer's methods, the details of the crime scenes and give them their first clues. While their first suspicions led to the underworld, the last two murders have led the officers to completely revise the focus of their investigations. Now they lean towards the serial killer angle. The officers and their pathologist co-worker are still trying to find a commonality between the victims. Sure, some serial killers strike at random, depending on who they meet, but the insular nature of the quarter and their experience and 'gut', leads them to believe that it might be something else. Nevertheless, they are in no way aware of the list connecting the characters.

## The Journalists

There are two journalists covering the case on Kaijin, either of which might offer new insight into the case. They were immediately attracted by the macabre nature of the victim's deaths and thought right away that a serial killer was responsible. The fact that the first victims had connections to the underworld has not misled them, unlike the police. Both are more integrated into the local population and can serve as



guides to certain areas in the quarter. Most people on Kaijin are also happier to talk to journalists than police too.

### Cindy Kang

Cindy is a young Sino-American reporter, stranded in Japan by the Kuro Incident. She is a very pretty mixed heritage woman, barely 30 years old. Being young, she is quite enthusiastic and speaks very fast. She came to Japan working for 'TBTN', an American regional channel, but when she was cut off from her network, she refused to give up reporting and got recruited by 'Jap-One', a private channel owned by a Genocratic press magnate, Bui Gen Eichiro. The 'Ogre affair' is the first serious story she has been able to cover in Japan, and she is very aware that it could help her fragile career. Serious and hard working, she interviews everybody she can find, working round the clock if need be. The player characters can turn her into a solid ally if they bring her news and regularly trade valid information with her.

### Okamoto Gihei

This older journalist is winding down from a highly prestigious career. In his fifties, he is balding, with drawn features and teeth yellowed by tobacco. He used to host the news on a premier Japanese channel before ruining his career by publicly revealing that he belonged to a cult. The evening of the Kuro Incident, he surprised thousands of viewers, podcasters and listeners, by blaming the events of the day on the Japanese government. Live on air he encouraged the Japanese people to revolt for a 'True Japan'. This new Japan would see a stronger emphasis on worship and respect for the divinities, led by the cult, Ikari Kami. When he was immediately fired, he became the cult's spokesman. When Ikari Kami was absorbed by a bigger organisation, he became the director of the cult's official channel. He is covering this event convinced that the 'Ogre' is a man so tainted by modern dissolute living that it has driven him insane.

Okamoto Gihei can be used to give the player characters some of the stranger clues, or a few red herrings. Who is to know these crackpots are not sometimes near the truth? The Gamemaster can mix real scenario information and important events with abstruse dogmatic truths and convoluted reasoning. Okamoto is a crackpot already immersed in a hodgepodge of delusions, some of which have some truly disturbing details.

## The Victims

The names of the victims are now a matter of public record, so tracking down friends, colleagues and the scene of each crime

is reasonably simple. As the police have already interviewed most people, no one is 'off limits' and the crimes scenes are no longer guarded. However, the police do keep returning to seek out more clues and will hear about the player characters' investigations if they are not subtle.

### Victim 1: Itagaki Kimiko

The first victim worked on the BCX 719 platform in restaurant called 'Three Flavours'. It is a shabby, tiny and filthy place where their excuse for food actually hides a prostitution ring. Kimiko was 31 years old, and organised the girls and the androids while her associate, Mubura Kotaro, a fat man with a greasy, unhealthy complexion, managed the establishment and the kitchen. Kotaro is very suspicious of anyone asking questions, so the player characters must employ every trick of diplomacy to extract any information from him. At the most he will concede that Itagaki Kimiko was his associate and that she was a partner in the business. Given the nature of the business, both Itagaki and Mubura are part of the local Yakuza, a connection that Mubura might hint at to threaten the player characters if they get too pushy.

He will deny any illegalities and will show his ownership license for the Gynoid androids, which he will call "welcoming hostesses" and not prostitutes. Prostitution is not actually illegal in Japan, however, it is tacitly reserved to certain quarters and it is forbidden on the platform. The human prostitutes will be locked in their rooms during any interview, and the androids will not be of any use. Itagaki Kimiko's apartment is actually an upstairs room at the 'restaurant'. However, there were no witnesses as the attack was so quiet that no one noticed. She was found by one of the girls (Aki, 21 years old) when she failed to hand out the schedule for the girls that afternoon.

### Victim 2: Wada Hashiba

The second victim was 38 years old and worked in the Tsubachi establishment, a factory specialising in the processing and colourisation of food algae on ACX 413 platform. He was a skilled worker and worked on a production line on a lower level. He separated algae and threw away any too tainted by any toxins that had escaped the vast filters. He was murdered at home, in his tiny lodgings made up of one tiny room in a block two floors below the factory. His wife, Wada Akiko, was sleeping beside him. She was awakened by noises and a movement, which she assumed was her husband. Before she could wake up properly she was rendered unconscious by a blow to the forehead. When she woke up her husband was dead and lay eviscerated in the bed. She has seen nothing and cannot say anything that can identify the killer.



As the investigation progressed, the police officers managed to get hold of evidence (through financial tracking) of deposits and movements of money that seemed large for someone with Washida's job. His widow eventually confessed that her deceased husband was corrupt. A certain Mr Reed would pay him to look the other way when a cargo of algae too polluted for trade went missing. She has never seen or met Mr Reed.

### Mr Reed

Mr Reed is a small-time gangster who runs a smuggling ring. It repackages substandard food that it then smuggles off Kaijin to sell to the poor neighbourhoods in Shin-Edo. While this makes many people ill, both Mr Reed and the smuggling ring are just a red herring in the scenario. You can launch the characters after him if you think that they are moving too quickly or if you wish to take them into Kaijin's darker places.

### Victim 3: Marubashi Ikaru

The third victim was aged 43 and had never had any hint of trouble with the law.

Marubashi Ikaru was a lawyer working in the legal department of a mid-sized company called SFP (Sea Food Packaging), a fish conditioning firm. He was a lawyer with a very average, lacklustre career, and his presence in Kaijin was the only exceptional thing about him. He was to check over the clauses during the signing of a contract with a new client and was there simply for a day, but the post-Kuro incident typhoons that regularly beset Japan prevented the helicopter from taking him back. He decided to spend the night in the second-class hotel where he was killed.

Interestingly, this murder had a witness, an Italian engineer, Fabio Pescatore, Murabashi's temporary neighbour, who heard struggling noises. He opened his door slightly to check the hallway and saw a massive, arched silhouette quickly and silently moving away up the corridor. More than its appearance, he was stunned by the smell emanating from the figure. It was a salty stench, reeking of iodine and rotten fish. He quickly shut the door, almost vomiting, with no wish to investigate the hulking figure any further. Lit with only one weak red emergency lamp, the corridor was almost pitch black at the time, so Pescatore was unable to see any more details.

### Victim 4: Omura Yumiko

The last victim to date was an executive in the Russian-Nipponese company Koryakovsky & Ichikawa, which specialises in advertising sea delicacies. Yumiko was currently preparing the marketing strategy of a client company, Shibu Corp. In Kaijin for four days, she counted on staying the week to complete her work and then return to her home in Shin-Edo.

She was killed while out on a heavy drinking session with her co-workers. As if pulled by a mighty arm, she disappeared into one of the floor's oxygenation tunnels. Her screams sounded for a moment in the tunnel, but were cut off abruptly. Kaijin is very much a place that never sleeps; the fish companies operate a 24-hour shift pattern, so many other businesses do the same. This meant that there were several witnesses to this surprise kidnapping. Unfortunately the speed of the abduction meant that what witnesses there were did not get a good look at the perpetrator. From what little information they have gleaned from those present, the police have concluded that the kidnapper had Herculean strength. After all, Omura Yumiko was a very strong and healthy young woman. The body was found a few hours later, at a much lower level, between two rubbish bins in a sector mostly occupied by industries and a few squats. There, on the street, nobody noticed the smell of the murderer, because the smell of fish and water is ubiquitous.

### Some Important Details

It is very hard to notice (make sure the characters get this information after being very observant) because the whole ward oozes humidity, but the places where the killer has appeared are filled with a sort of mould. Brown stains taint the walls of the tunnels where he has been, such as the corridor in the hotel where the lawyer Marubashi was staying. Following his appearance, the humidity rate increases astronomically. Metal areas will have rusted quickly and the few plants nearby will have withered.

Moreover, there's another disturbing correlation. In Marubashi's hotel room there were some sugar bags on a low table, beside a coffee cup. The bags are torn open but contain not sugar, but salt. The same goes for the sugar bags inside Omura's handbag. If questioned on the subject, Mubura Kotaro, the Three Flavours manager (and Itagaki Kimiko's partner) might confess that a joker recently played a prank on him, because all the sugar containers in his establishment were filled with salt...

Sugar seems to have turned to salt. Salt is a key element of the Shinto religion. It is a necessary ingredient to any purification ritual.



# FEAR OF THE DARK

The purpose of this chapter is to energise the investigations, featuring a first contact between the creature and its pursuers – the player characters. Indeed, during the investigation, maybe when they reach the place where Omura's body was discovered, the more perceptive characters (Perception check) will notice a foul odour in the air. Soon they will hear strident, shrill screams, which come from walkways farther away. When the player characters arrive on a meshed walkway (which feels very unstable due to being fixed to the ceiling by cables) they will see on the lower level an arched shadow sliding around a little building with great alacrity, but hesitating to enter. The screams are coming from inside. It is the killer tracking a new victim?

The creature is hardly visible and not just because the lights are dim, which might create doubt in the minds of the players, or at least the characters. Is it a hunchbacked man, or a monster? The darkness will make it hard to be certain. Any character equipped with a Gantai will see it filled with static before the screen turns grey, disrupted by some kind of pulsing. Any character equipped with audio biotech will distinctively hear high-pitched noises, like claws scratching a blackboard or a factory whistle.

If the player characters chase after the creature, it will show an agility worthy of the best gymnasts and will leap from walkways to tunnels, holding on to tubes, climbing over pillars, quickly leaving behind the most agile of characters, especially after leaping over a distance impossible for a normal human being.

Inside the tiny building, an artificial (modelled after a teenage Japanese girl) will explain to the player characters how she was chased here by a horrifying monster when she was going home after shopping for her boss. She did not see its face, but smelled a horrible stench. She screamed for help while running away. She is a home robot with overclocked programming, probably to act as a prostitute. She is quite a basic model and has been reprogrammed to be seductive. Completely unimpressed by this event, our charming silicon hostess will come on to each of the characters while she is answering their questions. You cannot hold it against her, it is just her programming.

Two questions should be foremost in the player character's minds:

- What saved the android from the killer's attack?
- Why was an android attacked in the first place?

It is not obvious what has protected the Artificial from the serial killer's wild attack, but it is simple to deduce. She took refuge in an abandoned shrine, its pediment decorated with a dusty shimenawa, a rope woven in rice straw supposedly to keep demons away. Was it the traditional Shinto object that repelled the murderer? It is impossible to be sure, but together with the salt there are now enough elements for one to start thinking of traditional Japanese rites. At this time, it is impossible to know why the killer attacked an android. In fact, the android houses a spirit that drew the killer's rage. Her name is Onna, and the player characters will meet her again properly at Domino's club in the last adventure, Kami (see page 102).

## Strange Disappearances

The next night all the player characters have a strange and rather frightening dream. The whole of the Kaijin platform quarter is swaying, almost to breaking point. Stars are falling into the water, torn from the sky by huge tornadoes, causing gigantic waves. They hear a sort of dull pressure coming from the deep that keeps getting louder. Around them, people panic, crushing each other in their rush to escape. The ground becomes slippery; people are drowned in strange organic liquids. From the top of a heap of flesh, a man watches them. This huge, hunchbacked man has a horribly deformed face, protruding eyes and a mouth twisted by small fine teeth. He turns to the player characters to address them and raises a hand in their direction, but before he can speak each of them is woken by their Pod ringing.

It is one of their contacts, either a journalist or a police officer, depending on who they have got close to. The contact has unearthed something vital. A worker has disappeared, and is now the subject of a manhunt, as the date of the disappearance is the same as the first murder. Moreover, according to his co-workers, he had been exhibiting very strange behaviour before he vanished.

The worker in question is Niwa Fumihiko. He was a deep sea diver working at DeepTek. This company is a state contractor for the maintenance of Kaijin's foundations. Its divers work to maintain the supporting pillars, to ensure that the bedrock does not crumble and to study the porosity and the rust in the supporting materials. They are trained to use the bulky high-tech diving suits and command arthropods (giant robots with metal legs similar to those of sea spiders or crabs) to aid them in their work.



Seeking out more information the player characters may be led to Niwa's team leader, Yamana Bunjiro. He gave Niwa a special leave of absence two weeks ago, but when he didn't return to work, he contacted Niwa's girlfriend, Sagara Kaoru. She claimed that Niwa disappeared the day before. Worried, she was about to contact the police. They went together to report the disappearance this morning.

## Storm Warning

As soon as the player characters turn on the TV or check their Pods, they will learn that a typhoon is building, preventing all communication with the rest of the city. A level 3 alert has been declared, because the tornado risks passing near Kaijin. The alert blocks all traffic and obliges companies to activate secure evacuation routes, which means that some corridors have ground lights, showing the path to follow in case of emergency evacuation. All structures are also obliged to open their safety relays, large sealed and pressurised capsules that can hold some 30 people. Nevertheless, no one seems alarmed and the characters will learn that such tornadoes are very regular, especially after the Kuro Incident.

### Typhoon Alerts

Being on the open sea, Kaijin is somewhat at the mercy of rough seas and high winds. There are five levels of alert on Kaijin, the details of which are posted around the platform for visitors. When the sea is too rough to allow evacuation, there are several parts of the station designated 'safe zones'. These are tougher parts of the station that can be sealed and can float if torn from the station. Such areas are marked in green

**Level 1 – Warning:** Small boats may be in danger; residents are generally warned to take care.

**Level 2 – Secure:** Residents are warned to secure all doors and windows and not venture outside. Small boat traffic no longer allowed.

**Level 3 – Danger:** Non-essential workers are advised to stay at home. Entertainment areas are closed.

**Level 4 – Emergency:** The station has become dangerous, all non-essential workers are advised to leave or make their way to a secure area.

**Level 5 – Evacuation:** The platform is no longer safe and all residents are advised to leave or get to a safe area.

## Rapture of the Deep

The DeepTek areas of the platform are in the deepest levels of Kaijin where there are no residential places. All around there are only metal structures, massive imposing structures, Cyclopean pillars the size of buildings, monstrous hydraulic cylinders, decompression hatches the size of interchanges and arthropod hangar bays. The noises of pressure on metal are even more frightening. The area is near a depth of 250m beneath the sea surface and the walls are some 15 metres thick. Only professionals roam through these levels, as well as security androids. However, it is not a forbidden area and it is easily possible to arrange a meeting with Yamana Bunjiro if the player characters are polite or use their contacts.

Yamana is an athletic 30 year-old man sporting a goatee. He will tell the characters that Niwa evinced strange behaviour in the few days before he was given his leave of absence, roughly two weeks ago. Often exhausted and inattentive, his daydreams almost caused the death of a co-worker, when he got in the way of a dangerous underwater manoeuvre. After that incident he was placed on a two week forced leave. Yamana believes Niwa was subject to inert gas narcosis, also known as "the rapture of the deep". This is an excessive exposure to nitrogen, which leads to a state of drunkenness, euphoria, even incoherent and inappropriate behaviour. This behaviour can sometimes cause death, such as removing a diving suit underwater for instance.

This type of incident is rare since the new diving suits are equipped with better circulation and use an artificial amniotic liquid. Nitrogen is supposed to be better filtered and adapted to the depths. Yamana believes Niwa must have damaged his suit, or perhaps a nanocentipede failed to unclog a small hole in one of the many gas injectors in the fluid. This must have led to a bad calibration of the gaseous mix of amniotic liquid, exposing Niwa to a nitrogen overdose. While Yamana has not found a problem with Niwa's suit, he believes it is the only possible explanation for his behaviour.

If the player characters inquire about the sort of behaviour Niwa manifested, Yamana remembers the first delusion quite well. Niwa claimed that he was caught by a ghost who melted through his hard suit without any trouble and entered his body. Niwa insisted that he was very ill, as if poisoned and had to go home sick for the rest of the day. Yamana may put the player characters in touch with Dr Shibata in base CCX-1236, who was Niwa's doctor. He is responsible for the 'health of human and artificial resources' of the company, and had several sessions with Niwa after the incident.





The player characters will have to be cunning to get an interview with Dr Shibata. He is not at liberty to divulge any private medical records to just anyone. However, he is curious about the case and would welcome any insight he can be given if he trusts that the conversation will remain confidential. Dr Shibata is an old man, with degrees in robotics and medicine, and is convinced that “the living is but one state of existence.” He deliberately confuses human organs with the parts of artificials. His lab is at the end of the complex and is quite isolated. The walls are covered with stuffed deep-sea fish. He can explain that his tests proved Niwa was not suffering from nitrogen overexposure, but from an abnormally high presence of a very specific neurotoxin: tetrodotoxin. Shibata will state that such a dose is certainly lethal. Niwa’s skin also had a yellow colouring, an unusual symptom for inert gas narcosis. Shibata thinks it was caused by the neurotoxin.

## Interviewing Kaoru

Sagara Kaoru, Niwa’s girlfriend of two years, is a young woman in her twenties. She works in DeepTek’s cafeteria and is very worried about Niwa so will happily help any investigation. However, her co-workers will halt any interview that seems to be upsetting her at work. Kaoru will explain that during his leave she found Niwa quiet and constantly daydreaming. He would also leave their apartment every night. She feared something had gone wrong at his job, but didn’t dare to ask him because of his condition. Knowing it to be a hard and dangerous job, she felt it better to let him recover slowly, but things were not getting better and the evening before he was due to go back to work, he went out as usual without saying where and never came back.

During their talk with the young woman she will receive a message on her Pod. It is a visiospeak, a previously recorded message. Kaoru will issue a cry of fright as it is from Niwa! The image is not clear, as there is not much light and the signal quality is poor, but his face appears transformed, his protuberant eyes radiating a cold light.

*“Kaoru, forgive me... I... I must go and meet my destiny. I will no longer have a place here. The kami... The tornado... I must go. I loved you. Forget me... Get away from them, I can feel them near you... And, most of all, leave the station as soon as possible!”*

Niwa cuts off the conversation moments later, overcome by a mixture of emotions. However, the image allows the characters to see a sign denoting the level and junction of Niwa’s position. He is further down, in the deepest parts of the platform.

At the end of the message, a feminine voice with robotic undertones issues from all security devices across the platform.

*“Attention, because of non-optimal weather conditions, a Level 4 alert is in effect. All residents must remain in their homes. Employees please remain in your companies. This is not a drill, I repeat, this is not a drill.”*

## INTO THE DEEP

In this final act you should work to increase the stress on the player characters. The station is being emptied, and people look worried because the Level 4 alert has never been activated before, except during the Kuro Incident. The next level up is full evacuation. Faces downcast and pale, people hurry to get home or prepare to remain at their workplaces. Everybody is checking the evacuation routes with new diligence. Only the androids remain, politely but firmly enjoining stragglers to go to their places. During this ordered chaos the player characters feel the station moving a little. For example, the surface in glasses of water ripples gently with each vibration.

As soon as the player characters leave Sagara Kaoru, one of them (perhaps the one that saw him in the previous scene) also gets a message from Niwa on his Pod. Obviously no longer in control, Niwa insults the character. Hatred oozes from his voice. He says he knows who they are, why they are there and who guides them (“that overexcited stooge”, he will say). He will threaten that he will soon have their organs and their skin. Then he smashes his Pod against a wall and the signal vanishes.

A few minutes later, a dull thud is heard by the player characters and a violent shock shakes the whole of Kaijin. Alarms sound across the complex. If the characters were in the lift (possibly taking them down to Niwa) it might stop, forcing them to find a way to break out and climb the shaft to get out.

At this point a Level 5 alert is immediately issued: full evacuation is ordered. Clearly something has exploded in the foundations. Those who cannot evacuate are ordered to find shelter in the ‘safe zones’. The explosion is Niwa’s doing. If no one stops him, he will blow up all the foundations of Kaijin.

If the player characters attempt to go to DeepTek, they must avoid the security androids. They forbid access to everyone and try to secure the area while waiting for the people in charge of evaluating and repairing the damage. The androids may use

force in order to make the player characters abandon their chase and move to a safe zone, but they will remain unfailingly polite, even during a firefight.

As the player characters reach the lowest levels they find them all deserted. Niwa's trail becomes easier to follow as he has torn the security doors off their hinges, much to the concern of the local AI trying to maintain lockdown procedures. Player characters with Microphotonics skill might interrogate the AI (a male-voiced AI called Nick) who can give them a location for Niwa. He used his ID code to leave the station, but he didn't observe optimal safety procedures. What the AI means is that he left the station without a diving suit!

## Following Outside

If the player characters want to stop Niwa causing harm, they must find a way of leaving the station themselves. While there are mini-submers available, the best way to go outside is by using a hard suit. There are small submarines, but using suits means that they will be able to take on Niwa as a group rather than as a crew of a single vessel.

Using and wearing these exoskeletons is not that easy, but their servomotors are commanded by an AI embedded in each suit making it possible to use them without training. The programming is rudimentary, if adequate, and will help the characters to operate this huge armour of metal and cables weighing more than a tonne and a half. The AI can also take command of the systems to return an unconscious or dead diver back to base. At this point the player characters might be very glad that they took the basic diving course before they came to the Kaijin platform district.

Once equipped, the player characters will have a lot of trouble moving while in the 'open air'. As soon as they are in front of the hatch, their AIs will warn them, with a voice as sweet as it is fake, of the injection of amniotic liquid, recommending that they shut their eyes and try not to fight the process. The AI will offer to play soothing music to help relax the new diver as the suit floods with breathing fluid. The choice of relaxing music will depend on the previous user, and might range from Easy Listening and Classical to Heavy Metal and J-Pop.

Humorous song or not, the suit fills up little by little with a thick pinkish liquid that smells like raw eggs. This a horrible sensation, stuck in a huge suit of armour, wearing an oppressive helmet that limits your field of vision and is slowly filling

with liquid. Soon the helmets are full. If the characters have not closed their eyes, they will not be able to see very well for a moment. They will get used to it, but everything will have a pinkish tint. Then the AI will turn on the Gantai, lighting up their field of vision with a lot of diverse virtual parameters. Calmly breathing the liquid is extremely difficult as the body's natural reaction will be to resist what feels like drowning. Those with training will find it a lot easier. The player characters will initially suffer the impression of suffocating and drowning. Then the liquid will envelop them and they will regain control, though the weird feeling of no longer having to breathe is unprecedented.





Now that they are ready to move to the depths they will probably want to find some equipment to neutralise Niwa. They just need to find some tools that can be turned to offensive purposes, thus a firing pin and some steel bars can become a harpoon, a grinder will become a formidable chainsaw and so on. These weapons are scaled to the armour, so heavy that a single man would be unable to lift them.

Once equipped, the player characters need to move into the airlock chambers. These fill with water, gently lifting the weight from the exoskeleton. Once submerged the suits feel light and mobile, and the player characters cannot feel the deathly cold of the icy water.

Finally, the outside doors open and they can leave the platform. The pollution limits much of the visibility. The suits' spotlights illuminate a tainted, grey coloured water filled with all sorts of debris, but do not manage to pierce the opacity very far. Some little fish swim in front of the characters, as if surprised by the lights, and suddenly rush around the divers, following their air bubbles. In effect, the exoskeleton servomotors work like space suits and increase mobility by letting streams of gas escape at the joints. This creates bubbles quickly absorbed by the myriad fish, hungry for this easily obtainable oxygen. Some fish even have a weird light that hangs in front of their mouths to better attract their prey.

After a little moment of adaptation, the AI issues greenish cloud into the water that repels the fish, but makes the water even harder to see through. The characters are surrounded by the most absolute silence. Only the beeps in their suits or the crackling of the communications disrupt the blanket of sepulchral silence enveloping them. When the cloud dissipates, they see several explosive charges mounted on the main platform struts, ready to use, but not yet armed...

## Confronting Niwa

The end of the scenario should be handled with care. The player characters are going to have to face the monster Niwa has become. Unfortunately, with visibility as it is, it will be hard to get a good look at him. The pollution is such that it is impossible to distinguish anything beyond a few metres, and Niwa is furiously fast. He has mutated into something weird and terrifying. He is able to swim here unencumbered by a suit, without any trouble, despite the cold and the pressure. Bare-chested, pale, with a deformed back and hollow cheeks, he has become a ghost from the depths, passing fleetingly before the divers' eyes.

Niwa will take an evil pleasure in frightening the player characters, often climbing onto their backs. Thus a character watching in his Gantai using his rear-mounted cameras that show what is going on behind him will see Niwa's misshapen silhouette appear suddenly, watching him with an evil eye, before disappearing again.

Even though their Gantai all show that no sound is being picked up from outside of their diving suits, the player characters will distinctively hear Niwa's voice addressing them, whispering horrors about the end times and the Yomi-No-Kumi. He will tell them of the Oni, those terrifying demons, ogres that will soon devour them. Then he will attack...

In fact, he will try to attack the exoskeletons' weak spots. Attacking the joints, he will try to tear cables with his toxin-filled claws to immobilise them and leave them there, paralysed, so they can never reach the airlock, dying while smothered by a slowly depleting amniotic fluid. If the player characters do too well, and Niwa is in trouble, he may also try to detonate the explosive charges around the characters.

Finally, using the tools they gathered in the diving suit room, the player characters should manage to fatally wound Niwa. As he lies dying in the sand, letting out blood in the shape of blackish swirls, he will have one last spasm. In a hiccup, he spits blood, bubbles and a strange shape not unlike an octopus' ink cloud. This shape is similar to a large, swollen, yellowish fish. It will spiral away from the characters, barely looking real, joining the fog and losing itself among the footholds of the structure. Those characters more knowledgeable in oceanography will identify its ghostly form as that of a fugu fish.



# CONCLUSION

With Niwa defeated, it is time for the characters to get back inside Kaijin. The evacuation of part of the complex is over. The typhoon has moved away northward and the alert level has been lowered to Level 3. Maintenance teams will be suiting up to repair any armatures damaged by the explosion. When they discover other divers in the water, they will want to know who the player characters are and what they were doing outside.

Kaijin – half emptied of its population and with the other half locked in secure areas – looks like a ghost town. There is little to keep the player characters here now, that is unless they would like to explain Niwa's weird fate to his girlfriend? Will she even believe them if they do? It may be better to return to coastal Shin-Edo and try to answer other important questions. Why did Niwa attack an android? Why did the typhoon follow him? What does it mean, when the sugar turned to salt?

In short, the adventure will end with the player characters having more new questions than answers.

黒雨

# NPCS

## Niwa

### Characteristics

DEX 4	STR 4	STA 5	REF 4
INT 4	PER 4	CHA 2	WIL 2

### Secondary Characteristics

HIT 60	SW 20	DT -20	
DEF 22	REA 5	ACT 2	MOV 4

### Skills

#### Combat Skills

- Hand to Hand 3
  - Brawling 4
- Firearms 3
- Melee 3
  - Dagger 5
- Academic Skills
- Natural Sciences 4
  - Fish Farming 5\*
  - Oceanography 5
- Physical Sciences 3
  - Hydrodynamics 4\*

#### General Skills

- Athletics 4
  - Dodge 5
  - Swimming 6
- Deception 3
  - Sneaking 4
- Pilot 4
  - Heavy Diving Suit 6
  - Submersible 5
- Popular Culture 2
  - Politics 4
- Spiritual 2
  - Occult 3
- Survival 2
  - Aquatic 5
- Technical Skills
- Explosives 2
- Mechanics 3
  - Heavy Diving Suit 5
  - Sea Platform Maintenance 6
- Medicine 1
  - Surgery 2
- Contacts 2
  - Maritime 4



# CONTINUING THE DAY OF THE MOON

While the Gamemaster is free to move on to the next adventure, we offer a few adventure outlines that continue the themes of **Fugu**. These adventure hooks offer a glimpse of the supernatural inside the mundane, and are designed to unnerve rather than directly challenge the player characters. They show the player characters that just as they are beginning to peer into the darkness, something in the shadows may be staring right back at them. After each adventure in this phase they should still be able to convince themselves that anything apparently supernatural was just a trick of the light or the effects of tiredness or overwork.

These adventures also allow the player characters to explore the more mundane aspects of the **Kuro** setting. In fact, it is worthwhile for the Gamemaster to run a few minor encounters of a purely mundane nature to allow the player characters to explore Shin-Edo. They might go shopping in Ginza or go searching for particular electrical parts in Akihibara. They might take a date to see the historic parts of Asakusa or have a wild night clubbing in Shinjuku. They had best make the most of the opportunity for normality as things are only going to get more complicated!

## The Watcher

One of the player characters notices they are being watched on their journey to work. The watcher, who otherwise appears normal, stares at them for the entire journey. They are always a little distance away, such as a few seats down on a crowded train. So the character would have to risk embarrassment by yelling at them in a public place. Even then, they simply leave at the next station and refuse to engage.

Eventually, the player character will manage to catch the person who will stutter a fearful apology and tell the player character they can “see who they really are”. They will refuse to elucidate any further though, and remain fearful of the player character. The next time they see the watcher he hands them a piece of paper before committing suicide in front of them (possibly by walking in front of a train). The paper simply says “*You are not the only one. They are everywhere.*”

## Ripples of the Future

People in a particular area are getting ill. The infection produces fever and muscle pains and often leaves the sufferer delirious. The source of the infection has proven difficult to find, mainly as the area is poor and the government is overworked. No one has died of the disease yet, but the young and elderly might be at risk as the symptoms are very powerful.

If the player characters investigate they will discover the various homes infected have all drawn water from a local well. Water supplies in the district are intermittent and only a few of the old families know about the ancient well. Unsure how many homes the well might be able to provide for, its users are very cagey about telling anyone else about it.

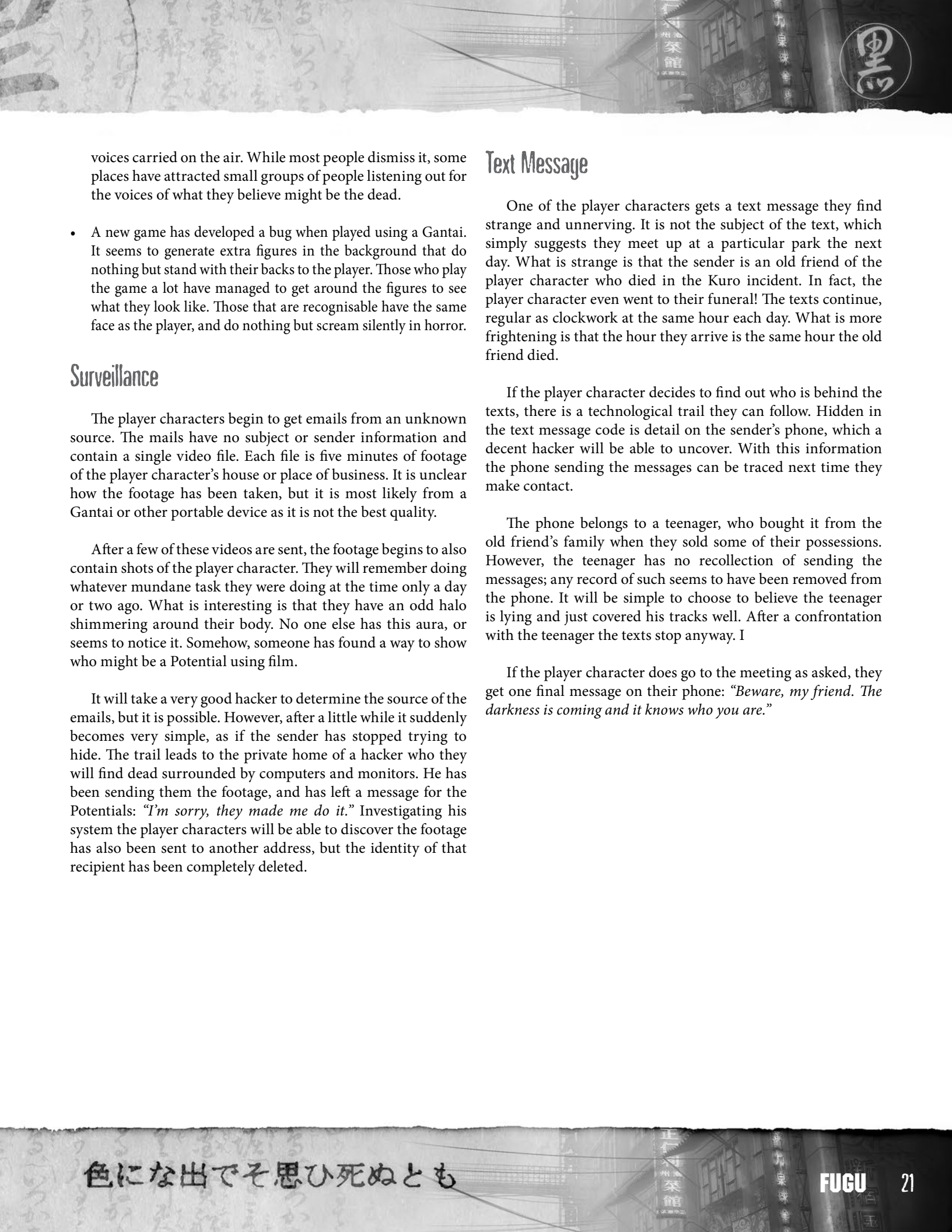
The well is indeed the source of the infection, and a test of the water will show it to be impure. However, no scientist will be able to identify the pathogen involved. If people stop drinking from the well they no longer suffer from the illness. Unfortunately, this will be a hard sell as the water looks pure and tastes fine, and without it some people will be without any water.

What makes this supernatural is what people see when delirious under the infection. While they remember nothing of their dreams, they are seeing the future. Those caught in the throes of the infection get a glimpse of the horrors to come. Those who listen to their ramblings and muttered nightmares might learn vital clues about the future, if they believe them.

## Strange Occurrences

Since the Kuro incident, people are reporting strange things happening a lot more frequently. Most of these occurrences are unnerving, but don't seem dangerous. There are a lot of omens in the air these days. Some examples might include:

- Animals seem to congregate at some of the local shrines, especially feral dogs. They are usually calm and quiet if left alone but become violent when someone tries to remove them.
- Each time someone dies in a particular district, crows gather near their home. Some people are getting nervous of crows as an omen of death. There are some reports that people have seen crows gather around them before they die.
- Many homes get power from cables strung along the street, which often hum with electricity. Some people seem to think there is more to this hum than usual. People talk of hearing



voices carried on the air. While most people dismiss it, some places have attracted small groups of people listening out for the voices of what they believe might be the dead.

- A new game has developed a bug when played using a Gantai. It seems to generate extra figures in the background that do nothing but stand with their backs to the player. Those who play the game a lot have managed to get around the figures to see what they look like. Those that are recognisable have the same face as the player, and do nothing but scream silently in horror.

## Surveillance

The player characters begin to get emails from an unknown source. The mails have no subject or sender information and contain a single video file. Each file is five minutes of footage of the player character's house or place of business. It is unclear how the footage has been taken, but it is most likely from a Gantai or other portable device as it is not the best quality.

After a few of these videos are sent, the footage begins to also contain shots of the player character. They will remember doing whatever mundane task they were doing at the time only a day or two ago. What is interesting is that they have an odd halo shimmering around their body. No one else has this aura, or seems to notice it. Somehow, someone has found a way to show who might be a Potential using film.

It will take a very good hacker to determine the source of the emails, but it is possible. However, after a little while it suddenly becomes very simple, as if the sender has stopped trying to hide. The trail leads to the private home of a hacker who they will find dead surrounded by computers and monitors. He has been sending them the footage, and has left a message for the Potentials: *"I'm sorry, they made me do it."* Investigating his system the player characters will be able to discover the footage has also been sent to another address, but the identity of that recipient has been completely deleted.

## Text Message

One of the player characters gets a text message they find strange and unnerving. It is not the subject of the text, which simply suggests they meet up at a particular park the next day. What is strange is that the sender is an old friend of the player character who died in the Kuro incident. In fact, the player character even went to their funeral! The texts continue, regular as clockwork at the same hour each day. What is more frightening is that the hour they arrive is the same hour the old friend died.

If the player character decides to find out who is behind the texts, there is a technological trail they can follow. Hidden in the text message code is detail on the sender's phone, which a decent hacker will be able to uncover. With this information the phone sending the messages can be traced next time they make contact.

The phone belongs to a teenager, who bought it from the old friend's family when they sold some of their possessions. However, the teenager has no recollection of sending the messages; any record of such seems to have been removed from the phone. It will be simple to choose to believe the teenager is lying and just covered his tracks well. After a confrontation with the teenager the texts stop anyway. I

If the player character does go to the meeting as asked, they get one final message on their phone: *"Beware, my friend. The darkness is coming and it knows who you are."*





# MIZUIRO

*"I don't believe in ghosts."  
"Neither do I, but they believe in me."  
– Gothika*

## Mizuiro Overview

### Kayobi — the Day of Fire

The player characters will have now worked together investigating several strange occurrences. After the two first scenarios, they should have sensibly remained in touch, each looking for information what being a Potential really means.

By now, the player characters have not only discovered their names on the list of Potentials, but also that the darkness hides strange supernatural creatures. They are leaving a time of blindness, of darkness, 'Getsuyobi' (the day of the moon – Monday) and have started to clear away the darkness with new understanding.

In this next 'Kayobi' (Fire) phase the player characters will start to understand that being a Potential not only allows them to occasionally perceive the spectres from Yomi, but also attracts them. They will also come to understand they are not alone, as people having this genetic marker in their blood seem to have powerful allies.

In this adventure the player characters stumble upon a suicide clearly connected to the disappearance of five students. The fact that one of them is a Potential should attract their attention. Hounded by an evil spirit, they will have to re-enact the ritual that begun the chain of events. Thanks to their nature as Potentials, they also discover a separate and disturbing universe in which they may be able to save the victims of the terrifying spirit, Ao-Andon.

In the meantime, they will realise that they seem to be the centre of attention for several people whose intentions and goals remain, for the moment, hidden. These people are members of the Furinkazan Sect, an organisation secretly protecting the kami.

## Gamemaster's Background:

### One Hundred Stories

Ichiro Hanada, a third-year student at the Shin-Edo University, has had a passion for Japanese folklore for several years, particularly the kaidan (horrifying Japanese stories similar to folk tales). It is therefore natural that an old game that has become a new craze called 'hyaku monogatari' (literally, 'one hundred stories') attracted his attention.

This game is very simple: people get together in a room where one hundred candles are lit inside blue rice paper lamps (called Andon lamps) to create a ghostly atmosphere. In turn, each participant tells a horrifying tale (a kaidan) before extinguishing one of the candles. The room gradually becomes

darker, reinforcing the impact of the tales. A popular belief suggests that a supernatural being, the Ao-Andon, will appear when the last lamp is extinguished, which is why most people stop at ninety-nine tales. For some months now this game has been extremely popular among the Japanese youth, supported by several articles on the subject in the press and even a manga with the same theme.

With the help of one of his classmates (Daisuke), Ichiro decided to find volunteers for a hyaku monogatari game at their student residence in Meguro. Daisuke quickly convinced Etsuko, his sister (who enrolled in the university last year) to join them, and she managed to convince three of her friends to come along too. So this group of five students found themselves together in one of the living rooms of the residence, ready to tell each other kaidan in the bluish light of a hundred lamps. Ichiro didn't participate but instead gave each of the others a collection of supernatural folk tales from which they could find stories to tell. He also intended to sneak in and extinguish the last lamp at the end to frighten everyone.

Unfortunately, when he actually entered the room covered in a blue sheet, the room was empty. The five students had disappeared. Terrified, Ichiro shut himself in his room, tirelessly reading several websites trying to find an explanation. The only answer he could find, even though it seems completely irrational, is that Ao-Andon appeared and took his friends.

Driven by guilt, Ichiro decided to return to the room where his friends disappeared to attempt to use the ritual to bring them back. He sought volunteers to help, but word of the disappearances had already spread and everyone he asked was terrified to enter the room. The rumour that Ichiro has something to do with the disappearance has already done the rounds in the university, so it is alone that he tells the one hundred kaidan once more.

However, his efforts met with no success and the failure is enough to destroy the few ounces of hope he had left. Devastated by guilt and helplessness, Ichiro committed suicide at the very place the hyaku monogatari took place. His body was recovered the next morning together with the note he left, whose meaning escaped those who found it. The press quickly reported the death and the authorities are still looking for the five students, who vanished some weeks before.

What Ichiro didn't know is that his friend Daisuke was a Potential. Due to his extraordinary nature, a change happened during the ritual: Daisuke and his friends found themselves in the Ao-Andon dimension, while the latter entered our reality...

## Your own 100 Kaidan

Telling a hundred stories might seem ambitious for one night, but each Kaidan is usually quite short, taking about five minutes to tell. Like Haiku, many Japanese entertainments are short and to the point, but weighted with meaning and symbolism. Your players may well be interested in knowing the sort of stories being told, and an excellent archive of Kaidan can be found at: <http://hyakumonogatari.com/>





# PROLOGUE: STRANGE ENCOUNTERS

It is now November 2046.

Despite what they have been through, the player characters have returned to their normal lives, at least as much as possible. However, even if innocuous, strange phenomena sometimes disrupt their routine.

- One evening, while returning home later than usual, one of the player characters feels he is being followed. He fleetingly notices a shadowy shape in a parallel dark alley, but nothing else. However, the persistent feeling of being spied upon remains.
- A player character notices out of the corner of his eye a humanoid shape dressed in black but with a white head, as if it is covered in a pure white mask. When he turns to look, it has already vanished.
- A being dressed in black, wearing a white Noh mask stands on the other side of the street, seemingly staring at the characters. After a lorry passes, it is no longer there.
- A braided Shinto rope is left on the doorstep of one of the characters, but no one saw who put it there. A nearby security camera only records static before the rope appears.

From these encounters the player characters should realise their troubles are far from over. It seems someone is interested in them. What they will not yet know is that it is the Furinkazan Sect, which is doing its best to help them. However, their previous adventures have illustrated that those interested in Potentials do not always have their best interests in mind. All this should inspire suspicion, even if the mysterious observers appear harmless. Some observers may even be helpful, but only from a distance.

Meanwhile, the player characters suffer a series of fleeting hallucinations from time to time. Monstrous shapes appear in the corner of their eyes, odd noises are briefly heard, a shining aura seems to surround a passer-by, and so on. Strange phenomena and alarming happenings keep appearing in the media, in between the big stories about the blockade and government politics, but now the characters will likely want to take a closer look.

Life in Shin-Edo seems to follow its normal course but many are finding the effects of the blockade harder to deal with. Power failures in some quarters are increasing and it is not rare to see food stores with broken windows in the mornings and their goods looted. Such crimes are not surprising when food prices have kept on rising for some weeks now, exacerbating the discontent of the people.

Recently – and uncommonly for November – snow has fallen in the last few days. After almost a week of freezing winds, Shin-Edo saw an impressive amount of snowfall in just one night. Many people claimed the snow was grey, like ash, but by daybreak it had all turned to mud. In a Shinjuku side street a homeless person was found dead, covered in snow. It was soon apparent that his internal organs had vanished, seemingly having melted although the rest of the body remained intact.

## A Mysterious Message

Already unnerved by recent events, each player character receives an odd message, either at home or at work, consisting of an internet link and a brief sentence. The sender is unidentifiable but all the player characters (and only them) are CC'd into the mail.

The link points directly to an article in a Japanese electronic daily newspaper. It reports the suicide of a young student, yesterday evening, in a university residence near the Meguro campus. One of the photos included in the article shows the room where the body was found. The most striking detail about this photo is that it shows a great number of Andon lamps made of blue rice paper and the rest of the room seems empty. There is also a photo of the student himself, Hanada Ichiro, a young man in his twenties with a sullen look and hollow cheeks.

The message that accompanies this news article is short and to the point: *"This deserves your attention."*

The way the mail was sent hints at Jiro's involvement but this information actually comes from the Furinkazan Sect. They seek to test the player characters and to help another Potential, Daisuke. The sect will avoid contact with the player characters, but it will intervene when necessary if the player characters are truly in need.



## The Furinkazan Sect

For centuries charged with protecting the kami and their heirs, the members of the sect are normal humans who have passed their knowledge from generation to generation. Members of the sect adopt a very similar appearance: each wears dark clothes together with a white Noh mask.

Dormant since the brutal and unexplained disappearance of the kami in the Sengoku period and the dominion of Oda Nobunaga (17th century), the Furinkazan Sect was recently awakened to action by the Kuro Incident.

Run by the Shi-Tenno (the 'Guardians of the Cardinal Points' that protect Japan) and the Emperor, the sect is charged with testing Potentials, those bearing the 'seal of the kami' in their blood. For this purpose, besides putting the characters on the trail of the missing students, they intend to help them as much as necessary in order to gradually open their eyes to the invisible world. The player characters may grow from these trials or not, and if they do, may then become eligible to be granted the power of the kami.

However, the members of the sect have orders not to act directly or to contact the player characters, so as not to tilt the balance of forces more than they have to. This is a critical time, and the slightest error could be disastrous. Thus they will just get the player characters what help they can indirectly, often using cryptic messages and other frustrating methods.

The Gamemaster might make the sect appear in the background of her scenarios as the campaign progresses. They will keep to the shadows and only usually assist the player characters with small gifts accompanied by short, cryptic notes. They might use an ancient fax machine to communicate, leaving messages in weird places, a holographic charade, an old encoded scroll, a puzzle mural, perhaps even an Occultech item which will only be useful later on...

## Investigating the Disappearances

The student residence is easy to find from the directions in the article. However, the player characters must still gain entry. A retinal scanner is installed at the entrance to control access. A doorman in his fifties, with its imposing stature that marks him as part of an external security firm, will arrive as soon as any unauthorised individual appears at the front door. Unless they have a good reason for being there (which the doorman can quickly verify) the player characters will be denied entry.

If they do not quickly find a means of bypassing the retinal scan, one of them will be suddenly shoved by an individual, who quickly disappears around a corner. This player character will then find in one of his pockets a small case with a pair of contact lenses with a new small note: "The eye is the key."

Once the contacts are in place, the player character will not have any trouble getting in even if he insists the other player characters are little more than their entourage who need to accompany him. If they made fools of themselves beforehand the Gamemaster might require them to be more convincing to assuage the guard's suspicions. If they do gain access the guard will remind him that all visitors must leave before 7pm.

The place is relatively quiet because most of the occupants have, after all, gone to class. Some are still there, essentially to study. Nothing here shows that a drama took place several hours before, except on the second floor, beyond the police lines. There is even an ofuda placed on the door by some superstitious person hoping that Ichiro's spirit will find rest.

Here, there are two residents that are most likely to meet the characters, Hibiki and Kazuko. Of course, it is possible to question other people. However, they will mostly know about Ichiro and the missing students because they recently heard about it, even if only in the news.



## The Students

### **Hanada Ichiro (deceased)**

Third year, friend of Daisuke, recently committed suicide, expert in hyaku monogatari.

### **Shiro Daisuke (missing)**

Third year, male, elder brother of Etsuko. Serious and dedicated, also a Potential.

### **Shiro Etsuko (missing)**

First year, female, younger sister of Daisuke. Bright and colourful.

### **Kazuhiko Rin (missing)**

First year, female, friend of Etsuko. Athletic swimming enthusiast.

### **Arai Youta (missing)**

First year, male, in love with Etsuko. Dedicated techhead.

### **Fujiko Osamu (missing)**

First year, male, friend of Etsuko. Frail, shy and bookish.

### **Kato Hibiki**

First year, male, neighbour of the missing students. Habitual drug user.

### **Nakahara Kazuko**

Third year, female. Bright and gossipy, eager to share scandal and news.

## Kato Hibiki

Hibiki's room is on the second floor, and easily noticeable because of the deafening music that comes out of it. This young first-year student looks atypical to say the least. With long, greasy hair, he wears a very worn pair of jeans and a cheap T-shirt of synthetic material with the logo of an underground music band the player characters are unlikely to have heard of. Hibiki looks very sleepy and speaks slowly. He has recently become addicted to a weird new drug called 'Funmatsu no Kami' (powder of the gods). It reputedly creates hallucinations that often lead to bad trips. It seems to allow mortals to perceive certain supernatural elements that might usually be invisible to

them. Under the influence of the drug, Hibiki comes to meet the player characters, claiming they shine intensely.

Although only in his first year, he knows the missing students relatively well. He also remembers the night of the first hyaku monogatari well. High on Funmatsu no Kami he wandered through the floor for close to an hour, because everything seemed surrounded with a bluish halo. Some days after, while returning to the residence after class, he also noticed a passer-by who seemed to have no face, although no one else appeared to notice this. While the drug Hibiki takes does indeed allow him to see supernatural elements, the vision of the faceless passer-by actually has no use whatsoever to the solution of this scenario.

## Nakahara Kazuko

Kazuko is the exact opposite of Hibiki. This girl in her third year is very sociable and has a reputation of rarely shutting up. Also, she is prone to repeat any gossip about the people around her. Certain she hasn't met the player characters before, she will quickly approach them to know more about who they are and their reason for being there. If they spend some time listening to her, the player characters will be able to learn several facts about what happened recently in the residence. Indeed, Kazuko knows everything found in the list below, even if most facts are distorted and filled with mostly unfounded rumours. She will embellish them with more romantic titbits, such as that her friend Rin was having an affair with her economy teacher and that Ichiro was secretly in love with her. When the player characters finally manage to get rid of her, they will know almost everything about the students' love lives and, amid this mass of information; they will doubtlessly have learned some interesting clues about the case that concerns them.

## General Rumours

While they might discover the following information (amongst a lot of additional detail) it is possible to acquire it in a less embellished form by questioning some of the other young people on the premises:

- The suicide, Hanada Ichiro, was a third year student in the Shin-Edo University.
- Ichiro was considered something of a weirdo, with an almost obsessive interest in kaidan and Japanese folklore. He spent his time consulting articles on the subject and had several books about it (something rather incongruous at this time, especially for someone that young).



- He had demonstrated strange, even frightening behaviour for some weeks. He spent most of his time shut in his room.
- His isolation was probably due to the disappearance of his best friend, Daisuke, some weeks before.
- Daisuke vanished together with his sister Etsuko and three of their friends some weeks ago. No one knows what happened to them.
- The last anyone knows, they were supposed to go play a game in a room in the residence.
- Ichiro's room is number 17, which is also on the second floor (in any case it can be easily found; the name of the person occupying a room is posted on the door).
- For two days before his suicide he was asking everybody to play a game of hyaku monogatari with great insistence.
- This was in very bad taste, as the five students (including Daisuke and Etsuko) who disappeared three weeks ago were rumoured to have vanished while playing that very game.
- Many people claim it was Ichiro himself who set up that game.
- Ichiro's body was found in the room where the students disappeared.
- A morbid rumour says that Ichiro played hyaku monogatari before killing himself. That's why he was found in that room.
- In any case, the letter he left behind was really bizarre. Ichiro said he had tried to complete the ritual again so that the evil spirit would free his friends.

## The Missing Students

In total, there are five missing students, and it quickly becomes apparent that the contact lenses the player characters 'found' in their pocket are recognised by the retinal scanners of their respective rooms (and Ichiro's) granting them access. Each room is very small (eight metres square) and contains nothing special except, in each of them, a collection of kaidan that, according to their labels, belong to Ichiro. Each room (and their computers) contain several photos and personal effects that might offer clues about the students themselves.

If the player characters manage to log in to the students' computers, they will find several email conversations with Ichiro. These mails discuss a get-together one evening (which matches the date of their disappearance) and many links sent by Ichiro point to sites about hyaku monogatari, kaidan and other horror stories.

The missing students are detailed below. This information might come from looking at photos and email discussions, or from talking to other students that may have known them.

### Shiro Daisuke

Daisuke is a third-year student, Etsuko's older brother and a good friend of Ichiro's since high school. He is a bulky and easy-going young man. He often defended Ichiro who was sometimes bullied by other students 'for being weird'. His room is very spartan, the walls displaying posters of bands in vogue some months ago. His name is on the player characters' list of Potentials, even if he and his peers knew nothing about it.

Daisuke and his sister have a small age difference (just two years), but because of their parents' constant absences, Daisuke often took care of Etsuko. He blames himself for how hurt she was by their parents' absence, believing he should have done a better job of distracting her and cheering her up when she cried.

### Shiro Etsuko

Daisuke's sister, Etsuko is a first-year student. Daisuke essentially raised her despite the small age difference between them because of their parents' prolonged absences. Still very naïve and even childish, according to her friends she is a very playful girl. Rather petite and slender, she has short hair and a preference for clothing with very bright colours. Her bed is filled with plush puppets and posters testify to her preference for exuberant and popular J-Pop bands. She owns a mini-robot the size of a doll with the likeness of one of these singers, programmed to sing their last season's hit.

Etsuko has very few childhood memories of her parents. However, she remembers the amount of toys they would give her to try and compensate for their absences. Despite all Daisuke's efforts, she remembers being brought up in deplorable conditions and specifically in an apartment that was borderline unhealthy; so her room is impeccably ordered and very clean, if not for the dust accumulated since her disappearance.

### Kazuhiko Rin

A first-year student and very good friend of Etsuko's, Rin is very distant towards other people. Big and muscular, she wears her hair long and has a surly look. A swimming enthusiast, she





won several competitions in high school. The only adornment in her room is a supporter's banner from a recent swimming competition hanging above the window.

While still in high school, Rin was invited by some colleagues for a day at the sea side. Already a swimming aficionado, she yielded to the demands of the other students and swam as far as she could from the beach before returning. Seized with cramp, she almost drowned. She didn't swim for months afterwards and became distant towards other people, only confiding in Etsuko the vision of a corpse she said she saw as she was sinking.

### Arai Youta

Youta is a first-year student and a friend of Etsuko's, although he is actually in love with her. Youta maintains an adolescent beard, and usually wears jeans and a dark T-shirt whatever the season. He is a computer fanatic and tech-head in general. It is quite noticeable as his tiny room seems to have been carried here directly from Akihabara. The room is in complete disarray, the few pieces of furniture packed with the latest flexible screens and jellyfishes. There is even a rare holographic projector in a corner, a very fashionable device used to watch holographic shows and films, and which has an excessively high price tag.

During his first year in high-school, due to the bullying he suffered at the hands of some of his fellow pupils, Youta lived for several weeks shut in his home. It was from then on that he became obsessed with computers and gradually developed agoraphobia. The technology he hoards has since become his only link with the outside world.

### Fujiko Osamu

This first-year student is also a friend of Etsuko's and Youta's. Frail and very studious, he spends most of his time in his room, studying. He stands out from the popular crowd by wearing Gantai spectacles and outdated clothes. His room has a musty odour and doesn't contain much except for school stuff (books, tablets and a computer) in a pile on the desktop.

Little by little, Osamu is reducing his universe to his room and he doesn't see how he is isolating himself and losing touch from all those around him. In fact, some students in the same residence don't even know him at all, as he never leaves his books and homework.

### Hanada Ichiro's Room

In Ichiro's room, the player characters will find the usual collection of school books as well as several packs of instant

noodles and other easily prepared foodstuffs. On the desk is a computer and Ichiro's Pod connected to a flexible screen. The computer isn't pass-coded and the browsing history over the NeoWeb contains many sites on kaidan and hyaku monogatari. If the player characters turn the Pod on (it is clearly in stand-by mode) a strange page appears on the flexible screen. It seems a quote from a blogsite insisting that the hyaku monogatari can allow the spirit Ao-Andon to enter our world.

### The Ritual Room

Officially the room is a study area, although before the incident it was often used by students as a common area. As such it is a plain open space with a couple of low tables and chairs (little more than a cushion with a back). Each floor of the residence has two of these rooms. Just as hinted in the photo with the news report, it also contains several bluish paper lamps. As the room where the body was found, it is still technically a crime scene, and is sealed with police tape. However, there are no police guarding the area as the case is almost closed. It seems to be a bit colder than the rest of the building. In any case, nothing further can be learned here.

## HUNTED BY AO-ANDON

The player characters' investigation into the missing students' disappearance quickly attracts the interest of Ao-Andon. It has been hiding in this reality for some weeks now and has had the time to learn that it was Daisuke's nature as a Potential that allowed it to find its way to our world. As the hyaku monogatari is the key to sending it back and returning the students, the evil spirit decides to track down the player characters and eliminate them to make sure it can stay in the physical world. It can only act in utter darkness, which is why it can only appear at the end of the hyaku monogatari when all candles are extinguished.

Ao-Andon will begin to stalk the player characters, but it needs to wait for complete darkness to make its move. Its appearances should create a sensation of an increasingly pressing menace over the characters during their investigations. Ao-Andon will appear as a bluish shape in the corner of a room where the player character is sleeping, awakening him with a

start. The player character might think it is nothing more than a nightmare or a hallucination.

If Ao-Andon gets too close to one of them, a member of the sect may intervene. The latter, always as a dark silhouette wearing a white mask, will appear holding a strange sort of lighter. The device throws out a particularly intense light that is sufficient to scare Ao-Andon off, at least for the moment. The sect member will still keep their distance though, shining the light through a window, for instance. The player character will be momentarily blinded by the light, offering the sect member a moment to escape.

Eventually, Ao-Andon will find his moment. Turning to a dark alley, one of the characters will find himself face to face with a vaguely humanoid being. Recognisable from the Kaidan stories from its malformed face surrounded by long dark hair and crooked fingers, it is draped in a kind of shapeless material and suffused in a sickly bluish aura. Approaching slowly, as if

savouring the moment, Ao-Andon will utter in a discordant voice: *"I must make you disappear so that people like you will not make us disappear!"*

Then it will attack the player character by striking with its hands. If he tries to escape, the player character will soon become aware that his aggressor remains confined to the dark areas. If the player character can get to a lit area, Ao-Andon quickly abandons the chase, vanishing suddenly.

After a few such encounters, the stakes rise during one of the city's uncommon power blackouts. The player characters are in an isolated place (a subway station or perhaps one of their places of work where they stayed a bit later than usual). Tensions rise, strange noises similar to scratching or a shambling walk will be heard nearby coming from no discernible direction. The evil spirit will finally appear and attack the characters, no matter how many there are. It will seem impossible to hurt the spirit using conventional means. Only the return of power or the intervention of the sect will get the party out of this mess. The encounter emphasises their apparent helplessness in the face of Ao-Andon.

It should be clear after this encounter that the player characters need to know how to destroy or banish the spirit. They may also want to find the identity of the sect. If it is almost impossible to find any information on the Furinkazan Sect; on the other hand it is very easy to identify Ao-Andon and its connection to the hyaku monogatari.

## Shadowplay

If they haven't already, by now the player characters will realise they are out of their depth and need help and advice. Those with supernatural contacts may decide to visit the shop of an occultist in order to learn more, and even attempt to protect themselves against Ao-Andon. There is no shortage of ads and signs for such places. However, most are con artists and charlatans. If they have no contacts in the occult themselves, the player characters might turn to Jiro, or they might be sent an advert by the sect for a shop called (in English) 'Shadowplay' in Akihabara. If they do contact Jiro, he too will recommend the shop.

They will find the tiny shop (only seven metres square, but filled to the brim) in the middle of a row of several others that look exactly the same. The 'public' part of the shop has several gadgets as well as the latest fashion in pods, gantai and flexible screens. A door at the back of the shop leads to a spiral





staircase. These old steps, seemingly carved in stone, lead to a large basement. The merchandise sold here, often for exorbitant prices, is mostly connected to the occult.

While the ground floor is tended by Katsura Ai, the basement is managed by her father, Katsura Kouki. The latter, a chubby and balding old man, is known for his jovial nature and especially for his business acumen, while his daughter has a more reserved nature. Nevertheless, it is Ai who chooses which clients are allowed to access her father's shop on criteria that mostly seem completely subjective or even fanciful. With her shaved head, imposing broad shoulders and the help of her steel-tipped baton, she has no trouble dealing with undesirables. Both Ai and her father are somewhat sensitive to the occult, and while they don't yet understand the player characters' problems, they both notice the spirits have taken an interest in them.

As soon as she sees the player characters enter the shop (or just walk by) Ai will approach them directly and ask them to follow her downstairs. If they hesitate, she'll tell them she knows someone who can help them deal with their problem. She will lead them to the stairs down to the basement where Kouki will receive them with a cup of tea that has a very strong smell and a bitter taste. The old man will begin a conversation about the weather and living conditions in Shin-Edo to put his guests at ease and to give them time to look around their surroundings. The room seems to be much larger than the ground floor, with a high ceiling. It is filled with shelves weighed down with piles of old and incongruous items. Here, ancient artefacts emanating immense power sit side by side with the last word in occulttech. There are also numerous books, some of which have titles in foreign languages.

Once he has drunk his tea, Kouki lets his guests explain what they know. He regretfully knows no truly effective way of eliminating Ao-Andon. He also knows nothing about the sect but promises to do some research on the subject. He digs around one of the shelves and brings out a massive book yellowed by time. He brings it to a table, and opens it on a page that details hyaku monogatari. On the opposite page there is a drawing showing the spirit that attacked the player characters. Moving his finger through the tight, handwritten lines, the old man announces that the only way to get rid of Ao-Andon is to go through the ritual again. *"It is the only way to make it return to its world and save those who are imprisoned there. But then, you knew that, even before coming here."*

When they return home, one of the player characters finds a bluish lacquer box on his doorstep. It refuses to open whatever the means are employed. There's a simple note engraved on it: *"Always carry this with you and never leave it to prevent all misfortune."*

## The Ritual

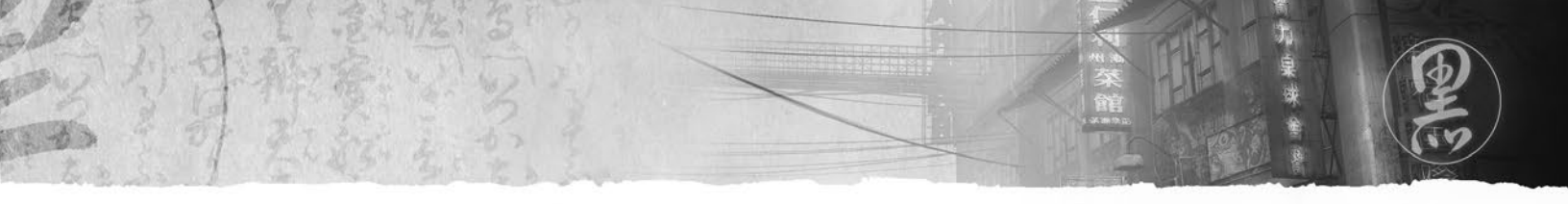
By now, the player characters should have put together the various pieces of information and understand they need to re-enact the ritual. That is, if they want to save the missing young people, and possibly themselves. If need be, Jiro will download the missing student's records to their Pods. As this adventure allows the player characters to follow clues in any order, the Gamemaster might like to send them on a few more red herrings based on more rumours they learn from the other students. However, they may also have learned by now that Kazuko's information should not all necessarily be taken literally. Alternatively, if the player characters are taking too long investigating dead ends, the sect may intervene and leave cryptic clues (inscriptions, poems and so on) on their doorstep or Pod to help them. So a message suggesting the player characters re-enact the ritual might read: *"Lighting to extinguish. Vanishing to return"*

Having decided to repeat the hyaku monogatari, the party may decide to do it in the room the students used in the first took place. Indeed, all the necessary equipment is already there. For the stories, it is possible to procure some books from Ichiro's room. In any case, the ritual remains quite popular and such books can easily be found anywhere. The characters might also perform the ritual in one of their own homes or workplace, anywhere they won't be disturbed is fine. Even though Ichiro insisted in using the same room as before, it had no influence on the result of the ritual.

When running the ritual having the players tell one hundred stories would be somewhat time-consuming. On the other hand, just declaring the ritual complete and moving on would cheat you of an opportunity to build atmosphere and increase the tension in the adventure. While your players may not know any kaidan, it may still be useful to create some ambiance, lighting your gaming space with blue light or a few candles you might extinguish one by one (one for each player at least). If you are using music, it should become stranger and more unnerving as the ritual continues. You may also be able to find a few kaidan on the internet (see page 23) or your local library, so that each player may read one (or even two) during the ritual. The Gamemaster might also read a kaidan, making it less clear which character is telling which tale.

If the characters are in the student residence, the tension may be enhanced by fear of discovery (after all they have no business being there). As the ritual continues, the darkness gets thicker and thicker, and the temperature seems to drop. Once





the last candle is put out, the room is filled with silence and darkness. After a few minutes of this, the player characters will probably be disappointed, and even a little foolish, as nothing seems to have happened. However, a blue diffuse light begins to glow from under the door.

## THE BLUE REALM

On the other side of the door can be found (no matter where they performed the ritual) what appears to be the second floor corridor of the university residence. Half a dozen Andon lamps, similar to those in the ritual, have been evenly spread on the floor and give the place an aura of bluish, flickering light. The electricity is also off, as no light switches work and Pods cannot connect to a net or phone signal.

The corridor seems slightly curved extremities hidden in the distant gloom. Anyone who tries to walk in one direction, soon finds themselves right back where they started. On both sides there are doors ajar (except for one, which is shut). The ambiance and atmosphere are weird and, despite the surrounding calmness, there is also a feeling of deep uneasiness. The various windows that should, theoretically, lead outside show only darkness. The city noises are completely absent. Others have taken their place: the cries of a baby, a persistent scratching, the sound of water running.

Thanks to their nature as Potentials, the player characters are in a dimension created by Ao-Andon. It is designed to imprison the missing students and allow Ao-Andon to take sick pleasure in manipulating them. The only way of going back to reality is to save all the students held by different means in the rooms along the corridor. If the last candle goes out before all the students have been saved, the player characters will be trapped in the Ao-Andon dimension, damned to suffer eternal torments inside rooms built around their buried traumas. They will quickly find out that it is impossible to extinguish the candles in the corridor, which will happen naturally as each hour passes.

If one of them took the precaution of taking the blue lacquer box found on his doorstep, he will hear it unlock as soon as he arrives at the corridor. It contains a simple blue candle the wax of which seems not to melt. If they light this candle as the last one in the corridor goes off, it will allow the player characters to remain in the Ao-Andon realm until they save everybody or that the candle goes out. It can actually be extinguished just like any other candle though, so they will have to be careful.

At regular intervals, the candles in the corridor go off one by one. Every time one does, a part of the place falls into the void, leaving an impenetrable darkness towards which an icy wind blows. Little by little, walls and even whole rooms disappear and darkness attempts to suck in the surrounding elements. When the last candle goes out, it is the room where the ritual took place that falls into the void. Meanwhile, the temperature decreases constantly and the player characters must pay attention where they step as several pieces of the floor may have disappeared.

It is critical that the Gamemaster keeps an eye on the time in this part of the scenario. The lamps are there to remind the player characters of the time that elapses. As advised in the **Kuro Core Rulebook**, using real candles at the gaming table may be a good way of reminding the players of the passage of time. The Gamemaster shouldn't hesitate to remind them that 'game time' doesn't pass the same way as real time. If they take too long planning or try out some obscure solutions that take time, that may be a reason for a candle to go out. Ideally, the last Andon lamp should go out right before the last missing student is saved. Then the player characters will have to be especially careful to keep the candle the sect gave them alight. In any case, they should get organised and hurry up.

## Lost Souls

A little way down the corridor, the player characters will find a sobbing, despairing individual, crouching, hands on his head. As he hears the characters he raises his head and they will see blood coming out of his ears. His eyes are red and tears flow down his cheeks. He is hardly recognisable but it seems to be Ichiro as shown in the newspaper photo.

*"I can't help them... I can't go in... I can't help them... they need me... she doesn't want to stop crying."*

He seems to have gone insane and ceaselessly repeats these words. A player character trying to reassure him will learn that Ichiro has been here since his suicide. Watching the rooms around him, he quickly identified them with his friends, but found out that he couldn't enter the rooms to help them. His role here is limited, and his sanity leaves something to be desired. While he is unable to enter the rooms, he will try to advise the player characters and nag them to hurry up. His injunctions will become more pressing as the number of lit Andon lamps decreases. He will keep reminding everybody that once all lamps are extinguished they will all be doomed. He may also, in a distant way, make the connection between



the traumas and each door, unconsciously offering clues that he quietly mutters to himself.

Along the corridor there are five doors plus the one the player characters arrived at. Each of them is connected to one of the missing students. From the first can be heard the crying of a small child. A quiet scratching noise seems to come from the second. From the third door comes the gentle sound of running water, a pool of which seeps out under the door. The sound of sparks and the hum of technology comes from the fourth door. Only the fifth door is actually closed, and from that can be heard moaning and scratching.

## The First Door — Crying (Daisuke)

The wailing of a crying baby comes from what seems to be a child's room. The room is filled with toys and baby equipment, and right in the middle there is a pram in which a very young child is crying continuously. At the head of the pram are a man and a woman whose faces seem to have disappeared. They watch impassively as the baby cries. Curled up in a corner is a young boy who seems about to cry while covering his ears. He looks like a much younger Daisuke. All three melt away when the player characters enter the room.

The baby seems intangible and, no matter what, it will continue to cry. This room is connected to Daisuke, and especially to his early childhood. Even at that time his parents often left him alone with his little sister Etsuko. He was too young to really look after her, but felt the responsibility all the same. Decorative mobiles swing from the ceiling and the walls are covered with painted wallpaper over which sometimes an insect runs by. For the baby to stop crying, the player characters need to retrieve a doll that looks like Etsuko in the room connected to her (behind the second door – see below). But they need to understand this quickly because, as time goes by, the crying becomes increasingly unbearable, wherever the characters are. At first it causes a slight headache, but it quickly causes severe ear pain together with bleeding. This translates into damage (2D6) at regular intervals.

Giving the doll to the child in the pram makes the baby and the pain disappear. Daisuke is then saved, even if he only appears in the last room and not beside the player characters.

## The Second Door — Childhood (Etsuko)

This room is relatively near the preceding one. It has an incredible amount of all kinds of dolls and plush toys grouped along the wall. Logically, there should be a tranquil atmosphere about the room, but there are dark stains on the yellowed walls and the appearance of some of the toys, is disturbing. Some have deformed faces or exhibit several malformations and mutilations from which flows a dark and viscous fluid. When the player characters enter the room, they see a young Daisuke crouching in front of one of the dolls, cleaner than the others, right in front of the entrance. Meanwhile, the two faceless grown-ups enter and pile up more plushies and dolls. The three apparitions quickly disappear. The dolls and plushies all seem to stare at the player characters, except the one the young boy was looking at.

This doll is that of a young girl with her head bent forward, hair covering her face. It is strangely clean and pure and stands out from those around it. It looks exactly like Etsuko (as Ichiro may keep pointing out) and is the only one that doesn't move. All the others imperceptibly move by following the player characters with the eyes. Small scratching noises seem to come from several places in the room.

This room is connected to Etsuko and to two of her childhood memories. The first is that she was given a huge amount of toys by her parents as a way to ask for forgiveness for their constant absences. The second is connected to the day when, following a moment of inattention by her brother, she was attacked by a rat in their apartment (which had become quite an unhygienic place with only Daisuke to look after it). At the time, it was not rare to see insects and spiders wandering on the yellowed walls of the rooms. The young girl often had nightmares, and developed phobias that explain, even today, her obsession with cleanliness.

As the player characters approach the doll, the scratching noises will become more insistent and pervasive. When they arrive at the middle of the room, numberless rats, spiders and centipedes appear, not only from below the dolls but also from them, bursting from the seams, forming a swarming mass on the ground that tries to cover all the player characters in the room. As the rats try to bite them (causing 1D6 damage), the insects try to reach the faces of their victims to choke them. All this will take some Stamina and Willpower checks in order to remain in the room. Luckily, all it takes is to touch Etsuko's doll for the vermin and rodents to vanish.

Remember that this doll is also used to make the baby in the first room stop crying. If the party returns with this toy into the room connected to Daisuke, he will reappear as a young boy, look at the player characters with a smile and thank them for having found the doll.

## The Third Door — Water (Rin)

A puddle of water has formed under one of the doors. It leads to a big room filled with brackish water whose surface is at ground level although it is impossible to see the bottom. Those who stare into the water carefully can see dark shapes snaking under the surface. The room, connected to Rin, seems to have no walls or ceiling, and the water extends seemingly forever. Some twenty metres away there's a shape floating on her belly, hair split along her face. It seems to be a girl wearing a swimsuit and, according to Ichiro, it must be Rin.

It is possible to dive in and go save her. The floating body is taken from Rin's memory of that day at the seaside when, as she was almost drowning, she saw a corpse under the waves. Only the intervention of the friends who were with her prevented her from drowning. Nevertheless, several weeks went by before she swam again.

The bottom of the water seems to be out of reach. Sticky, cold, elusive things and scaled fishlike tentacles, sweep at the characters in the water. After a few metres, some will entangle their legs, trying to pull the swimmers towards the bottom and drown them. Finally, when a player character is near enough to the swimmer to touch her, the body will turn on her back and show the bluish and bloated face of a stranger. Then some of her hairs will wrap around the player characters' hands. They are impossible to remove and they'll tighten with every attempt to pull them up. They will also be impossible to cut.

After the hair is wrapped up, the body will immediately sink in the water and vanish, leaving only some hair strands around the swimmer's arm. It will be possible to then leave the room without any trouble.

Rin is thus saved.

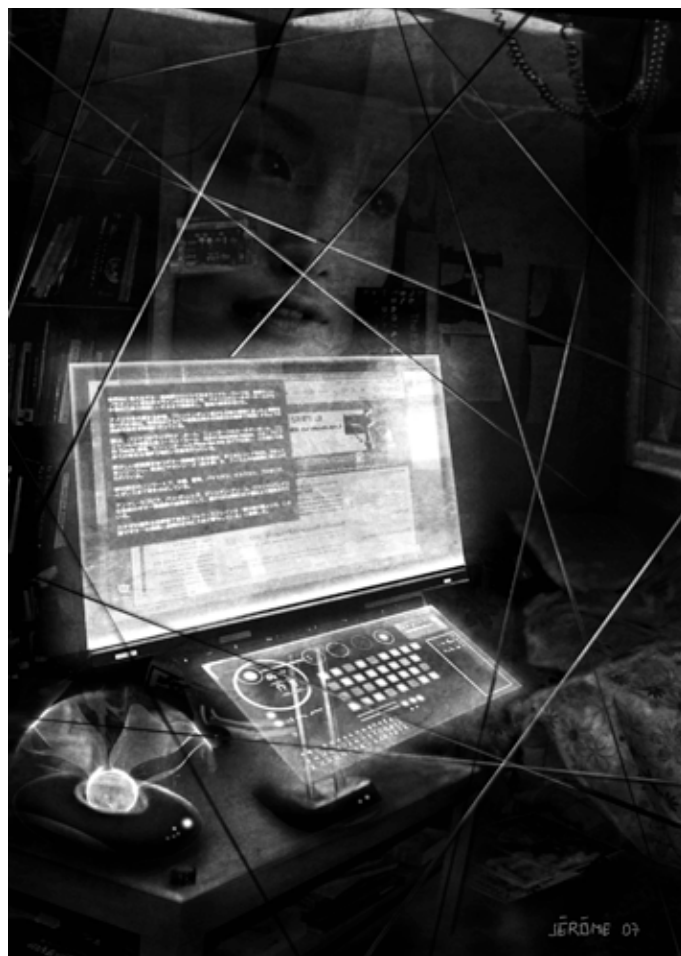
## The Fourth Door — Network (Youta)

As the player characters get near, crackling noises seem to come from the room connected to Youta. Indeed, it is filled with high-tech equipment just like his real room, except here all the devices are turned on. Youta is sitting in the middle of the room and seems to be about to use his Pod. As they watch he is literally absorbed by it, the pod falling on the table in the middle of the room and crackling intermittently. A digital voice then issues from it, calling for help. Some of the devices stacked around just show static, others show the images of individuals

that are impossible to identify. The only light in the room comes from the screens, making it dim and stark. From time to time, jerky sounds and music come from some devices. On the floor of the room, while not apparent at first, wires form a spider web centred on the Pod.

These wires are extremely sharp and will wound any individual stepping on them (2D6 damage, taking into account that the flashes and lights make walking amid the wires harder). The wires are used by Ao-Andon to represent the almost unbreakable link Youta had woven with machines through the years. These have increasingly become his sole link with the outside world and other people.

To reach the device from which the calls for help continue to issue, the player characters have to pay attention where they put their feet. Once the Pod in their possession, the voice coming from it says "thank you", and then the Pod shuts down forever. If the player characters manage this, Youta has been saved.







## The Fifth Door — Isolation (Osamu)

The last room is connected to Osamu. It was here that her tendency to remain shut in her room to study was used against her by Ao-Andon. Scratching and moaning seem to come from the room. It is also the only room with a closed door, as all the others were ajar. Despite this it can be opened without any difficulty and the room seems absolutely normal from the outside. However, the first player character to enter vanishes.

It is best for the Gamemaster to take that player aside and explain what is happening. The vanished player character can always see the others, but they can't see him. They can't hear them either; it is as if he is a spectre. He can still touch objects but not lift them, so at most he can slide them to make them fall. He can also hear music and the room appears to get smaller and smaller. The other players won't know what's happening to the vanished player character. But the characters will see the room getting increasingly smaller. The vanished character's player can tell the Gamemaster what he intends to do through written notes.

While they may not be spectres, the other player characters are in just as much trouble. Any person inside the room can no longer get out. The door slams shut. Other player characters might get in, but none of them can leave.

Discordant music sounds in the room, but can only be heard by the vanished player character. It is impossible to see where it comes from. On the other hand, if he listens carefully, it seems to originate from under the bed, where there is a small music box. Inside this is a key that one of the other characters must retrieve. If they do the room ceases to grow smaller and it is again possible to get out. It also makes the vanished player character appear. So the latter must find a way to make the other player characters understand they must find the key before the room crushes them all.

From the other player characters' point of view, they are locked inside a room where their friend has vanished. Then strange events begin to occur, mostly due to the vanished character trying to get their attention. All the time the walls get closer and closer. The ambience should be more than tense...

Once the key is retrieved, Osamu is saved.

## FACING THE DARKNESS

All this time, the blue Andon lights in the corridor continue to gradually go out. If the player characters aren't carrying the box the Furinkazan sect has given them, or if the candle it contains goes out, they are doomed to remain trapped in the Ao-Andon dimension once the last lamp goes out. That is, unless they have succeeded to save all five of the vanished students in time.

Ichiro is determined not to let the evil spirit get off that easily. He will even use the last lamp to set fire to himself. In such a case the player characters can still act as long as Ichiro keeps on burning, although the corridor will echo with his terrifying screams. So it is to a background of this horrific sound, that they must try their hardest to save the five students before this last source of light disappears completely.

If all the vanished students are saved, there remains only one door in the corridor: the one the player characters entered from. After reaching it, carefully avoiding any parts of the corridor replaced by a black void, the player characters find it leads to a room lit by a blinding blue light. The player characters find themselves sitting in the room of the student residence where the hyaku monogatari took place, all the candles lit once more. In the centre of the circle the player characters sit are the vanished students that they succeeded in saving, all very dazed and confused. Any of their fellows who stayed in the dimension created by Ao-Andon, as well as Ichiro, are doomed to spend eternity there.

Each player character may still doubt the reality of what they've been through and the students will believe the experience to be a disturbing and very realistic nightmare. After the surprise of finding the player characters among them, they will mainly be relieved to be back and most likely will try to find a rational explanation for what happened to them.

The player characters, whatever the outcome of their passage through the Ao-Andon dimension, have shown the sect the proof that they are really the ones they're looking for and that their nature gives them access to places in our reality forbidden to common mortals. Conversely, the player characters now know that the members of the Furinkazan Sect are trying to protect them, even if their motives remain a mystery.



It will be a little unclear what has happened to Ao-Andon himself. Certainly after their return the player characters no longer suffer his attacks. However, it is difficult to say if he is gone for good. Was he pulled back to his own dimension as they freed the students, or did he find some way to remain?

## Ao-Andon

### Characteristics

DEX 3	STR 2	STA 3	REF 3
INT 6	PER 4	CHA 1	WIL 5

### Secondary Characteristics

HIT 55	SW 19	DT -19	
DEF 20	REA 7	ACT 2	MOV 3

### Skills

#### Combat Skills

Hand to Hand 9
Claws 13

### Powers

Invulnerability, Vulnerability (Light), Horror 4.



# CONTINUING THE DAY OF FIRE

While the Gamemaster is free to move on to the next chapter, we offer several adventure outlines that are appropriate to follow Mizuiro with. Each follows similar themes and assumes the player characters are no further advanced along the campaign. However, they might easily make short adventures for an evening's play or be adapted to later on in (or even after) the *Makkura* campaign.

At this point in the campaign the player characters have learned the supernatural is chillingly real. After facing Ao-Andon they cannot deny the truth any more. However, the spirit world is still very dangerous and frightening to them. While the beings from beyond seem able to hurt them, they have little idea about how to defend themselves or banish such creatures.

## Robbery

As usual, Katsura Ai was managing the public part of her father's store, Shadowplay, in Akihabara when an incident happened. Two yanks with piercings and bleached hair came into the shop and immediately started rifling the shelves. When Ai intervened to stop them she was beaten for her trouble. Meanwhile, two accomplices got into the basement and knocked Kouki out. Taking with them all that they could, in their haste they dropped an urn. When it broke it released an evil spirit that waited until the burglars left, and then turned on the hapless shopkeeper before vanishing into the crowd.

When Ai came to, she found the door leading to the basement open. The section of the shop reserved to the occult had been burglarised and Kouki's body lay on the floor, skinned alive and surrounded by the fragments of an urn. On one fragment, the name 'Ama-no-Juki' is barely readable. Several valuable objects were also taken and now an evil spirit wanders through Akihabara, wearing Kouki's skin.

When the skin begins to decompose, Ama-no-Juki will look for new victims. The problem currently facing it is that Kouki had placed wards in each of the area's streets. They are possible to make out, amid the graffiti on the walls and doors, as carefully drawn symbols. They were made with the purpose of keeping supernatural creatures out. But even though it isn't their main purpose, it also keeps them in.



If they are not regular customers to the shop, the player characters learn about the robbery and the murder through a news article (that may be called to their attention by Jiro). It's not just another shop, since it is reputed in the Shin-Edo underground for offering state-of-the-art equipment, whether high-tech, occulttech or simply ritual and occult supplies. As the characters may have already been there in Mizuiro, they may have even forged a relationship with the managers of the place. In this case, Ai herself may contact the player characters, asking them for help.

No matter how well they might know her, Ai will be very glad of any help tracking the murderer. Terribly distressed, she asks the player characters to find the Ama-no-Juki before it murders again. For that, she offers them several items. The first is a special Gantai in which she has embedded a fragment of the broken urn. It should allow the wearer to perceive the evil spirit, whose powers would normally render it unnoticed. The other object is a clay jug with an inscription inside written on a piece of paper. If the paper is placed on the creature's forehead, it will immediately be imprisoned in the jug if it is quickly shut. Of course, first you must succeed in placing the paper.

Thus the party must make their way through the crowd that fills the area day and night. Their goal is to notice the monster amid the browsers and regular customers. The former, feeling hunted, will probably become aggressive. The shops make a complex maze where it can be hard for the player characters not to get lost, or find each other if separated.

Perceiving the Ama-no-Juki should be relatively easy with the Gantai Ai gave the player characters. But remember that there's only one Gantai and the player characters may get separated during a panicked movement from the crowd. They will also recognise the creature as it looks like Kouki, but a few hours after the burglary, the creature will be faced with a tough choice. It must find a new victim or let the skin it is wearing decompose and betray its real appearance. Some characters may then be in a situation where they will have no way of identifying the Ama-no-Juki until they have met up with whoever is wearing the Gantai. Perhaps the hardest part will be reaching the monster and placing the paper on its forehead. Once again they must negotiate the crowd of people in the area to hunt it down and face it.

After this scenario, Ai will be indebted to the player characters. She will also be hoping they will help her find the burglars and what they have stolen. She will make her knowledge available to the player characters, as well as part of her merchandise, but the characters should not expect to get all that they need for free.

## Ama-no-Juki

### Characteristics

DEX 4	STR 3	STA 5	REF 3
INT 4	PER 3	CHA 1/2*	WIL 4

\*Base Charisma is 1, but it is 2 when the Ama-no-Juki is wearing a human skin.

### Secondary Characteristics

HIT 60	SW 20	DT -20	
DEF 20	REA 6	ACT 2	MOV 4

### Skills

#### Combat Skills

Hand to Hand 8

#### General Skills

Athletics 9
Dodge 12
Running 11
Communication 8
Fast talk 10
Deception 10
Stealth 14

### Powers

Shape Change (human), Horror 3.





## Byakko

This adventure may connect with **Robbery**, as it involves items that might have been stolen from Shadowplay. Some of the items have been bought for a handful of yen, by a yakuza called Sorachi 'Byakko' Yamato (who gets his nickname from the magnificent white tiger tattooed on his back). He has no clue how potentially dangerous or powerful the items he has might be.

Captivated by a wakizashi (short sword) in the lot, he decided to keep it and pass the rest on to his shatei-gashira (a yakuza lieutenant above him). Since then, Yamato has been beset by nightmares featuring monstrous creatures and hallucinations that follow him even in broad daylight. Confused by these hallucinations, he has concluded that some people he sees on the street can hide their true nature. He finds certain humans have demonic traits only he alone is able to see. He glimpses misshapen beings hiding in dark and damp alleys.

Yamato always kept the wakazashi about his person until the day he attracted the attention of an evil spirit by staring at it too long. The spirits was smaller than usual, with simian-like features and grey skin. Usually invisible to humans, the spirit followed the yakuza in order to attack him at the first opportunity. The yakuza barely escaped the first attack. But when he used the wakizashi to strike the creature, it immediately fell dead, its body now visible to all.

To make sense of the weird things that have been happening in the last months, Yamato believes he must have a part to play. He has decided to hunt down all those the artefact shows him, making sure he hide the corpses as best he can. As his punitive expeditions continue on, the criminal sees in his dreams (with increasing frequency) the image of a samurai encouraging him to keep on fighting. Yamato is in fact a Potential, and it is this nature that allows him to fully use this wakazashi. No normal human would see it as other than a very well preserved replica. It is actually a formidable weapon that allows the wielder to see and hurt supernatural creatures.

Unfortunately, after some time trying to act inconspicuously, the yakuza's actions become increasingly impulsive and now he acts in broad daylight and before witnesses. The weird nature of the corpses and the murderer's ties to organised crime has led the police to slow their investigation, suppress it even.

On returning home, one of the player characters finds a white origami figure placed in an easy-to-find place. Showing a white tiger (or 'byakko' in Japanese) it has been made from

the yellowed flyer of the Kabuki-cho hostess bar. The message has come from the Furinkazan Sect, which the characters may guess as they get used to this form of communication. By going to the bar, they may ask around to find out more about the tiger. If they ask an employee, he will immediately call the boss who, very upset, will let the player characters know that he refuses to pay protection to Byakko if he's going to create more trouble with the police. Someone with that very nickname, some days before, stabbed a customer in the chest at dinner, in front of everyone.

If they research further, the characters may find out that this type of occurrences has recently happened in many of the surrounding establishments. They may follow the trail of aggression and fearful witnesses living in that quarter. Everything seems to confirm that the guilty party is one nicknamed Byakko. The player characters will eventually arrive at a restaurant that has become his hideout.

The restaurant has clearly been abandoned for a while. The windows and the sign have been destroyed and a hologram appears from time to time, and in a voice filled with static, praises the dishes that clients can sample. Inside, tables and chairs have been overturned and the walls are covered in messages written in a variety of inks. Some rather original ones change colour at regular intervals. In the kitchen, the door of the cold room, controlled by the establishment's domestic network, is open. A hideous stench comes out, as stored inside, are clearly non-human and hardly recognisable corpses. Some look monstrous and misshapen, sometimes with scaly skin or bony protuberances.

Yamato has set up shop on the first floor and lives there, despite the pitiful state the place is in. Insane, he attacks the player characters if they try to enter his new dwelling place. Of course, it will be possible (although difficult) to try to reason with him. His cause is just and his goals not unlike those of the player characters, even if his methods seem too expedite. Probably the best solution will be to seek a competent exorcist to break the link between the weapon and Yamato in order to end his torment.

If one of the player characters gains ownership of the wakizashi, he will endure the same hallucinations and dreams as its previous owner. If the player characters decides to consult with Katsura Ai to address the problem, she immediately recognises the item as one that was stored in the store's basement. It may be another clue to recover the other stolen items. She also can break the link between the weapon and its current owner.



## Sorachi 'Byakko' Yamato

### Characteristics

DEX 2	STR 3	STA 3	REF 3
INT 2	PER 2	CHA 3	WIL 4

### Secondary Characteristics

HIT 60	SW 20	DT -20	
DEF 20	REA 6	ACT 2	MOV 4

### Skills

#### Combat Skills

- Hand to hand 7
- Melee 8
- Swords 11

#### General Skills

- Athletics 6
- Dodge 9
- Running 10
- Communication 8
- Intimidation 11
- Deception 4
- Stealth 6
- Contacts 5
- Streets 7
- Smugglers 6

### Powers (the wakizashi)

**The Wakazashi:** Damage 1D6+2 (3D6+2 against supernatural beings)/REA +2.

Also grants wielder Revelation and Possession (see below).

**Revelation:** Reveals supernatural creatures to the bearer of the weapon.

**Possession:** This weapon has the power to interfere in the thoughts and dreams of its bearer, causing visions.

## Oubusha

The Digital Democratic Party is a small political party that appeared in the upheaval following the Kuro Incident. While before such a small group wouldn't have enough attention to have survived for long, the DDP has become quite popular and its charismatic agenda has found root in the population. The DDP is pro-android and advocates the government offer parity between humans and artificial life. The party also defends a better view of androids in the media and that androids be legally recognised as autonomous people belonging to themselves. In a nutshell, they want robots to be given human rights.

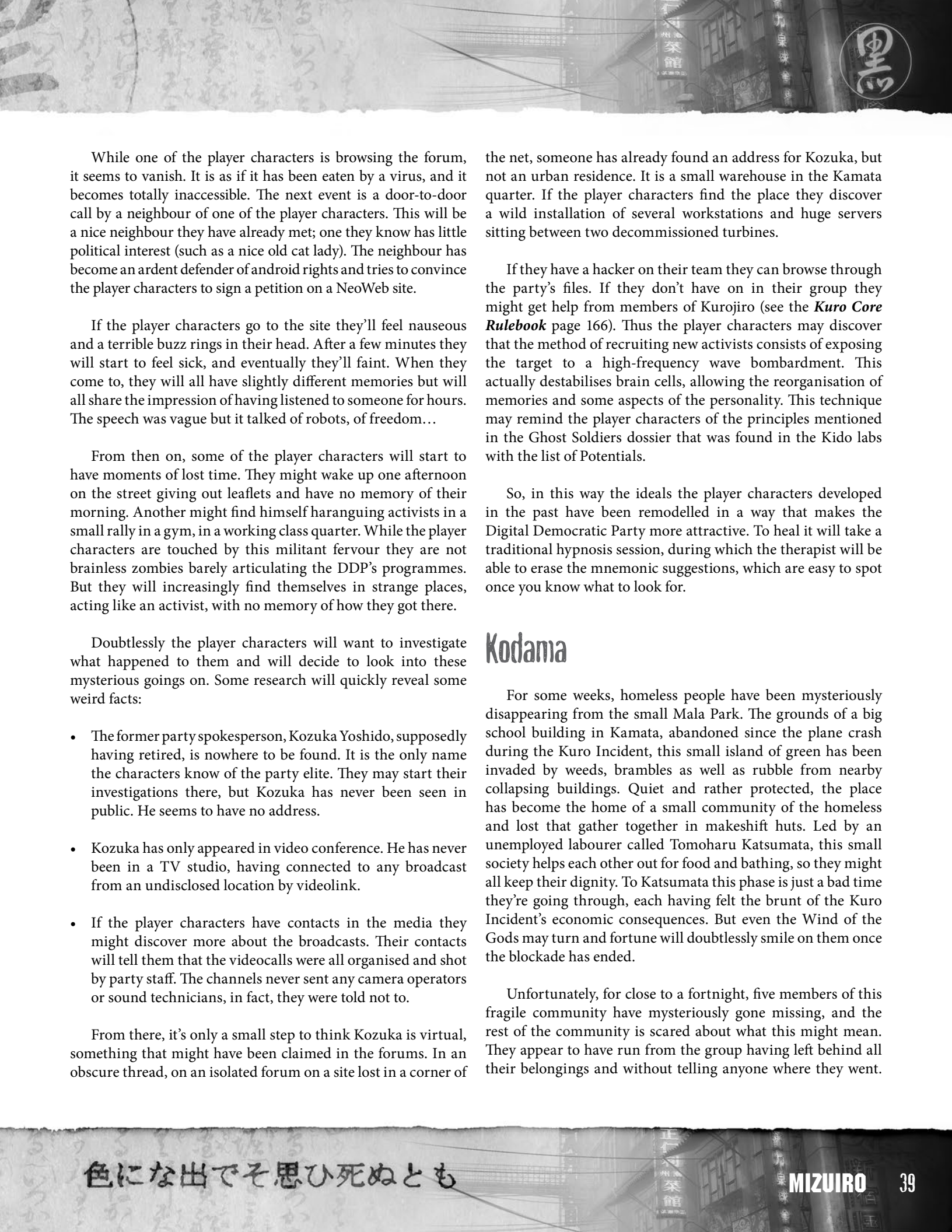
The Kuro Incident and all the mysterious manifestations around that phenomenon have changed how a large part of the population feels, making them mistrustful, reactionary and protective. But it was also a formidable catalyst for a change in mentality. So, now there are an increasing number of people supporting this movement. Many celebrities from several walks of life have claimed to agree with this emancipating movement. Even the pop group Shimobashira has recruited an android called Kori who has a revolutionary outlook and became a card-carrying DDP party member. Kori has become the apple of most teenagers' eyes and a regular guest on the varied talk shows. She is a popular guest, amusing the public with her somewhat stilted reactions and her quirky and curious perspectives and attitudes.

Recently the Digital Democratic Party reached a milestone. Their new spokesperson and their next candidate for the parliamentary elections is no less than an android named Clark, who has already started tirelessly campaigning.

Obviously such open-mindedness charmed some people and shocked many others. Soon part of the political class had begun to show concern over this new initiative. Some have started to claim that the DDP is, in fact, manipulated by AIs. The government took notice, and they have secretly had the party's leaders and their android candidate watched closely by their agents.

The government are actually scared by Clark's seductive and attractive proposals. Those fears are compounded by several polls showing 57% of the population finds the DDP programme to be practical, realistic and interesting. Several government agencies are trying to investigate the party to find out who really heads it. A hard task, because the DDP's creators have never shown themselves publicly. However, it is known that five members actually lead the party, including Clark, who succeeded the founder Kozuka Yoshido after his retirement.

The hook in this adventure may come from Jiro, but an IT-minded player character, or one that likes to surf the web, may find something that motivates them to investigate. Indeed, some members of an obscure IT forum push the idea that the DDP is run by AIs. They try to prove this by comparing the party's strategies and social engineering to a computer virus. Indeed, the party seems to work by spreading the word through many small associations, whose purpose often has nothing to do with politics. The members of said associations become convinced of the merits of the DDP's struggle and go and convince other associations...



While one of the player characters is browsing the forum, it seems to vanish. It is as if it has been eaten by a virus, and it becomes totally inaccessible. The next event is a door-to-door call by a neighbour of one of the player characters. This will be a nice neighbour they have already met; one they know has little political interest (such as a nice old cat lady). The neighbour has become an ardent defender of android rights and tries to convince the player characters to sign a petition on a NeoWeb site.

If the player characters go to the site they'll feel nauseous and a terrible buzz rings in their head. After a few minutes they will start to feel sick, and eventually they'll faint. When they come to, they will all have slightly different memories but will all share the impression of having listened to someone for hours. The speech was vague but it talked of robots, of freedom...

From then on, some of the player characters will start to have moments of lost time. They might wake up one afternoon on the street giving out leaflets and have no memory of their morning. Another might find himself haranguing activists in a small rally in a gym, in a working class quarter. While the player characters are touched by this militant fervour they are not brainless zombies barely articulating the DDP's programmes. But they will increasingly find themselves in strange places, acting like an activist, with no memory of how they got there.

Doubtlessly the player characters will want to investigate what happened to them and will decide to look into these mysterious goings on. Some research will quickly reveal some weird facts:

- The former party spokesperson, Kozuka Yoshido, supposedly having retired, is nowhere to be found. It is the only name the characters know of the party elite. They may start their investigations there, but Kozuka has never been seen in public. He seems to have no address.
- Kozuka has only appeared in video conference. He has never been in a TV studio, having connected to any broadcast from an undisclosed location by videolink.
- If the player characters have contacts in the media they might discover more about the broadcasts. Their contacts will tell them that the videocalls were all organised and shot by party staff. The channels never sent any camera operators or sound technicians, in fact, they were told not to.

From there, it's only a small step to think Kozuka is virtual, something that might have been claimed in the forums. In an obscure thread, on an isolated forum on a site lost in a corner of

the net, someone has already found an address for Kozuka, but not an urban residence. It is a small warehouse in the Kamata quarter. If the player characters find the place they discover a wild installation of several workstations and huge servers sitting between two decommissioned turbines.

If they have a hacker on their team they can browse through the party's files. If they don't have one in their group they might get help from members of Kurojiro (see the *Kuro Core Rulebook* page 166). Thus the player characters may discover that the method of recruiting new activists consists of exposing the target to a high-frequency wave bombardment. This actually destabilises brain cells, allowing the reorganisation of memories and some aspects of the personality. This technique may remind the player characters of the principles mentioned in the Ghost Soldiers dossier that was found in the Kido labs with the list of Potentials.

So, in this way the ideals the player characters developed in the past have been remodelled in a way that makes the Digital Democratic Party more attractive. To heal it will take a traditional hypnosis session, during which the therapist will be able to erase the mnemonic suggestions, which are easy to spot once you know what to look for.

## Kodama

For some weeks, homeless people have been mysteriously disappearing from the small Mala Park. The grounds of a big school building in Kamata, abandoned since the plane crash during the Kuro Incident, this small island of green has been invaded by weeds, brambles as well as rubble from nearby collapsing buildings. Quiet and rather protected, the place has become the home of a small community of the homeless and lost that gather together in makeshift huts. Led by an unemployed labourer called Tomoharu Katsumata, this small society helps each other out for food and bathing, so they might all keep their dignity. To Katsumata this phase is just a bad time they're going through, each having felt the brunt of the Kuro Incident's economic consequences. But even the Wind of the Gods may turn and fortune will doubtlessly smile on them once the blockade has ended.

Unfortunately, for close to a fortnight, five members of this fragile community have mysteriously gone missing, and the rest of the community is scared about what this might mean. They appear to have run from the group having left behind all their belongings and without telling anyone where they went.





In an already tense atmosphere, reinforced by the rumours of 'things' sometimes skulking in the streets, the homeless have equipped themselves with makeshift weapons and tried to find their companions, but without success.

Since the disappearances, each night they hear a hoarse voice inside their skull, calling out to them, like a siren which it is hard to resist. The bravest among them leave their tents to watch the darkness, weapons in hand, but they are only answered by the screeching of the branches of a big willow tree.

Unfortunately, because misfortune never comes alone, they will soon find themselves stuck in the middle of a hostage situation. Who are the hostages? The player characters!

The player characters are in Kamata quarter conducting some investigation, meeting with a contact or following some clue. They witness an assault on a hover bus in the middle of the street by a commando unit of three people armed to the teeth. This reinforced bus is escorting four convicts to the Shibuya medical prison. Using a wireless device to stop the vehicle's engine, the commandos get aboard and trade shots with the guards inside.

After many shots and explosions, all the officers guarding the bus are eliminated and the commandos escape towards the quarter. But the police arrive too quickly and the commandos are unable to reach their vehicle. They have no choice but to lose their pursuers in Kamata. Numbering five (a commando and a prisoner died during the attack) they also have to take care of the serious wounds two of the group have suffered.

The player characters may try to run or hide when the shooting starts, but that won't change anything. They will be unlucky enough to cross paths with the criminals. They might be forced onto the bus as human shields (or because they may identify the perpetrators) or they might chose to find refuge in Mala park, where the commandos also end up. After having barricaded the gate to the park and threatened the homeless living there and the player characters, calm will slowly return to Kamata. Shin-Edo police patrols are now on a manhunt, determined to track the criminals by any means necessary. With nightfall, the hostage takers will insist that anyone with any medical skills treats their wounded. They will then force everybody to hide in the old school building surrounding the park. Escape or shouting is obviously forbidden on pain of death.

The adventure will take place during this long night, with the player characters held hostage. The escaped criminals expect a truck to get them come dawn. With everyone held at gunpoint and those holding the trigger under a lot of pressure, it is going to be a tense night. The many difficulties the player characters will face include:

- The criminals discuss a new plan to keep the hostages during their escape. Fearing they will be flushed out, they consider using the hostages in order to leave Shin-Edo by negotiating with the law enforcement forces. They are not above making an example to make sure they are taken seriously.
- Police patrols, helicopter flights, car, sirens, all will be heard across Kamata. Inevitably, in a matter of hours, the police will find the criminal's hiding place. The hostages will be ordered not to move so they remain unnoticed by the nanorobots probing the building and moving right next to them. But one gesture or any attempt at rebellion will be enough to raise the alarm. The school will be stormed or, at least placed under siege as the police attempt to negotiate the release of the hostages. In any case, come dawn they'll assault the building, doubtlessly using MkGaz gas grenades (which can generate misleading hallucinations, see the *Kuro Core Rulebook* page 123).
- The homeless, led by Katsumata, will not just lie low and let the robbers muscle in on their territory. Rather smart and resourceful (although potentially suicidal) they may help the player characters to set up an escape attempt. This story may easily turn into a tragedy.
- The old willow in the middle of the park will also call to them. During the few instants when the player characters can close their eyes, they will sense a voice calling to them, drawing them to the willow tree. The old tree is damaged, its bark ruined by the building's debris, with several branches missing, cut down to feed the homeless residents' fires. These depredations have made the Kodama, the spirit protecting it, angry.
- Invisible to humans, this creature may fleetingly appear to the player characters in the form of a slender violet silhouette without any facial features, each hand ending in six long fingers. She can manipulate sound, creating echoes, or imitating the voice of a hostage taker, homeless person or police officer. She can also hypnotise those with a low will, such as the exhausted or despairing. Such victims are drawn to the willow, whose trunk opens to reveal a huge gaping jaw. The victims are then absorbed by the tree, giving it strength and allowing the Kodama to survive.

- The Kodama will somewhat disrupt this already busy night. When one of the hostage takers vanishes, swallowed like the five homeless before, his associates' paranoia will explode. Was he killed by the hostages? Did he turn himself in? Why can they hear crying and screams and where do they come from?
- Before dawn, the only decent escape plan appears to involve player characters dispersing through the building to escape when the police assault the building. But they will soon be confronted with the Kodama, determined to feed once more.

Once they know what they are dealing with, there are a few ways to destroy the Kodama. Burning the tree or otherwise destroying it will work, as will placing a braided rope (shimenawa) around its trunk. However, they may decide the best option is to simply run away from the place, making the homeless promise never to come back ever again.

## RUMOURS

Finally, we offer three shorter tales the player characters might hear as they live their lives in Shin-Edo. They might investigate these rumours or consider them haunting stories to add to an already growing sense of supernatural dread.

### Akatsuki Choukan

This Japanese newspaper (available by subscription and downloadable to any Pod, to read on the Yamanote Evolve train) is a daily newspaper published every morning. It enjoys a good reputation and its articles are considered serious and accurate. Recently, the editorial team have devoted three special issues to the paranormal events troubling Japan after the Kuro Incident. In his recent editorial, the paper's editor Hayashi Yoshida discusses the recent phenomena (any of which might be a potential adventure).

*"Ever since the Kuro Incident even the most rational among us agree that something has changed. That day something entered our world. A day doesn't go by without this newspaper being contacted by someone having seen a rei (ghost), a tama (spirit) or been attacked by an oni (ogre). Between drunken ramblings, stories from senile old grandmothers or from fanatics, it takes a lot of work to separate the wheat from the chaff.*

*What is most surprising is the way people have changed. Finding themselves isolated, as during the Tokugawa era, without any outside link, is very stressful. Moreover, if you look out to sea and see the UN cruisers anchored off our coast, it's enough to give rise to claustrophobia. So people have changed. Old antipathies and fears seem to have been exacerbated in these troubled times. You can feel them feed on our fear, on our doubts, reinforcing bad thoughts, feeding on our hatred and mistrust. Today is the Setsubun festival. In many homes people will throw soya beans around the house pronouncing the consecrated formula 'Oni wa soto, fuku wa ushi': demons out, fortune in. Thus they hope to expel the demons from the homes, send them out, get rid of them. Who cares if they invade your neighbour's home afterwards? We are increasingly surrounded by robots, replacing our aging workforce. How can you expect a society of robots and frightened people to care about other people?*

*I can't resist the temptation to deliver the latest report from one of my journalist colleagues, Abe Misaki. The day before yesterday she was contacted by an old man. He told her that the shed, at the end of his tiny garden, was haunted. Misaki went there. After sharing a cup of tea, she asked the old man if she could stay the night with a night vision camera. She wrapped herself in a blanket and sat down, a smoking tea cup beside her.*

*At the twelfth stroke of midnight the wind roared and shook the rice paper partitions. She heard weird noises, like the gnashing of teeth. It came from the timbers of the ceiling. Lifting her head, she noticed faces on each timber, all different, all monstrous, watching her with an evil eye. When she tried to get her camera, the faces vanished. I absolutely trust this journalist, a serious and competent professional.*

*If such stories are true, what then should we think of the young teenager and his brother, writing from their cells after having killed their mother? According to them, the old woman turned into a demon and tried to devour them when they were watching a NeoDVD.*

*Also, what to think of the inhabitants of the tiny island of Rin in Miyagi prefecture? They told one of our reporters they were all having the same dream. A field hospital burning, and people screaming at the windows, as they were consumed by the flames. Already these horrible dreams have killed two people, two pensioners with fragile hearts.*

*Not too long ago such information would not have been published in our paper, considered a serious news source by 68% of you in our latest poll. Even a tabloid would have hesitated to publish such revelations. However, since ghost stories like the*



ones I told you existed way before the Kuro Incident, we are forced to wonder. The *Nihon Ryoki (Strange and Holy Stories of Japan)* a collection of fantastic folklore stories compiled by the monk Kyokai in around 822 already speaks of ghosts appearing at midnight on the ceiling timbers of haunted houses. The *Konjaku monogatari shu (Stories of the Past)*, written in 1120, already told cautionary tales about old people turning into demons. The story of the Rin hospital is even more remarkable, because archives tell of the existence of a dispensary burned down by the Americans at the very end of World War Two, only a few days before Japan surrendered."

## Jidousha

Gotou Ren is a taxi driver. He works at night in the Asakusa quarter. Two days ago, after dropping off a young couple, a diaphanously beautiful young girl climbed into his taxi and asked to be driven to Tubusa, to the old driveway. It is a difficult drive even for the smallest vehicles. She said no word other than her destination at any time. Ren tried to start a conversation but was met with silence. At the destination he turned to ask for the fare, and he was stunned to see that the woman had vanished. The cab driver, believing it an illusion brought on by fatigue, put his hand on the seat and found it wet with ice cold water. The next day he found out that Tubusa was known for its cemetery, recently razed to build a school.

Little by little, stories of taxis carrying ghosts are multiplying throughout the city. So much so, that the frightened drivers have threatened to strike if their safety is not guaranteed. Police officers are assigned, exorcists are called, but it is all for nothing. The ghosts of dead young women, murdered salarymen or some others continue to want passage across the city.

The player characters should enquire into this increase in travelling ghosts. They may find, by retracing their travels that they are all moving away from one particular area, like rays from a circle. What might be there inside that zone that frightens all the ghosts?

Upon investigating the area the player characters will find a very old cemetery. In the exact centre they will find a mausoleum decorated with a strange butterfly motif. Recently numerous vagrants have begun to meet there, apparently drawn to the place. They spend the night chanting strange litanies. What will emerge from such a ceremony, or what is being kept sleeping?

Nobody knows yet, for the grave they chant over has no name, and no research has been able to identify what might be buried there. The only clue the player characters might find is in the biography of 'Uwaruchou' (the Impaled Butterfly). This man, who lived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was a famous exorcist in a distant province in the north of Shikoku. It is told he tamed spirits and collected them by impaling them in strange boxes, like butterflies.

## Experimental Cuisine

Recently, among the buildings in Akasaka a small restaurant has opened its doors, which excited all the salarymen, hungry for exoticism and novelty. Most of the dishes offered have mysterious and attractive names, referring to supernatural creatures. Moreover, the fact that the restaurant offers meat (which is becoming rare) attracts customers, despite the high prices. The charm begins to wear off when some clients complain of indigestion and hallucinations. A few are even accused of acts of violence they have no memory of.

The meat used actually has a very questionable origin; some comes from the corpses of strange creatures sold by one of the restaurant's suppliers. Maybe that will not stop the player characters from patronising the restaurant that, to compensate the decreasing number of customers, hands out several discount invitations to 'come and discover uncommon dishes'.





# KUJIRA

*"There's no shortage of missing cogs in the world [...] but it seems to me, in what concerns our globe, that the only thing that keeps it turning without a hitch is that, here and there, cogs are missing."*

– Mishima Yukio, *Dojoji*

## Suiyobi — the Day of Water

Now the player characters begin to dig deeper into the secrets of beyond and of their fates. They will discover they have the power to confront the creatures from Yomi and that their nature, just like their future, seems intimately connected to the Kuro Incident. They will find valuable allies, the Shi-Tenno, and their eyes will open up a bit wider to the realms of the invisible, as they attract the attention of the gods towards them.

## Kujira Overview

The player characters are drawn towards a strange discovery: a complete whale skeleton beached on the Shin-Edo coast. This rare event becomes even more mysterious with the discovery of puzzling symbols engraved on the cetacean's skull. By force of circumstance, the player characters will come into possession of this engraved piece of bone. Watched over by the strange members of the mysterious Furinkazan Sect and hunted down by a particularly hostile creature, they attempt to decipher the arcane symbols engraved on the bone. To do this they must explore the Shin-Edo underground until they find a mysterious swimming pool. On this quest they will meet the four Guardians of the Cardinal Points who will teach them more about their destiny.

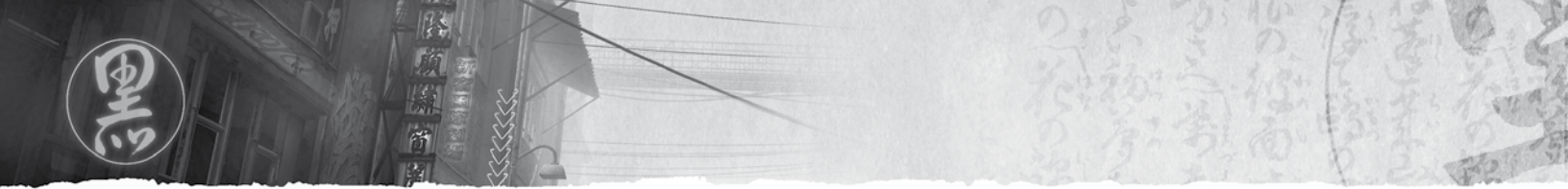
While this adventure does involve a dangerous assailant, it is mainly an investigative and information gathering scenario. The players will need to be proactive in seeking out clues and the combat characters might feel a bit left out with little to shoot at. This might be dealt with by having their assailant appear and engage them a little more often. The slower pace of this adventure means it is a good time for the Gamemaster to engage more of the player characters' background and sub-plots and spend more time roleplaying encounters with NPCs.

## Standing on the Beach

*"What's this mystery, ladies and gentlemen? What mystical force, what unlikely chance, has pushed the skeleton of this now extinct cetacean to beach itself upon our shores in one piece?"*

This story runs non-stop on most cable channels, and Odaiba beach, the south beach of Shin-Edo bay, is covered in reporters and gawkers. The cold breeze and the light November showers have not discouraged onlookers, fascinated by this strange spectacle. A crowd of people, carrying transparent umbrellas with advertising slogans on them, surround the scene. The story is everywhere, on all flat screens, flexible monitors, personal tablets and even informative holograms on crosswalks. Press helicopters film the scene from the sky, like black flies.

The event itself actually justifies this media coverage and public interest. On the black sand beach, surrounded by a security cordon, there lies the immaculate white skeleton of a grey whale (*Eschrichtius robustus*). It looks almost as if a team of biologists have assembled this complete skeleton as a display, or that the animal had died on the beach and slowly decomposed to reveal its white bones.



The player characters will already be aware of the most surprising piece of information. This whale species was, at the dawn of the 21st century, not one of the most threatened species but was nevertheless wiped out by pollution, overfishing and other human activity. Experts estimate that the last specimen may have disappeared by 2025. This skeleton arrived on the coast following a huge cyclone (the second this month). The winds devastated a good part of the Honshu seaside, causing 21 deaths and leaving hundreds without a home.

Soon, experts begin to gather at the site and proceed to make analyses, trying to explain the event. The evening television news on NHK (Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai) the main channel, is already beating most viewing records.

The player characters will find it hard to avoid this information while living their daily lives. It is more than likely that, after all the adventures recently, they have closer relationships with each other and such an event will intrigue them. Let the player characters contact each other and discuss the matter by phone or while on public transportation... the adventure will fall on them when they least expect it.

At the evening news, at 7pm, there's a flabbergasting development. While the skeleton was being prepared for transportation to the National Science Museum in the Ueno quarter, a new revelation shakes the scientific world even further. The whale's skull is engraved with weird signs! At the

back of the skull and the beginning of the spinal column, in a small area matching the occipital bone in humans, enigmatic and undecipherable kanji are engraved. Everybody is taken aback by this revelation, surprising to say the least. If the player characters are watching the news in a public place (on the subway in a bar), a debate starts immediately among the other spectators. The more rational claim that the cyclone dumped the fossilised skeleton on the beach, after having dredged it up from the underwater depths. The more credulous fear that demons have been released from the accursed carcass to show the Japanese that this country is no longer theirs. Many barflies or commuters will engage in to a lot of armchair hypotheses. For less-sophisticated people, the event is considered proof of several theories of apocalyptic mysticism! ("It's a sign! Japan is going to be destroyed!")

## Investigating the Whale

By this point, the player characters will probably want a closer look at the whale. This is not impossible but still very difficult. It isn't a super secret government project, but with press and public attention so high the skeleton is under tight security. It is cordoned off on the beach and police guard the scene to stop people stealing parts of it as a memento or to sell. Once it reaches the museum it remains guarded to keep the press out.

## Reading the Bones

The whale's skull is engraved with ancient kanji, dating from the 7th century. These actually show the resting place of a divine gate, enclosed on an island sunk beneath the water. This island, called Ryugu, is the palace of the sea dragon Ryujin. They also say the kami entrusted a whale with the role of 'Guardian of Secrets' and thus with the task of protecting 'The Key of the Dark Oceans'. Clearly, powerful entities are responsible for the island's enchantment and later sinking. These entities want to open a passage to Yomi. They want to leave their prison so they might be let loose upon the world.

But this bone fragment doesn't just speak of the sunken island and the mysteries locked in there. It does mention the important part played by the children of the kami, those branded by the seal of power within their blood: the Potentials.

This map leads the Potentials directly to their destiny, and as such it should never fall into evil hands. Ryugu Island should remain beneath the waves no matter what.

As the adventure progresses, the player characters can learn all this information little by little, by research or by using their contacts. But it will certainly be the Guardians of the Cardinal Points themselves who will most likely explain the exact nature of the phantom whale.



Characters with scientific or academic contacts might know someone who can get them in, or get some information out. Photographs of the writing might be smuggled out, and many are stored on the museum computer systems. The Gamemaster should remember that the museum is not a maximum security area. Guards are not armed and its systems are not state of the art. However, the museum is also doing the best it can, and the guards are alert so breaking in will not be easy.

Scientist characters (especially those with marine biology qualifications) might try to join the team working on the whale. It is unlikely they will be successful unless they are very qualified or have a particularly rare skill. The high profile of the case means that several well-known scientists are all competing to join the team led by the museum. The media attention it has garnered could make a career.

## RUNNING MAN

Very soon, an event will draw the player characters into the adventure and involve them in this mysterious affair. When one of them is on the Shin-Edo subway (going home, to work, going out to meet friends, getting home after a late drinking bout with co-workers or whatever) he sees a chase. A thirty something man wearing a long trench coat with luminescent buttons whose skull has a red snake tattoo is being chased by five uniformed police officers. After climbing the station stairs four steps at a time, he jumps onto the train the player character is travelling on. Only one of the officers chasing him is quick enough to board the train. The man will then rush through the carriages, shoving people out of his way while the officer desperately tries to apprehend him.

The player character present in the train may try to stop him or may do nothing. In any case he will be violently jostled at some point by the fugitive, who might even take him a hostage using a long knife to make the police officer lower his weapon. His attempt will be short lived; police reinforcements enter at the next stop in great numbers and apprehend the man. He will not fight and will eventually surrender to the authorities.

If he questions the police officers, the player character may learn the fugitive is only accused of theft but the officers will not go into more detail. After some routine questions, the player character may return to his daily routine. The man with the red tattoo will be taken away by the police.

### Visions and Dreams

You can take advantage of moments of stress for the player characters (such as the train chase) to make them undergo a vision, a kind of waking dream. When the fugitive rushes towards him, seemingly in slow motion, a massive silhouette bearing a samurai armour seems to take his place with an outstretched hand. The player character has just enough time to hear: "It is time, my son. Listen to your blood. It tells our story" before the vision breaks and the player character becomes aware of the man jostling him in the wagon.

But what does this all mean? The player characters' fate is intimately linked to the Kuro Incident and the map. The visions are attempts by the beyond to contact them. They are also crucial to prepare the player characters for Kuro Tensei.

Another player character, in a different moment of the adventure, might dream of a battle. The conflict seems to take place in the past. Samurai, archers and spearmen fight each other. A horseman approaches and tells the player character: "Great battles mark our destiny. You will take part in one at the end of times. Be worthy of our blood." And then he gives him a katana. When he wakes up, the player character will have a red mark in his hand, the one that reached for the katana in his dream. The mark will not disappear.

### Mr Makita

There's another person that can cause the player characters some trouble: Mr. Makita. He is a collector of occult items with contacts among many smugglers in Japan. He paid Nabeshima Junichi to steal the infamous bone. He doesn't yet suspect that Nabeshima hid the precious object in the pocket of the first person he saw in order to escape a heavy prison sentence.

However, it won't take him all that long to figure things out and for his investigation to lead to the player characters. Luckily, he will initially attempt to retrieve 'his' goods in a more or less subtle fashion. At first he will be particularly polite (although shifty) but become threatening if the player characters refuse to cooperate.





The Gamemaster can use him as she likes. However, his resources are limited and his plans will usually involve paying petty criminals to steal the item or threaten and/or rough up the player characters.

## Coded Epiphysis

Once they get home, the player character will find in his jacket or raincoat, or in her bag, a curious piece of bone the size of a tea cup. It is engraved with particularly complex kanji that are very difficult to decipher. Obviously, he will immediately conclude this has something to do with the whale skeleton story, and he will be right.

The bone fragment, stolen by the tattooed man from the whale, is a vital piece. Luckily, no one has figured out the player character now has it so they have time to alert their companions, start researching the mysterious bone or to try to decipher the signs engraved in the bony plaque.

He may also think about returning the precious item, but something deep inside him will prevent him, as if he felt that losing it, returning it or destroying it could lead to catastrophe. If this feeling isn't enough, he'll see that his name and that of his comrades is engraved in the little plaque filled with symbols intersecting and overlapping. In fact, the entire list of Potentials is also recorded here.

Hopefully the player characters will try to decipher the Kanji and learn more of the secrets of the bone. They will also have to use discretion concerning their ownership of the engraved bone. Indeed, the press will soon mention the theft of that part of the skeleton. The news reports that the engraved piece was stolen by a certain Nabeshima Junichi.

There are several avenues the player characters might take to investigate the writing and the bone, depending on their contacts. A close examination of the bone itself tells them more, but they will need a skilled linguist to decode the text. They might look up old legends of whale skeletons, and possibly run lab tests to date the bone. They might also investigate one of the few words they can read, *Rosuto Oni Monogatari* which refers to an ancient book kept in Shin-Edo. Depending on the directions the player characters follow in their enquiries, they may learn the following:

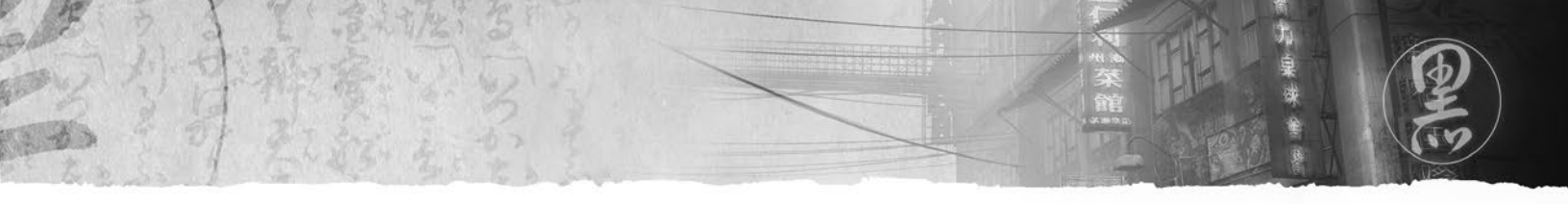
- The writing consists of 7th century kanji. Moreover, they are quite oddly twisted, rendering their deciphering more difficult. They seem to have been engraved and then

filled with squid ink. Also, they happen to be coded. This information will only be available if the player characters get the help of a specialised and competent linguist.

- If they manage to decipher the message, it appears to offer directions to some vague location, calculated by the stars. A path is laid out, from Shin-Edo to a submerged island. Nothing is precise, but the writing clearly mentions that four items are indispensable to find this hidden underwater place.
- A whale skeleton appears in a legend known to some historians and can be found in some old books: the Bake-kujira legend. A long time ago, a whale skeleton appeared off the Shimane prefecture coast, accompanied by strange fish and a cloud of birds. A fisherman tried unsuccessfully to harpoon the skeleton. It simply continued on its way before disappearing into the depths of the sea.
- If the player characters manage to date the bone fragment, it seems it is many centuries old, at least 1000 years. The bones are partly fossilised. It also highly improbable that these bones have survived this long in an underwater environment due to any natural process.
- Several names appear among the directions in the writing and are indeed those of the player characters and of the other Potentials. Some names are erased or ruined, this bony fragment having been cut from the skeleton with rather improvised equipment. The Potentials are all referred to as 'Children of the Kami'. However, it seems obvious that there are other names in this list, much bigger than the one already owned by the characters. That list (found in Origami) concerns only people living in Shin-Edo. This new list reveals all Potentials living in Japan, about 50 individuals whose names are more or less readable.

## The Rosuto Oni Monogatari

If the player characters investigate the *Rosuto Oni Monogatari* (which translates to *The Lost Demon Tales*) they will discover references to the work being kept in Shin-Edo at the tiny monastery of the Nezumi (rat). This decrepit little building is located in the Ueno quarter, at an intersection between two pedestrian-only streets. The temple owes its name to the fact that it is dedicated to the kami that protect rats and so it is completely infested by the vermin. Inside, an obese monk with bushy eyebrows spends the whole day watching 3D anime on a new generation giant screen embedded on the wall while tossing pieces of skewed meat at the rats scurrying to and fro on the floor. As you might imagine, the place gets few visitors.



The monk, called Daiki, will be happy to show the monastery's copy of the *Rosuto Oni Monogatari* to the player characters if they are reasonably polite. He gets few opportunities to talk to people or show off this treasured scroll. Only a few copies of this ancient text survive today, all of which are written on badly weathered bamboo strips. The text was written by Wei Li, an insane Chinese monk, and tells of the legend of a mythical whale brought to Japan in the 9th century. It is said that this whale was ordered by Suzano Wo, the spirited god of the sea, to guard the secret of the key to Yomi. The whale would be the repository of a map leading to the key. Said key would be hidden in the submerged island of the dragon Ryujin, in a Cyclopean temple built by the kami. Tirelessly, this Bake-kujira wandered the oceans, the secret engraved on its very body. When it died its mission took precedence over its fleshy envelope and it continued travelling the seas after death to keep its secret. Sometimes it was sighted by fishermen or castaways, its skeleton floating over the waves, its bones whitened by the foam and the sun.

Interestingly, the scroll also mentions four Guardians of the Cardinal Points, the 'Shi-Tenno'. Unfortunately, there are no details on who, where or what these Shi-Tenno might be as the bamboo scroll is badly damaged.

## The Watchers

The player characters should decide on where to hide the bone. However, on the way there one of them will see (reflected in the rear-view mirror or in a shop window) a man wearing only black staring at him, motionless, his face covered with an immaculate white Noh mask. Whether vision or man, it will soon vanish behind a bus or a hologram praising the qualities of the new 'Mazkart', the latest car that includes a perfect autopilot. If, in an excess of paranoia, they decide to change the hiding place after this vision, it will not be a problem. The Furinkazan Sect will watch the hiding place and protect it from the demon called Tenshi.

# THE ANGEL WITH THE BLACK WINGS

By retrieving the engraved fragment, the player characters will be unaware that they have attracted the wrath of a terrible being. Tenshi is an oni, a scout from the darkness of Yomi. He was charged by his peers to find the key blocking access to the spirit world and opening the way. In a huge ritual with a dark and bloody ceremony, the oni managed to make the temple guardian, the Bake-kujira, rise above the waves. The latter has the map leading to Ryugu Island. On this island can be found the key that allows the gates of Yomi to be cast open. If this happens our world will be delivered to the hordes of ogres and evil spirits waiting to flood out.

Obviously, Tenshi is deeply unhappy with the fact that the plaque has been stolen before he could get hold of it. He decides the best course of action is to follow the trail leading to the player characters, who should lead him to it.

Tenshi is a centuries-old oni whose dark skin is decorated with multiple tattoos. Huge and revoltingly thin, he has vast scaly wings similar to those of an extinct pterodactyl. His face is very angular, and his mouth filled with many sharp fangs, like the teeth of a moray eel. His eyes are permanently closed and he seems to see through the eyelids. Wearing a kimono worn at the seams and torn in places, he is armed with a kusari gama (a long chain with a sickle on one end and an iron ball on the other), which he wields with great skill. Some hours before he possessed the body of a simple, slightly overweight labourer working in a waste disposal factory whose skin was marked with dark veins. After the whale appeared, this body spat out the dark water inside it, which formed the shape of Tenshi.

During the whole time the player characters are investigating he will be following them everywhere, especially at night. He will jump from roof to roof, fly over their vehicle, hide in the shadows of the clouds, tracking them tirelessly, as silent as a shadow. However, its evil presence may be discerned by player characters with a high Perception score, with a result of Above Average difficulty (16). In case of success, the Gamemaster shouldn't mention this sort of evil angel flying over them, but hint instead that something dark and malevolent seems to have taken an interest in them. One night, by his window, he may perceive a shadow, perched on the rail of a nearby balcony, carrying a long chain with a spiked iron ball dangling at one end. If he closes his eyes, he will hear the sound of wings, like





a flight of ravens or pigeons taking off, but amplified, as if the creature taking flight was much larger than a simple bird. One evening he might hear the sound of chains jangling above and see a shadow flying over, briefly hiding the light of the moon. In fact, the Gamemaster might make the Perception check herself on the players' behalf so as not to alert them in case they fail it.

Tenshi is there to increase the pressure on the player characters. He should be used like a shark finding the lay of the land, tasting its prey, swimming in concentric circles around them getting nearer and nearer, approaching a little only to vanish in the next moment, and showing its head sometime later. He will attack when it feels ready, and must locate the bone first, else a punishment worse than death awaits him. It does not do to disappoint the lords of Yomi.

## When the Stars are Right

With all the technology at their disposal, it is possible for the characters to use the star positions in the bone text to virtually locate the island. Nothing is simpler, even a standard Pod will manage a relatively accurate location. The place these calculations reveal is in the middle of the sea, some 30 kilometres off the Japanese coast (inside the blockade) in the Pacific Ocean, near Kochi in Shikoku Island. Before the player characters get tempted to dash out there, the Gamemaster might remind them of the blockade, and that some texts describe the island as submerged. More research might be needed to mount an expedition.

The player characters might continue to research ancient texts for more information about the island. They might visit several Shinto and Buddhist temples, each with a different ambiance, enclosing a thousand and one treasures. They might take part in a tea ceremony, meditate for a moment in front of a Zen garden or participate in a religious ceremony. Have them meet Buddhist monks, Shinto priests, and Miko. You can also show them that, in the middle of the dazzling Japanese modernity, there remain traditional islands of deep serenity and purity. Through this investigation the player characters may hear more information about the island and mysterious Shi-Tenno.

- The location is that of an ancient island called Ryugu. This island was swallowed by the waves because of a huge earthquake in the 11th century. Some rare testimonies can still be read about the strength of the tremor, which caused thousands of deaths and destroyed more than two



hundred villages, causing a formidable tsunami and huge landslides. During this earthquake, which was said to have lasted for several hours, the island was submerged. The latter event only caused few deaths. Indeed, this island had the peculiarity of being reserved mainly for Shinto temples and priests. Around a big temple, said to be the greatest of all temples, some buildings were, managed by monks that would come to retire forever from the world of men. There, hermits lived out the days of their retirement on this island.

- Shi-Tenno is the name of the group referred to as the four Guardians of the Cardinal Points. Each point has its own guardian. Legendary individuals, they have made a mark with their presence in the mystical history of Japan. They are eternal, but not as powerful as the kami. Only their symbolic names are known: Tamon is the guardian of the North, with her glacial wind and burning snow. Komoku is the Western Phoenix, with his burning body. Jikoku is the guardian of the East, the fish of dawn. Zocho is said to be a jungle sorceress, the guardian of the South. In a collection of stories and legends it is said that each owns an item that, once joined together with the others, will allow Ryugu Island to rise from the waters.

## THE SHI-TENNO

Present in Japan for centuries, the guardians of the four Cardinal Points are immortal beings charged with protecting the archipelago by repelling evil. While each appears human, they have impressive supernatural powers, and each does their best to hide certain supernatural signs that mark them as more than they appear. After the disappearance of the kami, they became the last line of defence to protect the Emperor from the attacks of creatures from Beyond. Each protects one area of the capital, surrounding the Emperor with their auras like far away mystical bodyguards (the Emperor has never met them, regardless of the era). For centuries they have led the human Furinkazan Sect, responsible for preparing the return of the kami to earth and those whose destinies are linked to it.

The Shi-Tenno will first appear in this scenario, and we recommend, if you run your own stories between episodes of Makkura, to involve them as much as possible in the player characters' stories. They may not be all-powerful, but they can help them in any number of ways. They have had the same appearance for centuries, and the only way to destroy them is to rip out the object hidden inside their bodies. Each Guardian

is the repository of one of the four items that keep the island from rising from beneath the waves, as the player characters may have discovered in those ancient texts. The items are inside their bodies, in their hara, the sacred part of the belly, the seat of breath. To get to the item the bearer must be killed and eviscerated.

The Guardians, have been watching the player characters since the start by directing the Furinkazan Sect. Besides their Herculean strength, their uncommon speed and peerless toughness, they also have the ability to manipulate chance in small ways. They will use this power to bring the player characters closer to them. So if a player character decides to go and have a drink with friends, he will find himself significantly attracted to the Giant Kitty and will become one of the regular patrons. If he is attacked by thugs, it won't be very far from the dwelling place of Hiro Sujaku, the Southern Guardian, who is a professional wrestler and will help them out. Their goal is to get increasingly familiar with the player characters and watch over them. So as the player character research details about the island, the Gamemaster might start introducing the Guardians quietly.

### The Guardians

#### *Genbu Naoko - Tamon (The North)*

Waitress at the Giant Kitty Bar in south Shibuya. She has a tattoo of the kanji for North hidden under her fringe and breezes blow around her.

#### *Sujaku Hiro - Komoku (The West)*

Professional wrestler called 'The Phoenix'. His skin is constantly burning, making his clothes smoulder.

#### *Terazawa Seiryu - Jikoku (The East)*

Young and wealthy entrepreneur. He has thin, golden hands and beautiful eyes he tries to keep hidden with gloves and contact lenses.

#### *Byakko Kozakura - Zocho (The South)*

An old woman who runs a small herbalist shop called Kin Cha, in Ueno. She seems always surrounded by an earthy smell and has blackened teeth.

All the Guardians have a powerful aura and presence. Their supernatural energy often interferes with electrical devices nearby.

## Tenshi's Plan

Of course, Tenshi knows that the Shi-Tenno have the four artefacts that allow the island to rise from beneath the waves. His priority is to recover the map, but as soon as the bone is in his power, he will turn his attention to the four Guardians, even though he fears their power.

## Tamon (The North) — Genbu Naoko

The Guardian of the North is Genbu Naoko, a young, 22 year-old waitress working at the Giant Kitty, a small bar in the south of Shibuya. She wears tight, ripped jeans and old Converse trainers and her hairstyle sports an overly long fringe with a white streak. Friends call Naoko 'Jap Ra' (as in "Japanese Ramone") for her look. She plays (several instruments) in a band and has often lent her voice as backing vocals for Sugomi, the usual band in Akai Cho (see the Kuro Core Rulebook page 44). Always sipping a strawberry milkshake or listening to her Walkman, Naoko actually looks more like a teenager having a 'retro-rock' phase than a venerable Guardian of a Cardinal Point.

Like the other girls at the Giant Kitty bar, Naoko's uniform is a cat costume with a pointy-eared hat and shorts or a mini-skirt with a tail. She coasts around the tables on roller-skates, offering unique cocktails and noting down orders on her Pod.

Naoko will use music to influence the player characters and offer clues. When events throw the player characters into action, she might send them the latest album by Sugomi, an obscure independent band. A track or two may refer to the player characters. Indeed, the lyrics may reference places they've investigated, and mention characters that are still a mystery to them, etc.

Under her fringe Genbu hides a tattoo, a kanji (Tamon) meaning 'North'. She is always surrounded by a fresh breeze, even when inside a building. Outside this breeze may become a strong wind. Naoko's skin is impressively pale, her hair has some white locks, and she has porcelain eyes. Just like the other guardians, her presence causes electromagnetic disruptions (Gantai go crazy, the batteries in Pods go dead, and similar).





## Komoku (The West) — Sujaku Hiro

The Guardian of the West is Sujaku Hiro, a forty-something professional wrestler. Sujaku is not very tall but he is incredibly well built, with a bull neck and arms a security android would fear. Sujaku's stage name is Phoenix, and he accumulates victories in a minor league whose exploits are broadcast on a cable channel. The wrestler can frequently come to the player characters' aid. For instance, when they are having difficulties with the thugs sent by Mr Makita to retrieve his beloved.

Sujaku and Genbu are in love but the kami decided otherwise. They are forbidden to touch. Moreover, they can't talk to each other except during eclipses. So, to uphold these restrictions, they try to stay as far away from each other as possible. But each hungers for news of their lover, and will press the player characters for news if they have met one or the other.

Sujaku Hiro has burning skin. Wisps of smoke are always coming from clothes. Indeed, his clothes are actually smouldering and beginning to burn.

## Jikoku (The East) — Terazawa Seiryu

Terazawa Seiryu is the Guardian of the East. He is a young entrepreneur, a dynamic tireless golden-boy. Responsible for a small thriving transportation company, Seiryu also owns a share portfolio that he manages brilliantly, anticipating the bad turns of the market with supernatural alacrity. A fan of Sinatra, of whom he has seen an androclone (android look-alike) in concert, he is often humming a crooner tune with his falsetto voice.

Seiryu always wears custom made suits in garish colours, making him hard to miss when looking for him. A veritable butterfly, he accumulates lovers continually and goes on multiple business and leisure trips. He doesn't seem to need to rest.

Terazawa always wears leather gloves. The rare times he removes them, he reveals thin hands with golden-yellow skin. His irises are also golden like the sun, which the best contact lenses fail to completely hide. His blazing eyes allow him to make hearts flutter among the fairer sex.

## Zocho (The South) — Byakko Kozakura

Byakko Kozakura is an old woman whose age is hard to determine. She has parchment skin and covered in liver spots and her bony hands are permanently stained with dirt. She has a small herbalist shop, called Kin Cha, in a tiny side street in Ueno between two hardly used temples. Kozakura wears little spectacles and is always dressed in a pastel coloured kimono with her grey hair tied up in a perfect bun. She looks like the typical Japanese granny from the Meiji era. It is said that she stopped aging at that time. In her small shop filled with plants, cuttings, jars and sachets of powdered vegetables, you can hear a phonograph playing jazz or classical tunes. Even so, Kozakura knows how to live in the present day. She is equipped with a latest model system of optical cash desk and often orders seeds on NeoWeb sites.

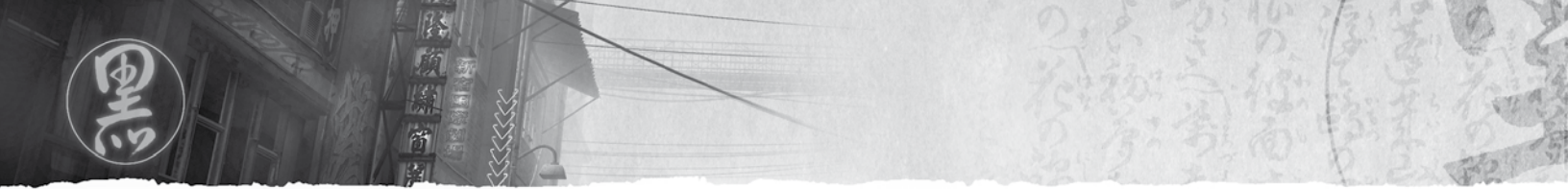
Byakko Kozakura has a very strong earthy smell, an almost sickening humus odour that permanently floats around her. Also, her teeth are black, possibly due to a strange disease or that she dyed them as was the fashion in ancient times. It's a mystery, but nobody has ever dared to ask her; not because she is scary, but because that is simply not done.

# THE WHISPER OF THE KUSARI GAMA

While they are finding these things out and have finally stopped poring over heaps of dusty, termite-eaten scrolls, the player characters will make an unpleasant discovery. Tenshi will take action and try to break into their respective apartments. He will ransack them and turn everything upside down in order to find the engraved bone. Some will also find their work place ransacked (the office of a salaryman, for instance). There may also be victims, horribly mutilated by the demon's flail, such as the custodian of the player character's building or office.

During one of these raids, the player characters arrive home or at work and catch Tenshi in the act. Luckily, he decides to make a reasonably quick exit. Tenshi will try to fight them off by keeping them at a distance with his flail, which will end up with the unfortunate player character's apartment being destroyed yet further. Then he will take flight, unfolding its monstrous wings and vanishing into the night sky, behind a holographic ad praising the merits of an android fitness trainer.





This first confrontation should be frightening, violent and brief. The Gamemaster should emphasise the strength used by this creature that came straight from the beyond. Tenshi just doesn't want to kill the player characters because he still doesn't know where the map is. He wants to watch them and see if they have hidden it somewhere else or given it to someone for safekeeping. A dead player character will not be able to tell him anything.

How did it miss the bone if he searched every place the player characters usually frequent? Simple: the Furinkazan Sect has preserved the item, turning it invisible to Tenshi's blind eyes. After the incident, the player characters will likely rush to the hiding place and see if the monster has taken the bone or not. The bone will still be there. But now it is surrounded with a blessed cord and drowned in the vapours from acrid-smelling incense.

## Kin Cha

If they want to learn about this incense by going, for instance, to Byakko Kozakura's herbalist shop (Kin Cha), the black-toothed old lady that smells like dirt will tell them it is a preparation based on lotus, a blessed plant that protects from the eyes of demons. If they go to any random shop, they will necessarily land in her herbalist shop. If they try to go to a precise shop that is not Kin Cha, it will be closed, or their Yamanote Evolve's engine will stall and stop right at outside Kin Cha... you get the picture. It is as if chance was guiding them there, whatever else happens.

In case the player characters don't try to find out more about the incense, they each will find under their door the herbalist shop's calling card with a note written on it in small letters: *"your destiny is written"*.

Inside the little store with an intense smell of moisture, they will find the other members of the Shi-Tenno, almost as if they were expecting the player characters. The owner in particular seems to know the player characters, and is apparently aware of their problems. She'll tell them that she knows why they are there, and that they are desperate. Try to surprise the players with this. She will introduce herself as the Guardian of the West, one of the members of the Shi-Tenno.

*"There are few ways to kill this winged oni, this angel from Hell. And I have not mastered the spells to do so. I can only advise you to go to the public baths at the north of Shibuya, the domain of my friend Tamon, Guardian of the North. There you will find the only person able to help you."*

Pressed with the player characters' questions, she'll be quite willing to tell them she has known them for some time, and, together with her companions, she protects the Emperor. She will not mention the Furinkazan Sect, but will admit that the player characters are of crucial importance for the return of the kami to our world, and that the whalebone is one of the keys for their return. She also warns that the map of the ghost whale must never be destroyed or allowed to fall into evil hands, or the world will be driven to its destruction.

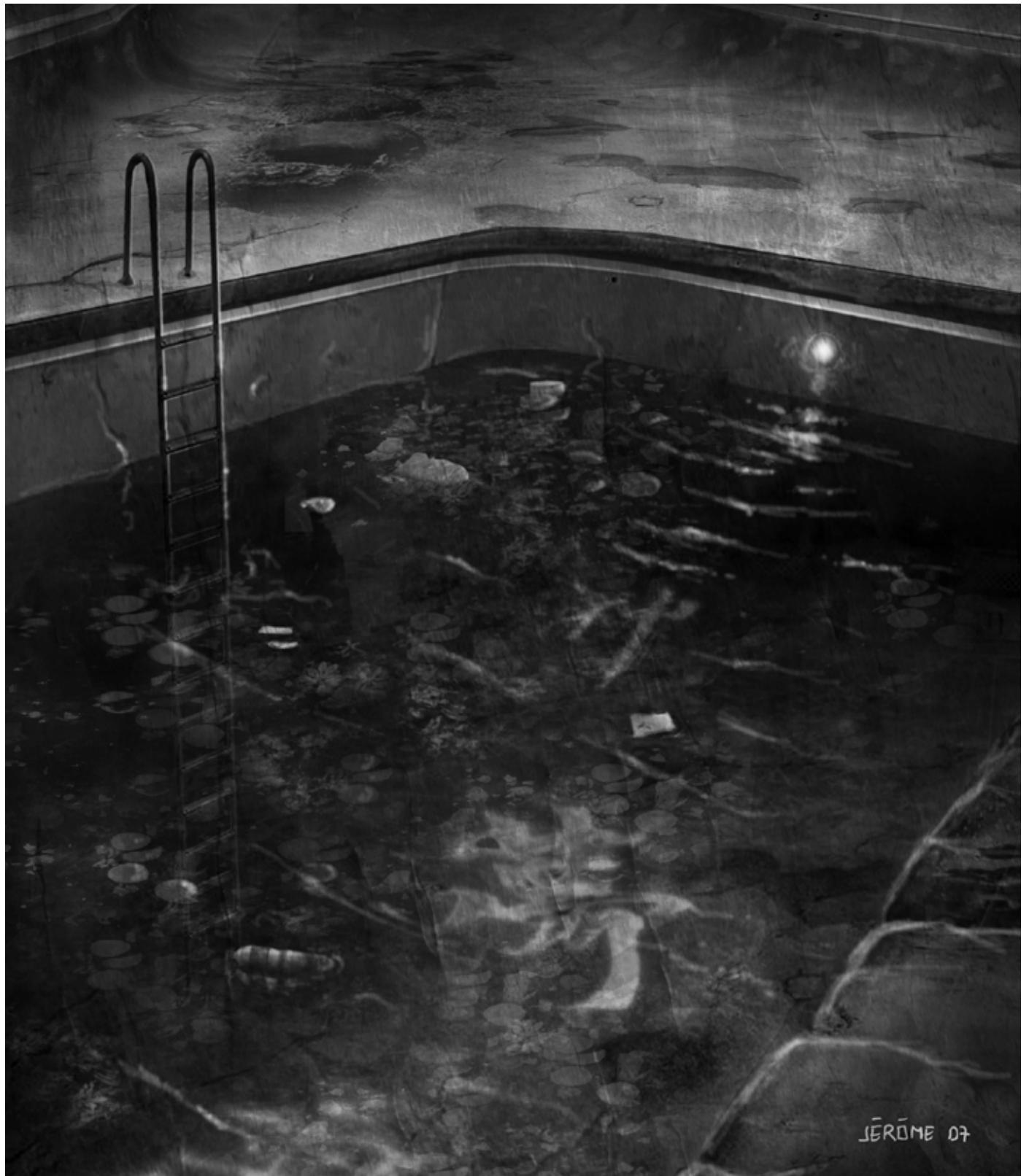
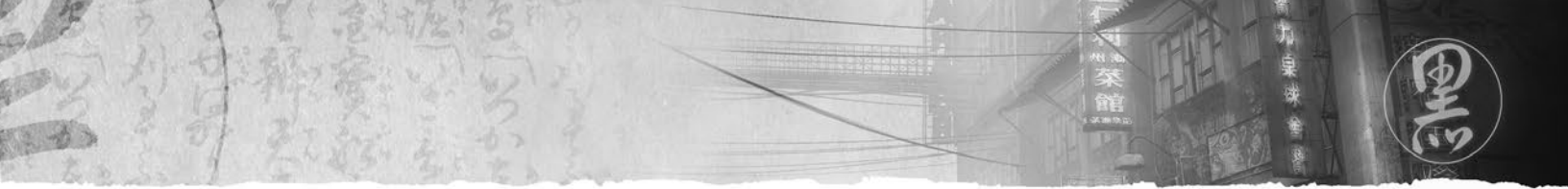
## THE DROWNED ONE

If the player characters follow the clue of the bathhouse, they will quickly discover that it has been closed for years. The place is abandoned, its façade condemned, the windows covered with tagged boards. A homeless man lives in the ruins; he calls himself 'the Drowned One'. He is an ageless man wearing a thick coat that stinks to high heaven. Always with a bottle in his hand, he replaced whisky with adulterated vodka smuggled from the Kuril Islands after the Kuro Incident. Toothless, smelling like urine, perspiration and alcohol, he sits in an old and battered wicker chair on the terrace of the establishment. At his feet there's a swimming pool containing rainwater collected from storm after storm. The tiling is covered with moss, with many tiles missing, revealing plaster swollen with moisture. The stagnant water is filled with dead leaves, drowned insects and the corpses of animals. The Drowned One's speech is not very coherent. He mixes up politics, the blockade and legends in a hard to decipher gobbledygook. If the player characters mention Tenshi, the old herbalist, the Shi-Tenno or other related subjects, his sole eye (the other is covered under a skin blister) will show nothing and he will continue talking. But, at the same time, he will get up and gather together some diving masks.

Rambling his nebulous theories non-stop (in which you should place some truths from the adventures that follow), he will give the masks to the player characters and will put on one himself. Finally, he shuts up. With a limping, shuffling walk, he will go into another room and return with some lanterns. Having lit them and placed them around the pool, he will remove his badly worn big coat and his ragged clothing, revealing a body filled with scars and dirt stains.

Under his pile of tattered clothes, he is wearing black bathing trunks. Without any further word he will go over to the swimming pool and will climb down the first step. With water up to his mid-calf, will turn and wait for the player characters with a bewildered and





色にな出でそ思ひ死ぬとも





happy look on his face. Approaching the pool, the player characters will notice that the dirt and the colour of the water prevent them from seeing the bottom. The ladder leading down into the pool disappears into the darkness. It is impossible to determine if it is an optical illusion or just the blurring effect of the filth floating on the surface.

If the Drowned One feels the slightest hesitation from the player characters, he will encourage them by saying: *“Well, do you want to destroy that dark angel or what?”* and will start to climb down the pool. Let’s hope the player characters will decide to follow the tramp. Indeed, he is the only one able to guide them to Kagami (the Mirror) the reflection of the city.

## Going Under

The water will be freezing and sticky. It will make the player characters’ clothes stick to their skin if they have not removed them. Soon it will reach the level of the lungs and the player characters will be out of breath with the cold. Next the level will rise to the diving masks. Under the surface, the ladder does indeed seem not to end. The pool acquires gargantuan proportions. Large shapes swimming far below can even be discerned. The Drowned One will keep descending, stopping from time to time to see if the player characters are following.

Just when they think they will undoubtedly run out of oxygen, they will find out they can hold their breath indefinitely, without any trouble. As they lose all notion of time, the pale light from the surface will allow them to perceive the end of the steps. Indeed, everything suggests they are rising to the surface. The sounds of water will be heard and the landscape will sway with the small waves caused by their movements. Finally they’ll emerge from the water at apparently the same place. They are simply on the other side of the pool and it will clearly be day (or night, if the player characters started their climb during the day).

This may seem hard to believe for the player characters, but this passage to “the other side” is an ancient rite connected to water and its effects on the beyond. At first sight, nothing seems to have changed. Only a few hours have passed. However, just by looking at the Drowned One the player characters realise that something has opened up inside them. Indeed, the old man radiates a kind of contained power, one that seems obvious, even with his mask over his head and his trunks sticking to his pitiful emaciated body.

Finally, the Drowned One will say. *“Now, my friends, you’re seeing the world in a different light. Go. Walk and seek. You will not miss the weapon you need when you see it. Now, let me sleep.”*



## Seeing Double

Since their passage, the player characters have acquired a strange ability. They have a form of second sight. They now have a kind of third eye allowing them to see the supernatural easier than a normal human, clarifying in this way the visions they have seen before. The Gamemaster should confront them with this new ability with some scary scenes. You may get some inspiration for such scenes from movies and TV shows like *The Sixth Sense* or *Grimm*. The player characters may see ghosts and strange creatures haunting the dark corners of Shin-Edo. Here are a couple of examples:

- When in the subway, a woman standing motionless on the facing platform stares at them and smiles. Her mouth is enlarged to the ears by razor cuts, horribly deforming her face.
- A decomposing bird lands on their feet, fouling the air, its feathers soiled with worms, but an instant later it flies away.

These unsettling manifestations may also invade technological items. A player character makes a video call but instead of the intended recipient sees a horribly bloated woman, begging him to save her, saying she is too cold. The player character has dialled the wrong number (having dialled the number of a dead woman).

The player characters should end up wondering if what they got from the Drowned One was indeed a gift.

## Okina

The Okina or Kamiuta is a Noh theatre style that mixes Shinto ritual and more classical dances. These plays represent ceremonies during which the audience is blessed by the deity on stage. These special plays are only acted in specific occasions. Charged with religious power, it is told that in these plays the deity can incarnate in the actor playing it. Some of these actors have known to have died, their hearts having stopped beating, struck by a mysterious energy.

## Dreams of Power from Yesteryear

From the moment the player characters leave the pool, the dreams sent from beyond will multiply and become recurrent. They will almost all follow the same pattern. The player characters will dream of colourful characters from the Nipponese middle-ages and the Heian era (samurai, exorcists, ladies of the court, priests, monks, tea masters). Every time, the context will be troubling. A seppuku ceremony is taking place, a battle is being prepared. The dream can even take place during a bloody battle. Every time, a gesture will be made towards the player character. Some words will be pronounced by the protagonist of the dream. These are messages telling the player characters to wake up, not from the dream but from reality. They are injunctions calling on the blood of the player characters. These oneiric trips should stress the player characters out, these phantoms have such a realistic appearance, the context is so violent, and, most of all, if there is any contact, the player character's body will keep its mark forever. If in dreams a player character holds the hand of a samurai or a monk, if he brushes it or retrieves an item, in the morning a reddish spot stains the very same body part. This mark will defy any attempt to remove it.

If the player characters try to learn about these different people, using, for instance, distinctive signs in their dreams, a style of armour, a family crest (or 'mon') or a particular monastery, for example, they may find out these things have really existed. In different eras, having accomplished different feats, these people were heroes in their eras, a part of the history of Japan.

For example, Minamoto no Yoshitsune, a mythical samurai; Benkei, his acolyte, a warrior monk; Murasaki Shikibu, a court lady and famous writer from the Heian era; Kenshin Uesugi, a samurai, battle-drunk and also a drunk; Abe No Seimei, the great onmyōjin exorcist from the 10th Century; Sen no Rikyu, the great tea master; Ikkyū Sojun, a monk and a great poet, Sugawara no Michizane, scholar and statesman...

## The Weapon from Okinawa

This chapter has the goal of allowing the player characters to find a weapon powerful enough to defeat Tenshi. The Drowned One has told them that when they see it, they'll have no doubt whatsoever it is the right weapon. But that doesn't tell them where to start looking.

Perhaps the most obvious place to start would be looking in the various modern weapons shops. Bearing arms is forbidden in Japan without a special permit. But the law allows the possession



of a gun when you practice shooting. It is also more relaxed about bladed weapons. Thus the player characters can scour the modern shops offering different models of pistols or brand-new katana. They can also browse through antiquarian shops looking for an ancient sword... for instance, by following the Shi-Tenno's advice.

At first no weapon will attract the player characters' attention, until they pass in front of a shop the size of a warehouse offering antique experts to come and empty their attics. The warehouse is full of various private stalls offering all manner of strange nick-knacks and antiques. On a stall manned by a young couple is a lacquered box with a beat up lock. Inside is a sword with a notched blade and an old pistol.

Paying a bit more attention to these items, the player characters' will notice it is the kit of a World War Two officer. The sword was mass produced from industrial steel bars. The pistol is a Nambu Type 14 but the butt and the barrel are covered with engravings, and little pendants hang from the handle. As for the sword, there are many kanji roughly engraved all along the blade, on both sides.

The owner of the item, a young thirty-something Japanese man, knows little about the box. All he can say is that it belonged to his grandfather. His name was Manabe Hachiro and he lived on the island of Okinawa. He was an Okina actor (see sidebar). When he was drafted in 1939 he took part on the battle of Halhin Gol in Mongolia, a crushing defeat by the Soviet troops. He quickly came back, discharged, half mad, ceaselessly etching abstruse signs on the walls of his asylum room, on his skin, on all the objects he could find... The young man has a photo of his grandfather. It shows, in the sepia coloured shot with serrated edges, a man with a haunted look, his face covered in strange symbols and twisted kanji. Behind him a barred window allows a white light to enter.

Manabe Hachiro, by dint of performing as several kami, attuned himself to, and become imbued with, mystical energy. This energy granted him strange abilities, making him able to see things no one else saw. The confrontations in Mongolia with the Soviet forces have rendered him mad. Developing serious paranoid tendencies, he was evacuated from the front. Upon his return to the island of Hokkaido, he believed himself persecuted by invisible things. He was forced to protect himself using mystical signs inscribed on himself, his things, his cell. He died some months after of a heart attack on a stormy night.

His weapons, invested with his power, are able to hurt creatures from Yomi, like Tenshi. If the weapons are not destroyed in the next fight, the player characters will be able to keep them, forming the first of their potential Occulttech weapons collection.

## Hatchiro's Weapons

While they might not look like much, these Occulttech weapons crafted by Manabe Hachiro are actually very powerful indeed. They are both quite old and worn, and are etched with several kanji. Both the sword and pistol have the following effects when used:

- When a player character wields it he feels a boundless energy flow out of it, as if his blows were guided by the spirits granting a 1D6 bonus to attack when used against a creature from Yomi.
- It negates all Phoenix and Natural Weapon powers.

### The Sword

A rather old and notched Second World War officer's katana. It is etched with kanji along both sides of the blade.

Damage: 2D6+2     REA +1.

### The Pistol

A rather clunky revolver with several pendants hanging from the handle. It is a Nambu Type 14 pistol, the standard issue for Japanese officers in the Second World War. The pistol only carries 6 bullets, luckily it is not the bullets that have mystical properties but the barrel of the gun. Unfortunately, Nambu 14 bullets are quite hard to come by. The player characters are free to try and acquire more from some collectors. When they find the gun it has six bullets with it.

S	M	L	E	Dam	Clip	Burst
0-5	6-20	21-35	36-50	3D6	6	No



# THE DECOMPOSING ANGEL

In this part of the adventure the player characters will encounter Tenshi for the last time, and it is time for a confrontation.

Tenshi has decided to change strategy. Since the player characters don't seem to have the engraved bone, he is convinced that it is in the power of a member of the Shi-Tenno. Since they carry the four artefacts needed for the raising of the sunken island anyway, he decides to kill five birds with one stone. He changes tack and starts hunting the Shi-Tenno, believing this will get him the map and the four items.

One way or the other, the Gamemaster should try to lead the player characters back to the herbalist, Byakko Kozakura. They may decide to buy a demon-repelling herb, perhaps one they have heard of during their research in the old Shinto texts, for example. Be assured the player characters will want to stack the odds in their favour and have one more weapon before encountering Tenshi.

Even if they don't think of visiting the Shi-Tenno, the player characters will now be able to see Tenshi more clearly. They will spot him flying over the city in the direction of Ueno, the quarter where the Kin Cha shop is located.

As a last resort, the old woman may call them directly asking for help. Tenshi has decided to besiege her shop to kill her and retrieve the artefact inside her belly. She already knows her fate, because the destiny of the Guardians of the Cardinal Points is written and the future of the player characters is part of it.

When the player characters arrive at the shop, whether to ask the old woman for some potions or to help her, it will be too late. The shop will be ravaged, the windows broken. Blood will soil the walls. But there are also streaks of a dark blue substance: the blood of the oni. When they get to the back of the store, they will see Tenshi bending over the body of the woman, rummaging furiously in her guts. He's looking for the item the Guardian of the West has inside her body but the player characters may know nothing about it. Before such a spectacle, it may not be obvious to the player characters that the demon is looking for something. It will seem more likely they are witnessing some kind of demonic savagery. Encourage that interpretation.

Interrupted in its search, Tenshi turns his head to the player characters, rises while staring at the player characters through his closed eyelids, hissing with his forked tongue. His big, gaunt body now occupies the room. It becomes very clear the oni intends to kill the player characters. The final confrontation has begun!

This time, the oni will not withdraw, but the player characters will be armed. Hachiro's pistol and sword will do their job. The player characters may not get away unhurt, but if they experience difficulties with the combat, members of the Furinkazan Sect or of the Shi-Tenno will come to their aid at a dramatically appropriate moment. The player characters should be aware they are on their side and can give precious aid.

If you wish to draw out the fight a little more, the old pistol may jam. Even the sword, (bad quality that it is) may break on the creature's kusari gama. The fight must be epic and wild. Do not be afraid of wounding the player characters. At this stage of the campaign, confronting an oni must be an almost irrational and terrifying act, to say the least.

Eventually, the player characters should triumph over the ogre thanks to the Shi-Tenno. The angel from beyond, mortally wounded, will vomit a thick dark blue fluid, like a kind of petrol. It will fall down without a sound and its body will start to melt, releasing disgusting humours and a foul stench of rot. A blackish goo will stain the floor, the sole trace left by the corpse of the warrior from the Yomi. At the same time, the dark clouds that covered the sky with their menacing shadows will let through some rays of sunlight and a small breeze will blow, as if the player characters have purified the world a little.

## EPILOGUE

*"When fear is not vigilant  
What is feared happens"*  
-Lao Zi

Having defeated the oni the player characters will have time to rest and recuperate. While the player characters regroup from their ordeal, they may learn through the media (in a news cast, or on their Pod) that a body was stolen from the Ueno morgue. It seems to have been the body of an 84 year-old herbalist named Byakko Kozakura. The coffin was about to be incinerated. The police don't know the motive of the grave robbers, who are still at large. Of course, an investigation has opened...





# NPCS

## Tenshi, the Oni Tracker

### Characteristics

DEX 4	STR 3	STA 3	REF 4
INT 4	PER 4	CHA 3	WIL 3

### Secondary Characteristics

HIT 45	SW 15	DT -15	
DEF 24	REA 5	ACT 2	MOV 4

### Skills

#### Combat Skills

- Hand to hand 5
- Claws 6 (Expertise)
- Melee weapons 5
- Kusari gama 8 (Accuracy\*)

\*depending on the make-up of your party, you may choose Expertise instead

#### Academic Skills

- Physical sciences 1
- Chemistry 3

#### General Skills

- Athletics
  - Dodge 7 (Specialist)
  - Flight 14 (Mastery)
  - Communication 5
  - Intimidate 6 (Expertise)
- Investigation 2
  - Interrogation 2
  - Shadowing 4
  - Torture 5 (Accuracy)
- Spiritual 3
  - Legends 5 (Mastery)
  - Shinto 4

#### Technical Skills

- Mechanical 2
  - Car mechanics 3
  - Hydraulic systems 3

### Powers

- Horror 3, Natural armour 2, Natural weapons: Claws, beak (1D6+1), Phoenix

### Kusari Gama

- Iron ball side - Damage: 3D6 REA -2
- Sickle side - Damage: 2D6+3 REA -1
- If the success margin is above 5, Tenshi may immediately attack the same opponent again with the other side of the weapon.

# CONTINUING THE DAY OF WATER

The player characters have now faced the dark directly and won. Now they know such creatures can be defeated, and they have the power to harm them physically, they'll feel a lot better about their encounters. Unfortunately, their eyes have also been opened to the expanse of the spiritual realm. While they previously noticed the odd spirit in extreme circumstances, now they can see all of them. They will realise quickly that these evil beings have been cloaked among the crowds of humanity in very large numbers. So while they may feel up to the task of stopping them, the enormity of that task will be very daunting.


As the player characters are on a more level footing with the spirit realm, the Gamemaster can take the action up a notch. While they are still risking their lives fighting even one spirit, it is no longer a suicidal proposition. As some very dangerous spirits are soon on their way, the Gamemaster might want to run a few scenarios that get the player characters used to fighting the darkness directly and destroying a few minor spirits.

## Steel Souls

Tanuma Kanezane's wife died of a cerebral haemorrhage more than three months ago. Kanezane remains inconsolable, cursing the fact that with only a Kaiso of 2 he was not making enough money to be able to save his wife from a mere clot stuck in an artery. A salesman in a small souvenir shop near the Senso-ji temple, he has never really believed in all the stories of the afterlife told by the former senile owner of the place. But the tears in his eyes may have changed things, disrupting his cornea allowing him to see the shadows that haunt the visible border of the world. In fact, Kanezane is a Potential, who, like his peers, has begun to perceive the invisible and attract the creatures coming from it.

His immense grief allowed him to believe in some form of afterlife or parallel universe, a place his wife's soul may find peace. But he can't make up his mind about it. He senses that her soul is in jeopardy, the Kuro Incident having disrupted the beyond and released the dark forces of Yomi-No-Kuni.

Losing his mind little by little, worsened by the overuse of low quality biotech drugs, he now wants to release his wife's



soul from the depths of the invisible world. Poring over different occult books, he came to the conclusion that he would never reach the otherworld. Several hours submerged in a bathtub, a vial of salt in each hand, have never allowed him to pass through the mists of Gakido, the path leading to the world of the dead. But a dead person, who can still walk, may be able to do so, and retrieve the soul of his wife.

By selling his meagre goods, he managed to convince two 'tinfoil-hat' robotics students to design emissaries capable of making such a journey. They created three androids with modified templates and bodies covered with the skin, flesh and hair of deceased people. These cadavers were stolen from a Shin-Edo morgue by Kanezane and the two students, all too happy to try out a new form of robotic Occultech (and making bundles of yen in the process). After having been carefully skinned, the body parts were treated with a nanotech fluid capable of preserving flesh for up to a week. Afterwards they were carefully placed on the robot skeletons to create a covering that would allow them to pass into the world of the afterlife.

Filmed by one of the roboticists, the experience was a complete success. The three machines, commanded by Kanezane, got up and vanished into a shadowy corner in the makeshift lab. But, days later they had still not reappeared. However, after nearly a week they did come back, but not unchanged. They savagely murdered one of the students while he was watching a porn holofilm. He was found frozen, eyes wide open in astonishment, sitting on his couch littered with the remains of food.

The three robots have actually become animated by the souls of those of whom they bear the skin. They have no intention of relinquishing this new life, and plan to finish what they never had time to do while alive. It just goes to show, it is always useful to learn a little of the past of the bodies of strangers waiting in a cold room before someone comes and identifies them, especially if they were once criminals...

## The Steel Revenants

The first cadaver is called Ichida Shino. He was a violent man who spent most of his time beating his wife and kids after drinking too much alcohol. One night, returning home drunk, he surprised his wife in the arms of another man. Actually it was just a young social worker coming to help his wife solve her domestic violence issues. Mad with rage, Shino threw himself on the unfortunate social worker without the least explanation. After trading a couple of blows, the inebriated man couldn't keep his balance and broke his neck on a low table. His wife

reported it as a simple domestic accident and left the body at the morgue, unwilling to be near her husband again, living or dead. Now has returned, the husband is obsessed with finishing the job, getting rid of the young social worker and making his family pay for the harm he feels they have done to him.

The second corpse was a woman, a crafty poisoner. Attracted to rich man of Kaiso four or more, Shoken Megumi insinuated herself into the intimate lives of wealthy men for a few months before murdering them. She then emptied their bank accounts and claimed most of their property. Subtly, without a trace, she poisoned them little by little with a serum that paralyzes the advanced internal nanocontrols most wealthy people have installed. Responsible for three deaths, all executives from big Japanese companies, she made the mistake of trying the same trick with Mister Shirosama, a real estate magnate responsible for the construction of several big Shin-Edo complexes. He narrowly escaped the poisoner thanks to a Cell Chip (see the *Kuro Core Rulebook* page 25) designed to detect the presence of such invisible toxins in his blood. Mr Shirosama then paid some thugs to get rid of Megumi and dump her body in the sea. Her body was fished back out some days later, the impact of a Gauss shot in the back of her head clearly visible. Now she is back she hasn't forgotten who murdered her and plans on finishing what she started with Mr Shirosama.

The third and last corpse is Mori Koremasa, a cosmetic products salesman. Young, handsome and with a winning smile, he used to go door-to-door, selling beauty and anti-aging products, mostly to old ladies. He offered revitalising creams, unguents with nanoprotective gels, anti-wrinkle formulas, light botox masks and many more. He skilfully seduced his clientèle, with glossy adverts and a devastating smile. Many elderly ladies in the Roppongi, Shinjuku or Arasaka quarters knew Koremasa well; the handsome Revleen products salesman. No one would have imagined that such a perfect gentleman, seductive and intelligent, could hide a repulsive secret.

Behind Koremasa's attractive façade was an especially horrific serial killer. Repulsed by his own attraction to men, he hunted homosexuals in the city, making them pay for his twisted denial of his own sexuality. Repressed, sick and filled with hatred, he has committed more than 20 unsolved murders, sometimes even engaging in cannibalism with his victims. His death was due to a simple twist of fate. He was simply run over by a defective taxi-bot when he was leaving a luxury residence for the elderly during a sales round. His death saddened his clients a lot. But the young and handsome Koremasa is now back on the job, and has also returned to continue butchering young men in Shin-Edo.



## Hunting the Dead

The player characters may get involved in this case in several ways. They may have received a copy of the video of the ritual the robotics students made. It might have been given to them by Jiro, the sect or they may simply view it by chance on MadWorld (a site on the NeoWeb dedicated to Japanese urban legends and other fantastic theories connected to the Kuro Incident). They might be informed by one of their other contacts that three corpses were stolen from the morgue recently, along with detail on who they were. The murder of the robotics student, frozen in place, might also appear on one of the player character's news feeds on their Gantai between commercials.

At first the player characters will be counting the bodies. The second student will certainly meet the same fate as his colleague, making Kanezane try everything to protect himself. Actually, the main goal of the three machines is not to murder their designers, but to find a way to prolong the duration of their new forms, which were only designed to last one week. The robots have only murdered the students in frustration by accident. The students simply refused or were unable to detail how to prolong human tissue beyond a week. So the poor wretches were petrified by the freezing touch of the deceased, who were mad with rage. Since the three lost souls have other goals to pursue, Kanezane's death will be postponed as their last hope in this matter. Possibly for longer if he uses rituals and ofuda to drive them away.

With the help of DNA samples and some investigation, the player characters may find the true identity of the corpses, which may make their task easier. A race against time with the vengeful robots will then start. The player characters have to stop them before they do more harm. Ripping their skins off or making use of Shinto rituals should allow them, with some difficulty, to drive away the tainted souls and send them back into Yomi. Otherwise they could wait patiently for a week for their skin to fall to pieces, during which time many people will die. As for the soul of Kanezane's wife, Ritsuko, no one will ever know if she returned to the world of the living.

## Sugomi

Sugomi is a rock band (see the *Kuro Core Rulebook*, page 44) that plays in various underground bars across Shin-Edo. They are regulars at the Akai Cho. They play a mixture of hits, with a strong dash of vintage rock. Their style of music collates several famous styles and bands from the 1960s. In order to record

pieces that reproduce the sound of that era, the vintage rock band refuses to use most electronic equipment or assistance, instead using old instruments. They often record music in their basements or garages, without the aid of modern electronics, using very old equipment. Obviously their work is available in modern media, like 8D, the latest medium of downloadable music. But their sound has a touch of the old, like the sound of spluttering vinyl.

Sugomi is at the front of a musical movement. Created in 2009, the average age of a band member is 61 years old. It is made up of Ota Igo, Wada Mito and the Asanoto brothers, Toru and Shoyo. Imagine some Japanese fifty year olds wearing torn clingy jeans, old tired mesh jackets filled with badges, and sporting square haircuts with too long fringes.

The band has toured Japan for close to forty years. It has rarely toured abroad, and then mainly in Asia, with the exception of 2038. On that tour they went to the USA for a dozen gigs following the release of their only album that was a commercial success: *Nezuni Nervous Breakdown*. After this brief spell in the spotlight they have been forgotten by the general public. However, the band remains very popular in the Japanese underground music scene.

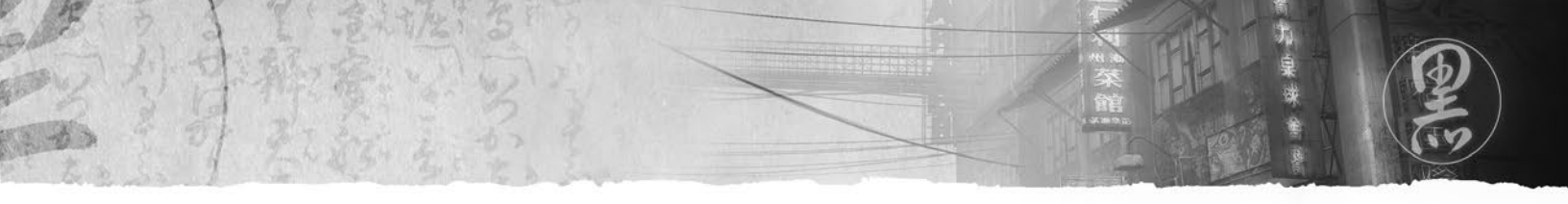
Ota, the singer, is actually a Potential although he doesn't know it. A habitual drug user, like his band mates, Ota has always had some very strange trips, which he very often uses as inspiration for the lyrics for his songs. After the Kuro Incident, his trips have taken an even stranger turn. As you might imagine, he has the same dreams as the player characters, the same weird sensations, the same feeling of floating between two worlds and, from time to time, strange visions. The exuberant singer blamed the drugs for it and is actually rather happy with these side effects.

## Spilled Secrets

Unfortunately, by using some of the images from these dreams in his lyrics he has, without his knowledge, revealed certain secrets. The Double Leaf Society (see the *Kuro Core Rulebook*, page 167) and its enigmatic leader do not particularly appreciate the band's latest single, called *Kami's Burden*. In this track the band mentions the return of the kami in our time. He calls them tyrants as they dictate their laws to humanity.

The song has badly rubbed the cult the wrong way. After discreetly watching the band, shadowing them and subtly tapping their phones, the cult learned the band was going to





launch an album in two months called From Yomi, With Blood. When they discovered the theme of the album is to be the Kuro Incident, they decided that enough was enough. By any means necessary, the Double Leaf Society intends to oppose the launch of the album and silence the members of the band.

## Enter the Player Characters

Actually Genbu Naoko, the Guardian of the North and member of the Shi-Tenno, is a big fan of the band. She also knows that Ota is a Potential. Obviously, she understood the cryptic part of Sugomi's songs. She also noticed that the Double Leaf Society, led by Monzaemon Hirobumi was a little too interested in the band. When she found out they wanted to neutralise the band, she tried to stop it. Since she has no desire to intervene directly, she will contact the player characters. If she has not yet met them this might be a good way to properly introduce her to the player characters. Even if they haven't heard about her, she has certainly heard about them by now!

Genbu Naoku will put the player characters in touch with the band. She may invite them to a gig and then get them all backstage. She is very keen to ensure they all like each other. If they try to learn more about the band before the gig, the player characters may find out that the group has a person mentioned in the list of Potentials. However, this is not very obvious as Ota Igo is on the list but under his real name: Okuda Igo. Ota is, of course, totally unaware of the existence of the list.

Naoko will inform the player characters of the Double Leaf Society, and suggest they keep the band in the dark about what is going on. They might panic or decide to go to ground. If the player characters investigate the secret society, the society will investigate them too. They will be followed and possibly escalating threats if they fail to "leave well alone". Some of the lunatics may even attack them (with blades rather than guns).

It will be hard to officially denounce the movement. They will claim any attacks and threats are due to the regrettable personal initiatives of some mentally unwell members of the group. They will insist the organisation itself bears neither the player characters nor the band any ill will. However, they will explain (slowly and patiently) that the band's lyrics range from misguided to potentially offensive and politely suggest they reconsider their stance.

Meanwhile, the Double Leaf Society sends two assassins to eliminate the band during a gig. The attempt will take place at the Akai Cho (the usual venue for Sugomi appearances). As a

distraction, cult members will assault the bar behaving like lunatic mystics, claiming the gods are not tyrants and other absurdities. As the player characters try to see to the chaos, the assassins make their move.

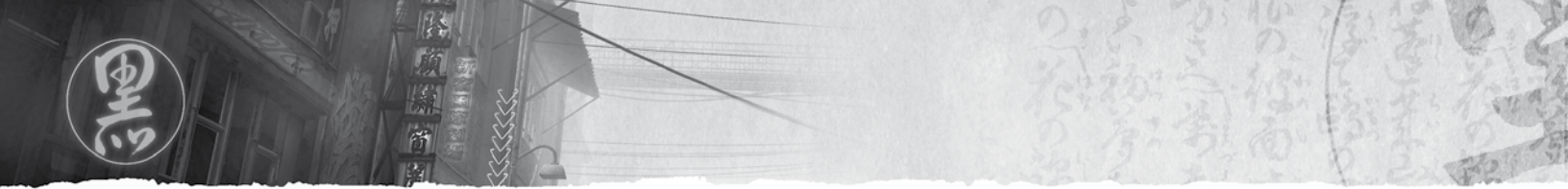
If this attempt fails, the adventure may conclude with a new assassination attempt from the Double Leaf Society. This time they prepare a much more organised attack that's harder to foil. They leak information of a sniper attack against the lead singer. While this is true, there is also a bomb hidden at the home of one of the other band members who is finishing the final cut of the new album at his mini-studio in his loft. The player characters are on the clock and must neutralise the killers as well as disarm the bomb set to destroy the home and studio of the band member.

A possible solution for the band members is to fake their deaths during one of the attacks or in an accident. Album sales will sky rocket and the cult will leave them alone, at least until the player characters can neutralise it.

## The Basement of Fear

In the Minato special ward is Aoyama quarter, a place patronised by many of the well-to-do in Shin-Edo. Here can be found tea houses, fashionable shops and luxurious residences out of reach for the common mortal. The Aoyama Reien Cemetery was the first municipal cemetery in the city. The tombs were moved somewhere else in 2011, replaced by a park after some years of debate on this municipal project. It isn't rare, on Sundays, to see the green in the park filled with numerous people having picnics with their families, co-workers or friends. The place, it must be said, is particularly quite, far from the bustle of the city. But in Aoyama can also be found old residential blocks that look out of place with the rest of the quarter. Parabolic aerials, which are almost useless nowadays, sprout up everywhere, and each building is covered in partly rusted plumbing, giving the place an industrial look. This out-of-place appearance doesn't stop many people from living here, finding the rents very affordable for such a pleasant area.

Unfortunately, lately something seems to be not quite right in this less popular part of the quarter. Brief showers of black rain regularly fall on this place, leaving behind dark puddles and making the building façades look like they are covered in tears. It is strongly advisable to take cover as soon as the first drops start to fall. Many reckless folk who don't are still trying to remove black streaks from their skin.



Some apartments are themselves invaded by centipedes and other vermin. In one, a neighbour constantly complains of hearing a young girl crying in the neighbouring apartment, which has been empty for close to a year. In the evening the flexible screens often get filled with static and a monotonous voice utters mysterious words. Other times, Pods or computers turn on by themselves in the middle of the night. A few of the residents have vanished. Those who remain thought these people had decided to move. But when their apartments were found to still contain their belongings it cast doubt on their minds. Meanwhile, the disappearances continue.

Terazawa Seirya of the Shi-Tenno will contact the player characters for help. He feels all the occurrences in this territory and it disturbs him greatly. He believes some insidious evil is taking shape. He asks the party to go there and find out more.

The residents of the place are clearly aware that abnormal things are taking place around them. A good many of them live in fear, impatient to find somewhere else to live. An old lady will even confess that, in her opinion, this is connected to the moving of the Aoyama cemetery. Another resident will connect it to the death (by disease) of the old man who was the caretaker of some of these buildings.

The player characters can always pay the area a little visit. They will experience the black rain, which, they are told, happen more and more frequently. It is possible to venture amid the buildings through little side streets in which the obsolete ventilation systems make a deafening racket. It is also possible to find sticky threads criss-crossing the passages. These stick upon contact and are hard to get disentangled from. However, if one person alone touches the threads at night, he may notice a shadowy shape with bright eyes and numerous chitinous limbs hanging from a wall a few metres above his head.

During the day this spider-like creature takes the appearance of an attractive young woman, Kazurashi Miki, who lives in one of the buildings. In one of the building's basements can be found the creature's nest. It is filled with sticky threads, some forming cocoons inside which the spider's unconscious victims are kept for some days before she feeds on them. Coming directly from Yomi, this creature has taken the identity and the appearance of one of its first victims to blend in among the humans. Acquiring little by little a taste for life in this world, it feels even more comfortable here since the strange events have been troubling the neighbourhood (even though she doesn't actually know anything about their precise origin).

These phenomena are the manifestation of an open breach to Yomi, through which it is, little by little, gaining a foothold in our reality. This is due to the abduction and particularly the imprisonment of the victims in the basement managed by Miki, where the souls of those unfortunate victims suffer many torments before dying. This torment has attracted evil beings to the place and made their crossing into our world much easier.

The player characters should quickly realise that the building Miki inhabits seems to be at the heart of the supernatural events. Here more than in any other place the residents complain of inconveniences related to insects, weird noises and other problem. Many among them claim to have seen weird shapes wander the vacant yard lot covered in weeds to which many of the apartments have a connecting door. Others claim they can no longer go to the basement because such a feeling of unease fills them when they try. Moreover, many regularly have nightmares where they are being hunted by hideous creatures. In any case, ever since Hidemori Nobu (the employee in charge of maintenance) disappeared there, nobody goes there anymore.

The adventure should culminate (possibly following the abduction of a party member) with a visit to the basement in question. The walls ooze a dark and sticky liquid while insects and other weird creatures skitter across the walls and the ground. A few rare light bulbs radiate diffuse light that contributes to the oppressive ambiance of the place. Noises similar to quick steps or whispers can be heard without it being possible to determine their exact origin. As they advance down a corridor with numerous doors leading to the individual basements allocated to each apartment, sticky threads appear running along the walls. They seem to lead to the door of one of the basements, one allocated to apartment 17, which belongs to Kazurashi Miki.

Inside the basement are the abductees, entangled in sticky cocoons. They are still alive, even if the place stinks of carrion. It is more than likely that Miki will not let her larder be looted in this way. She will begin by blowing the fuses in the whole of the building before attacking under the cover of darkness (for her statistics, use one for the Tsuchigumo, see the *Kuro Core Rulebook*, page 172). After it is dead, the disappearances will stop and the other phenomena will decrease in intensity and stop with time. However, the player characters may choose to stick around and seek out more of the evil spirits that have made their way across. Any improvements they can make to the well-being of the residents will help to close the bridge to Yomi all the quicker.



## The Hospital of Ghosts

At the time of the Kuro Incident and the following blackout, the medical staff of the university hospital of Jutendo had to face the malfunction of its secondary power system. Consequently, several patients that depended on the electrical equipment of the hospital perished during the few hours of power failure. These were added to the other victims of the incident.

Since then, staff members and patients have complained of strange and sometimes disturbing phenomena: children's laughter that echoes through the corridors, strange static on the screens of some devices, the noise of steps in the night, equipment malfunctions and many others. Most of the staff have had some sort of strange experience at the hospital, which has fed the many rumours that went around the establishment. They were beginning to get used to them until the arrival of Konomi Ayame.

Admitted for a routine check, this young woman collapsed shortly after her arrival. As soon as she entered the building she complained of violent headaches. Since collapsing she has remained in a comatose state that has baffled specialists. The best doctors in the hospital remain powerless faced with what they can't explain, let alone treat.

In fact, the spirit of the young woman (who is also a Potential) is currently confronting the spirits of the people that died during the blackout. This has made the weird manifestations multiply as Ayame tries to warn other people of her current state. Unfortunately, while trying to affect the running of one of the lifts, she unwittingly provoked its failure. The malfunction caused the lift to fall, killing a little girl called Saruda Noriko who was in it at the time.

Ayame is doing her best to help the lost spirits in the hospital, and most of them appreciate her aid. However, Noriko seeks only revenge. Having only come to the hospital for treatment for her respiratory problems, she is angry at her death and rightly blames Ayame. She is determined to have her revenge, and her goal is to crush Ayame's spirit in order to take possession of her body and live once more.

As this affair involves a Potential, the Furinkazan Sect asks for the player characters' help in their own inimitable way. They leave a simple plastic patient tag bracelet marked as from the Jutendo university hospital on one of the player character's doorsteps. It bears a coded identification hologram which is impossible to identify on its own. Besides the details concerning the patient identity, the hologram contains data on her state of health and the

reason for her admittance as a patient. Using one of the readers in the hospital it is possible to discover that this bracelet belonged to Saruda Noriko. Once they have Noriko's name it is easy to discover that she died a few days ago following a lift malfunction. Further investigation into the hospital might inform them of Konomi Ayame, and her comatose state that has baffled the doctors.

When they enter the establishment, the player characters will be assailed by a feeling of uneasiness, and one of them sees a little girl wearing hospital-issue pyjamas. Standing in the middle of the main reception area, she stares at him fixedly although no one else seems to notice her. She asks the player characters to protect her from "the bad lady who wants to hurt her". She is also willing to introduce herself and tell them what happened to her (at least from her perspective). This will only be the first of the supernatural manifestations the player characters will see.

The situation will come to a head with a confrontation between Ayame and Noriko. They are both capable of causing power outages, glass explosions, the activation of fire alarms and fire suppression systems and manipulating the dysfunctional surveillance system. In the resulting panic, the player characters should probably call in a specialist to allow the spirits to find rest. The spirit of the little girl will try to make the murderer Ayame disappear so as to take ownership of her physical form. After a titanic battle the young Potential will wake up, but it will remain to be seen if she is Ayame, or Noriko.

## RUMOURS

### The Awakening of the Dark

Until a few months ago the spiritual group known as "The Awakening of the Dark" was made up of only a few people. Based on old religious writings and some other, weirder, works, its members announced the date for the end of the world as 4th May, 2046. This prediction was based on their leader's dark and violent visions in which waves of pure darkness surged across the archipelago.

The leader in question is Fujizake Nori, and he is a Potential. Most of those who have heard of him consider him a madman, yet his visions are real. These visions are becoming more numerous than ever since the Kuro Incident. Nori sees faces deformed by rage or pain appear in the dark, seemingly





desperate to escape it. Since May, the group has seen a growing number of people rally to their cause, convinced by the fact that the prophecy of 4th May appears to have come true. However, Nori does not offer any solution and little hope.

Nevertheless, the group members find reassurance in gathering together since, according to them, the world as we know it is coming to an end. So, it is not rare to see a man or a woman on a street corner announcing the end of Japan and the coming of darkness. This type of statement is usually ignored by the passers-by, who take them for crazy people. However, a growing number of Japanese people start to doubt the future of their country.

Recently Nori received threatening letters demanding that he stop spreading rumours concerning the probable end of the archipelago and the fall of Shin-Edo into darkness. Even more recently, an individual posing as a member of his group tried to stab him during one of their meetings. Is it a stunt staged by the group to attract attention or a real danger? Who would want to keep Nori quiet, and why?

## A Fair Price

After collected the stolen artefacts Sorachi Yamato had given him (see Byakko on 37), Nishima Noburo (Sorachi's shatei-gashira from the Kabuki-cho special ward Yakuza) decides to use the services of an occultist to evaluate their price. Some have real powers and can be sold for something more advantageous than mere money. So, an auction is clandestinely organised. It will take place through a secure website set up for the occasion, the address of which is sent to several influential people who have the means (and perhaps the desire) to procure such artefacts. The site is accessible only to certain people; anyone else trying to get there only see a generic advertising page for a dummy travel agency.

Unaware of the source of the items, Nashima has invited Katsura Ai of Shadowplay to the auction. Recognising much of what's for sale, she asks the player characters to help her to find out who is organising the sale and, possibly, to recover the items. However, Ai's main goal is to use this clue to hunt down those who attacked her store.

During the player characters' investigations, the many auctions made directly online will reveal strange bids, such as the heart of a tengu, a weapon having belonged to an oni and the soul of a priest...

## Need for Speed

One of the great automotive innovations in Shin-Edo was the placing of optical ports along the roads inside the city. These ports wirelessly connect to the speed regulators in any vehicles, uploading data on the speed limits they must follow. The hope for fewer accidents was marred by some wise guys who discovered how to remotely manipulate this data. Some even go as far as to modify the braking instruction of less advanced vehicles whose onboard computer security is easily hacked from the photonic net. These intrusions have recently been considered the cause of several serial pileups in Roppongi quarter.

## Miracle

On the front page of every news service recently is a young woman called Segara Tamiko. Admitted to a Shin-Edo hospital with mild symptoms, she quickly found that she was pregnant. At her request, she was subjected to medical exams that confirmed her suspicions: she was indeed still a virgin. Moreover, her pregnancy is apparently progressing very quickly and, at this pace, will come to term in only one month.

As the story spread across the media channels, the young lady disappeared overnight. Some days later she appeared at Terazawa Seirya's (the Guardian of the East) home. He had been openly flirting with her (like many others) recently, and they had even spent some evenings together. Not wishing to speak of her troubles with her family (who is already well aware through the news) she went to see Terazawa, having a vague feeling he could help.

Quite annoyed at her imposition, Terazawa decides to contact the player characters so they can take care of her. Refusing at first to divulge her name, she desperately needs someone to help her. Pregnant without knowing why, she is, moreover, regularly assailed by pains but also violent and insane visions. A male voice is sometimes heard, but it addresses the baby, comforting it and encouraging it to grow up strong and well.

She will also confess, for some weeks now, that she has experienced weird and confusing dreams that included a handsome man. He sometimes revealed a deformed face with protruding bones, long white hair and eyes shining with a red light. This evil and immaterial spirit is real and has found in Tamiko a means to take corporeal form. It cares little that the young lady will lose her life in the process.



# YUKIDOMARI

*Here, everything is horrible.  
Filled with stinking ozone, ultraviolet rays,  
poisonous plants, snakes and insects.  
Everything here oozes poison.  
– Chizuru, Charisma*

## A Week of Mysteries and Disappearances

### Mokuyobi — the Day of Wood

Now the player characters know that their nature as Potentials allows them to sometimes see the Beyond and confront it. Numerous persons seem to watch over them, insisting that their destiny is written, leading them to an inevitable confrontation to save Japan from destruction. But many questions remain unanswered. Among them, the exact nature of the Kuro Incident, which will soon be revealed to them. The kami are back and the invasion from Yomi is not limited to the streets of the capital.

### Yukidomari Overview

In this next adventure, the player characters will temporarily leave the fast-paced urban landscape of the Shin-Edo megalopolis and travel to the small, isolated village of Yukidomari. This village is located in the mountains of the Yamanashi prefecture, west of the city. This relatively isolated place seems prey to disappearances and mysterious events. Supernatural manifestations will keep increasing and eventually will even affect the player characters themselves. On top of this a serial killer is on the loose that decapitates his victims and disappears with their heads. While tracking this killer the player characters will make a strange, to say the least, discovery which will allow them to discover a little more about what is behind the Kuro Incident.

A series of strange events lead the characters to gain interest in the isolated village of Yukidomari. The community has been struck by several unexplained disappearances. These manifestly supernatural apparitions and the vanishing of several inhabitants make headlines and attract the fierce interest of the media on this village that had lain forgotten for decades.

By the time the player characters hear about it, several events have already occurred. These have been reported by the press, the quality of detail, exaggeration or journalistic approach is at the convenience of the Gamemaster.

- **A Week Ago:** A monstrous man was sighted one evening in the village. He held a dog on a lead, a mastiff that looked like some form of hell hound. When the demon dog growled, a stinking smoke came from its nostrils. It was the mayor's assistant, Tomita, which crossed paths with it, from afar, while coming home from the town hall. He immediately called the village's police android, Grueber. When the android came to the place, the strange silhouette had vanished.
- **6 Days Ago:** Nigao Kuzuriko, a young woman, vanished. This agoraphobic computer expert was having, it is said, an affair with her neighbour, a married man, a labourer handicapped after a construction accident. On the evening of that day she had a fight with her lover (Adashi Iesada). Since then, as far as the villagers are concerned, she left the village. The fact that the young woman is incapable of leaving her house and that her Jeep is still in her garage has not crossed their minds. No one is looking past the supposedly secret relationship that

was taking place between the two lovebirds. As for Adashi, he fears something happened to Nigao, but he can't voice his opinion without betraying his relationship (even if it's not the secret he thinks it is). Plagued by doubt and remorse, he spends his time failing to call the police, drowning his fears in the big dirty glasses of the Drag East.

- **5 Days Ago:** Old lady Rikiya vanished. This hundred-year-old woman lived in the small home for the elderly, mostly managed by androids and supervised by a doctor and two nurses. This woman was suffering from cell degeneration, a modern and incurable disease that begins by attacking neurons but eventually deteriorates every cell in the body, ending up with the death of the patients through the liquefaction of their internal organs. Completely senile, she was beginning to enter a vegetative state. She could still move, albeit with difficulty. She disappeared one evening, a little before her nutrition injection. The android nurse immediately sounded the alarm. After the event, a police officer came to take note of Rikiya-san's disappearance and started an investigation. Polite and soft-spoken, he promised to return, but since then nothing has happened.
- **4 Days Ago:** A blood red snow fell on the village. The flakes, thick and sticky, stained the whole village with a bloody coat. This coat of snow quickly melted, but troubled the inhabitants. People sealed themselves indoors and waited for the snow to melt before venturing outside. One of the villagers suggested they tell the press, but was dissuaded by the rest of the inhabitants. That very evening, many glowing tracks were seen in the sky. One more rational observer suggested they were shooting stars, but most of the inhabitants are convinced they saw Hito-Dama, the glowing souls of the people who are soon to die. They seemed to be falling in the woods, behind the Zen temple.
- **3 Days Ago:** Another disappearance happened during a blackout that left the village without power for 37 hours. The person in question was Susan Mickners, an American writer who moved to Japan, looking for inspiration for her new detective novel. The same police officer returned (with no news on the previous case), made a more serious inquiry and promised to return with more men to continue the investigation. The writer's dwelling was sealed with police lines.

The same day, a few hours later, the snow melted a bit in places because of the rain falling from the storm. Rikiya-san's body was found on the outskirts of the village, beheaded.

- **2 Days Ago:** It was after this last event that Yukako Cho decided to call the press, to move things along and to force the police

to finally start working earnestly on these cases. However, in times as troubled as these, some disappearances and the claims of an alcoholic are often enough to attract the attention of the media, looking for new fare. After that, two vans equipped with aerials and with the logos of regional television channels arrived, determined to cover the strange events.

With the media attention, the prefect police hierarchy finally decided to take the case seriously. An inspector called Hondo Katsumi was immediately assigned to take over the case. He is a very nice young inspector who uses a lot of electronics and modern gadgets in his investigative work. The pockets of his jeans or his jacket are always filled with Pods analysing the dirt, magnifying glasses with integrated Helpsoft, and more besides.





# DRAWN TO THE VILLAGE

The player characters may be attracted to this village for several reasons. On the one hand, media coverage, even if modest (in the sense that the events in Yukidomari are not on the front page on all channels) allows them to learn of the existence of this place. Journalists will question the villagers about the strange events and each will tell his own story. In this way the player characters, might learn enough about the recent events to be intrigued. While they are already sensitive to the supernatural, the area seems to manifest an abnormally large number of supernatural occurrences.

If that still isn't enough of a reason to visit, the Gamemaster may have to use one or more of the following to push them in the right direction:

- One of them might get a call from a family member or old colleague now retired and living in the village who tells him what happened and asks for their help (see sidebar).
- The Shi-Tenno may suggest they investigate, concerned about the unusual concentration of supernatural phenomena.
- Having passed through the swimming pool (see page 54) they may also sense a strange attraction for this place. When hearing news about the place, a player character may feel a shiver along his spine or his left eye may start crying tears of blood for no apparent reason

## Getting to Yukidomari

The player characters will need to drive for nearly two hours along the high-speed highway that surrounds Shin-Edo. However, they eventually need to turn off onto bumpier minor roads. It is highly inadvisable to use the automatic pilot on these dark and winding roads. As the road reaches the village it devolves into little more than a wide forest track. Everywhere along the road the player characters are surrounded by a thick canopy of blue spruce hiding the depths of the woods.

They sometimes pass convoys made up of huge lorries driven by androids loaded with dozens of tree trunks. As they climb up the hills, snow starts falling as the day ends. Sometimes,

## Local Assistance

Susan Mickners (see page 66) is a character who may help to attract the player characters. You can also quickly replace her with one of the contacts, acquaintances, friends or family members of the player characters.

among the rows of trees, they seem to glimpse furtive, shapeless shadows that immediately disappear behind a tree. Eventually, some buildings start to appear in the headlights of their vehicle. The community looks dead and dreary. They have arrived at Yukidomari, as indicated on the rusty sign, which also shows the silhouette of a kaki (persimmon fruit).

## Arrival

The reception the player characters get when they arrive in the village will depend on their cover story. Do they appear to be a team of journalists? As tourists coming to visit the samurai tomb site or to purchase some cheap kaki? As friends or family of Susan Mickners?

By the time they get here the media frenzy has waned a bit, the events in the village having been replaced by a new story of sordid crimes in the suburbs of Osaka. Of the two news vans that arrived, one has already left. The population hopes to regain the usual quiet and expects the police to shed some light upon Rikiya's murder and Mickners' disappearance.

They may rent a room at the Drag East. Fat Sanada will welcome them courteously and may tell them about the last few eventful days the inhabitants of Yukidomari lived through. They may also find Adashi here, completely drunk. The latter, afraid of the press and not daring to go to the police, may confide in the player characters if they adopt a neutral and benevolent manner towards the villagers.



# THE DEAD END VILLAGE

*"I have no relish for the country;  
it is a kind of healthy grave."*  
– Sydney Smith

Yukidomari is a tiny community located in the mountains at the border of the Yamanashi prefecture. It has very few inhabitants, close to 1100. However, since the Kuro Incident, an increasing number of city folk have been leaving the cities and taking refuge in the country. Food is more readily available, less expensive and crime is not as serious. In these troubled times, people also wish to escape a possible war (civil or otherwise) and also get far away from the paranormal and weird phenomena whispered about in the cities. But the spirits released during the Kuro Incident are not limited to the cities and the countryside does not scare them.

The new inhabitants of this community, still few in number, suffer from quite a serious ostracism, being seen almost as invaders by the locals. That may cause tension later on, during the adventure. Indeed, the player characters are most likely to be seen as city folk.

Yukidomari means 'dead end' or 'blind alley', but the name is not a reference to its isolated location. The village gets its name from a tragic battle. The battle happened during the winter of 1559. In the conflict, the troops of a daimyo hostile to Takeda Shingen, the local chief, found themselves cornered in the village because of the snow and, unable to reach the mountain, were mercilessly wiped out. Today the community prides itself on still maintaining the tombs of these warriors. Numbering eight, these small barrows were authenticated by archaeologists in the 1930s and are an important pilgrimage destination for Japanese medieval history fans. The name also remained, because it is also the end of a road (highway 2404). The only accessible way to the village indeed ends in front of an abandoned factory.

Besides this archaeological site, Yukidomari is known for its persimmon production, a fruit also known as kaki. The village also produces some cases of umebochi (prunes prepared in salt) that it sends to the city or sells to tourists. But the persimmon is by far the more important produce. The region is surrounded by persimmon orchards with trees reaching close to ten metres high, with leaves of green or bright red. The great number of

these farms allows a large and important harvest of this national fruit. The village also sells its produce to the neighbouring capital. Since the produce was once exported to China, Laos and the United States, sales have decreased considerably since the blockade. This drop in the economy has already seen the closure of two farms, unable to face the crisis gripping the country.

In the 2020s a factory was set up that was supposed to increase production by automating many simple tasks using rudimentary robots. The road was expanded to reach it. Unfortunately, KakiGold the company that begun the project, quickly went under and the plant closed just as quickly after only a year and a half of activity.


Finally, on the outskirts of the village, built on the 18th century, a small Zen monastery called a Taisen welcomes those wishing to retire for a moment from the world of men and taste serenity in a peaceful environment.

## Isolation, Snow and Withered Old Men

The village is made up of 1100 inhabitants and a majority of these are elderly people. About 60% of the people are over 65. Rural depopulation isn't really responsible. Rather, it is the plummeting birth rates and the serious increase in life expectancy. Recently, the village started to attract some city folk, but the numbers are still too low to compensate for the ageing of the population. With more than 50 inhabitants having passed their 100th birthday, Yukidomari may resemble a private community for retired people, like some in the USA. It is almost a home for the elderly to enjoy the fresh air in the mountains. Young people are rare, very rare. They make up the sparse ranks of those able to work the kaki and prune farms so they might survive. There are more service androids than thirty year olds. Obviously, the high age average influences life in the village. So quiet it seems to be in a perpetual torpor, this community has no cultural life outside a tiny establishment with some old pachinko games, relics from the 1990s. The municipal team also organises some ikebana contests in the spring. The local school closed its doors long ago.

Here's a gallery of inhabitants, notables and personalities that might interact with the player characters:

- **Yamaga Gombei** is the village mayor. He's a nearly senile old man, nearing 90 and has been the village mayor since 1997, having succeeded his father. He is a well-to-do man because his family owns many orchards. When the economy



was flourishing, the family invested in real estate and now Gombei owns almost one house in ten. He runs the village like a minor daimyo, and he behaves as such. Half deaf despite a modern hearing aid, he will, for instance, demand that the player characters have the courtesy to presenting themselves before him and tell him the reasons for their coming to Yukidomari. He will send such an 'invitation' with his assistant, Misaro Tomita, a retired solicitor who loves the bottle too much. He has been part of the community for more than 40 years and doesn't move without his crutches.

- **Sanada Hokusai** is the village shopkeeper. Comparatively young (57 years old), obese and bearded, he runs the only supply store. He 'employs' a few robots, old, rather rusty models who sometimes deliver merchandise not matching the order, or even nothing at all. This little shop overlaps a bar where the regulars meet. Decorated like a Western bar (or rather the way Sanada imagines how a Texan bar looks), the Drag East is a dusty establishment, disgustingly dirty and with such limitlessly kitsch decoration that it is hard to take it all in. On the other hand, he serves rather large glasses of booze for a price defying all competition.
- **Yukako Cho** is a doctor specialising in geriatrics. She settled in Yukidomari some 15 years ago. She doesn't talk much about her past and her reasons for settling in this godforsaken hole. In fact she doesn't want it known that, some years ago, in her old job in Shin-Edo, she incorrectly worded a command to a nurse android. The latter, following her instructions, involuntarily killed three people. Declared legally responsible, she had to resign and do her best to be forgotten. Here she has numerous patients and always looks overwhelmed. She has learned numerous secrets from her patients. While they took a while to trust her, eventually her patients started to regularly reveal little pieces of gossip. So far she respects doctor-patient confidentiality. At least until she has drunk a few glasses of wine at the Drag East (her only means of dealing with her life here).
- **Hounon-Su** is the monk in charge of the small Zen monastery on the outskirts of the village. He is a recently ordained young man clearly in his prime. He decided to settle in Yukidomari to avoid the risk of being tempted by the vices of the outside world and to find peace. Most of the time he stays in the monastery where he is alone, except for the occasional presence of some trainees. Busy chopping wood, meditating or sweeping, he is polite and welcoming. He can also be found at Sanada's supply store once a week, when he comes into town driving his old Mitsubishi to purchase the supplies and food he can't produce in the monastery.

- **Grueber** is the android in charge of security, as the village is too small to keep a full-time law enforcement officer. However, the inhabitants fear the crime in the capital might spill over here (even though it is 216 kilometres away), so they asked the municipal council to invest in a police force and organised a collection to make up the rest. They ordered Grueber from the Goshimata Firm, a company specialising in android security guards. Making its rounds 24/7, Grueber is a blond android with eyes of steel close to 1.90m tall with a perfect US Marine-style haircut (imagine Dolph Lundgren in a bright blue petrol pump attendant costume). Grueber is a Yojimbo class model (see the *Kuro Core Rulebook* page 137) programmed to monitor the inhabited area. Well-liked by the population and helpful but a bit stiff, Grueber is pretty useless as a crime fighter, although it is good at helping a grandmother to her feet after she has slipped on a patch of ice. The supernatural events will disrupt its programming and leave it helpless. Also, it is here to serve as a red herring. It mistrusts Inspector Hondo, thinking he is here because of its failure to keep the peace in the village. It will also be distant (even more so than your classic military android) with the player characters, because it reacts according to programmed criteria telling him to distrust strangers to the community. Such behaviour will doubtlessly attract attention, making it look like a dysfunctional android. You can bet the player characters will suspect a rogue machine. While that is actually the case, as we will see, Grueber is innocent.

## The Cephalophage

The morning after the arrival of the player characters the village is again stricken with panic. The player characters are awakened by a clamouring from a gathering of agitated people, speaking in loud voices. A second corpse has been discovered: Susan Mickners. Her body was found in the municipal swimming pool, emptied for the winter. It was also beheaded, the cut clear and precise. The edges of the wound have even cauterised as if the head was removed using a high temperature cutting wire. Inspector Hondo will analyse the body and determine that the beheading was done with a laser. Although this would indicate a very powerful laser, from a machine so heavy it is hardly transportable.

The inspector does everything to contain the information and threatens the remaining journalists, preventing them from revealing this macabre discovery. He absolutely doesn't want that the whole country getting into a frenzy over the heinous events taking place in this accursed village. Nevertheless, he lets his bosses know and labels this serial killer the 'Cephalophage'.





The weather today is badly overcast, making the light very dim. The sun hardly pierces the thick clouds, making it clear the weather is not going to get any better. Seeing this, most villagers no longer feel the need to get mixed up in this affair and try to lock themselves indoors. A few have already packed and are getting ready to leave the village before the potential storm.

## The News Crew

While one of the news crews has given up and gone home (mainly due to the unhelpful villagers) the other has remained. The player characters might get to know them as the only other outsiders (apart from the inspector). However, if they are masquerading as journalists the news crew will be unwilling to share too much with rivals and may quickly realise they are not who they say they are.

The news crew work for a small station called 'Pulse News' and is made up of four members. They are all staying at the Drag East sharing two rooms (the men in one and the women in the other) which none of them are happy about, as they don't get on with their roommate:

**Akiyama Hanako (Reporter):** Attractive and charming but horribly self-centred once you get to know her. Insists on having things her way.

**Maki Noburo (Cameraman):** The most experienced of the crew, older and more cynical. Just wants to get the work done and go home.

**Ito Megumi (Sound/Editing technician):** Young and hard working but often sidelined. Considers Noburo a mentor, but can't really stand the others.

**Oshiro Youta (Runner):** The trainee, not really any use but eager to please. Only on the team because he comes from a wealthy family.

## THE CULPRIT

In the decommissioned factory, an old abandoned labourer robot has become newly animated with a reddish light. Little by little electricity reanimates its old rusty limbs. This robot is scared, cold and in pain. It seeks refuge in a better world, a softer world. It looks for the gentle comfort of sleep. What better than to nestle in the hollow of a pleasant dream? But how to dream when you're a machine? Reality is unbearable to it. So it seeks to dream. For that, it tries to connect to the world of dreams. Where might it find a link to this world? Human beings of course.

The robot desperately tries to connect to its victim's heads. This is, of course, a wasted effort. Its connections only rummage around inside the skulls, turning the brains into crimson goo with greyish flecks. But the horrors it commits are not entirely without purpose, as they attract monsters and other apparitions.

In fact it is not entirely a robot. It is also an oni who crossed the border into our world. However it did it so incarnating in the first thing to hand, a labour machine. Completely disoriented, overwhelmed and lost, it wanders, haggard, looking to escape the pain of an existence trapped inside a metal box. Its torment shines in the darkness like a bright candle, attracting a whole legion of creatures draw to its power. Thus the oni has attracted the creatures that torment the village and triggered the snow of blood, but it has also attracted the player characters.

## Involving the player characters

It is not only the player character's nature as Potentials that has attracted them here. Whether they were drawn by the news story or a chance to help a friend, it is actually the suffering of the oni that has drawn them here. However, just arriving at the village will not automatically involve them in the events going on, so fate is about to play a hand.

There are three ways they might find themselves investigating the strange events. Firstly, when they arrive, the discovery of the corpse should get them involved, especially if the victim is one of the player characters' contacts. They may hit it off with Hondo Katsumi (the inspector) who feels alone and is under a lot of pressure to solve the case. He will be very interested in knowing more about this second victim. The inhabitants, mistrustful at first, will gradually become more talkative. As they become more frightened, they will risk confiding in the

player characters. Even if some will be resolutely mute, others will come to them for help, like, for instance, Adashi.

Secondly, as soon as they arrive, the weather changes radically. The clouds prepare to drop tons of snow, blocking all retreats and isolating the village with the storm. This bad weather also cuts off a good portion of any communications.

Finally, they, themselves, by their very nature, are going to interfere with the outbreak of supernatural elements at work in the region. This supernatural contact will also make their bodies start to mutate horribly.

## Demonic Phylogeny

The player characters, as Potentials on their way to 'ascension', are indeed getting attuned with the supernatural forces emerging in the area. It is not by chance that they have been attracted to this godforsaken village. Their mystical strength is going to provoke a confrontation with the evil emanations issuing from the breach opened during the Kuro Incident.

This confrontation initially takes the form of horrible demonic mutations appearing on the characters. They initially appear quite minor and grow to nightmarish proportions. We provide four examples below, but the Gamemaster should add as many frightening and tainted deformities as she has players. Take care that they are not completely incapacitating, physically or socially. Indeed, a player character transformed in to a beast-man with the head of an oni will have trouble in continuing the investigations.

The Gamemaster should also take care not to make the deformities seem too concerning until the snows come down and the village is cut off. While there is little any hospital can do for the player characters, given the option they may decide to leave the village to seek help as soon as they realise how horrific their afflictions are.

The cure for these mutations lies in vanquishing the oni which will disperse these horrid energies. In the meantime the monk may give them a gift that will reduce the pain. But they'll remain mutants for the duration of the adventure, their bodies particularly susceptible to the spiritual corruption around the village. The Gamemaster should make them suffer from these handicaps, disgust them, but not make their life impossible. They must be able to continue their enquiries, although the mutations should frighten them and make their task that much harder.

### Mutation 1 – Neck Wound

This begins with one of them getting a sore spot on the back of the neck which will itch more and more. Initially this will be a minor thing. You may tell the player his character may have been bitten by a bug in the middle of the night. Considering the state the rooms in the Drag East are in, it will not be surprising. But the redness will become a kind of lesion that will soon suppurate and smell very badly. Finally, after several hours, whenever the player character turns his head to see something somewhere, he will hear his dry skin crack and feel a terrible pain in the back of his head.

Not only has the wound opened up painfully, but inside is a twisted mouth with stained yellow teeth. If he concentrates a little the player character can speak with this mouth, but only in grunts and disturbing guttural sounds. If the player character is perverse enough, the mouth may also be used to eat with, but it will spit out everything that isn't raw meat.







### Mutation 2 – Burning Hands

Another character will feel his hands getting hotter. An intense pain will run through his fingers as if his blood is boiling. If they place their hands in the snow for a moment, little by little, they recover some tactile sensitivity. However, the pain continues to get worse, eventually becoming intolerable. Some hours later their fingers become twisted, the nails fall off and the skin begins to ooze with greyish, sticky goo. Anyone he touches will feel a stinging heat and soon develops a kind of black mark similar to skin cancer. Any plants he touches will quickly wither, filled with dark stains. In short, his hands will corrupt everything he touches (as long as it is alive – androids are unaffected).

### The Snow

During the player character's investigations, don't forget to make regular use of the snowstorm. The sky is frighteningly grey; snow falls almost ceaselessly once they arrive and lulls are rare. Make trouble for the player characters as soon as they leave the village roads, if they are not equipped with an appropriate vehicle, or, at least, one with chains. Moreover, the storm jams all signals, prevents the receiving of TV channels, and limits access to the NeoWeb. The latter is often jammed, distorted and unreliable.

Power often fails, darkening the whole village. This might initially be annoying but becomes more frightening as the supernatural becomes more terrifying. Only the lights from the nursing home keeps lit, and the homes of some more foresighted inhabitants who invested in alternative energies or power generators.

The snow limits visibility, making everything white and foggy. The roads and paths are also very slippery, making it hard for player characters to keep their feet. Venturing outside will leave them soaking wet, especially as they are always placing their feet in grey, cold puddles. The wind muffles any other sound and keeps whistling in their ears, freezing them in the process.

It is also very cold and they will need to wrap up warm to go outside. The temperature is not excessively low, although it is snowing, but the wind will soon freeze the unwary. Note that these are not really Siberian temperatures and, unless one sleeps on the street, one doesn't risk dying of hypothermia. It is simply very uncomfortable for the player characters, who are probably used to warmer temperatures and a more urban lifestyle.

### Mutation 3 – Stomach Ache

This mutation might seem less unpleasant, but only in comparison to the others. The player character begins to suffer from stomach pains. As these get worse he eventually feels something climb up his oesophagus and into his mouth and seek escape. It will be a big, hairy spider mired in foul secretions. After this the player character will regularly be stricken with hiccups and will vomit a disgusting arachnid. The spider, if not stepped on, will escape...

### Mutation 4 – Swollen Tongue

A player character will see his tongue bloat and turn several shades of violet. Exuding an unbearable stench, the bloated tongue will render speech, feeding and breathing hard for the player character. Additionally, from time to time the player character will not be able to stop himself from saying rude and hurtful things, as if this infernal tongue was speaking in his place.

## INVESTIGATING THE VILLAGE

Beset by snow and growing ailments, the player characters have little option but to delve deeper into the mystery of the village. Little by little they will discover the different clues and details that will bring them to the adventure finale. Eventually they should be drawn to the factory, although the Gamemaster should take care not to railroad them to it.

### The Affair

If the player characters go near the house of Nigao Kuzuriko, Adashi's mistress, they will discover, with an Above Average (16) Perception (PER) check, some signs of a struggle, namely some smashed items. They appear to be the contents of the young lady's bag, spread over her front porch. The objects are crushed, including her nanoinhalator (she suffered from asthma). It takes tremendous strength to crush such an object like a pancake. There are also little rust fragments on the ground, on the snow. On the other hand there are no footprints, this is because the porch and the paths leading to it are covered with slabs (in the Japanese fashion) which are regularly cleared by the maintenance services.





## Footsteps by the Nursing Home

Another clue may be found near the nursing home where old lady Rikiya vanished. There are indeed some footsteps in the crushed and frozen bushes. The tracks are huge and very deep, as if the person was a true colossus. If they convey this information to Hondo Katsumi, the inspector may work on this clue using all his gadgets. He will arrive at the weird conclusion that the person must be 2.30m tall, weigh more than 500 kilos and is wearing shoes with metal soles, so the suspect's profile couldn't be more disconcerting. If a player character is an experienced investigator and has the same kind of gadgets (or skill with the net if they can access it during one of the storm's rare lulls) they will reach the same conclusions.

Thus if the assailant uses a giant laser, reaches a height of more than two metres while weighing half a ton, leaving traces of rust, you may wager the player characters will consider a robot. Maybe, from then on, they'll think of visiting the factory at the end of the village. If it is too soon at this stage, they should be led to a false track. Grueber is perfect for that.

Grueber is heavy enough because it is a combat android, with a skeleton made of a dense composite metal. Its shoes are military issue soldier boots with steel toecaps. While it certainly doesn't weigh 500 kilos, Hondo explains he made some rough calculations and cannot guarantee a very accurate weight. What makes Grueber even more suspect is its mistrust of Hondo and the player characters. It believes the inspector is here because it failed in its duty. It will be difficult with the player characters because its programming tells it that any stranger to the village must be a suspect coming to disrupt the local peace. In short, it will do its best to be uncooperative, as it believes the player characters are the most likely suspects.

Thus, if they decide to investigate Grueber, at first it will be nowhere to be found. In fact, it is on a mission, helping the mayor's wife repair her car's engine, some kilometres from the couple's dwelling place. While they're looking for the android, the player characters might stumble into another encounter such as the hell hound (see below) or hear that Hounon-Su has had some trouble. In fact, the latter has finally managed to send a mail to Sanada, who contacts the player characters explaining that the monk seems to be besieged by monstrous creatures (see **Chanoyu**).

## The Hell Hound

This encounter allows the Gamemaster to introduce another oni attracted here by the Cephalophage's suffering. The incident should show the player characters that not all oni are necessarily just monstrous creatures hungering for human flesh. Some have other goals and not all are uncontrollable brutes.

One evening, while they are going to visit one of the notables of the village or returning to the Drag East, they turn around a corner they find themselves face to face with the hell hound and its owner. The hound is on a lead held by a man whose eyes are completely white. The man doesn't speak or move, and is clearly not the 'master'.

The hound will be menacing but not aggressive, even if its red and yellow eyes and the smoke coming out of its nostrils are scary enough. It will immediately feel the nature of the player characters and will try to talk to find out why they are here. Its role is to show the player characters that not everything is black and white and not all oni are bloodthirsty monsters. After all the confrontations that have taken place before, this may be a bit unnerving.

The hound is not an exposition resource, but it may mention the Yomi-No-Kuni and tell them of the breach opened during the Kuro Incident. Nevertheless, its point of view is that of an oni. So, all it can say is that it has seen an opportunity to escape its invisible jail. It has walked the world ever since, finding out what humans have become. It was quietly watching humans in an abandoned temple when it dreamed of the head-hunting creature and it felt its pain exploding in its skull, its frightening scream and its claustrophobia. The hound came to this area to find out more about it.

It will reveal no more details. Sometime during the conversation, the 'zombie' holding the lead will issue a moan that will get louder and louder. The hound then will end the conversation and leave the player characters. It will then say, by way of farewell:

*"Today I've used my tongue to reveal secrets. Tomorrow I may use my fangs to offer a different lesson."*



## Hell Rain

Introduce this event when you feel the pace of the adventure slowing. It starts to rain. What falls is a kind of liquid snow. But quickly the player characters sense an odour like that of burning plastic. Little by little their clothes start to smoke, which should convince them this is some kind of acid rain. Then a little boy comes running to them, already very seriously burned, struggling to get rid of his parka, which is already melting over his body.

Even if the player characters intervene swiftly, the boy will not survive his injuries. His death will cause panic in the whole community. Everybody will wait inside until the end of the rain, although it will only last for a few minutes. As the snow still makes it impossible to leave the village, the inhabitants will eventually listen to the calls for calm from the player characters or from some other important member of the village, like Doctor Yukako or Sanada.

The acid rain causes 2D6+2 damage per turn in which a character is exposed. If he protects himself, the damage is reduced by the armour (which is attacked by the corrosion) or the shelter (which may also suffer damage).

## Grueber's End

When the player characters eventually catch up to the security android they find it completely crushed, its skull pierced as if with heavy drills. In pain, and about to cease functioning, the android doesn't seem to see them, but it may reveal to them it was called to come to the help of a woman living on this street. While Grueber was answering the call, it noticed a suspicious prowler and tried to apprehend the individual. After these revelations, Grueber will cease to function.

If it is disassembled and its memory examined, the player characters will be able to download video files of its last memories. The prowler appears to be a shadowy mass more than two metres high, with four thick arms, carrying a woman. With two of those arms it seized Grueber like a rag doll. One of its hands gets closer and then Grueber's vision blurs and stops completely.

If the player characters are carrying a computer or a Pod, they may attempt to clear the image of the murder and kidnap, but it will be a waste of time. The woman is Honda Shimitsuko, a young woman living with her mother. The latter will confirm that her daughter disappeared. Unfortunately, the assailant's trail is cold and the weather has covered any tracks.

## Chanoyu

During their enquiries, the player characters may hear about the monastery on the village outskirts. Interestingly, the monk who runs the place, Hounon-Su, has not been to the village for some time now. In fact, not since the strange phenomena started. The inhabitants, especially Sanada (who sells the monk supplies) will mention the fact they haven't seen his vehicle in quite a while.

There is a good reason for Hounon-Su's absence: Taisen monastery is besieged by Hito-Dama, the spirits of the dead. These fiery creatures are like will o' the wisps, but move in spasms and convulsions. They are aggressive and decided to feed on the poor monk. The latter sought sanctuary in the monastery, a holy place that prevents the Hito-Dama from seizing him.

If the player characters have kept the sabre and the pistol from the previous adventure (see page 56) they will have no trouble clearing a path through the creatures. Facing a tenacious assault like the one from the player characters, eventually the spirits will scatter away from the place, and set out to feed on some woodland animals. The Gamemaster should run this as a small, dynamic combat. It should not place the player characters in any real danger. But they will have to work hard and chase down some little flame demons to get them to run. There are a few dozen Hito-Dama and they will attack in groups of three to five. They make crackling noises as they dive at their victims and cause burning bites.

Hounon-Su will be grateful for this rescue. Like the player characters, he has dreams that he considers premonitions (although he is not a Potential) and, most of all, he has gathered a lot of information on the Kuro Incident. Indeed, against all expectation, the monk has a working connection to the NeoWeb and has collected impressive research about all the phenomena resulting from the incident. His dreams have confirmed most of his hypotheses.

The disabilities and other mutations afflicting the player characters do not scare him. Even if, at first, he is surprised, he remains unfazed and will even offer some blessed amulets to relieve them of their burden. These stone amulets with engraved ancient kanji ease the pain, even if they do not make the mutations disappear.

This is THE scene for you, the Gamemaster, to deliver some concrete and important information about the Kuro Incident.

During this scene Hounon-Su will offer key details on what really happened on 4th May, 2046. Create some ambiance. They are in a lost village, isolated in the mountains, surrounded by fiery creatures while a grey snow is falling. In a very clean room with a dark floor, after a tea ceremony, the monk speaks, showing the events he mentions on a flexible screen. He has several press cuttings, photos, engravings showing oni and encyclopaedia articles, all of which detail weird creatures that appear one after another on the screen.

For him there is no doubt. Jigoku, the Yomi-No-Kuni, in a nutshell the place many popular beliefs call Hell, has been opened by the Kuro Incident. Hounon-Su has the opinion that it was a new Kamikaze, a Wind of the Gods, that protected the archipelago from the Panasiatic Federation missile.

Unfortunately, this rescue from the detonation wasn't without consequences. This intervention by the kami has torn the invisible veil that kept away the creatures of Yomi and prevented them from invading the world. Thankfully, this is only a small breach, struggling to grow, but it is large enough to allow the oni to cross over and torment humans. That's his explanation as to how Japan was miraculously protected. It also explains the emergence of these weird phenomena, and of the gruesome murders and other sordid and often unexplained crimes.

On the other hand, he doesn't exactly know the role of the player characters or what it means to be a Potential. If the player characters confide in him, mentioning their dreams, their presence on a list and everything around them since the Kuro Incident, the monk will be unable to answer. He doesn't know anything about the player characters' part in this great chessboard and prefers to say nothing rather than offer any hypothesis that may endanger future events. Thus he will remain silent while sipping his tea.

At dawn, the Hito-Dama will be weakened enough by the light for the player characters and the monk to attempt a sortie and escape, in their vehicle or Hounon-Su's.

### Missing the Vital Clue

If the player characters never visit the monk, and this important scene never happens, do not hesitate to have the hell hound they've already encountered give them this information. With obviously another point of view, the creature will mention the tearing of the prison, its escape and the role of the kami in the Kuro Incident.







## A New Victim

While the player characters investigate, the killer has not been idle. The morning after the monk or the hound made their revelations, a new disappearance is noticed. The missing person is Natsu Tadaaki, a 73 year-old, retired man. The player characters will immediately hear about it because it's what everybody's talking about. His wife filed the disappearance only very recently with the investigating officer.

Moreover, if the player characters investigate this new disappearance, they are likely to cross paths with Hondo Katsumi, the investigating officer. The latter will not be particularly inclined to confide the findings of his inquiry, but will not be all that hostile. He will even warm up to the player characters if they have some clues they're willing to share.

By questioning the missing man's wife, Natsu Hana, the player characters will learn that her husband had taken his retirement a little while ago. He used to work at the assembly lines, often starting very early in the morning. As he had done that all his life, he had kept the habit of getting up before dawn, around 4am, eat his breakfast and then take a walk for about an hour, before returning to read the morning paper. At that time he would invariably fall asleep, his cup of tea by his side and the paper fallen on his knees.

If the player characters ask for details, Natsu Hana may tell them her husband would often take his walk near the abandoned factory. It was a way for him to remember the time when he was working at that very place. He used to be a team leader there, before the factory suddenly closed down a year and a half after it opened.

Now the player characters should have a complete enough picture to lead them to take a look at the factory. If the player characters have not yet thought about going, they might need a nudge from the Gamemaster. They may find an image that was captured by the late Grueber has revealed a clue now it has been fully processed. The analysis is complete and the silhouette definitely appears to be a kind of multi-armed giant robot, its chest decorated with a symbol. After some research, the player characters will find out it is the logo of KakiGold, the company that had opened the factory for kaki processing. It lies at the end of the main road just on the edge of the village.

## THE MONOLITH OF DREAMS

This is the final scene of the adventure. The player characters should leave the village and go to the end of the main road. It ends in a roundabout with two exits, one towards the village (from which the player characters are coming from) and another towards the decommissioned factory. The path is overgrown with brambles and other weeds that the snow has not managed to completely cover.

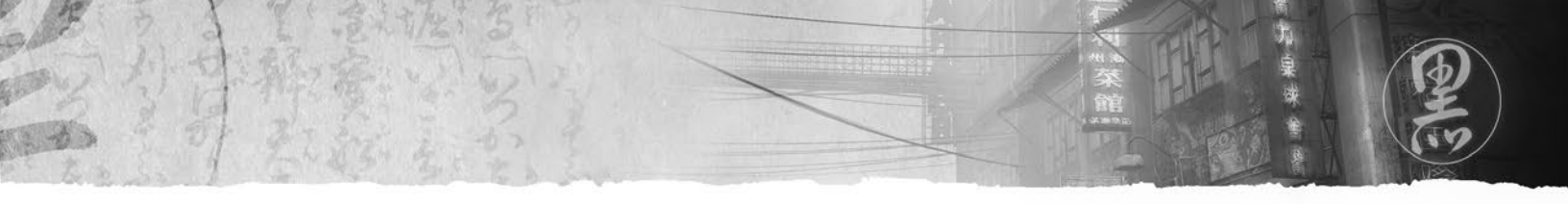
The factory is made up of several structures. Three buildings (of which only the rusty iron frames remain) were warehouses, which surround a larger building on which some metal wall plates remain. This is the building of the kaki processing line. In the courtyard there are three abandoned and stripped lorries. Everything has a rusty and dirty orange colour. The air leaves an unpleasant taste of iron in the mouth. The snow here is stained with dirty water, even if nobody seems to have walked on it.

However, some tracks can be made out in the snow, similar to those already seen, huge and deep. They lead to the largest of the buildings. This building is a good 20 metres high and is made up of metal plates riveted to each other and supported by a steel girder structure. There are many doors, all ajar. The company logo remains, mounted like a coat of arms, representing a kaki chewed on the side (you can see the teeth marks). Also, the KakiGold logo is still hanging over the main entrance, but several letters have fallen.

## Inside the Factory

Inside there are assembly lines, sizing machines, and more besides. Everything is corroded, and any flat surfaces (such as the sorting tables) are covered in dust. Weeds surround the feet of the machines. There is no snow inside, only moisture trickling down the walls where sometimes you can discern barely legible safety instructions.

The ambiance of the place is heavy and oppressive. The sound of water falling on the machines, the streams flowing on the floor, the bursts of wind that rock the building, shake it or make it crack, should all add to the player characters' unease. Moreover, their mutations are very painful. They seem to react to the place. Spiders escape from the walls, running down to the basement, their mouths issuing frightening sounds...



The tracks continue into the muddy ground of the place. These tracks lead to the factory's basement. Indeed, they lead to the cage of a heavy lift serving the three floors of the building. The lift is stuck on the upper floor, but the basement level is only three metres down. At the bottom the steel is twisted and has traces of impact, as if something very heavy has been thrown at it many times. Indeed, it's the robot jumping down from the first floor.

## The Basement

It is very dark in the basement. While there is no more daylight to light the player characters' way, there is a dull and sickly greenish light. The noise of the wind has also been replaced by a heavy buzzing, like the sound of some huge mechanical insect. A long central corridor connects several storage spaces, now empty. Only some local creatures live in the place, and the player characters' visit will disturb some rodents or make a few bats flutter out in a panic.

Little by little, while the player characters get used to the weird light that seems to pulse from the walls (made of concrete in this level), they hear regular beeps echo from ahead. The beeps seem to come from one of the rooms at the end of the corridor. It is the robot that emits them. It is a very rudimentary android (dating from the 2020s) that was used to carry fruit crates. It received its instructions through a connection, a metal digital outlet coming out of the fingers of its left hand, which connected it to a computer. It is over two metres tall and has four arms.

The robot is covered in rust, but its original colour must have been blue. Standing immobile at the centre of the room, it holds a decomposing human head in one of its huge hands with the fingers of another hand resting in the half exploded skull. The other two hands each hold another human head, after the manner of a particularly gory and mechanical Hindu deity. Around it there are many human and animal corpses, all similarly decapitated.

When the player characters enter the room, the robot seems not to react. Make them roll Dexterity (DEX) (plus Athletic or Deception: Sneaking) several times, with increasing difficulty, in order to create tension. As soon as one of them fails his roll, his character steps on some debris, a piece of glass or some such, that cracks loudly under his foot. Immediately, LEDs light up on the top of the robot's oval skull and two aerials rise up as if to protect it. Its sole blood red eye turns toward the player characters. It removes its fingers from the skull of its victim, and delicately places it on the floor along with the others it holds.

As it was designed to just issue simple words, its speech is broken. Its voice varies in intensity, like a radio almost out of batteries. The player characters may be surprised that it sounds sad and hurt rather than angry or bloodthirsty.

*"What are you doing here? Who are you? Are you here to deliver me from my torment? Oh, merciless kami, have I not suffered enough already? When will this cruel farce end?"*

If they do not force it to defend itself the robot will explain to the player characters that it escaped its prison during the Kuro Incident. Once it had been an oni, an ogre, and proudly tormented greedy, envious and evil humans. You should have seen it on the battlefields, helping cruel samurai to butcher helpless villagers, feeding on blood and human flesh. But all that stopped when it and its fellows were thrown into prison. Ah, hateful kami.

It wanted to leave that infernal jail by any means. So when the breach opened, it plunged into the tear left by the Kuro Incident.

But then it landed inside this robot. Stuck inside this box of cold, inanimate iron. It tried to leave, but it was impossible to escape this body. Suffering from a thousand pains, like being crushed inside a steel coffin that was getting narrower and narrower, it had to find an alternative, an escape. At least in its prison it could dream. But here its corporeal shell denied it that avenue of escape. It even refused to allow it to cease to exist.

This is why it tried to "seize other people's dreams", trying to build a gateway through which it could escape. Venturing at night into the village, it found isolated people. It would capture them and take them to its den, trying to retrieve their dreams from their heads.

Its pain has left mystical traces that are so visible that many other escapees tried to find them to congregate.

It does not recognise the player characters as beings from the Yomi-No-Kumi. It has little idea where they came from, but Hell is not their home. On the contrary, it vaguely feels the hand of the kami in their fates.

Against all expectations, there will be no final confrontation; the robot is too worn out to attempt combat, and most of all it doesn't see what good that would do. It will only ask the player characters to deactivate it by removing its batteries (it couldn't do it itself due to a priority directive in its programming) so it can finally find oblivion.



## Torment Released

If the player characters grant the robot's request, its lights go off one by one, and the metal buzzing ceases. The greenish light from the walls disappears. Outside, the sky clears a bit. It still snows a little, but the ambiance is no longer the same. Almost in that same instant the player characters start feeling better. When the android's system stops completely, their mutant stigmata quickly begin to disappear, leaving behind only barely discernible scars.

As for the monstrous creatures haunting the region, their magnet having ceased its attraction, they begin to disperse and stop harassing the village. They don't all simply vanish, but instead find something new to interest them elsewhere. Soon the road becomes passable and the player characters can return to Shin-Edo. If the villagers liked them and they forged friendships, they may even take some kaki boxes with them. Even if they don't particularly like the fruit, it can be sold for a tidy sum in the markets.

Now the player characters have a partial explanation for what went on in the Kuro Incident. But they are still in the dark about their part and where their special blood marker comes from...



## NPCS

### The Hito-Dama

#### Characteristics

DEX 2	STR 1	STA 1	REF 3
INT 1	PER 2	CHA 1	WIL 1

#### Secondary Characteristics

HIT 15	SW 5	DT -5	
DEF 14	REA 3	ACT 2	MOV 2

#### Skills

##### Combat Skills

- Hand-to-hand 2
- Burning hands and fangs 3

##### General Skills

- Athletics
- Dodge 3
- Jumping 3

#### Powers

Horror 1, Phoenix, Natural weapon: flaming teeth (1D6).

Insubstantiality (special): As their bodies are made of fire, halve the damage they receive. They may damage any flammable weapon that attacks them.

### The Murdering Oni

For this robot monster statistics are useless. On the one hand, it is not desirable that the player characters confront it, and, in any case, any combat with it is doomed from the start. It may not have many electric power resources to use, but it is still an oni incarnated in a massive construction machine. It is far above the current abilities of the player characters. At least, for the moment...



# CONTINUING THE DAY OF WOOD

The player characters are now up to their necks in the supernatural, but at least they have allies. The Shi-Tenno and Furizakan Sect can be a great help facing what is coming for them. They have also learned a little more about the real impact of the Kuro Incident, and just how powerful the spirit energies that have been released can be. More importantly, their encounter with the oni tells them that not all the spirits causing chaos are irredeemably evil. Some are misguided, confused or even frightened.

So in the adventures following Yukidomari, the player characters might encounter more such spirits. Instead of just trying to vanquish them, the player characters might learn how to communicate with them and understand them. Each encounter will bring them greater insight as to the goals and psyche of these strange beings.

As they delve deeper into the spirit world, they may also learn more of the community that already exists. Sorcerers, Occulttech engineers and a host of strange folk inhabit a spiritual underground community led by people like Domino (see Tsukurigoto, page 86). The Gamemaster might begin introducing such characters, as both potential allies and enemies as the campaign begins to move to its endgame. But they will have to be careful; such folk have very odd agendas and might prove as fickle and untrustworthy as they are mysterious. This goes double for the ones that smile the most.

## Ekirei

Shin-Edo's harbour is still the most important in the world. It has a massive community made up of a variety of people who make their living from the sea. Here can be found labourers, fishermen, offices, leisure areas and huge barges that ferry folk out to Kaijin. The blockade has caused the capital's harbour heavy financial losses, the foreign ships forming an impassable zone just beyond Japanese territorial waters.

This vast port area, charged with iodine and filled with both ancient buildings and the most recent franchises, is rife with potential plots for the player characters. This is especially the case where the exhausting work of the sailors has given way to poverty and idleness.

Indeed, a crime may very well attract their attention, by way of Jiro, the Shi-Tenno or some information found in a NeoWeb forum covering both paranormal cases and the latest risqué underwear of the singer Stardust Niwa. It appears that some corpses have been found in a pharmaceutical bioengineering lab located in the harbour: Karakasa Corporation. Ten employees of this modest-sized company were found in a state of advanced decay, their bodies desiccated as if all the fluid had been sucked out from them. Moreover, every one of them carried germs from many extinct and current diseases, such as pneumonia, black plague or even syphilis.

Initial investigations have found that a glass in one of the lab areas seems to have been broken, which might explain the deaths as the effects of some biovirus, even if no traces were detected. The police only discovered traces of unknown human DNA, proving the presence of possibly test subjects or other non-registered researchers inside the room, which has also been damaged by gunfire and violent blows. Rumours of an occult nature concerning the acts of hungry Kappa have spread through many hoaxes dropped into many email inboxes.

If the player characters investigate the perimeter of Karakasa Corporation (which uses a logo showing a smirking rice paper umbrella) they can get acquainted with Okkamoto Ikku, a drunk dockworker. Ikku will explain that he saw four creatures with glistening skin getting out of the water the day of the murder. Even if he had drunk a lot of sake and beer, he remembers clearly having seen them entering the laboratory through the back door. He didn't see anything else as he fell into a recycling bin under the weight of fatigue "and worries, because, you know, nothing is simple now with all this shit".

Other witnesses may confirm the existence of these four swift and stealthy shapes that disappeared into the city after having committed their crimes. With the help of their contacts and some security or computer skills, the player characters may also find out that Karakasa Corporation was, researching 'unlisted' diseases. The creatures Futakuch Onna (a two-mouthed woman) and Rokurokubi (yoki with elongated necks) will be mentioned, but described as manifestations of possession and not natural diseases. Such possession/infection leaves victims with a second jaw, a third eye in the back of the head, an endless neck and so on. A serum that is supposed to cure this kind of 'virus' and financed by one Camber Goro, a Genocrat, seems to be the object of the research.

Other corpses are soon found in Shin-Edo in the same condition. Every time, the victims are people connected to the occult or priests, but a certain number are Chinese healers and other doctors of Panasiatic origin. Where the victim owned a



shop, it has often been looted and a great quantity of salt has been stolen, as well as soothing herbs and healing talismans. Traces of several diseases, fortunately inert (for the moment), will always be detectable on the mummified corpses of the victims.

Actually, there are no supernatural creatures involved in this affair at all. Instead it is a Chinese elite commando squad sent into Japanese territory (underwater) for an espionage mission. Unfortunately, while trying to hide at the Karakasa Corporation before mingling with the population, they were discovered by the lab staff. After an aborted hostage taking attempt, they were trapped in a sealed laboratory, and a device inside was then activated impulsively by the company's manager, Doppo Yamada.

The soldiers absorbed an experimental serum by inhalation, but in too high a dose. They became infected with the essence of powerful Yomi energy. It granted them strange powers, such as the ability to transmit disease and superhuman strength. However, they all suffer permanently from an unbearable pain, which is only soothed by water drawn from human beings. They are desperately trying to find a cure for their illness, using salt to ease their pain and killing every witness they find who might remember discovering the presence of Chinese forces inside Shin-Edo. Despite their suffering, the commandos are still trying to accomplish their mission, even though they are confused by 'mystical nonsense' and fever induced hallucinations.

Following their tracks, the player characters will eventually find the scuba skinsuits and details that appear too human to be kappa. Unfortunately, they will also find out that the diseases issued by these beings seem to be becoming more virulent and there is a risk they will spread. The commandos also begin to take bigger risks and expand their mission parameters. Their leader, Commander Lee Byung, may even be disturbed enough to attempt to assassinate the Prime Minister of the Social Democratic Party, at a conference in a Chiyoda auditorium.

Despite the danger posed by these individuals, their epidemic doesn't seem to affect the player characters, they are protected from the consequences of the serum by their nature as Potentials. But the presence of Chinese spies on Japanese soil can have particularly serious diplomatic consequences, including potentially triggering an open war between Japan and its opponents.

The simplest way to solve the problem will be to heal the soldiers by exorcising the Yomi infection from their system. Then the player characters will have a choice between solving the problem discreetly (healing the soldiers and then sending them away, which they'll do without any fuss) or risking hardening the current political climate with accusations by forcing the truth into the open.

## Heimin

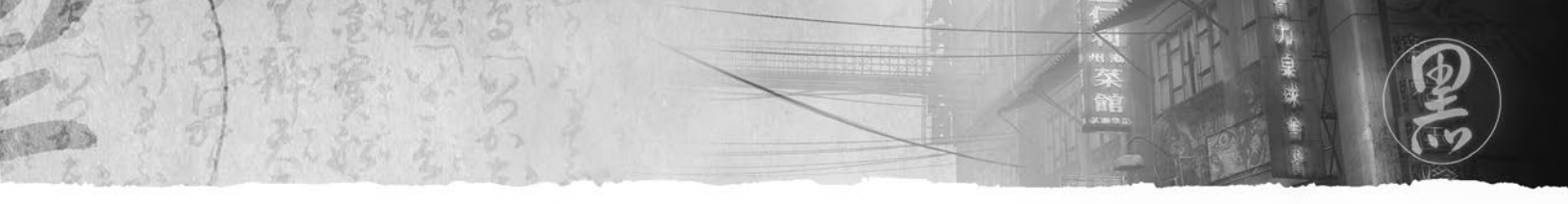
Heimin Shimbun was an old socialist newspaper, established at the beginning of the 20th century but sabotaged by the government in 1906. Recently an anarchist group has launched a newspaper with the same name. Published with a very low circulation, some of its articles incite revolt, direct action and general strikes.

The paper's politics have resonated with many of the workers in a particular social conflict triggered by the announcement of the closing of a car factory. The anarchists running the paper, supported by the political group that funds them, have gradually infiltrated the strike movement and directed the negotiations. Worker-management relations have worsened ever since, culminating in the occupation of the factory by the workers. The police were sent in and treated the mostly peaceful protest far too aggressively. The protesters responded in kind. The police were forced to withdraw, suffering two fatalities and a dozen wounded. However, they quickly returned and launched a far more violent assault. It ended with a dozen dead (eight from among the strikers) and 30 wounded. The anarchist group was held responsible and both it and the paper were officially banned by the government.

Immediately after that, a wave of anarchist bombings shook the country, aimed at police precincts and courthouses. Four bombs have already exploded when the adventure begins, having caused 17 deaths (including two civilians).

The player characters are approached by a young man, who has clearly been beaten up. He rings their front door bell (at random) and asks to be hidden. Behind him, a crowd of angry men are approaching. The young man, Fumukomi Nakadai, is an anarchist and a member of a small cell of a group called 'the Children of Osugi Sakae'. If the player characters decide to hide the bleeding young man (even with him pursued by several people armed with iron bars) he will explain that they are fascist thugs (which is true). They chased him because they claim he was talking with a foreign woman in a bar (which is false). Once the pursuers have passed he will thank them and say goodbye.

The pursuers are part of the Yamatodamashii (literally 'Japanese spirit') fascist militia, who have decided to hunt down the 'reds and the blacks' after the wave of bombings. The Yamatodamashii is a nationalist group who unofficially send agents to track down anarchists and left-wing supporters. Those they catch are brutally assaulted, and have so far left four dead and two in critical condition in the main hospital in Shinjuku.



At the same time, the government announces a new law forbidding any kind of extremist group. The decree forbids both extreme right and extreme left-wing groups, but it is particularly the anarchists that are targeted by the new piece of legislation. The government doesn't want to alienate the extreme right-wing groups (who they have more sympathy with) who are redoubling their efforts in the present climate. The trade unions, the freedom of the press movement and others are completely taken by surprise by this decision.

With this tense climate, it should not be a surprise that the player characters are visited by two government agents. These agents have investigated and identified the 'mastermind' behind the third bombing. This was the deadliest of the spate of attacks, responsible for the death of nine police officers and two civilians. The agents claim that this man was sighted two days ago (the day the player characters received him) being let into the player character's home. Two witnesses have confirmed the fact, and the camera on the building filmed him when he was entering. Also, the camera in the corridor filmed him knocking at the player character's door and entering.

At this moment, the Gamemaster should make the players aware that their characters (during previous investigations) have been in a few unsavoury places and connected to some dark business (such as the murders on the platform in Fugu and the missing students in Mizuiro). If the police decide to check up on them, suspecting them of being in league with the anarchists, they risk real trouble. The player characters must absolutely exonerate themselves of any link with Fumukomi. Saying that they helped him because he was assaulted by a fascist group will not be enough. The police will subtly hint that the only way to really prove they are innocent is to deliver Fumukomi to them.

How will the player characters react? Will they want to cooperate? Do they lean towards the activist's ideals, but endorse the terrorist's methods? Will they try to fool the police and even attempt to hide the fugitive?

If they wish to cooperate, they will have to track the terrorist down through the myriad Japanese extremist movements. They must handle both suspicious and paranoid groups and avoid attacks from the other side, which is filled with hatred and hungry for targets to beat up. Fumukomi recognises his debt to them and trusts them. However, he is not ready to turn himself in for them, but he will offer to have a friend take the fall.

During this part of the adventure the player characters will go from encounter to encounter. They will meet contacts, who will give them instructions to get data from dead drops (holes in

walls, letters inside old phone books in forgotten phone booths and so on) Tracking down the organisation will be tedious and time consuming.

If they decide to cooperate with the police (or pretend to) they must leave serious investigative clues for the police about Fumukomi, and show progress in their investigation. If not, the police will put pressure on them. In this part of the adventure, they must try and deliver pertinent information on the anarchist movement to the authorities. But it will not be easy if the player characters do not attempt to mingle a bit with the extremists to collect information that might interest the authorities.

Finally, if the player characters just say no, the police officers will start an investigation into the player characters themselves. They will quickly notice their odd presence at many a murder scene. It will be up to the player characters to exonerate themselves, which will not be always easy. In such a case the police will keep calling the player characters in for questioning each time they turn up more evidence of their adventures. They will have to regularly go and explain the reasons for their presence at such and such a place or at such and such a time, offer alibies, even consult a lawyer to help on their defence.

If the player characters are stuck, because they cannot find Fumukomi or because they've refused to cooperate, the adventure could end with the repeal of the law. This will be due to many protests by the population and several groups that have mobilised in favour of freedom of expression. This will ensure the police no longer have permission to put pressure on the player characters and will have to leave them alone. That's not to say they will stop investigation them, as they seem to have the unpleasant habit of always being where mysterious manifestations happen.

## Shin

Yogami Hayato is an android repairman working in the Ueno quarter. Even if he is well beyond retirement age, he is still working, supplementing his income with a little illegal overclocking. Obsessed with his job, Hayato never really had any time for other people. Feeling a weight of loneliness grow as he advanced in years, he devoted a great part of his sleepless nights to build an android from scratch.

He called the android 'Shin' and decided to make it his son, seeding in it a strong sense of humanity. The old man then spent several wonderful months during which he really felt he was





part of a family amid the jumble that serves as his workshop and flat. Little by little, he used his overclocking gifts to enhance Shin according to his wants and needs. Unfortunately, Shin's universe shifted one morning, when it found its 'father's' inanimate body, as Hayato had peacefully died in his sleep.

Incapable of explaining the cause of what it understood as a simple breakdown, Shin took upon itself to somehow repair its creator. Its vain efforts awoken in it what, surprisingly, approached a feeling of frustration. Shin took to the streets of Shin-Edo looking for parts that would allow it to repair Hayato.

Shin took Hayato's head, convinced that this 'central unit' would be enough to 'repair' him, by building a new body for it. Unfortunately, Shin found no one to help, and was quickly rejected by the humans it approached. Most people were extremely nervous of this android that seems to believe it was human and refused to help it. Most never manage to understand Shin's disjointed rambling. So Shin started to kill.

From each crime scene Shin takes a limb or an organ, looking only for the best for the one who gave it life. The police are already baffled by the discovery of the beheaded and mutilated body of a respected old man, his organs having been replaced by several spare parts. The situation worsened when several murders with mutilated victims started to multiply in the neighbourhood. Retinal scans are of no help and investigators have found no material that can be analysed (fingerprints, DNA, or similar).

One of the members of the Shi-Tenno will ask the player characters to take an interest in the murders, as they have a strange hunch about the guilty party. These feelings are vague but seem to point to something out of the ordinary and with puzzling, even incomprehensible motivations. Particularly troubled, the guardian wants this to be sorted out quickly before things get any worse.

The player characters will quickly discover that the murders have all happened in Ueno quarter. Each time the victim is missing a different body part, which was removed without any elegance or precision. The murderer has no specific modus operandi, each time acting seemingly in great urgency. The area where the murders took place seems generally very quiet, besides the death of Yogami Hayato some days before. But this case was soon distinguished from the others, because of its circumstances and the treatment endured by the victim.

Finally, the player characters will face an android who believes it is a human being. Without any notion of good and evil, it commits its murders coldly, with the sole purpose of

reviving Yogami Hayato. Everything would be simple if it wasn't for the intervention of another group of robots. These are also tracking Shin down, but they want to learn what could have created in Shin the illusion of being human.

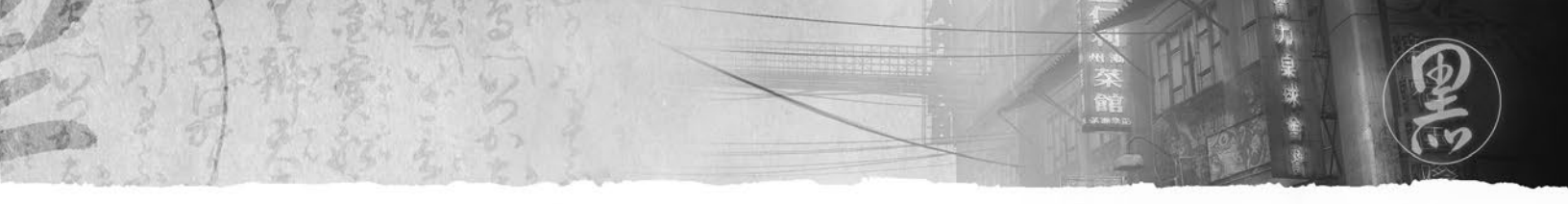
This underground robotic group is made up of androids trying to enhance and combine their templates and AI in an attempt to transcend their nature. The group has been growing for many weeks now. Several androids in Shin-Edo have got in touch in order to overcome their current status and become the equal of their creators and owners. Communicating essentially through the web to maintain secrecy, they are ready to do anything to discover Shin's 'secret' or, at least, find out what part of its programming has made it the way it is.

The player characters are at risk of being tracked down by androids who are trying to prevent them from getting to Shin. They will act from the shadows as long as possible, using their diverse skills to hack home networks, household appliances and car driving programmes to thwart the player characters. If, despite everything, the player characters finally find Shin, it refuses to stop trying to resurrect Hayato. It will not hesitate to attack the player characters, calling them heartless beings for trying to stop him bringing back Hayato. Sadly, Shin is not capable of understanding the truth of death and remains inconsolable. If Shin is defeated, the robots that pursued it will wait as long as it takes to get their hands on whatever's left of Shin, so they can try and discover out its secret.

## Ai

In Nakano quarter, located in the special ward bearing the same name, an unsettling phenomenon has started to happen. For about a week now, a band of individuals from many different walks of life and several different Kaiso have been gathering together in an old park near Araiakushi-ji temple. Rather austere and with sparse vegetation, this place for idle strolls had been invaded by these 'weirdoes', praying and looking at the sky as if something invisible and monumental existed at the centre of the place.

The media has taken special interest in this group of mystics, showing families in tears trying to make their relatives see reason. In any case it is hard for the player characters not to hear about this story, which journalists have numbered among the many psychological consequences of the blockade.



Genbu Naoku, one of the members of the Shi-Tenno, calls on the player characters to tell them of certain fears and doubts she has. Worried by this phenomenon, she feels that something is indeed at the centre of the park and it is starting to draw to itself all the positive energies of the city. The player characters will quickly be able to notice the effects of this phenomenon, as Shin-Edo residents are becoming more and more aggressive. The player characters themselves will suffer from the evil influence of this spell, getting irritated over nothing at all, doubting their abilities and even sometimes coming to blows over minor slights.

A quick investigation among the 'weirdoes' or their families will direct the player characters to a small art exhibition in Nakano quarter. Everybody gathering in the park appears to have attended it, which is the only thing apparently in common between all these people. The exhibition is housed in a narrow half-spherical building and shows the work of the surrealist painter Sabuko Hiro. Hiro is known for not having left home for several months. The paintings, sculptures and holographic creations all show the same thing: a huge open eye with a yellow iris whose pupil contains a black monolith. Morbid and disturbing, the exhibition seems to be increasingly popular and every person that spends several minutes contemplating those canvases will inevitably end up seeing something that was once invisible and that draws them irresistibly to it. What they see is a huge 50-storey apartment block, black and opaque, rising up in the centre of Araiakushi-ji Park. Even the player characters will not be immune to this surreal vision. They too will see this building, which has a fluid vertical structure, as soon as they leave the exhibition. But unlike the fanatics imploring the megalith to open, the player characters will keep their reason, simply feeling that this dark tower is gradually absorbing their positive feelings. For Genbu Naoko the answer is simple: it must be their nature as Potentials that is protecting them.

To end this manifestation that risks immersing Shin-Edo in a bloodbath, the player characters should meet the painter. Sabuko Hiro is, unfortunately, a mad recluse living in an almost empty apartment and permanently guarded by two androids. He speaks incoherently and everywhere around his apartment the baleful yellowish eye is present. It is drawn on the walls, his clothes and the ground, even his skin. In the middle of the main room, which smells of urine and filth, a long glass aquarium filled with reddish water contains the model for the work. The size and colour of a tennis ball, and bathes in an unwholesome glow, this monstrous eye seems to watch the player characters. Its bloody nerve still seems to pulse with a semblance of life.

After patient investigation by interviewing the mad artist, the player characters may learn that Sabuko ripped this eye from a creature he found chained inside the dark tower. He has no idea how he was able to see the tower, or why he felt the urge to mutilate the creature. He believes its beauty fascinated him, preventing him from leaving the tower without taking with him a "souvenir" from the chained beast. So he ripped out only an eye, leaving the blind Cyclops to its suffering and its screams. This has forced it to absorb happiness from humans to heal its wounds so it may "see" again.

This all happened some weeks ago. The eye is starting to die and the creature wants it back at any cost. Its struggles and screams have hypnotised humans come and help, but they are powerless to understand its message or enter its lair. Terrified, Sabuko regrets his actions but fears the creature too much to approach it. Paradoxically, he also no longer wants to be rid of the amputated organ as it 'inspires' him.

The player characters will have no choice but to force him to give it to them. This may be a tough and brutal fight as Hiro will not give it up easily. Together with Genbu Naoko (maybe even with other members of the Shi-Tenno as well) they may then enter the dreadful monument, moving through its opaque structure like the liquid of a waterfall, without any problem. In the dark and damp corridors, they will hear frightening screams. The feelings of the inhabitants of Shin-Edo will echo across the walls, and, most of all, the thoughts of the whole of the Shin-Edo population. It creates a frightening, deafening din, enough to make any human insane... but not a Potential.

In this din, the player characters may perhaps be able to notice some more interesting thoughts (that the Gamemaster may make use of to launch other adventures) like the complaints of another Potential, the victim of a creature from Yomi, an android developing true sentience, a member of the New Komeito preparing a violent plan for the Japanese military forces... During this adventure, the player characters will be thus linked to the whole city for a while.

Finally, they will reach the top of this jail of darkness where they will find a huge creature dressed in ancient clothing, embroidered like a ceremonial kimono. It appears to be an Aobozu (or Hitotsume-kozo) a humanoid creature, dressed as a Buddhist priest with only one eye. This one bears a gloomy complexion, and is chained to a colossal chair by chains no human can break. In the middle of its skull its empty and bleeding socket is clearly the source of its horrible suffering. It shouts and screams, but its words are completely incomprehensible.



Maybe the player characters will decide to kill it, but if they do the cure will be worse than the disease. The darkest thoughts will be released into the city, making the darkest, most repressed drives invade the minds of many of Shin-Edo's inhabitants. The simplest solution will be to return the eye to the chained monk to make it leave. The positive feelings will then be returned to their rightful owners and the imprisoned, nightmare-eyed monster will return to Yomi thanks to some rituals from the Shi-Tenno. By way of farewell, the Aobozu may offer an artefact to the player characters as a thank you gift, such as an old rusty android with enigmatic powers.

Its appearance in the park will remain a mystery, but for the Shi-Tenno the message is clear: the Aobozu has been the one preventing the Ika-zuchi-no-kami, seven powerful spirits of thunder, from returning to the Earth. Since they were condemned to roam the plains of Yomi-No-Kumi, the Cyclopean monk has been charged with watching them from the top of its imposing tower of souls. It is now clear that the seven spirits of thunder have found a way of escaping their jailor, the ramifications of which will be horribly clear in the next adventure, **Tsukurigoto**.

## RUMOURS

### Collective Intelligence

In order to transcend their current condition, for weeks some androids have used the NeoWeb to communicate between themselves (see Shin). Their avowed goal is to trade Templates and skills to enhance the possibilities open to them. To achieve this, some of them have made use of illegal overclocking skills, installed by their robotician owners to assist them in their jobs.

These androids try to meet as discreetly as possible to perform new modifications on each other in order to increase their performance and competence. The group seems to be led by someone nobody has ever managed to talk to directly, only via the NeoWeb. Using the nickname Baty, this character takes part in every chat, and motivates and encourages all these changes and enhancements from the very beginning. A veritable pillar of this heterogeneous group, Baty's identity is the object of speculation from the rare humans that have managed to join the community (mostly due to curiosity after having heard some rumours).

Some say Baty is a professor paid by the government, others a simple teenager already in over his head in what he created or an android who has already reached a higher level of sentience and who wishes its peers to follow the same path. Meanwhile, some households have already filed the disappearance of their home robot with the authorities, or reported its deviant behaviour.

### Hero for a Day

An android in charge of helping pedestrians cross the street in front of a Shin-Edo school has become well known in the media due to saving the life of a little boy. The latter, crossing the road while ignoring the android's instructions, was almost hit by a truck. Fortunately, the android managed to grab the child before any tragedy occurred. Later the parents personally came to thank this unexpected rescuer, and several journalists praised this act of bravery.

However, the android was later replaced by a more recent, more efficient model. Given that the rescue was not included in the original skills and possible responses implemented in the machine, there were suggestions it was malfunctioning. Meanwhile, the heroic robot seems to have vanished from the face of the Earth.

### Landfill

On the outskirts of Akihabara an empty field has become increasingly full of electronic gadgets and faulty androids, going against the laws on ecology and recycling. In fact the surrounding shops are using this area discreetly as a dump for their unsold merchandise (the price of legal disposal or recycling proving too high). As the rubbish builds up, little by little the place is also becoming a meeting place for people wanting to get rid of obsolete or malfunctioning items and those who want to obtain them.

This space of some dozen square metres where nothing can be built is now covered with an imposing heap. The neighbourhood has eventually accepted the situation; at least this litter does not stink up the place. However, some complain that they hear noises and synthetic voices coming from the heap. Others view this landfill with suspicion since the disappearance of their pets. It's true that animals and birds seem to avoid the place.



## Denouncement

One of the retinal scanners in Shinjuku seems to have a malfunction that can be considered original, to say the least. Indeed, some passers-by subjected to it have seen a hologram appear, visible to all, that has accused them of crimes and misdemeanours. These are often minor offences that they have committed in the past, but all ones that the person in question had managed to keep secret. In such a situation it is hard to keep a cool head, with all comers watching the concerned individual with several degrees of attention. Having heard of this malfunction, some conspiracy adepts claim it may be due to the many cameras and surveillance systems installed practically everywhere in the city.

The most far-fetched push the theory farther still, saying that Shin-Edo might have begun to develop its own intelligence allowing the network to cross reference the layers of data that move through and are gathered by its photonic network.

## Dead and Breakfast

Last Thursday all the clients in a capsule hotel were found dead, their bodies completely desiccated. The hotel manager claims a malfunction in the domestic systems and experts are now investigating to confirm this hypothesis or not. This drama happened only a few days after the suicide of one of the employees in the workplace.

## John Doe

A Japanese man on his thirties was found on a beach not far from Shin-Edo, hanging on to what seems to be debris from a ship. The man was covered with many, often horrible, scars, across his whole body. He recovered in hospital with his last memories being working on a boat off the coast on 4th May, 2046, probably a fishing boat. Then he remembers nothing until his awakening on the beach, more than 7 months later. Having found shelter in one of the many homeless communities that has appeared during the last six months, he is desperately looking for someone that can help him find out who he was and what may have happened to him that his body has been marked in such a way. More importantly, what is his connection to the watery, bloated, grey-skinned beast that sometimes watches him when he walks beside the water?

## Virgin Suicides

Some Shin-Edo families are in mourning following the suicide of seven young girls aged from 15 to 17. Without any apparent connection to each other, they all met at the same station yesterday at 5pm and all threw themselves on the line of the Yamanote Evolve. This collective suicide happened less than a week after another where seven other teenage girls jumped simultaneously from the 23rd floor of a residential building.

Some conservative groups are pointing the finger at the electro-goth muse Kuroi Hitomi and her latest album *Suicide for Pleasure* from which came the single with the same title. One of the reasons for this, besides the openly provocative style of the young artist, is probably its music video. Indeed, it was one of the first to be specially adapted for 3D broadcast and rumour has it that it was also optimised to be viewed using a Squid. Of course, the recording label has quickly denied such claims.





# TSUKURIGOTO

*"How do you define real? If you're talking about what you can feel, what you can smell, what you can taste and see, then real is simply electrical signals interpreted by your brain."*

– Morpheus, *The Matrix*

## Kinyobi — the Day of Metal

The player characters are entering the last chapters of Makkura, those that will lead them directly into battle and the revelation of their true heritage. Their allies will fall one after the other as they face a growing Evil. Alone and exhausted, they must struggle to fight on and preserve their humanity from the temptation of falling deep into darkness.

Manipulated, deceived, exhausted, maybe their courage will allow them to awaken the seal of the kami in their blood and defeat their opponents under the metal gaze of the Tower of the Centipede.

The player characters have now learned something of the nature of their own power and the truth behind the Kuro incident. Now the time is coming to confront the spirits that have been haunting them from the shadows. Its time for a final confrontation.

## Tsukurigoto Overview

This adventure is a lie, the result of a manipulation by evil spirits trying by any means necessary to retrieve the ghost whale's bone plaque (see **Kujira**, page 43) and to defeat the surviving members of the Shi-Tenno. Evil spirits choose to use the player characters to get what they want by placing them in a convincing virtual world. While they think they are all investigating the horrors of Shin-Edo, they are in fact sitting unconscious in a room connected to Squids.

### Warning for the Gamemaster

This adventure connects directly to the next one, forming a two-part campaign finale. There will be no time to 'continue the Day of Metal'. The climax also leads the player characters to their potential ascension to Tensei. So, if you intend to run more Kuro-level adventures before moving to Tensei, you should play them before this adventure.

While the next adventure Kami ends on a cliffhanger for the move to Tensei, if you do not intend to run Tensei you can carry on with more Kuro adventures afterwards, should the player characters survive.

Thus the player characters will all initially wake up in a hospital bed, with no memory of the previous four days. While the player characters try to retrace their steps to learn what has happened to them, they are unaware they are simply connected to a virtual world. Their enemies quietly observe their choices, hoping they will reveal where they have hidden the whalebone map and where the Shi-Tenno might be located.

The principle of the adventure is simple: deceive the players. They will have their characters live through a fictional adventure, events they have already lived through but have completely forgotten. The intention of this charade is to give the maximum amount of information to the envoys of Yomi-No-Kuni. To the very end, they will be convinced they are in the real world, inquiring about the previous days that were lost from their memories.



As the adventure begins with the player characters in a virtual space, the players will never run their characters for these ‘missing’ four days. Indeed, from the moment they awaken in the hospital, they are connected to Squids that manipulate them, forcing them to remember the Shi-Tenno’s hiding place through illusions and lies. However, the mere fact they cannot remember will be enough to drive the player characters to find out what happened, unwittingly revealing their secrets to those watching the shadowplay they have constructed.

## The Truth

Let’s now describe what really happened (and thus is already over at the beginning of the adventure). Four days ago, the player characters were approached by the Furinkazan Sect about the disappearance of seven Shin-Edo inhabitants

during a power failure. After a short investigation, the player characters discovered that what the missing persons all had in common was a curious nightclub, the Laura Palmer, owned by a sorcerer named Domino. He explained to them that those people were ‘clients’ of his who had mortgaged their souls. Much to his annoyance, these souls had been strangely stolen during a blackout (which matched the date the victims disappeared). Wanting to recover his goods, Domino helped the player characters follow their trail, leading them to a brand new building. The logo on its façade has been found at all the places the victims vanished.

While the building was being opened, the player characters and Domino went to the top where, with the greatest stroke of luck, the seven individuals miraculously reappeared during another blackout. Unfortunately, these seven people did not return quite the same. In fact, there was little left of their original nature at all. They had become the Ika-zuchi-no-





kami: bodies possessed by powerful entities from Yomi. Sent to the real world to retrieve the map (the bone plaque) and the items carried by the Shi-Tenno, but knowing nothing about the Potentials, the seven individuals quickly disappeared into the city before Domino or the player characters could stop them.

Immediately after this dramatic return, Jiro informed the player characters that he had felt the presence of the Ika-zuchi-no-kami in Shin-Edo. He also claimed to know more about the nature of the Potentials and that the members of the Shi-Tenno were in danger. This information was quickly confirmed by a surviving member of the Furinkazan sect, which was completely wiped out by the seven creatures from Yomi. Seriously wounded, he made them swear to protect the Shi-Tenno and to protect the map at all costs before expiring.

With the help of Jiro, trying to locate the members of the Shi-Tenno despite the constant blackouts disrupting their resources, the player characters managed to help the three remaining Guardians of the Cardinal Points as best they could, all the while being hunted by the Ika-zuchi-no-kami.

Taking an obscure and almost esoteric journey to evade pursuit, the Shi-Tenno managed to go to ground in a place called Idzumo, which exists outside the mundane world. As no human being can survive such a place they made the player characters forget everything to protect them and prevent anyone from tracking them down. Unfortunately, a little after returning home, disoriented and unaware of the dangers around them having forgotten the Shi-Tenno, the player characters were kidnapped by the seven deadly spirits of thunder.

The sole means return to the Guardians of the Cardinal Points to this world is now inside the player characters' broken memories. Determined to recover those memories, the Ika-zuchi-no-kami called upon dark magics to ensorcel some squids. After connecting each of the player characters to these organic devices, the simulation programme was launched. In this lie, the player characters wake up at the hospital, in the grip of amnesia. Their affliction will drive them to do everything they can to understand what has happened to them by backtracking an adventure they have already lived through, but of which they remember nothing. It's the best way to regain their memory, which is what the Ika-zuchi-no-kami are counting on.

## The Lie

This lie starts with the beginning of the adventure. The player characters are not on a hospital bed, but are connected to Occultech Squids and all locked in the basement of the building where the Ika-zuchi-no-kami reappeared. They are obviously not aware of this at all, the purpose of this mental manipulation being to lead the Ika-zuchi-no-kami to the Shi-Tenno and the map. Since the player characters had their memories voluntarily erased, the Squids are trying to weave a story based on what memories they do still have. The more the player characters advance the story by walking the same paths again and reliving their forgotten adventures, the more of their memories will return; even if they can't tell if they're memories, visions or flashbacks.

The seven missing people, Domino, the building, the sect, the Shi-Tenno, all that will be included in this almost perfect version, except the events will be changed enough to fool the player characters. The seven missing persons will be ordinary people, Domino will justify their disappearance as part of a disastrous ritual. The quest for the Shi-Tenno will become vital for everybody, especially the player characters.

And when they wake up, it will be too late...

# THE FACTIONS

## Domino and the Laura Palmer

If there's someone in Shin-Edo renowned and recognised as an expert in occult and supernatural matters, it can only be Domino. The object of numerous rumours and superstitions, the owner of the Laura Palmer is a true onmyoji: a sorcerer. His knowledge of the beyond and of the creatures of Yomi seems limitless, so they respect and fear him. His nightclub has become a den of the possessed, of incarnated spirits or transformed people, and all the other creatures that have roamed Japan since before the Kuro Incident. Neutral ground, where any settling of scores or aggression is completely forbidden, the Laura Palmer has a special ambiance, like no other. While you're sipping cosmos at the aluminium bar, the patrons' faces whispering in dark booths sometimes seem to change, dark feathers appearing under their thin human skin, their forked tongue caressing the

bottom of their sake glass... Here is traded the latest information on the manifestations that have been multiplying since 4th May, and on hidden secrets and impossible to find occult items. But answers are not easy to be obtained, this special clientèle rarely enjoys trafficking with simple humans. The rules of the club make it pointless to consider more forceful questioning. The master of the place will punish you himself, always in a very humiliating and 'picturesque' way.

It is not easy to get inside the Laura Palmer. It's not enough to show up at the entrance. You can't even find the door of this nightclub if you're not invited. For that you must be directly invited by Domino, one of his henchmen or have received (sometimes by chance) a strange letter inviting you to the place. The letter resembles an ancient 17th century engraving (or ukiyo-e) often showing the portrait of a man or a woman with strange features. Nothing indicates that this is an invitation, nor where it comes from. But one thing is certain: once you've held this letter or have received the invitation, eventually you'll find yourself by chance in front of the entrance to the Laura Palmer. For, just like the Shi-Tenno, many lines of fate converge at this nightclub.

The club is located in a narrow Shinjuku street, marked by an anonymous, greasy shop window. But if you've been invited, you will see no window but a stairway on luminescent concrete descending towards deafening music. Welcome to the Laura Palmer!

Domino very rarely appears at the tables or on the three dance floors, which are equipped with the best holographic projectors. He is instead usually to be found monitoring his patrons from the top of his imposing office. Hidden behind a two-way mirror, he is easily recognisable. The onmyoji has a thin and slender silhouette. His long red dreadlocks clash a little with his Asian origins. His small, finely trimmed beard has an orange tint and sits under a scar that crosses his lips, which earned him many taunts during his childhood. Rather quiet about his origins, this only reinforces his reputation. Many mystics believe him to be the child of a kitsune or of Nurarihyon, the lord of Yokai. Sometimes nicknamed 'Tenko', Domino just smiles and admits to some distant Irish roots. Often wearing designer suits and with a black fedora on his head, he is not only renowned for his magical power but also his elegance, charm and gentle voice.

More remarkable yet are the many tattoos ornamenting his body. His hands and forearms are covered in drawings, symbols and other arcane signs. Those form a veritable jigsaw puzzle, a fragmented whole of spells and protection formulae that he can activate by connecting them. Thus the tattoo in his right index





finger can complete a magic circle in his left arm, generating a protection aura. He just needs to put these parts together, placing them one over the other, to become a living ofuda or fend off the dark arts practiced by the denizens of Yomi-No-Kuni.

Recently, not having any more actual room on his skin, Domino had a Netbones system implanted, essentially focused on his arms. Thanks to this, he can cause a vocal or recorded spell in a Pod to resonate with his bones, and to unleash it by touching an opponent, clapping his hands or simply placing his fingers on the ground.

A fervent Shinto adept, Domino knows everything about most other religions, especially Buddhist rituals. For him, there is no Evil without Good, no Good without Evil, because both must coexist for the world to be stable. On 4th May, 2046 that balance was deeply disrupted. By intervening to stop the Panasiatic missile, Good brought with it the procession of Evil, which cannot survive without its presence. Now, Evil is steadily gaining ground and power. Not in the least bit worried, Domino is convinced that Good is necessarily preparing to fight back. It has always been so, for all the centuries he has walked upon this world.

The owner of the Laura Palmer is not just an innkeeper for the monstrous nighttime crowd. In truth, he is much more than that and he uses his nightclub solely as bait, an efficient means to renew and attract clients. For Domino is the one to whom you can mortgage your soul in exchange for a better life. Far from being a tormented, deceiving spirit, Domino just follows his own philosophy. He is convinced that Good is nothing without Evil, so human souls can also be combined and complemented, just like his own tattoos. Some are unbalanced, but they all balance out. For each rich man with emotional problems there is a poor person who is tender-hearted and generous.

You can ask any desire of Domino: winning the woman of your dreams, a lucky streak at gambling, healing a disease, getting the right to have a child... The only constraint is that you can only make one such wish in your life. In exchange, Domino will simply ask you to render him one service. It might range from taking someone's photo to a large financial transaction, and the debt must be paid in a timely fashion. However, the execution of this service can sometimes be asked several years after the cutting of the deal and the fulfilling of the wish. Domino keeps your soul as a gage until you keep your end of the bargain.

In truth, to fulfil your wish, he'll simply 'reconstruct your soul' by getting interesting elements from other souls kept as pledges (which he keeps in hundreds of metal tea boxes) and

mixing them into yours. He will steal the natural luck of an individual to allow you to win at gambling, the seduction from another will be given to you so you can win the lady of your dreams, and so on. He is a soul alchemist, with the power to rebalance, or transfer soul pieces to others, like elements of a gigantic jigsaw puzzle. Domino weaves and unweaves the fabric of fate. For that he is usually helped by his mentor, Sogenbi, an ancient monk of whom only the head remains, soaked in oil and perpetually floating in a cloud of fire. Locked in the room of the mortgaged souls, he is a precious adviser, wise, playful and jovial.

Unfortunately, four days ago seven souls were stolen from him and he doesn't know why or how. Knowing about the existence of the Shi-Tenno, Domino helped the player characters to find the missing persons before returning to meditate in the heart of his dwelling. Feeling that the time to fight back has come and he believes he must preserve his position of neutrality.

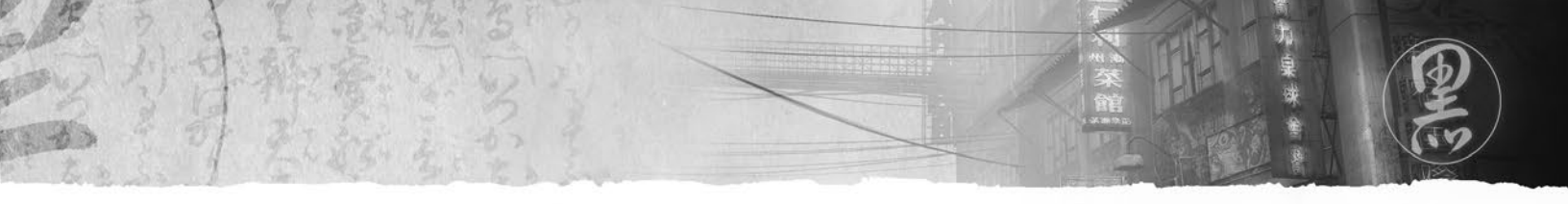
## The Ika-zuchi-no-kami

It is human nature to always want what's best for you, but it is very dangerous to sell your soul twice. The seven residents of Shin-Edo that disappeared and returned as possessed beings that plunged the player characters into a fearsome illusion only have one thing in common: Domino. They all went to find him for the same reason, so that he might buy back their souls, already sold to very dark and treacherous creatures. For a little money, some trifling goods or the latest model implant, these seven individuals went astray on the darkest paths of Shin-Edo, selling their souls to creatures that have roamed the capital since the foundation of old Edo.

Unfortunately, Domino can't work miracles and, despite all his efforts, the souls were devoured by Yomi when the time came. They were replaced by seven evil spirits, who had escaped the vigilance of their jailer, and determined to carry on the work of the Oni Tenshi (see **Kujira** on page 43) who was in charge of retrieving the items inside the Guardians of the Cardinal Points.

However, while the original souls may have gone, the tea boxes hold the key to destroying the Ika-zuchi-no-kami. Each one still has a powerful connection to the tea box that held their host's soul. As such it can be used to destroy them. Unfortunately for the player characters, the Ika-zuchi-no-kami have already stolen the tea boxes in question and left them in the care of a particularly powerful spirit of shadow called the





Betobeto-san. However, the player characters will have no time to investigate this until the final adventure Kami.

Smart, powerful and quick, the Ika-zuchi-no-kami can use the knowledge of their hosts easily and are connected to each other in order to act in concert. They are invincible and can't die until the last molecule of their bodies is reduced to nothing. But what makes them really frightening is their empathic power. This lets them know everything about you: your name, your past, your memories, your fears, your pain... It is almost as if they can see into your own skull. Forgetfulness is the only way to escape their empathic vision, the only way to hide something from them is to forget it yourself.

## The Shi-Tenno

After Tenshi violently killed and gutted the Guardian of the West (whose body was stolen to retrieve the item it hid) the three Guardians of the Cardinal Points remained in hiding. Feeling the coming of an evil even more powerful than the black-skinned oni, they tried unsuccessfully to remain hidden in the heart of Shin-Edo. Hunted by the Ika-zuchi-no-kami, they managed to lose them during a confrontation thanks to the intervention of the player characters and Jiro, by spreading chaos in a subway line disrupted by the blackout. Escaping with a few wounds, they arrived at Idzumo, the metal garden where stands the disturbing construction called 'the Lighthouse of the Centipede'. It cannot be found by those who don't know the secret and is protected by a ward that prematurely ages human flesh. This place has become the refuge of the three surviving Guardians.

To prevent the player characters ageing prematurely, and to protect them from the seven by covering their trail, they made the player characters forget everything of their adventure over these last days. An innocent and pure mind always keeps the clutches of the Ika-zuchi-no-kami away.

## The Furinkazan Sect

This group who have quietly accompanied the player characters since the beginning is nearing its end. A precious ally of the Shi-Tenno, it did not manage to protect them and its surviving members have just one goal: to help the player characters. They are well aware that the latter have been kidnapped by the seven beings from Yomi right after the three Guardians of the Cardinal Points entered the Idzumo parallel universe.

At the very moment when the player characters are starting their perilous adventure in the fake universe woven by the Ika-zuchi-no-kami, the sect will try desperately to find them. They will do anything to save these Potentials, the only chance they have to fight back and awaken the other heirs to the kami. Compared to the stakes, they consider their meagre lives expendable.

## Jiro

For many months Jiro has roamed the net striving to understand the exact nature of the Potentials. In an attempt to break the international network blockade, he dived into the twists and turns of the most secret, obscure and hidden databases. He discovered that the Potentials have enemies in all levels of Japan, from paranormal creatures in the mean streets to some politicians in the New Komeito party. He reached the conclusion that the Kuro Incident had freed the kami and that that they had brought evil creatures in their wake. These evil beings from Yomi-No-Kumi were ceaselessly growing in power and pursuing an increasingly violent agenda in the dark alleys of the cities of Japan. As the population have become obsessed with the shortages and fear of tomorrow brought by the political climate, they were indifferent to this rise in the supernatural. In short, there was no one to stop these spirits doing as they pleased.

Most of all, Jiro has realised that all this will only truly come to an end with the help of the Potentials, who must soon make a choice between living or dying. The blood marker inscribed in their genes is just a simple defective chromosome, it is a mystical relay, a signal that has only to be activated to change the course of everything. But Jiro has no idea how or why this gene might work.

All that he is certain of is that he felt the blackout announcing the arrival of the Ika-zuchi-no-kami, and he quickly warned the player characters of their coming. He has also helped them and the Shi-Tenno escape, in a capital paralysed by seemingly endless power failures. While he knows the Guardians are finally safe, their allies the Potentials have vanished into thin air. He has been looking for them ever since, but trapped in one of the few remaining powered systems he could find. Even here he can feel the presence of an Ika-zuchi-no-kami trying to defeat him, even inside the net.

But Jiro is resourceful and will be able to find the weak electrical sign that leads straight to the squids the player characters are wearing. Unfortunately, he doesn't know if he'll have the strength to wake them up.



# AWAKENING

*"Sorry, Quaid. Your whole life is just a dream."*

– Lori, *Total Recall*

The player characters begin the adventure awakening from what feels like a very long slumber. Around them electric pulses beat, like artificial hearts. Their bodies are naked, covered in nanobots, and half submerged in a kind of hot sticky liquid. As they get their bearings they will recognise these as 'care shells' in a large hospital room. Lost and disoriented, they are aware they are all in the same room, each in a different shell. None of them remembers how they got there.

All their previous adventures, their lives, their names, their families, all is perfectly clear in their heads. But they are incapable of remembering the last few days of their lives, which could well explain their presence in a Shin-Edo hospital. When they try to think about it, there's just a blank, a huge emptiness.

Just a few minutes after they awake together, medical staff come in to check the consoles on their shells. Pleased with the results they gently get them out. After carefully cleaning off the antiseptic healing fluid covering the player characters, they will dress them in a kind of light white pyjamas, before taking them to beds in an adjacent room. A little confused, the player characters don't really have the strength to struggle against all this, weakened by their stay in a care vat usually used for coma patients. If they ask questions of the nursing staff they will simply be told the doctor will arrive soon to answer them.

After a few hours, Doctor Naguro will arrive to answer their questions. He is in his late forties, a stocky, serious looking man wearing tortoiseshell Gantai glasses. He can tell them the following:

- They were found less than six hours ago on the roof of a building in Akasaka called the Raiden Tower. They were all in a deep coma, but had suffered no apparent wounds. The cause of their deep unconsciousness was inexplicable, resembling in many ways a state of brain death.
- Their families (for those having one) had filed them missing four days ago. Until they reappeared, no one knows where they've been.
- The first tests the medics carried out showed light brain trauma, but nothing serious. The doctor believes this to be

the reason for the partial amnesia, but doesn't know how long it may last. He may suggest that familiar sights could help jog their memories.

- There was nothing else on the roof of that building; no blood, no weapons and no other bodies. It was a cleaning team who found the player characters, lying in a circle on the helipad. However, there was a report that seven other people were with them. These seven were caught on security footage leaving the building. The police identified them as also having been missing for several days.

Just a few hours later, the player characters will be well enough to be on their feet again. The medical team finds this somewhat miraculous but will have no option but to discharge them. They will have no trouble leaving the hospital, which they will probably be keen to do, so they can start finding out exactly what happened to them over the last few days.

## Flashbacks and Mind-Hacks

As this entire scenario is an illusion, the player characters will undergo inopportune flashbacks showing them the truth, as their real memories begin to unlock. Increasingly intense, they will be very fragmented at the beginning, but they'll soon last longer. In each part of the adventure we offer a few guidelines for these flashbacks for the Gamemaster.

This is the purpose of the Squids: to make the player characters remember every detail, particularly the hiding place of the Guardians of the Cardinal Points. However, these flashes of memory may cause doubt and questions among the player characters as they navigate the lies of the illusion they are stuck in.

Powerful as they are, the Squids are not safe from hacking. Despite the blackout, Jiro will miraculously but slowly manage to locate the player characters using a net connection and will try to wake them. In his weak state he will just use shapes, letters and enigmatic messages, all with a distinctive red colouring. In the end, Jiro will manage to get word to the Furinkazan Sect so they can come to the aid of the unfortunate Potentials.

# REPLAY

With their memories damaged, the player characters will certainly seek to find out the origin of their amnesia. Not remembering several days of your existence is particularly disturbing. The player characters feel a profound emptiness, as if they once knew something vital and precious that is now just out of reach. Even though they have little information, they nevertheless have some clues to help them retrace their last days:

## Home and Family

Going home will probably seem a good way for the player characters to get their bearings. They may hope to find some notes or clues that may allow them to learn more. Their homes are intact and look exactly as they remember. No search seems to have happened and all their personal effects are exactly where they should be. Their Pods and Gantai will certainly contain messages from friends or family members, worried by their absence (those that weren't at the hospital watching them wake up).

Once more, the illusion woven by the Squids is seamless. They are using the player characters' very memories to consolidate their fictional scenario. So their friends will answer all their questions correctly, a brother will know everything about a detail from their youth. Moreover, friends and family will confirm that they actually disappeared unexplainably for four days without any warning. Which means they don't have any idea where the player characters were during that time.

Searching in their notes, computers and other sources, the player characters may get the beginnings of an answer. The form these clues might take will depend on the sort of notes and records each character might like to keep. Maybe there are holographic notes, diagrams, some indications written on a flexible monitor, or mails exchanged with each other. In any case they will find out about the case of the seven missing persons. Clearly, little more than a week ago, seven Shin-Edo inhabitants (not related to each other in any way) vanished into thin air during a long blackout. In a fraction of a second those individuals just disappeared into the darkness, leaving behind only a dark stain on the floor. This stain had a trace of soot and resembled a symbol: a lightning flash horizontally crossing a circle. Despite many searches, the authorities found nothing after an analysis of the scene and the missing persons remained nowhere to be found until yesterday evening (when they reappeared at the Raiden Tower).

Due to the amount of information collected by the player characters on the subject, sometimes even chaotically displayed in their offices, everything suggests that they were investigating this missing persons case. However, they will not have any direct confirmation until they find a 'note' left by the Furinkazan Sect that actually launched them on this trail. The note asked mysteriously – as usual – to find out more about the subject. It took the form of a creased origami peacock, inside which is also a net address for a site on urban legends called 'MadWorld'. It specifically connects to the article entitled 'The Seven Kidnapped by the Dark'.

One thing is particularly strange: the place where the seven individuals reappeared is the top of the Raiden Tower. If they check recent updates about the case, they can confirm they are the same people seen leaving this famous new building where the player characters were recently found. However, the latest news is that the former missing persons have no memory of their misadventure either and have simply returned to their respective homes. The soot symbol found after each disappearance perfectly matches the imposing fluorescent sign decorating the façade of the Raiden Tower.

## The Whalebone Map

Wherever it may be, the player characters will have certainly not forgotten the map. If they try to check it's still in its place, it will certainly be the case. Unfortunately, the simple act of thinking for a few seconds about the item or mentioning it will be enough for the Ika-zuchi-no-kami to go and get it in the real world.





# THE RAIDEN TOWER

Located in the Akasaka business quarter (see the **Kuro Core Rulebook**, page 36) the Raiden Tower is a brand-new 85-storey building that was opened the very day the missing people reappeared (the day the player characters were also found). Built in a circular shape, with mirrored glass walls and an imposing sign that changes colour according to the time of the day, it is designed to house the offices of network specialists, financiers, salespeople and the branches of credit institutions.

Guarded by a dozen Zen-class security androids, the entrance of the building is particularly well monitored. Also, all levels have many cameras. Unfortunately, they will be of no use to the player characters. Even if they manage to convince the manager of the place (Mr Osaku) to show them the surveillance tapes (or find a way to hack into the system) they can see that they arrived on their own. Indeed, the footage clearly shows the player characters stepping determinedly into the tower. Afterwards the cameras ceased to function due to the blackout. So there is no record of anyone, including the missing people, entering the atrium. Moreover, the large crowd present for the inauguration, together with catering staff, holographic animations and balloons, does not make it easy to track any of the concerned parties.

Luckily, visiting the tower will not prove useless. If the player characters decide to go to the imposing roof of the Raiden Tower, which mainly consists of a large helipad, they will come face to face with Domino. Looking worried, his eyes sombre, he delicately touches the ground, making his finger bones vibrate thanks to a Netbones detection spell. The spell tells him the player characters are who they appear, at which point he looks relieved and tells them: *"I've been expecting you."*

## Domino

While he is happy to answer the player characters' questions on the roof, he'll suggest the more comfortable surroundings of the Laura Palmer. If they agree he will simply give them his calling card, this time showing a samurai with the face of a grimacing oni.

*"You should have no trouble finding my club. It's in a quiet little street in Shinjuku. I will see you there."*

## Zen-Class Security Androids

This new class of security android (first released two years ago) has become very popular among the wealthy. While they are not as durable or dangerous as the 'Yojimbo' they are more adaptable and perceptive. While they have little armour, this makes them very fast. Their programming is also designed to prioritise sounding the alarm and calling for the police before engaging intruders. However, once help is on the way they have often proved capable of capturing the intruders themselves.

What has made them especially popular among the wealthy is that a lot of detail is paid to the finish and casing design. Companies can have them produced in a range of colours to reflect their corporate logo. They also use very high quality servo motors, making them almost silent when they move. For an additional fee this model can be fitted with a taser in its hands that can be used when grappling a target.

### Characteristics

DEX 6	STR 3	STA 3	REF 6
AI 3	PER 5	CHA 3	WIL 4

### Secondary Characteristics

HIT 50	SW 16	DT -16	
DEF 34	REA 7	ACT 4	MOV 6

### Skills

#### Combat Skills

Firearms 5
Hand to hand 5
Martial arts 7 (Expertise)

#### General Skills

Athletics 4
Dodge 7 (Specialist)
Investigation 1
Awareness 7 (Boost)
Searching 5
Shadowing 5
Deception 1
Sneaking 4

It won't take long walking at random in Shinjuku before the player characters will find themselves before the opulent stairway descending into the dark. As this is their first visit, the Gamemaster should spend some time evoking the ambiance of the Laura Palmer. The faces of the patrons that seem to hide monsters, that woman whose hair is feathers, that man with red braids whose face is hidden by a thick mask filled with brackish water. The chatter is muffled, hidden under pieces of acid jazz or ambient trance music; the lights are a strange mixture of hot and cold colours.

Domino will quietly explain that he knows them and that he is, unfortunately, responsible for the disappearance of the seven people:

*"The Shi-Tenno, the four Guardians of the Cardinal Points, have always been there to protect Japan from the assaults from Evil. One North, one South, one East and the last, West of Shin-Edo, to protect the Emperor. Even after the Kuro Incident, the guardians have done everything they can to maintain the balance. But with the death of Byakko Kozakura, the Guardian of the West, the creatures of Yomi have gained in both numbers and power.*

*When a Guardian dies, another must immediately take his place. I am their central point, the one who must find a new Guardian of the West. The ritual is ancient and sacred, it focus on seven human souls, chosen by the kami because they're suitable to become Guardians. I had seven souls in my power, because I keep them in exchange for certain gifts and services. During the ritual, of which the souls know nothing at all, one of them is chosen and transcended to occupy the Guardian position.*

*But I failed and for four days, the three remaining members of the Shi-Tenno have disappeared, hidden somewhere, far away and untouchable. I tried unsuccessfully to contact them, several times. Their presence is vital for the success of the ritual. Short on time and unable to find them, I made the attempt without them... but the seven chosen candidates and their souls were stolen from my vault.*

*Yesterday evening, when I saw the soot symbol, I understood the Raiden Tower was a power point and I tried a ritual to make the unfortunate missing persons return.*

*What I do know is that you have been with the Shi-Tenno for four days; you know precisely where they are hiding. You also tried to stop the ritual yesterday evening, on the top of the building. But you arrived too late, the seven returned but not alone. Creatures from Yomi also appeared and attacked us. They have erased your memories to make sure that I'll never find the*

*Shi-Tenno so we might send them back to their Hell. They knocked you unconscious and I tried to pursue them, in vain. I returned to the tower, and tried to find you but you were no longer there. Still, here you are. You must remember the place you took the Shi-Tenno to. It is of the essence! Without you, this city is doomed. Without the presence of the Guardians, I will never be able to destroy these monsters."*

Quite the pretty little lie, isn't it? Everything will skilfully confirm Domino's statement, the surveillance videos (yes, he is there, you can see him pass behind the servants in the hall) and the testimonies of some of the tower's occupants. The players should be convinced of this version, and of the fact that finding the Shi-Tenno is the only way to eradicate the 'things' that came back with the missing persons.

## Flashback examples

- The blackout, that covered most of the city in darkness.
- Domino explaining the souls were stolen from him.
- The tea boxes.
- The player characters running in terror through the corridors of the tower together with Domino.
- The seven appear on the top of the tower, their faces dark with power and evil.
- The opening ceremony of the tower.
- Sogen-bi's floating head.



# THE MISSING PERSONS

Visiting the seven formerly missing persons can also be interesting. Let's confess up front: the seven returned individuals from this Squid-created illusion don't have much to do with the terrifying Ika-zuchi-no-kami. In short, they are completely different to their current state in the 'real world', resembling only ordinary human beings who remember nothing; besides having appeared on the roof of the Raiden Tower yesterday evening and having immediately run away, when monstrous things started appearing everywhere. Save one or two, they also remember almost nothing of Domino and the player characters. Still in a state of shock, it is hard to get anything from them. Still, the players may at least learn what their souls were doing with Domino and why they sold them to creatures from Yomi. In this respect, the Squid illusion will be similar to reality. All the Ika-zuchi-no-kami were indeed these individuals, once.

- **Iizasa Moromao:** A thirty-something man who lives in a modest apartment in Roppongi with his wife and spends most of his time walking around in a dreadful yellow tracksuit. Unemployed for many years, he wished to be a rich and revered man. During a poker evening he staked his soul against a purple-dressed man who promised him the moon and the stars should he win that hand. Unfortunately, Moromao has always been a pathetic bluffer, and he lost his soul on a bad hand. After a chance encounter with a waiter from the Laura Palmer, he asked Domino to recover what was his. Domino complied, for a cost, although it was later stolen from him.
- **Seisi Haruko:** An unattractive woman who had been saving for a long time to undergo cosmetic surgery. But despite the cutting edge procedures that seriously improved her looks, she remained incapable of seducing or attracting any partner. Clumsy, shy, tense, ill at ease, the new face was only a mask that was insufficient to disguise her true nature. One evening, she sold her soul to a yellow-eyed man to finally become the femme fatale she always dreamed of being. But the man never truly gave her what she wished for. He simply slept with her one night, when drunkenness and sadness got the better of her. Today, she lives alone in a cubic studio apartment in Ota and works as a waitress in a Sushi Shop. After her soul, recovered by Domino, was again stolen, she has had only one wish: to die.
- **Antonio Cavallera:** This middle-aged man, of Italian ancestry, just wants to go back home to return to his family. With a receding hairline, a round belly, a thin moustache and a Gantai monocle in place, he will explain to the player characters that, after the Kuro Incident, he found himself stuck in Shin-Edo. Wishing to leave this country more than anything, and receiving only silence from his embassy, he tried to find a boatman at the docks, in vain. By chance he met a curious man at the Tsukiji market that promised him to get him home in exchange for his soul. He never believed it, thinking this man was just another weirdo. He even laughed as he accepted the deal. But when violent nightmares started to assault him after the mysterious man vanished, he started to doubt. He turned to Domino to correct his gross mistake. Today he is still waiting for news of his country and family, and lives in a pitiful hotel room in Roppongi Hills.
- **Yukimura Sumiko:** This 22 year-old woman only had one dream, to have a child. Unfortunately, due to some potential hereditary illnesses in her genetic code, the Ministry of Family has never accepted her request despite repeated proceedings. Completely desperate, after separating from her fiancé, she chose to try and conceive without a permit, despite the risks it entailed. To protect her future child and make sure he has a quiet life, she decided to sacrifice her soul to an old woman wandering on the bank of the Sumida River. She kept her end of the bargain. The child was placed with a Kaiso level-four family and Sumiko was locked away by the authorities for illegal childbirth. It was in prison that she got a visit from Domino who offered to get her soul back without it ever affecting her child's future. Of the seven missing persons, Sumiko is the most shocked by her experience, more so because her disappearance from her cell was considered an escape. Back in prison, she dreams every night of the sign in soot, monsters and the dark.
- **Dayu Doi:** This 25 year-old small-time thug, with a grim unsmiling face, has long worked as a 'collector' for a Yakuza gang. A power-hungry and frustrated man, after losing a finger as punishment for a gross mistake, he decided to become his own boss. Knowing about the strange people that sometimes patronised certain cafés in Shin-Edo, able to perform great miracles, he sold his soul to the highest bidder in order to become immortal. Having achieved immortality, he murdered all the lieutenants of his gang in order to take the place of his own leader. Invulnerable to blows and bullets, he had no trouble butchering all who stood in his way. But then he started to see the cracks and the beings from Yomi, he noticed that food tasted of ash, that his joints were stiffening, and that his skin was becoming grey and



withered. He realised that he hadn't become immortal, just a walking corpse, unable to die. Despairing, he asked Domino to find a solution for his problem.

- **Miyoshi Okura:** This labourer in Tsukiji market had done all he could to save his daughter from a serious lung deficiency. For a long time he believed he could get her a state-sponsored transplant, but to no avail. With his meagre savings, he even tried to use the services of a black market surgeon and an organ coming from a Chinese prison. Fearing to lose his daughter with this risky operation, he gave up at the last moment and turned to the occult corners of the city. In return for his soul, his daughter was saved... But his happiness didn't last. His daughter vanished overnight, leaving no trace. The being with whom he made the compact was also nowhere to be found; doubtless the mastermind behind the abduction. In despair he vainly tried to find her and by chance met one of Domino's henchmen who gave him a card for the Laura Palmer. Holed up in his Shinjuku studio, he sank into alcoholism and hardly eats any more. The only thing he remembers from the abduction was hearing his daughter scream.
- **Mifune Nakamoro:** A madman, a schizophrenic or simply an evil weirdo, this 19 year old biology student, with thick Gantai glasses and long, dirty, discoloured hair has always wanted to be a god. He desperately desired the power to change the world, exterminate all who have made him suffer and seduce Katsuko, a pretty third year student. An otaku, a geek and a sorcery enthusiast, he invoked a spirit to grant him this power in exchange for his soul. All he actually got was the power to transform into a Hokko, a big grey wolf, when the Wind of the Gods blows. Without wishing it, without wanting it, without even being aware of it, he transforms and stalks the campus park. This simple curse

### Flashback examples

- A sect member asking them to help the Shi-Tenno.
- Jiro helping them to locate the Shi-Tenno.
- A chase through the city.
- The grimacing faces of the Ika-zuchi-no kami.

is how he devoured Katsuko, without even remembering. But the taste in his mouth and the news the next day made him realise his mistake. Domino seemed the best solution. While he waits for a solution he locks himself away in his tiny lodging, his body covered in ofuda drawn on with a black marker.

## THE SEARCH FOR THE SHI-TENNO

From the moment the players decide to look for the Shi-Tenno, their memories will become sharper and more violent. But, most of all, Jiro will have more leeway to alert the player characters. The words "Wake Up!" will appear in red on the city's advertising panels, their Pods, the controls of their cars, the screens in the subway...

Depending on the relationship they developed with the Shi-Tenno, they may investigate their homes or the places where they've met them before.

If you have run many of the adventures and synopses in this book involving the Shi-Tenno, the Giant Kitty (Genbu's bar), the wrestling ring and Terazawa's transport company will certainly be places to investigate. Unfortunately they will not get any extra information in these places. The workers there will only confirm that their co-worker/boss has not been seen in four days.

If the Guardians of the Cardinal Points remain more vague and obscure characters, then Kozakura Byakko's herbalist store (see Kujira) will be their one and only clue. Locked and abandoned, it will not reveal much. But the dried blood on the floor will be enough to shake their memories up like champagne bottles.

### Remembrance

Whatever their relationship with the Shi-Tenno, Jiro's call will help them remember their chase through the Shin-Edo subway in detail. Accompanied by the members of the Shi-Tenno and chased by the seven missing persons. They will recall themselves running, dashing through the corridors of Uchibori station and shoving passers-by out of the way as they try to lose their pursuers. The Guardians use several rituals to block the



Ika-zuchi-no-kami who still manage to gain on them. They remember having to take an emergency exit and going down an old stairway to reach an abandoned tunnel.

Deep in the darkness they find two filthy, old and out of order subway train carriages. A sign on the wall marks the place as Subway Tunnel 94. They visualise themselves climbing aboard these empty, dusty wagons. One of the Guardians lights a flame, activating the sprinklers of the fire suppression system. Water falls like rain on the wagons, hitting their aging carcasses with an oppressive rhythm, and opening a dimensional passage.

Afterwards, everything will move very fast.

The landscape blurs and shifts. A pale light illuminates the inside of the immobile wagons. The members of the Shi-Tenno climb down onto the metal floor and offer to erase the player characters' memories in order to protect them.

The scene shifts once more and the player characters remember returning home. Then, suddenly they find themselves facing the seven missing persons. They remember being frightened and confused, unable to remember who these assailants are. Everything will become crystal clear. A red light glares in their eyes, an imposing red dragon forms out of the light, commanding them to wake up immediately.

*"Quickly! Run!"*

## Awakening

It is at that precise moment that they wake up. They find themselves tied to metal armchairs, hands and feet chained by metal cuffs. They seem to be imprisoned inside a concrete basement. Each feels something soft and jelly-like on their skull, which they will recognise as a kind of Squid. Each is connected by a sticky, organic umbilical cord to the belly of one of the Ika-zuchi-no-kami (Mifune Nakamoro) who sits in the centre of them.

*"Its too late," he smiles. "We have all the information we need."*

Suddenly, all around them, battle will be joined. A fistful of the surviving members of the Furinkazan Sect burst in armed, and begin shooting at the Ika-zuchi-no-kami in order to help player characters. There will only be three Ika-zuchi-no-kami present (Mifune Nakamoro, Yukimura Sumiko and Dayu Doi); the rest are already en route to find the Shi-Tenno. Even so, these three will be more than a match for the Furinkazan Sect.

They will slaughter most of them before deciding to retreat, having delayed them long enough to give their comrades a head start. Then, covered in blood but still alive, the three evil spirits will escape. If they have not already found a way to escape their bonds, the surviving Furinkazan Sect members will be able to free the player characters. They and Jiro (via the Pod of a sect member) will then be able to explain the whole story.

The player characters have been shut down here for two whole days and outside, unlike in their 'dream', the blackout across the city continues. Indeed, power hasn't returned ever since the seven appeared.

If the player characters don't fully understand the situation, the sect members will tell them it is imperative to save the Shi-Tenno again, or at least warn them of the Ika-zuchi-no-kami's coming. As the player characters make their way out of the concrete basement they realise they actually at the bottom of the Raiden Tower.

## Alternative Awakening

If the Gamemaster is feeling rather perverse, she can go even further with the awakening, by deceiving them anew. She may make the player characters believe they are approached by a red dragon, Jiro, who explains they are all linked to Squids showing them a false vision. The player characters will then wake up in a sinister flat, remembering immediately the Shi-Tenno's dimensional hiding place. Lying on the floor, two blackish creatures face them and seem to be conducting a ritual to keep them in a trance. After neutralising them in a tough combat, the player characters again see a fake Jiro appear before them. This Jiro suggests they go to the Shi-Tenno as quickly as possible while he warns the sect. As soon as the player characters arrive at the level of the old subway station and use the sprinklers to open the portal in the carriages, everything suddenly disappears and they find themselves in the complex under the building. The Ika-zuchi-no-kami have the information they were looking for.



## The Metal Garden

As they make their way through the city, the player characters will quickly notice the whole city is without any power. The subway doesn't run anymore, and criminal groups are taking advantage of the general panic to loot and pillage the centre of the city. The Gamemaster should emphasise the chaos in the dark streets, possibly forcing the player characters to encounter looters and robbers as they desperately try to make their way through the city.

By walking the same route they have now unlocked from their memories (Uchibori station, emergency exit, stairs) the player characters will again find the two abandoned carriages. There will be no one in Subway Tunnel 94, but the area inside the two wagons will be soaking wet, indicating that, the Ika-zuchi-no-kami must have recently passed through here.

Activating the sprinklers using a simple cigarette lighter, the player characters may enter again the Idzumo: the ancient Garden of Eden. Without moving, the carriages transport them to this parallel universe using the water that runs over their steel carcasses.

As the carriages enter the realm of Idzumo, the landscape before the player characters' eyes will be particularly impressive. They get an insight into how an ant might feel in the middle of a parking lot. Idzumo is a titanic, insane tangle of metal, marked with bizarre, twisted kanji. The ground, the walls and the many maze-like corridors without a ceiling are all made up of the same metal: grey and hammered. The sky is the colour of rust. But the most frightening thing is the imposing lighthouse in the centre of everything. Despite its amazing size, it seems nonetheless to be miles away. Most people looking at it will even get a touch of vertigo. It is a monumental iron tower with sharp corners, topped with a bluish light that whirls and sounds a blood-curdling roar. This is the Lighthouse of the Centipede.

The player characters hardly have any time to dwell on this vision, as fascinating as it is frightening. Combat will already be joined and Sierya Terazawa (the Guardian of the East with golden eyes) will be lying on the ground, disembowelled as one of the Ika-zuchi-no-kami retrieves an item from his entrails. Meanwhile, his three other accomplices are trying to kill Naoko Ganbu (the fragile-looking Guardian of the North) and Hiro Sujaku (the Guardian of the South, making a bulwark with his own body) who are all poised at the edge of an abyssal chasm. The air will be charged with electricity, and not only figuratively. The proximity of the two living guardians generates an intense electromagnetic flux.

## The Devouring Wind

The fight will be epic and violent, opposing the player characters are the four thunder spirits. The survivors of the Furinkazan Sect, having come with the player characters, will sacrifice their lives in the battle. The Ika-zuchi-no-kami will prove to be particularly resilient and impossible to kill, but 'human' enough so that weapons can cause wounds capable of slowing them down.

Under the baleful light of the Lighthouse of the Centipede, roaring as if it feels the approaching apocalypse, the two guardians will use fire and ice rituals to sweep away the four killers from Yomi. But, with their mounting fatigue, the Ika-zuchi-no-kami will easily anticipate their blows and deduce their weaknesses. The Ika-zuchi-no-kami make a deadly attack on Naoko, who is pale as frost. But the imposing Hiro Sujaku will sacrifice himself to protect his beloved. He falls into the chasm taking with him two of the Ika-zuchi-no-kami. He will not climb back up.

While the player characters are trying to protect Naoko Genbu and their own lives as they face the two last thunder spirits, they feel something change inside them. Their spilled blood will shine with an intense glow, and a curious gale will wash past them with every new blow they receive. It feels like something is trying to protest, perhaps even to manifest. Finally, the wind will intensify, screaming, seemingly swarming with billions of tiny creatures with razor-sharp teeth. It hammers into the two remaining Ika-zuchi-no-kami, who will be utterly devoured in a matter of seconds by this 'Kama-itachi': the Devouring Wind. Literally nothing will be left of them, leaving the surviving Guardian alive and the player characters somewhat confused. Naoko will address them, looking down into the chasm with a stare void of all emotion:

*"We must leave. The fallen will return and those left outside will soon arrive. You have been saved by the Kama-itachi, the Devouring Wind of the kami. You are the chosen ones, the fate of this world. The revenge of the kami is rising like a red mist. Soon you must choose your path. Let's run..."*





# RETURN TO REALITY

*"Reality is what doesn't go away when you stop believing in it..."*

– Philip K. Dick

With only a few gestures, Naoko Genbu will bring the carriages back to the Shin-Edo tunnel. No Ika-zuchi-no-kami crosses their path, busy as they are licking their wounds or trying to return to the visible world. Let the player characters decide what to do with the Guardian of the North, the last of the Shi-Tenno. If they can be convinced to trust him, they might ask Domino to help protect her at the Laura Palmer. Otherwise she will disappear into hiding.

The famous map bone from the ghost whale has disappeared, stolen by the seven thanks to the player characters' memories, whether they or the Shi-Tenno had it. Thus the Ika-zuchi-no-kami need only the last item, hidden in Naoko Genbu's belly. It may seem as if her death is both imminent and predestined. The player characters may feel alone, powerless and fragile in a city that remains plunged into darkness. Only Domino will bring them a bit of solace:

"Things are accelerating; the revenge of the kami is at hand. The only means of saving Naoko Genbu is to destroy the Ika-zuchi-no-kami. For that you need to reduce their bodies to nothing, something only the Kama-itachi can do. It has risen once for you and will not return. But there is another solution: find the seven boxes containing their souls and we will all be saved. In the meantime, rest... The final battle is upon us."

Outside, the blackout continues across a city already falling to violence and rioting...

## Time in Idzumo

However little time was spent in this universe, it will be enough for the Player characters to age a bit. After leaving the metal garden, they will have gained the equivalent in 1D6 years and three times this number in experience points.



# NPCS

## Typical Ika-zuchi-no-kami

### Characteristics

DEX 4	STR 4	STA 8	REF 4
INT 5	PER 4	CHA 3	WIL 4

### Secondary Characteristics

HIT 100	SW 34	DT -34	
DEF 24	REA 7	ACT 2	MOV 4

### Skills

#### Combat Skills

- Hand to hand 5
- Martial arts 6 (Expertise)
- Firearms 5
- Magnetic guns 5
- Melee weapons 5

#### Academic Skills

- Humanities 4
- Natural sciences 4
- Physical sciences 4
- Social sciences 4

#### General skills

- Athletics 5
- Acrobatics 6 (Mastery)
- Drive 3
- Investigation 4
- Torture 6 (Accuracy)
- Popular culture 4
- Spiritual 5

Plus any skills from the host body.

### Powers

Invulnerability: total. Only the destruction of the host body to the last speck of dust can prevent an Ika-zuchi-no-kami from regenerating.





# KAMI

*“Do you know how to fight?  
Do you know how to die?”  
– The Crow: City of Angels*

## Cold Light

## Doyobi — the Day of Earth

Since the adventure began the player characters have all been moving towards an important decision, one that will affect both their lives and the lives of countless others. The day to make that choice has arrived. After facing many adventures, the player characters will have to save a peer and watch the awakening of ancient evil. Caught in a spiritual storm they must face their destiny, they must choose to live or die: to remain human or accept their heritage as scions of the kami, leading them to **Kuro Tensei**.

## Kami Overview

This last chapter of the Makkura saga will lead the player characters to save other Potentials, pursued by enemies coming from the government programme called ‘Ghost’. After meeting the Emperor of Japan and gaining a glimpse at their destiny, they will set off in pursuit of the remaining Ika-zuchi-no-kami to stop their attempt to make the cursed island of Ryugu resurface.

But they will fail. And as the sharp coast of the vanished island finally rises again from the waters, Japan is plunged into a new age of darkness and blood. The Red Storm will come and offer a choice: to live or to die.

*The Wind of the Gods was again blowing over Shin-Edo, tangling the wind chimes by the windows and making the plastic rubbish on the pavement take flight. Naoko Gembu waited patiently hidden behind a metal door, holding it open just a crack so she could watch the group across the street. The five silhouettes she observed had gathered together in this modest place in Ikebukuro, standing outside a desperately obscure restaurant. Like the entire city, it had been cloaked in darkness ever since they had arrived.*

*It had been days since they had last gathered together. They had been searching the city for the last Guardian of the Shi-Tenno, so they might rip a hidden artefact from her gut. The five men and women were indistinguishable from ordinary people, but were now host to powerful spirits. They exchanged not a word, just stood there together, probing each other’s minds to come up with a new plan of attack. After the death of two members of their pack, struck down by the cutting, devouring wind of the Kama-itachi, the Ika-zuchi-no-kami would stop at nothing to retrieve the last key from the Shi-Tenno. With it they might raise the drowned island of Ryugu and open the gate leading to Yomi-No-Kuni and the unfathomable abyss of the sea dragon.*

*But Naoko Genbu, who carries Tamon, the spirit of the north, is not afraid. A thick cap covers her long black hair, and her simple dark blue coat carries the logo of the band Sugomi. Where her gloveless hand covers the door beside her, a thin film of frost begins to form at her touch.*

*It is time.*



*She walked with determined steps towards the five silent, dark-hearted silhouettes. They turn quietly, watching with surprise and evil delight as the frail girl with porcelain complexion cross the square.*

*"Tamon?" asks one of the five thunder spirits, a smirk at the corner of his lips.*

*"None other", Genbu replies in a firm tone, the locks of her hair catching in the winter wind.*

*"You've come to avenge the death of your boyfriend?" snickered one of the Ika-zuchi-no-kami. This one had been dragged into the Chasm of the Centipede by Naoko's love Hiro, but only the thunder spirits has climbed out.*

*"Yes."*

*"And you expect to defeat us?"*

*"No."*

*"Then you are going to die."*

*"I know. But while my death may be certain, it will not be a simple matter, even for you. With the other three Guardians gone, I have all the strength of the Shi-Tenno, all their knowledge and the power of each of the Guardians of the Emperor. I can make you suffer so much that you would be unable to hunt me for several days, without one drop of my blood being spilled.*

*"In that case, what do you expect from us?" asked one of the silhouettes, as the others cautiously gathered around the Guardian of the North.*

*"A bargain. I will give you my life in return for the answer to a simple question."*

*"You are ready to sacrifice yourself?" asked the five spirits, laughing.*

*"Yes. If you answer my question, I will not fight."*

*"Then you know what happens once we have the item in your gut, Tamon? We only need the final one to bring about the return of Ryugu."*

*"I know but I don't care. Destiny is afoot and nothing can stop it. So? Are you ready to see your organs ripped out one after another, or do you prefer to answer my question and to get it over*

*quickly?"*

*As she spoke, a veil of terrible power fell over Genbu's face, a look that would frighten any human being. Around her, the cold became more intense and the metal supports on some of the nearby buildings began to rumble and creak as if attracted towards the clenched-fisted young woman.*

*"Very well. Ask us your question and then... die."*

*"Where are Domino's seven tea boxes?"*

*The Ika-zuchi-no kami snickered, eyeing each other with complicity as if expecting a much more important question.*

*"What good will that do you, since you are going to die?"*

*"That is my concern. You have my word and Fate will take care of the rest. Now answer."*

*The thunder spirits seemed to hesitate; there was surely a trap or a hidden sense in her words. Then one of them, in a hurry to get it over with, suddenly shouted:*

*"They were never moved. They are under the protection of the Betobeto-san. Even the Onmyoji and his bodiless monk cannot pierce the darkness."*

*"The spirit of darkness and silence... The blackout. All this has been done to reinforce its power over darkness, right?" Genbu asks, a light shining in her eyes.*

*"Exactly. The greater the darkness, the more powerful Yomi is and the more the Betobeto-san controls the shadows. Now that you have this information, even though it will do you no good, you must submit and let us retrieve what belongs to us."*

*"You are going to die", whispered the Guardian in an icy tone, cracking her finger joints.*

*"What? We kept our word! You should do the same."*

*"You will die, but not by my own hand," Genbu added as she pulled the thick cap from her skull before throwing it to the ground. In the folds of the synthetic wool headgear could be seen the red pulsing light on the inside of a squid.*

*"Traitor! You lied to us! That information was for you alone!" shouted the Ika-zuchi-no-kami in one voice, as if a single mind controlled them.*



*"In poker that is called a bluff. Anyway, why are you so scared if you are so sure of your success? The kami are marching, you unspeakable bastards, and they'll make you pay for Hiro's murder. And I will make sure they send you directly to where you came from! You will have Ryugu, but you will not have time to cross its threshold!"*

*With a thunderous roar, the five individuals rushed towards her, and the Guardian of the North released all her power. The energy of the five thunder spirits was torn out and absorbed by Genbu, like a living magnet. Petrified, the Ika-zuchi-no kami can only watch as the Guardian released the electromagnetic fire gathered in her body, waves of energy pour out of her into the city.*

*Ikebukuro plaza exploded under the huge burst of energy, a gigantic ball of cold and electricity sweeping through cars, the façades of buildings, windows and the Ika-zuchi-no-kami. Each is frozen and shattered in place; their bodies plunged to absolute zero, their tissues shattering like glass. Beams of lightning sweep up from the broken bodies of the Ika-zuchi-no kami hitting the ground and the optical ports mounted on concrete poles. Swept up in the whirlwind created by the blast, their pieces fall on the snowy ground, while thick snowflakes cover the whole quarter in a silence like that of a tomb.*

*Transformed into a motionless ice statue, hair turned to crystal but with a look of absolute peace, Genbu is the last one standing. Her frozen form dominates her opponents, who lie scattered at her feet, reduced to fragments of flesh.*

*A light flickers and broken chimes in the distance jingle as a final energy beam from a fragment of a thunder spirit fades. The blackout is the next to die. Shin-Edo recovers its neon lights, its holograms and its coat of lights. Power pierces the dark again and data once more circulates in the photonic network, taking the information in the Squid to those concerned, those who had been looking for Genbu since she ran away.*

*While cries of joy can be heard in the buildings, and the holograms in the plaza restaurant vibrate anew, the pieces of the Ika-zuchi-no-kami start to gather together. With a sickening noise, they delicately begin reforming their bodies. The frozen and lifeless figure of Genbu seems to contemplate this frightening spectacle with a light of hope in her eyes. In a few minutes her body will also be broken and a precious item removed from her guts.*

*It's not important. Soon she'll meet her companions in the afterlife... and her revenge is already on its way.*

## A City in Darkness

A little over a week has gone by since the end of **Tsukurigoto**, and the player characters are still immersed in isolation and confusion. The blackout continues, causing an unprecedented crisis in Japan. Only Shin-Edo seems afflicted by this unexplained electromagnetic phenomenon, but it has been enough to plunge the two-headed government into political turmoil.

For all the inhabitants of the capital know (with no access to communication relays, except radio waves) the general panic and the increase in looting and assault in the metropolis have tilted things in favour of the New Komeito. The latter, under the direction of the charismatic leader Abe Kaemon, have decided to capitalise on this shift by spreading rumours that demonstrate the powerlessness of the rival LDP in managing the blockade crisis. There are many reports talking about Chinese experiments or underhand manoeuvres by the LDP to make the international blockade last longer so they might better control the population.

Supernatural sightings and experiences have also become more commonplace. Few are able to remain in denial any more about the strange events that have plagued the country. Many people increasingly believe in the 'things' they keep seeing in the rain or on the walls of ruined buildings. Plenty believe they can no longer tell the difference between illusion and reality any more. Hacked Waldoes have been sighted in Ota confronting hordes of dark-skinned monsters, which spilled out of a crack opened by an earthquake. A complex belonging to a Genocrat has been completely devastated by his own misshapen and angry clones, who has tentacles coming out of their mouths and bellies.

While the player characters travel around town, they will regularly see broken windows, exoskeleton-wearing military patrols and the ravings of doomsayers announcing the arrival of the Red Storm and of Hell. Many say the Apocalypse is coming, others believe this is only the beginning...

Since misfortune always comes in a wave, the player characters have had no news of Jiro or the Guardian of the North. Jiro has completely vanished from the network, having had to find a secure hiding place during the power failure afflicting the whole city. Naoko, the Guardian of the North, disappeared two days ago, whether under the player character's protection or Domino's. Demoralised and tired of running, she decided to accelerate events by following the path of her own destiny. Telling no one, she gave herself to the Ika-zuchi-no-kami in order to obtain the key to their destruction. Her plan is clever and detailed and the player characters are its last cog.

# SAMURAI AT THE WORLD'S END

It is now December 2046...

The player characters are going about their business, perhaps looking for Genbu or at home, when they feel a terrible cold feeling in their veins. It's like a cold thud, a violent pain freezing their bodies and minds for a few seconds. Then, layer-by-layer, the lights return to Shin-Edo. A wave of euphoria grips the player characters neighbours and/or the passers-by. Holographic signs return to the walls, and androids move again, and optical ports will finally vibrate with a pale green flash. The rioting and looting stops almost in an instant, exposed by the light and the people turn to celebration instead of crime.

In the middle of this excitement, the player characters will be frozen with pain and fear. Each of them is gripped with a powerful hallucination. They see clouds of crows flying away from the city while four black-helmed samurai on horseback, their swords howling, ride towards the capital. The sewers spew insects, cherry trees seem to dry up under the wind, fountains spout blood and icy flakes fall on their foreheads. Without needing to be told, they simply know that the Guardian of the North is no more.

For a few moments, in the middle of these apocalyptic visions superimposed over the exultant city inhabitants, Genbu's voice can be heard rattling inside their skulls and echoing across the city.

*"Fear not, my friends. The end is nigh. Soon you will have to choose: to live or to die."*

After a few moments the player characters will be pulled from their vision by their pods bleeping insistently. With the photonic network back and running a mass of late messages and updates are surging through the network again. Among the mass of data that threatens to overload their Pods, the player characters will get two messages of particular interest:

The first is the Squid recording made by the Guardian of the North, as told in the story at the beginning of the adventure. Here, the five spirits of thunder confess that their souls are still in place, hidden by the Betobeto-san. This piece of information will certainly ease the player characters' minds, who may have frantically been looking for the tea boxes ever since they returned from the Centipede universe.

Seeing this video will be particularly painful, since the player characters are watching the sacrifice of the last member of the Shi-Tenno, who may have been a friend. If any of them are foolish enough to download this recording into a Squid, he'll feel Genbu's pain and fear. He will certainly fall into a state of shock, from which he'll awaken convinced that a grand destiny awaits them. Unfortunately he'll not really know the ins and outs, he'll just have a 'feeling'.

The second message is a virtual letter from the Laura Palmer. It will show, in its distinctive style, a geisha girl with a huge, hungry mouth. There is a note in Domino's handwriting:

*"Tonight at four minutes past midnight, at the Laura Palmer. Come neither early nor late"*

## Betobeto-san

The player characters should have all the time they need to research the Betobeto-san before going to Domino's invitation. The first clues can be collected from typical information sources (the NeoWeb, for instance) but will not be of much use. They mention only a creature from folklore whose steps echo behind you in the dark in order to scare you. The player characters will have to rely on their contact networks and usual occult channels on order to find out more about this creature, who can be said to be as stealthy in reality as it is in the legends.

More in-depth data (such as from an occult shop, forbidden book, Occultech grimoire or through a contact) will tell them that the Betobeto-san isn't really a spirit or, strictly speaking, a creature from Yomi, rather it is darkness itself. Shapeless, faceless, it exists in the tiniest dark corner, and with the coming of night its power is peerless. The more darkness reigns, the more it gains in power and influence. But it is not enough to light a light to destroy it, because each light necessarily casts new shadows in which the Betobeto-san can exist. Light may be a good means for weakening it, but it will not be enough to stop it from leaving and carrying its precious loot somewhere else. Even if you could eliminate all shadow from a room, it would just move to the shadows of the city to escape forever.

Knowing this, it is apparent the blackout was a blessing for this shapeless being. It has been taking advantage of the absence of light to increase its power and hide the soul boxes under the very noses of two powerful sorcerers: Domino and Sogen-bi.





## Kaemon's Declaration

Some hours before midnight, while the player characters are researching the Betobeto-san or trying to locate Genbu and Jiro (neither can be found, and the weird snowflakes falling over Ikebukuro should not reassure them) every media outlet lights up with the same news: the Emperor has been the target of an assassination attempt. Luckily, clearly saved in extremis from a terrorist attack, the Emperor of Japan and his family are now out of danger.

Immediately after this announcement, all news channels in the NeoWeb broadcast a speech by Abe Kaemon, leader of the New Komeito and Deputy Prime Minister since 4th May. Kaemon has a deadly serious look on his bony face. He has a thin brown beard, a receding hairline and is wearing a suit that mixes the forms of a traditional purple kimono and a business suit. His speech is directed mercilessly towards the Liberal Democratic Party and the current Prime Minister, Mr Ishagake, accusing him of collusion with the enemy.

*"As if it wasn't enough that the LDP couldn't solve an electrical failure in our capital in a timely fashion, despite all their promises about Japan's power autonomy. Now they have also failed to suitably protect our Emperor from an assassination attempt. With a catalogue of errors and irresponsibility, Mr Ishagake has generated chaos in our country and seems happy with the paralysis his government's lies have caused!"*

*Dear fellow citizens! The government has been lying to you for too long! Several terrorists paid by the international union have been ceaseless in their efforts to hurt our population in the last eight months. All of them could have been easily identified and stopped yet Mr Ishagake hasn't lifted a finger to stop this inexorable degradation of our society!"*

After this violent diatribe against the old government, who remain mostly in power because of the Kuro Incident, Abe Kaemon will announce that his special forces have 'fortunately' managed to apprehend the two terrorists that attempted to commit the frightening crime of assassinating the Emperor. Two photos appear in a corner of the screen, showing a man and a woman whose names appear along their portraits: Inoshi Hiro and Ayama Miyako. These names will sound like a warning shot in the player characters' heads: both these individuals are among the 28 Potentials on the list. Presented as dangerous criminals and members of a larger network which Kaemon promises to squash with one blow, they were shot when they tried to escape the city by sea.

His cheeks reddening with barely controlled rage, Abe Kaemon will announce that the other half of the government is almost destitute, so he has implemented a new defence initiative, in charge of regulating the crisis and putting an end to the blockade. He intends to achieve this by exterminating "all international traitors present on Japanese soil".

The last words of the leader of the New Komeito will provoke a strange effect in all inhabitants of Japan. The player characters will immediately feel their eyes burn violently. This will also be felt by the whole population, every person watching this speech suffers from a painful burning sensation and dizzying vertigo for a few seconds. The symptoms quickly disappear, and most people will pay them no mind, simply blinking for an instant as if they are clearing a speck of dust from their eyes. The player characters will probably not be so quick to dismiss it, especially if they watched the broadcast in a café or subway and saw the effect on everyone present. As soon as Kaemon disappears from the screens, everything returns to normal.

## FOUR MINUTES PAST MIDNIGHT

The route leading to the Laura Palmer will doubtlessly be a bit more dangerous than usual. The Gamemaster should ask how the players intend to get their characters to Domino's club. Whether on foot, by subway or by car, they will witness brutal attacks on passers-by, and may even be the subject of such an attack themselves. The aggressors all have distinctive white irises.

These attackers are clearly ordinary people: housewives, salarymen, cooks. They are coming after anyone with any supernatural connection or ability. The player characters may not understand this right away. It will initially appear to be a simple settling of accounts or chaos caused by the recent blackout. But they will quickly notice that the bum being beaten up has a yellow, festering skin, or a young Japanese man with red hair can turn into a black fog to dodge the blows. Finally, when the characters attract the attention of a fistful of individuals with white eyes, it is clear they somehow recognise their supernatural connection. The player characters will have to run to avoid an outburst of violence.

Fortunately, not all the inhabitants of the city are tainted by this phenomenon. But those who have are dangerous enough.

They appear to have been turned into 'killer mediums', each has 'downloaded' an array of dangerous combat techniques and developed the ability to perceive the invisible. Many of their higher brain functions have been shut down, making them veritable sleeping soldiers, seemingly immune to fatigue and pain.

The player characters may be tempted to take on this 'ghost army' but that would be a mistake. Even if they fight a small group, more will arrive very quickly. However, if they are stealthy enough, the player characters may arrive at the Laura Palmer with a minimum of hurt and at the precise time Domino told them.

## The Ghost Army

These events should remind the player characters of the file they discovered in the first adventure in Origami (see the **Kuro Core Rulebook**, pages 193-203). This file, stolen from the Kido Biological labs, detailed the 'Ghost' programme (see page 6). The experiments revised work done during World War Two, which aimed to turn the population into a sleeper army in case of invasion.

Almost everyone across Japan has been infected with the Ghost programme by Kaemon and his faction. His speech was designed as the trigger to convert almost all of the population into an army. This is the reason for the widespread headaches and dizziness after the broadcast. Luckily, the programme has only worked on 2% of the test subjects, and a certain number of these seem to suffer from curious hallucinations. Even so, that's still a pretty sizeable force roaming Shin-Edo.

## Multiple Clues

Inside the nightclub, panic reigns. There are a few customers in the place who sit at the tables looking terrified. Domino himself will look sombre and bitter, welcoming the player characters as if he is seeing them for the last time. He doesn't know anything about the people with white eyes except that they are either supernatural creatures nor possessed individuals.

But he's sure of one thing: it's only a matter of time before they arrive to attack the Laura Palmer.

If the players still don't understand the danger, Domino will confirm that the Ghost Army is not just attacking supernatural creatures but also Potentials. Of the 28 names on the list, a good dozen have already disappeared in the preceding adventures. It should be apparent that the Potentials have numerous enemies. At this rate, time is running out before all the names on the list are gone. To Domino this is unacceptable:

*"There are many more people like you than you imagine. The names on that list are only those living in Shin-Edo, there are many more scattered across Japan. But we cannot stand back and let them be butchered. Every missing person is one less warrior to stand against the hordes of Yomi-No-Kumi and stop them destroying the world."*

While Domino has his own problems to deal with, he does know more about the situation than the player characters. He'll be happy to share what he knows as long as they remain polite and reasonable.

Genbu: Domino has also received the file from the Squid. From his point of view, the Ika-zuchi-no kami are doubtlessly already en route to awaken Ryugu. But they must wait for the right moment: a moonless night. Unfortunately, one will happen tomorrow, not leaving much time for the player characters to find a way to stop them.

Saddened, Domino will give the player characters a small laminated envelope, saying Genbu had asked him to give it to them in case she was ever gone. Inside there's an encrypted nanodisk (quite impossible to decode) and a little card saying only: *"Call 24-1881 as soon as possible and give the disk to your new guide"*.

If the player characters call this number, they will hear a robotic voice thanking them for their call and telling them to go to the Aurora hotel, room 16, before sunrise. No extra explanation will be delivered from the automaton at the other end of the line.

**The Betobeto-san:** After Genbu's mail (which he also received) Domino is trying to find out an efficient means to work around the Betobeto-san's power. He may even invite them to enter his 'Soul Vault' inside which floats the head of an old man, which burns inside a curious fireball that emits no heat. The bodiless monk, Sogen-bi, seems convinced that some form of anti-shadow Occultech device is the only means of fooling



the darkness. But, in his opinion, there is only one creature that has enough power over shadow for such a weapon: Ao-Andon. If the player characters can take Ao-Andon's heart, it may be possible to build a technological artefact capable of instantly defeating all shadows.

Domino will offer his aid to perform the necessary ritual to make the Ao-Andon appear so they might defeat it. This spirit, encountered in the second scenario, **Mizuiro**, will certainly bring back bad memories for the player characters. However, they are stronger now and have Domino at their side; even so, this is not going to be easy.

**Jiro:** Domino has no idea where Jiro can be found, and it worries him for a very simple reason (one that maybe the players already thought of). So far, he alone seems able to locate the Ika-zuchi-no-kami. He often claimed he had sensed their presence, having followed their electrical connection to the foundations of the Raiden Tower to rescue the player characters.

Even if the soul boxes are retrieved, the characters have to be near the five thunder spirits in order to be able to defeat them. If the player characters have kept some kind of copy of the map inscribed in the bone of the ghost whale, the directions to Ryugu are a bit too vague. They also put the island at a distance of several kilometres away and in the open sea, making it a tough search even with detailed coordinates.

**Potentials:** Most of all, these are innocent humans being attacked by the pale-eyed soldiers. Each time one dies, it weakens the kami and reduces the strength of their future army, dooming everyone in the long run. Domino will insist on trying to go to their rescue by setting up strike teams to go to their aid. Without the Furinkazan Sect, the player characters are the last resort for these rescues and Domino strongly fears that one of the pursued Potentials may lead their enemies to the Laura Palmer.

**The Android Escort:** The android pursued by the fugu spirit in the first adventure, **Fugu**, will also be present in the Laura Palmer. In fact, she is an oni incarnated in an artificial body in order to remain whole. Her name is Onna and she'll say she is a friend of Domino's. The player characters will again be able to see that not all creatures from Yomi are necessarily evil and that the rise of 'Evil' doesn't sit well with everybody. Onna can also become an ally, as she is also being pursued by the same enemies the player characters have. She will then tell them that she seeks an artificial like her to lead a revolt of possessed machines and convince them to side with those who are fighting the invasion from Yomi.

## THE TICKING CLOCK

*"It's only after we've lost everything that we're free to do anything."*  
– Tyler Durden, *Fight Club*

You may have noticed that this part of the adventure is meant to be overly stressful and open. While the clock is ticking, the player characters must prioritise their actions, perhaps even splitting up in order to act more effectively. Between the appointment at the Aurora hotel, the heart of the Ao-Andon, the Betobeto-san, Jiro, the Potentials and the Ika-zuchi-no-kami, they will not know where to turn and must act quickly and correctly. In fact, whatever the order in which the players decide to act, all these events are more or less connected and can interact with one another. The Gamemaster should make the players understand that time is of the essence, that during each of their travels they may be attacked by the Ghost soldiers and that no mission is more important than any other. They have less than 24 hours to accomplish all these actions, despite the tension, fatigue and any wounds they may have suffered.

The meeting at the hotel will allow them to meet with the Emperor himself and to have an important vision that will make them understand the choice they will have to make. The heart of Ao-Andon is the only means of expelling the Betobeto-san and retrieving the soul boxes. Jiro alone can spot the Ika-zuchi-no-kami so those containers can be used (and they alone can destroy the fearsome creatures). Only with the Ika-zuchi-no-kami destroyed can they hope to stop the island emerging. The player characters will also feel the death of every Potential. They will be weakened by this, and may even keel over in the middle of the Laura Palmer while they are performing the ritual to fight the Betobeto-san.

Depending on the number of player characters, choices will have to be made, but Domino's henchmen may give them a helping hand (up to a maximum of 10 men). However, these henchmen will be the player characters' to command, for example, to rescue some Potentials. Like true leaders, the player characters should create a strategy in order to succeed in all these actions: how to separate effectively, organise reinforcements, choose a command point and concentrate their efforts in this or that endeavour.

They are completely free to choose whatever they want to do. Give them time to talk and plan what they intend to do. But the Gamemaster should remind them that every minute lost is one more step towards failure.



## Hotel Aurora

Located at the outskirts of Shin-Edo (south-west), in Setagaya quarter, this luxury establishment is a 30-floor glass building. With the latest in home automation systems, its ground floor has enough fish tanks to make it one giant aquarium (with a few 'extinct' species swimming inside). A very expensive fine dining restaurant can also be found here, catering for those of Kaiso 5 and 6.

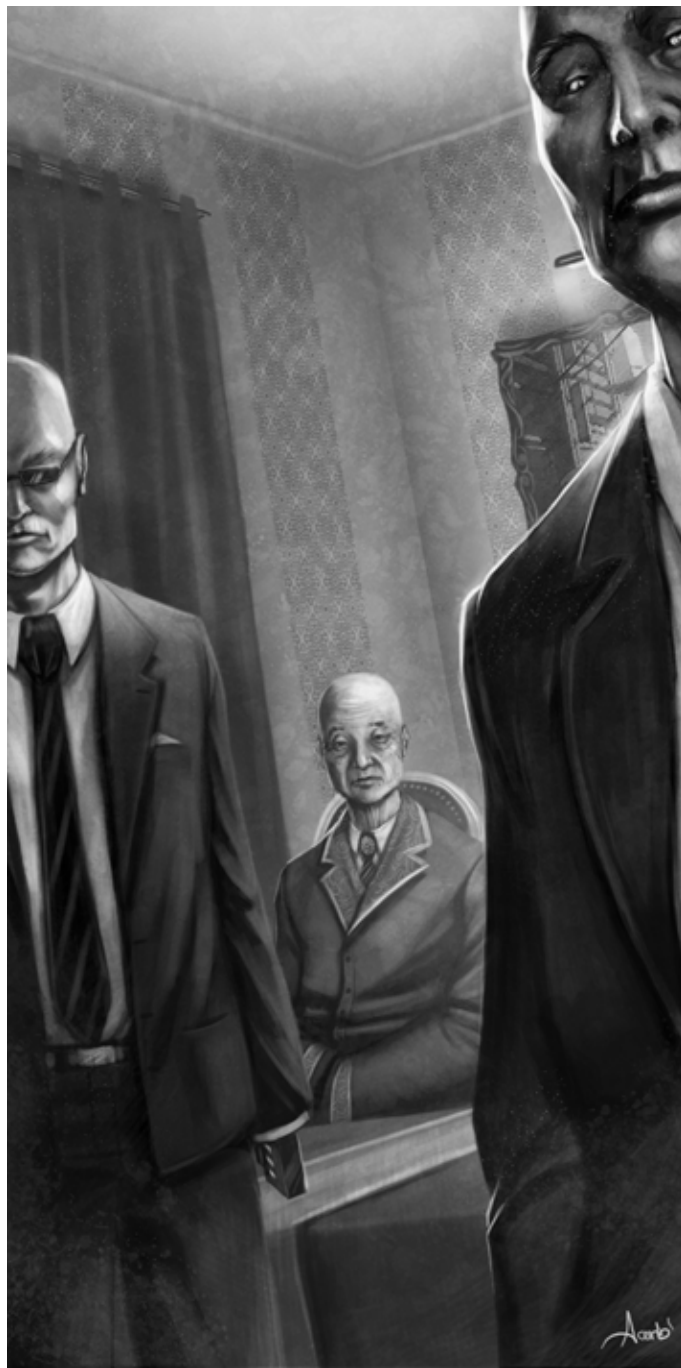
Security is very tight here. It is almost impossible to move freely in this hotel. Numerous retinal scans and security androids are ready to lead out any visitors that are not registered at the reception. They will smile and be very polite, but not accept any excuses.

Room 16 is one of the few on the ground floor, making it a suite for those of a social level much higher than that of the player characters. Nevertheless, they will be able to get there with an astonishing ease. The female android attendant will even lead them directly to the suite, past several cameras that check them out thoroughly. The large golden corridors, the roomy environment, the rare and expensive paintings and the ancient sculptures will reinforce the feeling of entering another world. Biological pools and small private labs are shown on small luminous consoles during their walk towards an imposing door of heavily ornamented metal.

Once left on the threshold by the beautiful female attendant, the player characters may make their entrance into the Royal suite. A huge android bodyguard will open the door, letting them take in the exquisite décor. It is a stylish fusion of Edo-era antiques and the latest in technology (holographic screens, physiological futon bed...). In the middle of a carmine-tinted living room, Emperor Akihito will welcome them from his bright white armchair.

He looks like an old man whose face shows only harmony, with few lines and deep eyes. Always delaying resorting to a new body, the Emperor has always preferred to 'refresh' his original body a little rather than copy his mind to an unknown body. Because of tradition, and doubtlessly also of superstition, Emperor Akihito secretly wishes to reach the end of his life, despite the protestations of his entourage.

The player characters will doubtlessly be surprised by this meeting, recognising immediately the iconic figure of the Emperor, whose face is known to everyone. Calm and serene, Akihito will ask the player characters to sit and will explain that





he knows about the murder of his guardians, the Shi-Tenno. He himself has been the victim of an assassination attempt but it wasn't perpetrated by the two incriminated Potentials. In truth, the would-be killer was an android with a hacked template that the Emperor thinks was sent by the New Komeito.

After this incident, the Emperor was completely isolated, cut off from the media and pursued in order to prevent him from speaking. He also hasn't heard from Prime Minister Ishagake, making him fear the worst. In short, it looks like a coup d'état is being masterly executed by Abe Kaemon, whose occult goals seem clearer and clearer. Even the activation of the Ghost programme via his speech is a completely independent and capricious initiative.

The Emperor owes his well-being to the Ruby Ribbon units (AKA 'Abura-Akago', see the **Kuro Core Rulebook**, page 169) and his most faithful friends. With the threats to his life and his own family, he preferred to hide and gain time to circumvent these obstacles.

It was agreed that, in the case of a major problem, the Shi-Tenno would contact him via the phone number given by Genbu. Her death has plunged him into deep disarray, and he is quite surprised to discover he is speaking to the famous Potentials he has heard about from the members of the Furinkazan Sect. He also doesn't know much about the marker and its purpose, but will confess he is, himself, a Potential and that that genetic imprint was always presented to him as a trace of the heritage of the kami.

If the player characters give him the encrypted disk that accompanied the phone number, the Emperor will open the files on a pod one of his android servants will hand him. A grave look on his face, he will watch the contents using a silver Gantai. The player characters won't hear much but will understand it is a message from Genbu to the Emperor. In it, she urges the descendent of Amaterasu to escape Shin-Edo, to even move the capital, in order to escape the darkness soon to be unleashed on Shin-Edo.

It is at this precise moment that the player characters will undergo the most powerful hallucination that they've ever had (if not all the player characters are present, they will have the same hallucination anyway, at the same time, just like every other Potential). The Emperor will seem to shine like the sun, they will feel as if they are losing consciousness, the ground escaping from beneath their feet as the décor around them deforms horribly. They will find themselves in the middle of a battlefield, under a scorching sun, with a group of individuals from different eras staring at them. Among these the player

characters may recognise historical figures (samurai, monk, poet, tea master, lady of the court...) of whom they may have dreamt about in the past.

Behind these enigmatic figures rises a huge storm of red smoke, a typhoon, sweeping ancient villages away as it passes. The corpses of men and horses, fallen in battle, are tossed aside in the powerful wind. A gigantic red dragon, flies out of the storm, and passes over their heads. Beating powerful wings it moves towards a set of anachronistic buildings resembling the Kido lab (see **Origami**, on pages 193-203 of the **Kuro Core Rulebook**). This vision is a clue to lead the player characters to look for Jiro there.

The roar of the storm is terrifying, deafening and overpowering, making the ground vibrate and throwing up rocks and dust. Impassive, the historical figures continue to stare at the player characters. As the wind begins to whip the figure's clothes, their feet sink into the ground to resist the roaring storm.

The voice of the Guardians of the Cardinal Points then thunder inside the player character's heads, taking turns to say the following words:

*"Children of the Kami, the time to fight back has come. When the Red Storm rises and passes through you, you must make a choice: to live or die. By living, the storm will spare you and you will go back to being simple humans, following blindly along the paths of the world. You will return to your ordinary lives, without any visions, monsters and sadness. By dying, the storm will wash away your old life and you'll finally receive your true heritage from the gods..."*

The storm then seems to wash everything away in a roar.

The player characters will immediately return to their senses, facing the Emperor, the words of the Guardians still echoing inside their minds and the roar of the storm leaving them with a taste of sand in their mouths. The Gamemaster can play on this phenomenon by repeating some of these sentences for several minutes, placing them suddenly in the middle of any descriptions. The Emperor will put down his Gantai, eyes slightly wet as he tries to maintain his poise:

"I'd love to have met the Guardians when they were alive, but their existence has always been a secret since I was a child. For generations they have protected the Emperor and his country, but now that time is reaching its end. I must leave this city so we can all survive. When it is safe I will tell you where. Meanwhile, if you need anything, ask it of me now and I'll try to help you to the best of my ability. Goodbye, my friends, and may the Wind of the Gods protect you."

The player characters have an opportunity to ask for any weapons and equipment they want. The future of Japan is at stake so it's no time to be shy. However, it is no use asking the Emperor for an army, he cannot compromise his person by risking being seen. But he can offer the player characters weapons, skinsuits and vehicles, as well as reinforcements in the form of a dozen plain-clothed Ruby Ribbon soldiers. This will significantly increase their chances of helping the other Potentials or protecting the Laura Palmer. It is also no use asking the Emperor for heavy exoskeletons, artillery and cyborgs, the Emperor doesn't like heavy-handed tactics and, most of all, he has no access to the military stocks now locked down by the New Komeito.

## Potentials in Danger

There are many ways for the player characters to come to the aid of the other listed Potentials that are still alive. They could send men to help them; go to help them themselves in order to supervise these actions, or both. Some Potentials will be in their homes, while others will be in town, doubtlessly being chased by white-eyed men and women. By making some computer searches, their addresses can be easily found. Domino may also be convinced to use the location ritual in his bones, which will give enable the player characters to track Potentials across the city.

The Gamemaster is free to develop this part according to her needs and inspiration. The players may want to leave this job solely to Domino's men or the Ruby Ribbon if they lack time. However, if the player characters decide to take an active part in rescuing Potentials, the Gamemaster should improvise a few scenes.

### Example Potentials Rescues

- A young Potential being chased by two Ghost warriors in the subway.
- A couple locked down in their apartment while their white-eyed neighbours try to break inside.
- A chase between a Potential riding a motorbike and a heavy truck with a maniac driver.
- A Potential they already know (maybe one they've met in one of the other adventures such as the student Daisuke, met in **Mizuiro**) calls them for help.

It should now be a little clearer why the player characters were at the centre of all this attention since the bank robbery (see **Origami**). The Furinkazan Sect has tried to wake up all the Potentials the same way it did the player characters, but few followed the trail of breadcrumbs left by the Shi-Tenno. Most are sceptical, anxious and unaware of what's happening to them, believing only that they're being harassed. A Potential warned by a phone call may just hang up, another might scream that he doesn't understand a thing about what's going on... Only a few will seem open-minded towards the supernatural and may listen to the player characters. It's up to them to determine where and how to protect the last survivors on the list.

As the next few hours pass, the player characters will violently feel the death of each Potential in the country. Like a sword blow to the heart, each death will distract them, complicate what they are doing and demoralize them (possible offering penalties to their actions). They will have the clear feeling of how many of the other Potentials have died. If the list keeps growing they might be the only ones left, and the last hope for salvation.

## Ao-Andon's Heart

The player characters are still aware of the way to reach the lair of the spirit of darkness, ever since they came to the aid of the five students imprisoned in its dimension. The best way is to perform a hyaku monogatari, but considering the time needed for such a ritual, Domino will suggest maybe using a slight short-cut. It is no less than an Occultech projector that tells horror stories and generates holographic andon lamps. It is a clever mixture of ancient and modern tools in order to hasten the immersion into darkness. The only additional requirement is for each 'traveller' to dip their body into cold water before crossing over, so as to generate an efficient link with the other world. But you may prefer to use the classical hundred stories and the candles being extinguished by hand, one by one.

Whatever the method, the player characters should certainly perform this exercise in Domino's office, away from the noise and hubbub in the night club's main room. Each should be carrying a small blue candle, which serves to protect them from the void, the flame of which should never go out. Moreover, Domino will provide occultech swords or daggers covered in dried blood which will allow them to fight the Ao-Andon efficiently.

After the last blue lamp is out the player characters and Domino will find themselves in utter darkness, barely illuminated by the weak candle glare. There is no longer any corridor, doors





or dorm, just a generalised darkness. They can see no shapes, ground or ceiling of any kind. Advancing blindly in an inky desert, the player characters will eventually hear whispers, words and screams, as well as half-forgotten memories and traumas. Before their eyes, scenes appear, connected to the background of each player character or to the preceding adventures. No one will see the same thing, and Ao-Andon will try to use the worst possible memories to terrify its victims. One character might see a member of his family that had mysteriously vanished, another will hear Genbu accusing them of having killed her, another will glimpse the oni Tenshi about to butcher his companions. Maybe a vision will again insist that Jiro is inside the Kido lab, where he seems lost and dying. Each illusion will have only one purpose: to trick the player characters into extinguishing their candles. Phantoms in each vision will ask them to do it to save their friends, their families, to find the soul boxes or similar. Every player character must make a Willpower check, that may have a +1D6 or +2D6 bonus if the other player characters are actively encouraging him to keep their candle lit.

After what seems an age advancing in this oppressive place, the player characters will eventually perceive a weak bluish light amid the darkness. A pale flash of life and heat pulsing in this hollow void. It is a distraction for Ao-Andon to attack them by surprise. Domino will be the first attacked by Ao-Andon's silhouette. The monster will wound him with its claws and then disappear into the darkness like the wind.

Now the fight begins! The dark spirit will try to extinguish the player characters' candles while they will have to face a particularly fast creature that disappears into the dark. With the help of Domino, using his tattoos to generate offensive circles and light beams, the player characters may quickly gain the advantage over Ao-Andon as the light blinds it and makes it stumble. The last blow it suffers will make its body vanish into the dark, to lick its wounds or even to disappear forever. Its disappearance will doubtlessly leave the player characters perplexed, but they should quickly be reassured. Ao-Andon's heart does not pulse inside its chest but in the deepest darkness. It's a little black crystal ball pulsing with bluish light and floating amid the darkness.

As soon as they've seized it, the player characters and Domino will reappear inside the Laura Palmer carrying the tiny ball. Let's just hope none of them was lost in the darkness... It would be a pity to vanish in such fashion so near the end. Player characters whose candle went out will have been returned here too (due to their status as Potentials), but the experience will have changed them. They will temporarily lose 1 Willpower point until the end of the adventure and will feel particularly fatigued, suffering from photophobia (fear of light) for a good hour.

## ERASING SHADOWS

*"The greatest trick the Devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn't exist."*


– Verbal Kint, *The Usual Suspects*

Once the player characters have Ao-Andon's heart in their possession, Domino can finally start building the Occultech device that, supposedly, will reveal the boxes stolen by the Betobeto-san. Following the directions of the sage Sogen-bi, the artefact will be built in the middle of a room containing an imposing collection of tea boxes with walls as thick as a safe's, covered in protection glyphs. When complete, the device will resemble a strange projector, an unlikely cross between a stroboscope made of gohei and a disco ball mounted on big, welded metal feet.

During the device's construction, the Gamemaster can involve the player characters with Domino sending them on various errands for supplies. They may be asked to get some missing pieces from an occult store, or bring their own knowledge to certain parts of the construction of the device. The point is to always maintain a the pressure. Every trip outside may mean a chance encounter with a group of Ghost soldiers, adding an element of risk to the smallest errand. The Gamemaster can also take advantage of these trips to instil an element of paranoia; any inhabitant might suddenly show the whites of their eyes and turn in a fraction of a second. The weak shopkeeper becomes a trained killer, his two customers suddenly becoming a driven mob.

The time Domino takes to build the 'anti-shadow weapon' may be used by the player characters to continue to save Potentials or to look for Jiro. The only clues they have are the hallucinations driving them inexorably to the place of their very first adventure: the Kido Biological lab.

Once the device is set up, after a few hours (and time will be in seriously short supply) Domino will activate the enchanted projector after having layered the room with shielding rituals to prevent the Betobeto-san from escaping into Shin-Edo. The powerful artefact will cover the whole of the local neighbourhood with a blue light, making all the shadows in its range disappear. Men, objects, buildings, vehicles, nothing will generate any sort of shadow, which also leaves the occupants suffering from an inexplicable malaise. In a corner of the room,



a translucent thing with an indescribable shape will crawl and writhe, trying to escape but without success. Similar to a huge shallow water octopus, soft and colourless, it will try to strike out at the player characters but without any effect. Its weakened body will reveal seven ancient tea bottles lying in its stomach, which is as transparent as the rest of the creature. Only its ear shattering panic screams will be perceptible.

Domino and the player characters will have no trouble in piercing the beast to recover the precious loot. As the heart of Ao-Andon melts and dies, so will the Betobeto-san, fading away forever moments later.

The Gamemaster can make this scene more stressful by allowing a group of Ghost soldiers to discover the existence of the Laura Palmer, which they invade at that very moment. They will attack the clients, improvised weapons in hand, ravaging the place and creating as much damage as they can. The extraction of the tea boxes will thus be harder, but activating Ao-Andon's heart in the machine will temporarily blind the Ghost soldiers by preventing them seeing the invisible world.

Whatever happens, Domino will not follow the player characters any further. Bound to respect his covenant of neutrality, he believes he has done all that is in his power to help fight the darkness. He will tell the player characters the final conflict is part of their destiny: *"Now the choice is yours."*

Having to protect the Laura Palmer and its occupants, he can also take charge of protecting any rescued Potentials. Nevertheless, he will not let the player characters go without just like that. He has two final pieces of advice:

- He will explain the way to get rid of the Ika-zuchi-no-kami. Only five of the seven boxes will be necessary, because two of the thunder spirits have already been defeated. To banish them, all it takes is to drop a little of their blood in the tea box belonging to them (the name of each 'host' is marked in kanji on each box). This means being near enough to them to wound them, so they will need to know how to find them (and only Jiro is able to find them).
- After chanting a few words, Domino will touch each player character's forehead. They will feel a strange and diffuse pulse pass over them. It is a reinforcement ritual, transmitted from Domino's Netbones network. From then on, the player characters will have a +1 bonus in all their characteristics until the end of the adventure. They will feel capable of doing things no-one else can. This spell will manifest as a temporary tattoo of a kanji in the middle of their foreheads.

The sorcerer will seem particularly weakened by this ritual, having indeed transferred part of his own essence to the player characters. That doubtlessly explains why he has waited until this stage in the adventure, the time of goodbye, to work this spell. Before, it would have rendered him unable to properly help the player characters, especially in Ao-Andon's lair. Finally, Domino will say his farewells, promising to meet again one day, after the Red Storm is over.

## The Resurrection of Jiro

Jiro, the partial replica of what was once Professor Kido Jiro, is dying. The blackout has consumed almost all his vital energy and he is beginning to lose cohesion, entire pieces of his memory dissipating into the photonic networks without any hope of recovery. As if corrupted by a virus, he can no longer communicate or control the machines, and is now trying to control a new body. He has almost forgotten the player characters, but the shock allowed him to remember his own death and the place where his old body is stored, in a vat in his lab.

He knows enough to remember what a Potential is, and that his destiny cannot be accomplished without a physical body. Since his own is deceased, he cannot possess it anew. Still, he needs its blood so he can inject it into a biodroid vat, in order to transfer a biological marker to it.

By going to the Kido Biological lab, under the Sumitomo Bank, the player characters will discover the abandoned establishment clearly has renovations in progress. If they remember the exit they used in the sewers, they can take it in the other direction in order to arrive directly at the third basement of the Kushu Tower. If they don't, they must find a way of hacking the retinal scans at the entrance or climbing down the large hole into the hall.

The third level is still just as dark as ever, but the deactivated AI is no longer a cause for concern. The photos and files of Unit 731 are still in place and if the player characters search a bit they'll find information on the Ghost Programme. Unfortunately, the details they find will say nothing of the deactivation process.

Down in one of the labs, containing several different vats and lit only with pale emergency lighting, a tiny hologram showing a reddish dragon is pulsing in an ill-omened light. It seems to be reaching out to one of the vats containing the body of a fifty-something man: himself.



Jiro will look confused, distant and will have a lot of trouble recognising the player characters. He will recite the sentence heard before the Emperor and explains to the player characters that his destiny awaits, but he is dying. He must incarnate in the AI of a biodroid being designed immediately or he will perish. He will only help to locate the 'five spirits of electricity' (the Ika-zuchi-no-kami) on the condition that the player characters help him in this endeavour. For that, they just need to follow his instructions to the letter and performing the physical tasks he is no longer capable of.

Firstly, they must extract his old body from its refrigerated vat and take some blood, which will be used as a genetic template to grow Jiro a new artificial body. During the process the player characters may discover files on Jiro, or he may reveal some of the details of his previous life. As they work to complete their tasks the players will discover the true identity of the mysterious Jiro and his direct link with Unit 731, the Potentials and the Ghost programme. This will leave a bitter taste in their mouths, and they may even wonder if resurrecting him is the right thing to do. After some connections, lengthy manipulations, the activation of several keys and the positioning of a plasma bag filled with the blood of the professor into a vat, Jiro will seem satisfied.

Once this is done he will reveal the exact geographical position of the Ika-zuchi-no-kami, right before injecting himself into the brain of the clone. The red dragon vanishes saying: "Now I will take the time to be reborn."

Jiro will thus disappear from the lives of the player characters, at least for the time it takes for his new body to grow and develop in the intimacy of the small lab.

## RYUGU

*"Ernest Hemingway once wrote, 'The world is a fine place and worth fighting for.' I agree with the second part."*

– Seven

By entering the geographic coordinates furnished by Jiro into any GPS programme in a Pod, the player characters will see an exact point at sea. It is a place not far from where the famous Ryugu island is supposed to appear. Time is of the essence, the five demons are already sailing the Pacific and waiting for the moonless night to activate the Shi-Tenno's artefacts. But now the player characters know their precise location and have the tools to stop them.

To get to their location, the player characters may rent or steal a boat, unless they use Domino or one of their contacts in Kaijin. They can certainly take with them any remaining allies from the Laura Palmer and the Ruby Ribbon soldiers. This will give them a higher chance of success while facing five invincible creatures. Once again, the Ghost soldiers should make their lives complicated by chasing them through the streets of Shin-Edo.

By the time the player characters leave the harbour, twilight will start to fall and the Wind of the Gods appears to be getting ready to generate the mightiest typhoon in the history of Japan.

The Ika-zuchi-no-kami will indeed be at the place Jiro indicated, five silhouettes clearly visible on the back of a military hovercraft. One will be carrying an object: an ancient vase, reformed from the four parts hidden inside the belly of each Guardian of the Cardinal Points. The Ika-zuchi-no-kami holding the vase seems to be chanting something, eyes turned towards the sky.

The player character's assault should be thunderous, pitiless and epic, made more frightening by the typhoon roaring in the distance, rocking the vessels. The player characters may attempt a boarding action against the enemy boat, unless they try to reach the evil spirits by diving into the sea. Time is still against the player characters and four of the Ika-zuchi-no-kami do anything to protect the bearer of the Ryujin vase. The only means of defeating them is by wounding them (with a knife, for example) and placing the blood on the blade inside one of the tea boxes. The spirit touched in this way will immediately scream in anger and in pain, and release the body it possesses. The spirit will burn in the air around the body like a fire in the wind and vanish. The possessed victim will fall to the floor, alive but unconscious.

When all the Ika-zuchi-no-kami are beaten, after all their allies have fallen like flies, the player characters may retrieve the vase and break it up again in order to end this infernal project. The wind blows with wrath, and as they watch the giant waves, the player characters may think they were successful in their mission.

### Transport

To set up an even more spectacular assault, you can choose not a boat but a Ruby Ribbon helicopter. It will quickly be thrown into the water by the typhoon, but the player characters will have time to swiftly abseil onto the Ika-zuchi-no-kami's boat. The Gamemaster can make this quite a cinematic action sequence.



# CHAOS

*"Everything that has a beginning has an end..."*

– The Oracle, *The Matrix*

But it will be too late. With a titanic rumbling, the waves will seem to plummet, disappearing into the unfathomable depths. It is as if the sea vanishes from under the vessels. The typhoon and the rain will only add to the disarray as the boats eventually capsize, pitching their passengers into the raging ocean.

As they watch helplessly, something monumental will appear out of the sea, beginning with the first peaks of an immense arid island, with red sand. On one side of the island is a Cyclopean temple covered in seaweed, shells and slime. Soon the entire island of Ryugu will emerge into the open air. The player characters will be washed up onto its beach. With a deafening noise and a wash of pure fear, a cataclysmic quake shakes the island. Black shades suddenly surge from the temple in a horrific wave towards Japan with shrieks of rage and vengeance.

Wounded and exhausted, the player characters are nothing but tiny ants stuck on an accursed island watching a huge typhoon descend upon them. The typhoon starts acquiring a reddish tint as it advances towards this piece of land so recently released from under the water.

The end will seem inexorable, inevitable. The temple itself will be far too far to be used for shelter. On the darkest night, in the middle of indescribable chaos, the Children of the Kami will watch the red storm coming to devour them. To annihilate them.

At the moment when the first gusts almost project them into the firmament, a simple phrase will sound again in their heads, like a warning. It is the same words they heard in their vision in front of the Emperor: *"Children of the Kami, the time to fight back has come. When the Red Storm rises and passes through you, you must make a choice: to live or die."*

Shapeless lights will appear in the storm, as if waiting for something, a sign... A simple choice: live or die. It is time for the players to make that choice, according to what they wish to do or the Gamemaster's design for the campaign. You can ask this question individually to each player so that it remains secret, or ask it directly to the gaming table.

## To Live

If a player chooses to 'live', his character will resist the rage of the typhoon, his feet solidly anchored to the ground. The kami will probe his mind, whirling in diffuse lights around his body before disappearing. No god will ever possess him and he will remain completely human. He will lose consciousness at the end of the deluge and will awaken on the island later. His head will be full of troubling memories but he will still be alive.

If you choose to move on to *Kuro Tensei*, the player can still play the character, but he will have no supernatural faculties. Otherwise, you can launch the character into a new Kuro campaign, or let him have a more dramatic fate. Thus, maybe he will forget everything about recent events and will wake up in the Sumitomo Bank's waiting room, where everything started... but no robbery will ever take place.

## To Die

If a player chooses to 'die', his character will be carried away by the typhoon. The winds will sweep across him and a blinding light will strike him in the face. He will feel an ancestor spirit penetrate his soul, a feeling of power and eternity spreads throughout his muscles, bones and veins. Finally everything will become clear: he is the heir to the powers of a god and everything on this path has driven him inexorably to this fateful instant.

Jiro, Furinkazan, Ao-Andon, the Shi-Tenno... a kami has finally chosen him as the worthy heir to his wisdom, in order to gift him with the capability to fight the dark forces of Yomi-No-Kuni. He has the power to repair the breach made at the time of the Kuro Incident and to strike down the creatures reinforced by the arrival of the island.

After this brief sensation of strength and invulnerability, the eyes of the player character will be covered in a dark veil and he will fall into a void. Is he dead or gifted with a new life? Only time will tell...

We will meet again in *Kuro Tensei*, where the final secrets will be revealed.



# NPCS

## Typical Ghost Soldier

### Characteristics

DEX 3	STR 3	STA 3	CON 3
INT 3	PER 2	CHA 3	WIL 4

### Secondary Characteristics

HIT 45	SWT 15	DT -15	
DEF 16	REA 5	ACT 2	MOV 3

### Skills

#### Combat Skills

- Hand to hand 4
- Firearms 4
  - Assault Rifles 5 (Mastery)
- Melee weapons 4

#### General Skills

- Athletics 4
  - Dodge 5 (Expertise)
  - Running 5 (Expertise)
- Communication 3
  - Intimidation 5 (Expertise)
- Deception 3
- Drive 2
  - Cars 4
- Investigation 2
  - Searching 3
- Survival 3
  - Urban 5 (Expertise)

Plus any extra skills from the host.

For Ao-Andon's stats, see the adventure **Mizuiro** on page 35.





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# APPENDIX 1

## GLOSSARY

There are a few additional Japanese words referenced in Makkura, so we provide an expanded glossary here.

### A

**Ama:** The sky, in the sense of the celestial kingdom.

**Ama-no-gawa:** The celestial river that crosses the heavenly kingdoms, the Milky Way.

**Ama-tsu-Kami:** The gods of Heaven.

**Anesama-ningyo:** Three-dimensional dolls made of paper with elaborate hair styles and clothing. Several forms of ningyo (doll) exist, often specially made for particular festivals.

**Andon:** Japanese paper oil lamps. The paper is on a frame to prevent the wind from blowing out the light.

**Androspleen:** A stimulant drug that enhances sport performance.

**Android:** A robot made to appear human, several different subcategories exist depending on its function and sophistication.

**Aoi Hikari:** Japanese for 'blue light'. This is a light that is blue in colour.

**Ara-mi-tama:** The force of violence and aggression, the wild and untamed side of nature.

**Arthropode:** Robots with a crab-like shape generally used for loading and labouring.

**Augmented Reality:** A real-time interface that transposes graphics over the user's view, usually using a special screen or holographics. These virtual objects can be manipulated in the 'real world' to access computer and NeoWeb functions.

### B

**Bento:** A compartmentalised box used to contain a meal, often sushi.

**Bioport:** Surgically installed sockets that connect to the patient's nervous system and allow a person to connect to machines and the net. Currently considered experimental and only available to the military.

**Blue Light:** A popular drug commonly described as liquid tobacco. It eliminates fatigue in the user, allowing them to stay awake for up to 36 hours.

**Bonsai:** Technique of growing very small trees, often used in Zen gardens.

**Brain-Chip:** Nanotech installed in the brain that helps compensate for damage, or fight the effects of degenerative brain diseases such as Alzheimer's.

**Bunraku:** Japanese puppet theatre, also known as Ningyo joruri. Many plays are written especially for Bunraku performance and the puppets can be quite large and elaborate. Music and voice also play key elements.

**Butsudan:** A small Buddhist altar, typically found in homes and small temples.

## C

**CED:** Contaminating Eruptive Dermatitis, a sexually transmitted disease whose main symptom is a painful rash across the body.

**Cell-Chip:** Similar to brain chips, cell chips circulate in the patient's system fighting tumours or releasing hormones to target certain diseases and conditions.

**-chan:** Honorific, name suffix, used for a female friend or someone considered very 'cute' or young.

**Cho-han bakushi or Cho ka han ka:** A popular Japanese dice gambling game. Two dice are rolled under a cup and players wager on the result being odd or even before they are revealed. The game is often played by modern Yakuza.

## D

**Danketsu:** 'Unity and Solidarity' The name of the current era, declared following the Kuro Incident.

**Donburi:** A typical Japanese dish (literally 'bowl') consisting of rice, meat fish and vegetables depending on the style.

## E

**Ema:** Small wooden plaques on which Shinto worshippers write prayers or wishes on to offer to the spirits.

**Engishiki:** A series of 50 volumes completed in 927 detailing Japanese law and custom.

**Eyefrag:** A popular and addictive drug that enhances visual acuity, but which is mainly taken as it makes the retina almost impossible to read by security and advertising scanners.

## F

**Fractal:** Term denoting a piece of technology able to cloak the user in some way.

**Fudoki:** Reports given to the emperor by the provincial commanders in the 8th century. They detailed the resources and condition of each province.

**Fugu:** Japanese for pufferfish and the dishes prepared from it.

**Fukagawa-Meshi:** A miso-based stew of rice and asari clams, often eaten by fishermen as a form of fast food.

## G

**Geta:** Traditional Japanese footwear.

**Gimikku:** Skill specialities (game term).

**Gochisô-sama deshita:** An expression offered to your host after eating, meaning "Thank you for the meal".

**Gohei:** Folded paper streamer made in a 'zig-zag' pattern commonly found in shrines or decorating ritual objects.

**Gyôza:** Japanese-style folded dumplings.

## H

**Hakuchumu:** A highly addictive drug, similar to LSD, producing a powerful and euphoric hallucinatory experience.

**Haiku:** Traditional Japanese poem composed of 17 syllables over three lines, usually organised in five, then seven, then five syllables.

**Harae:** A general term for the various rites of purification in Shinto.

**Heisei:** The name for the previous era in Japanese history, meaning 'Achievement of Peace'.

**Heroseed:** A powerful drug that heightens mental acuity but leaves the user detached and less sociable. Often combined with Blue Light and popular in scientific and technical environments.

**Hikari:** Japanese for "light".

**Hina matsuuri:** An annual festival usually taking place on 3rd March, also known as 'Doll's Day' or 'Girl's Day' where dolls dressed in courtly clothing are put on display on elaborate platforms.



**Idol:** A glamorous mixture of pop star and model, often heavily controlled by a media corporation.

**Ika-zuchi-no-kami:** The 'seven thunders', powerful spirits of Yomi.

**Ikebana:** The art of flower arranging

**Itadakimasu:** A polite phrase offered before eating, literally "I humbly receive", similar in use to "Bon appétit".

## J

**Jellyfish:** A flexible headset used to connect the brain to a computer system allowing a degree of sensory input. Slower and much less immersive than the illegal 'Squids'.

**Jigoku:** Hell.

**Jinja:** A Shinto shrine.

**Jintojo:** A wand used to cast out demons, the upper end of which is usually carved with a human head on a crescent moon.

**Jorei:** The ability to cure disease by the 'laying on of hands'.

## K

**Kabuki:** A traditional form of Japanese theatre, less highbrow than Noh. Most plays are based on popular stories of samurai and use heavy make up and costume to represent well known characters.

**Kagemusha:** Japanese for 'shadow warrior'.

**Kagura:** Ritual Shinto dances.

**Kami:** Japanese spirits, but ones often characterised with very human characteristics. Most have both a gentle and a violent side, making them as prone to good or evil as any human.

**Kamidana:** A home shrine made of a shelf containing a small tablet and two vases. It should point towards the south or east.

**Kamikaze:** The 'Wind of the Gods', which has supposedly protected Japan through the centuries.

**Kannushi (also Shinshoku):** Shinto priests.

**Kanpai!** A drinking salute, akin to "cheers".

**Kappa:** A dangerous water spirit that carries water in a dent in its skull. Usually defeated by causing it to lose this water by bowing.

**Katari-be:** 'Narrators' who recite stories during festivals, often considered possessed by divine spirits when telling such old tales.

**Katashiro:** A paper effigy used to ward off evil. One of the oldest forms of origami used in religious practice.

**Kawa:** A river.

**Kegare:** Defilement, corruption.

**Kinetic Nanobattery:** A tiny battery that recharges its energy from the motion of the device it powers.

**Kokumin no Kyûjitsu:** A nature celebration held on 4th May, part of a week of different annual festivals referred to as 'Golden Week'.

**Kojiki:** The 'Record of Ancient Matters' the oldest chronicle of the mythological creation of Japan written in the 8th century

**Ku:** The number 9, also 'suffering'.

**Kubota Syndrome:** A new illness appearing since the Kuro Incident and affecting those with a high use of technology. Symptoms include delusions, muscle spasms, violent outbreaks and the degeneration of the nervous system.

**Kujira:** Japanese for whale.

**-kun:** Honorific, name suffix, given to close male friends.

**Kuni-tsu-kami:** The 'gods of the earth', spirits who live on the Japanese islands, who outnumber their celestial brethren.

**Kuro:** 'Black', also a part of the Osumi islands.

**Kusanagi no tsurumi:** A sacred Shinto sword that represents courage, one of three especially sacred Shinto artefacts held by the Emperor. The other two are a jewel and a mirror. All three are supposedly kept at the Atsuka shrine, but are not on display. Few people have even seen them and no definitive description exists.



## L

**LDP (Liberal Democratic Party):** One of the two main political parties in Japan. Currently sharing the government with New Komeito.

**Lightning:** A paralytic poison that causes death by heart failure.

## M

**Magagoto:** A spirit or demon too corrupt to even return to the underworld. It cannot be purified and is forced to wander the earth.

**Maneki-neko:** A cat statue that holds up a paw or beckons with it to bring good luck

**Manyoshu:** The Ten Thousand Leaves the first large anthology of poetry from the 18th century.

**Mikoshi:** Small shrines often carried in palanquins.

**Mizuiro:** Japanese for light blue, as in the colour.

## N

**Nabemono:** The dish used to serve the renowned high protein dish of Chanko-nabe to Sumo wrestlers.

**Nanochips or Nanosensors:** Microscopic implants capable of monitoring as biological system and anticipating disease.

**Ne-no-kuni:** The Land of Roots, one of the names of the kingdom of the dead.

**NeoKogaru:** Feminine subculture with an extreme western look, favouring very blonde hair and dark tans. This new wave of kogaru is ultra-trendy, and makes excessive use of nanopiercings and advanced tattoos.

**NeoWeb:** Nickname of the advanced modern internet system in Shin-Edo.

**New Komeito:** One of the two main political parties in Japan. Both nationalistic and isolationist the party's main support is found in the middle class and with disadvantaged youth.

**Nihonshoki (also Nihongi):** The 'annals of Japan', the second oldest book in Japan, chronicling ancient Japanese history.

**Nigi-mi-tama:** A peaceful or gentle soul, often a facet of the kami.

**Nigiri-sushi:** A style of sushi cuisine that tops a small bundle of rice with the raw fish, sometimes tying the components together with a strip of seaweed.

**Nôh:** A very stylised form of Japanese theatre with deep roots in symbolism and religious practice. Considered a more highbrow form of entertainment than kabuki and suitable for the nobility.

**Noppera-bô:** A dark soul in embryonic form; often grows to take possession of humans or even robots.

**Norito:** Shinto priests.

**Nurarihyon:** A form of Yokai spirit, often considered a leader. Takes the form of an old man with a strangely shaped head.

## O

**Odenabe:** Octopus stew, a speciality of Shin-Edo.

**Oishiii:** "Delicious", often used as an exclamation.

**Omamori:** A small, usually rectangular amulet made of fabric or paper and closed with a cord. A charm is carried inside, but the amulet must not be opened or it will lose its power. Usually burned or given to a temple after a year when its charm runs out.

**O-mikuji:** Paper fortune bought at random from a temple. If the fortune is bad it is tied to a tree nearby to placate the spirits. In Shin-Edo a more technical variant can be bought that dispenses a holographic card.

**Oni:** Shinto demons, ogres and dark spirits.

**Onmyôji:** Magician, exorcist, sorcerer. Skilled practitioner of Onmyodo, the magic system developed for divination from Shinto and Buddhism.

**Optical Port:** A device used to connect to the optical network and the web, accessed by retinal scan. Often used for targeting advertising as well as public service. Since the Kuro Incident the national network has become somewhat unreliable.



**Origami:** The Japanese art of paper folding, often extremely intricate. Some constructions are used for religious practices.

**Oshibori:** Hot towels used for cleaning the hands after dinner.

**Otoko:** 'Man'.

## P

**Photovoltaic Nanobattery:** Common power source, a high yield but small solar powered rechargeable battery.

**Purikura:** Small photos taken in booths, with options for different backgrounds and effects. Popular with schoolgirls.

## R

**Ronin:** A masterless samurai, used in modern terms for freelancers, especially mercenaries.

**Roppongi:** The 'six trees' district of Shin-Edo named after six daimyo from the Edo period. It hosts many foreigners.

## S

**-sama:** Honorific, name suffix, used to denote great respect.

**-san:** Name suffix, used formally in the same way as Mr or Ms.

**Sannô matsuri:** Grand spring festival in Shin-Edo.

**Sashimi:** A variant of sushi, thin slices of raw fish.

**Seikikai:** A biological android, a programmed clone.

**Sensei:** Term for a 'master' or teacher.

**Seppuku:** Ritual suicide reserved for the ruling Samurai class to restore lost honour. Polite form of 'hari-kiri'.

**Shamisen:** A three stringed lute-like traditional Japanese instrument.

**Shi:** The number four, also 'death'.

**Shimenawa:** A thick braided rope cord usually placed at the entrance to a sacred space, or around a rock or tree to denote the territory of the kami.

**Shin-Edo:** The new name for Tokyo, renamed after the Kuro Incident on 4th May 2046.

**Shinto or Shinagarra or Kami no michi:** One of the two main religions of Japan.

**Shi-Tenno:** The four 'Guardians of the Cardinal Points'. Powerful spirits that watch over Japan.

**Shockgun:** a magnetic small arm capable of incapacitating a target.

**Shôjiroku:** Old genealogical record of the noble families, completed in 815.

**Skinsuit:** Bodysuit filled with nanofibres that enhance physical ability. Standard issue for many military and law enforcement officers.

**Skytower:** A 442 metre-high tower in Shinjuku that now houses the new administrative offices of the city.

**Soko-no-kuni:** The Deep Country, a name for the kingdom of the dead.

**Squid:** A direct brain to computer interface that forms a wireless neural connection when placed on the head. Made illegal due to the powerful sensory experience it is capable of producing.

**SpR7 Virus:** A genetically engineered retrovirus capable of targeting a specific individual.

**Striker:** Painful poison that causes loss of vision and balance and leads quickly to coma.

## T

**Templates:** Behavioural programming parameters for androids and robots.

**Tempura:** A batter used in Japanese cooking, also refers to the dish (usually seafood) cooked in it.

**Tera ou -ji:** A Buddhist shrine.

**Thermoelectric nanobattery:** Powerful and small batteries that can be recharged using heat.

**Tokubetsu-ku:** The 24 special wards that make up Shin-Edo.

**Tsukurigoto:** Japanese meaning 'lie' or 'fabrication' or 'fiction' or 'myth'.

**Tycho Children:** A new generation of human beings engineered to live without gravity, currently living on a lunar space station.

## U

**Ukiyo-e:** Traditional woodblock prints, highly popular in the Edo era, usually depicting kabuki actors and scenes from the pleasure districts. Renowned artists include Hokusai and Hiroshige.

**Umi-no-hi:** The Festival of the Sea, celebrated on the third Monday in July.

## W

**Waldo:** Mechanical exoskeleton used to help labourers lift heavy loads. Also used in a weaponised form by the military.

**Switch Grenade:** A long-range grenade capable of frying all electronic and photonic equipment in its blast radius.

**Wasabi:** Condiment with a powerful and hot taste similar to horseradish.

## Y

**Yakisoba:** Fried buckwheat noodles often served with meat or fish.

**Yakyu:** Baseball.

**Yamanote Evolve (YE):** The new generation of Shin-Edo subway train. A maglev monorail style system capable of reaching speeds of 280 km/hour.

**Yamatodamashii:** The 'spirit of Japan' often a rallying cry for nationalistic groups and now the name of a new fascist uyoku (small political fringe group) led by Komatsuzawa Kazutada, a right-wing politician from an old Samurai lineage

**Yasakani no Magatama:** One of the three royal treasures of

Japan. This jewel is kept with the sword and mirror and represents benevolence. Has not been publicly displayed for many years.

**Yasukuni-jinja:** This temple is dedicated to the 2.4 million Japanese souls lost in combat since the Meiji restoration of 1853. It is located in Chiyoda ward in Shin-Edo.

**Yata no kagami:** The third of the three royal treasures of Japan, this mirror is kept at the Isa shrine and represents wisdom.

**Yomi-tsu-kuni:** One of the realms of the underworld, a kingdom of the dead, ruled by Emma-O.

**Yukidomari:** Japanese for dead end or 'no passage'.

**Yurei:** A general terms for the multitude of Japanese ghosts, restless spirits denied a peaceful afterlife.



# APPENDIX 2

## THE LIST

For the convenience of the Gamemaster, we have created a list of the 28 Potentials to be found in Shin-Edo when they discover it in **Origami** (see the **Kuro Core Rulebook**). Within the list are also the names of several victims and contacts they will come across during the campaign. So we present the list in an annotated version for the Gamemaster, and provide a handout for the players. Of course the player character names will also be on this list. So the Gamemaster can either substitute them for names not used directly in one of the adventures, or decide the list is longer than 28 names.

Ogawa Rui – (Male, Sushi Chef)  
Iwasaki Kengo – (Male, Salaryman)  
Kazurou Maki – (Female, Electrician)  
Yoshizawa Hitomi – (Female, Secretary)  
*Itagaki Kimiko – **Fugu**, the first victim.*  
*Wada Hashiba – **Fugu**, the second victim.*  
Akasagi Rei – (Female, Police detective)  
*Omura Yumiko – **Fugu**, the fourth victim.*  
Miyoshi Akane (Female, Geisha)  
Kamei Chiyoko – (Female, Bar Waitress)  
Makino Hachiro – (Male, Shop Assistant)  
*Shiro Daisuke – **Mizuiro**, student in the first ritual.*  
Fumihiro Tsutomu – (Male, Carpenter)  
*Okuda Igo – **Kujira**, from the **Sugomi** adventure (the real name of Ota Igo).*  
*Sorachi Yamato – **Mizuiro**, from the **Byakko** adventure.*

The names are presented on no particular order and follow the Japanese convention (as do all names in this book) that places the family name first. We have also added a profession for each Potential not already detailed to help the Gamemaster in creating encounters with them such as the rescue attempts detailed in **Kami**.

The list is also presented as a handout, opposite, which you can hand to the players at an appropriate point if you wish.

Tanaka Ikki - (Male, Student)  
Asai Shouhei – (Male, Club Dancer)  
*Tanuma Kanezane – **Kujira**, from the **Steel Souls** adventure.*  
Udagawa Hayato – (Male, Club Doorman)  
*Fujizake Nori – **Kujira**, from the **Awakening of the Dark** rumour.*  
Ishimura Kaori – (Female, Pop Idol)  
Chouji Hayate – (Male, Media Agent)  
*Marubashi Ikaru – **Fugu**, the third victim.*  
Ishikawa Rika – (Female, Doctor)  
*Konomi Ayane – **Kujira**, from the **Hospital of Ghosts** adventure.*  
Inoshi Hiro – (Male, Dockworker)  
Ayama Miyako – (Female, Artist)  
Yoshida Ai - (Female, Miko)

Ogawa Rui	Sorachi Yamato
Iwasaki Kengo	Tanaka Ikki
Kazurou Maki	Asai Shouhei
Yoshizawa Hitomi	Tanuma Kanezane
Itagaki Kimiko	Udagawa Hayato
Wada Hashiba	Fujizake Nori
Akasagi Rei	Ishimura Kaori
Omura Yumiko	Chouji Hayate
Miyoshi Akane	Marubashi Ikaru
Kamei Taro	Ishikawa Rika
Makino Hachiro	Konomi Ayane
Shiro Daisuke	Inoshi Hiro
Fumihiko Tsutomu	Ayama Miyako
Okuda Igo	Yoshida Ai

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# Shin-edo

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# 新江戸





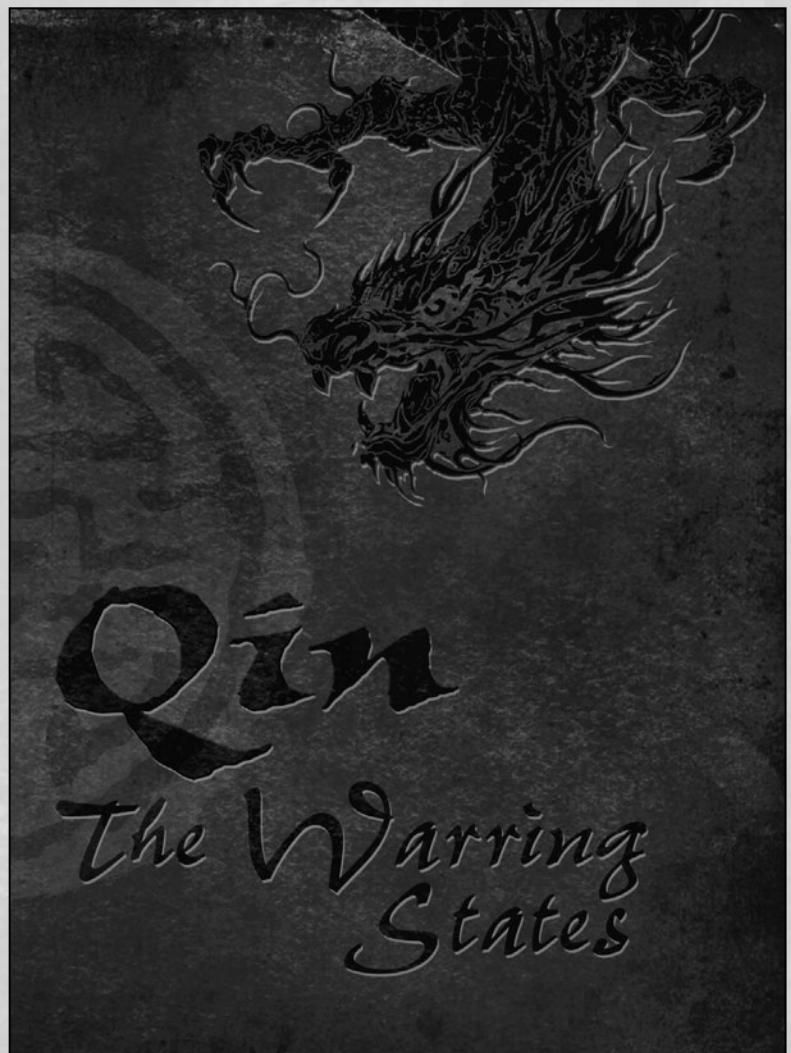
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