

小洲
酒
水

南
興
隆
顧
舖
窗
簾

KUJURO

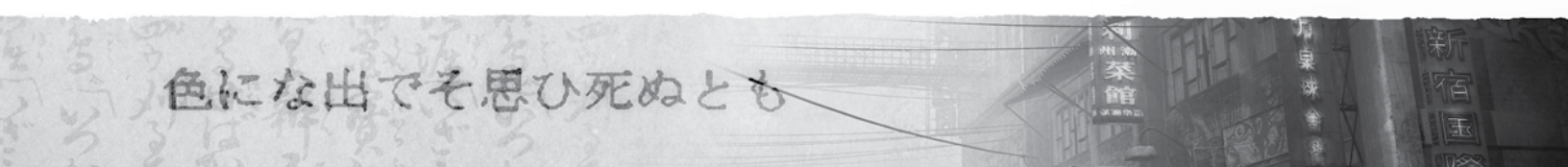
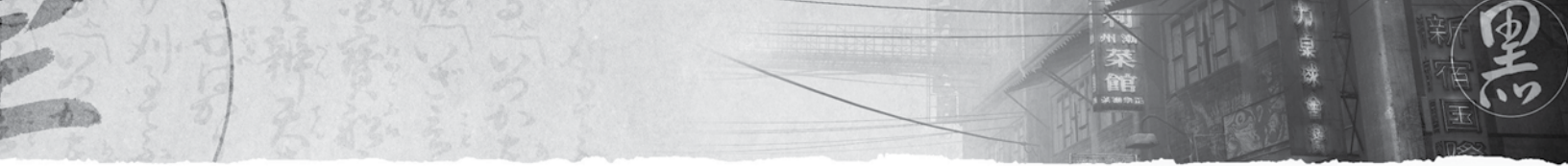
心

茶館
正宗潮茶

寶力桌球會寶

花
園
餐
廳





色にな出でそ思ひ死ぬとも

CREDITS

For Septième Cercle

Original Concept: Neko

Lead Editors: Neko and Willy Favre

Rules System: Florrent, Kristoff Valla

Original Writing: Willy Favre, Julien Heylbroeck, Kristoff Valla, Jerome Larré and Neko

Proofreaders: Jerome Larré, Willy Favre, Samuel Vidal, Laurent Devernay

Original Cover art: Mark Evans

Interior art: Marc Simonetti, Xavier Colette, Pascal Quidault

Original French Layout: Florrent

French Playtesters: Jonathan Waistcoat, Olivier Darles, Samuel Vidal, Matthieu Destephe, Laurent Devernay, Julien Fauré, Olivier Kulbicki.

Kuro Calligraphy: Eri Takase

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"

Special Thanks:

I'd like to thank all the team for the work they provided under difficult circumstances for crazy deadlines.

Thankyou to the illustrators who have supported to us with such dedication.

Thanks in particular to Mieko Larré for the invaluable assistance in Japanese language and help running our site.

Hontôni dômô arigatô gozamaisu.

Kuro© is published in France by 7èmeCercle

All rights reserved

The 7èmeCercle, 10 rue d'Alexandre, 64600 Anglet

www.7emecercle.com

For Cubicle 7

Line Developer: Andrew Peregrine

Creative Director: Dominic McDowall-Thomas

Art Director: Jon Hodgson

Translated by: José Luis Porfirio

Cover Art and New Graphics by: Paul Bourne

Edited by: Andrew Peregrine

Layout by: Andrew O'Hara

Proofreading by: Matthew Pook

Special thanks:

Neko and Florrent, Sarah Newton and Claire Mehegan & James Holman (for their linguistical assistance in French and Japanese!).

Kuro (English Language Edition) © 2012 Cubicle 7 Entertainment Ltd. All rights reserved.

Published by Cubicle 7 Entertainment Limited, Riverside House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, UK.

Cubicle 7 Entertainment Limited is a UK Registered Company (Reg. No. 6036414).

ISBN: 978-0-85744-160-7

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, carved into the side of a mountain, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner. Permission is given (nay, encouraged!) to print or photocopy the Character Sheet on page 205.

CONTENTS

| | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------|------------------------------|------------|
| ELECTRIC TOWN, PART 1 | 4 | ACTION AND EVOLUTION | 103 |
| 2046 | 13 | Combat | 103 |
| The World of Kuro | 13 | Wounds | 108 |
| The Whisper of the Kamikaze | 16 | Healing and Treatment | 111 |
| Technology and Society | 19 | Evolution | 113 |
| SHIN-EDO | 30 | SHINAGAKI | 114 |
| Popular Quarters of Shin-Edo | 34 | Shinjuku Armoury | 114 |
| | | Akihabara Shop | 129 |
| | | Shibuya Laboratory | 139 |
| | | Occultech | 147 |
| DAILY LIFE IN 2046 | 60 | CONTACTS | 156 |
| THE WAY OF THE GODS | 64 | ELECTRIC TOWN, PART 2 | 164 |
| GAME SYSTEM | 67 | OF FLESH AND SHADOW | 166 |
| CHARACTERS | 70 | Of Flesh | 166 |
| Character Creation | 70 | Of Shadow | 170 |
| Characteristics | 73 | Supernatural Powers | 177 |
| Skill List | 75 | WHISPERS | 179 |
| ARCHETYPES | 77 | Gamemastering Kuro | 179 |
| SKILLS | 92 | Living in 2046 Japan | 186 |
| Combat Skills | 93 | Horror, Japanese Style | 187 |
| Academic Skills | 94 | ORIGAMI | 193 |
| General Skills | 96 | INSPIRATION | 204 |
| Technical Skills | 98 | CHARACTER SHEET | 205 |
| Engineering Skills | 100 | | |
| Contacts | 101 | | |

ELECTRIC TOWN

"When we are children, we speak as a child, and think as a child, and speak as a child. But when we become adults, we must kill the child within us."

Mamoru Oshii, *Ghost in the Shell*

Violent wind sets the superstructure of our patrol car vibrating, and the gusts shake the whole vehicle, but fail to divert it from its programmed trajectory. On autopilot we're stuck behind a shipment of synthetic fish, doubtless intended for Tsukiji market. The touch-sensitive control panel on the transparent windscreen announces another typhoon about to hit Shin-Edo Bay. This isn't unusual anymore.

For several minutes in the thick heat of the cockpit I've been watching my partner energetically slurping up the soba noodles, which he's been carefully picking out from a carton, marked with a red koi symbol. With concentration and precision he grabs the pinkish noodles with his chopsticks before lifting them to his mouth where they slap his lips before vanishing. Smiling mockingly as always, Gonshiro has no idea that his uniform and the car seat are spattered with proto-calorific mirin sauce. Gonshiro is usually on his best behaviour in the company of a woman, but we've been partners too long for him to be bothered by me.

"How many packs have you had, Gonshiro?"

He eyes me sardonically as he noisily slurps up the last two strands of noodle before replying. "Oh, I don't know. Maybe four packs."

"You do know that even the best pharmaceutical foods no longer have any effect if you take four times the intended dose?"

"Yes, I know. But I love their new prawn noodles; they almost taste like real ones! Honestly, Nao, once you've tried FujiLab's ramen or yakisoba, you won't want anything else."

"I'm just saying as a friend. You do know that with the new biochips they injected last week, they can work out rapidly that your dietary regime is out of equilibrium? They just have to check your monitoring to see if you're still capable of doing your job. I heard of one policeman from the Shinjuku Special District who got suspended when the probe found amphetamines in his system..."

"We all need to find something to help us get through the day."

"Sure... I've been overdoing the chocolate a bit recently."

The hammering rain drowns out our voices and the thick clouds plunge our faces into shadow, dissipated by the lights from the dashboard and the neon lights of the city. The patrol car leaves the express way at last, following its course to our destination - Akihabara quarter.

While Gonshiro's finishing his fourth meal of the day, the news goes on again about the blockade which has been surrounding Japan for almost six months. I have a quick look at the back seat on the middle of which lies my backpack. I hesitate for a few seconds, then grab it and pull out a thick plastic bag containing a curious rope of woven rice-straw and a small cloth bag.

*"Hey! Those are... *cough*," Gonshiro reacts immediately, swallowing the wrong way.*

"I know."

"Mind telling me what... *cough*... you're doing with a Shimenawa and an Omamori... *cough*... Nao?"

"No idea. I found them outside my apartment door this morning. The rope was around the lobby and the amulet was left on the ground."

"Since when has your apartment been a Shinto shrine? The twisted rope - the Shimenawa - is supposed to indicate the site of a spirit, a kami, right?"

"Normally yes. Looks like I've got one living with me. Honestly that's not going to work at all, what with the size of my bed..."

Gonshiro bursts out laughing. Then he asks, his eyes suddenly more alive, "Can I have a look at the amulet?"

"Sure."

Akihabara - the "Electric Town," the quarter of Shin-Edo where you find the most robotics engineers, computer experts and machines in the city. With the robotics explosion and the arrival of androids in every sector of the economy, from household use to street-cleaning, Akihabara has become a flea market for artificial intelligence. In its covered alleyways, where little electronics shops lie beneath gigantic holographic signs, the recognisable silhouettes of androids work day and night to satisfy their clientele. They are the ones which society has chosen to compensate for our demographic drop, preferring artificial beings to immigration, while births are more and more controlled in order to be able to meet the collective needs of the population. It has been years since I last came across a pregnant woman in the street, doubtless because it has become illegal to procreate without authorisation. Japan has become a gigantic aquarium where the fish have learned to meticulously manage their resources, to manage their own heredity. Like so many others, I have no permission to conceive.

I'm proud of my country. I always have been. Numerous efforts and progress have permitted us little by little to bring ourselves to self-sufficiency, using our deserted countryside to develop gigantic state-run hydroponics farms. Our scientists have managed to create artificial or cloned aquatic livestock, discovering new energy resources such as nanophotovoltaic batteries and creating new technologies like photonic crystals and flexible polymers. Biotechnological laboratories have multiplied, rapidly superseding the gigantic industrial corporations. But this national policy has equally had perceptible consequences in our culture. We no longer distinguish people just by their name, their lineage, their money

or their origins, but equally by their access to nanotechnologies, to genetic manipulations and to the benefits of medical technologies that transform the wealthiest into a completely new, perfect species. Meanwhile, we "naturals," continue to earn a living in a community regulated like a music score.

Nowadays, it is no longer we who have chosen to cut ourselves off from the world, but the world itself which has isolated us.

"We're here," announces Gonshiro, activating the fluid in his blue-coloured uniform to dry up the food stains.

At the rear of a building with a faded facade, situated near the Yamanote metro line, a police cordon denotes the scene of a crime with luminescent studmarks. In the half-light, two plainclothes officers seem to be busying themselves in the rain, their ultrasound capes keeping them from being completely drenched. Getting out of the patrol-car, I'm immediately scanned by a wall advert that I hadn't noticed. The gorgeous woman on the holographic poster seems to be handing me a beauty cream with an unreal smile, all the time vaunting its qualities:

"Otwara-san, you are only 28 years old, but it is never too early to try SweetSkin, the algae-extract revitalising cream from YumiCorp laboratories."

I quickly catch up with Gonshiro, whose soft gloves covered with blue-coloured filaments are beginning little by little to take on a crimson hue.

"No doubt about it, there's blood around here," he announces.

Near the police cordon another tiresome advertisement scans my retina in moments, and with it my ID, to better adapt itself to my profile.

"Still single, Otawara-san? Have you thought about the Yoshi X635 android and its range of 'massaging options,' designed especially for your well-being? With a programmable personality, our android will know how to please you and care for your most intimate desires."

Gonshiro daren't even look at me, embarrassed to meet my gaze after the advertisement, which also catches his eye and begins to tell him of the same virtues of a similar pleasure android. Wiping raindrops from his visor he simply adds:

"All these advertising panels are getting to be a pain. I've got one for the FujiLab prawn noodles right in front of where I live. So you see I've got an excuse..."

I turn to the crime scene, and the view of the body immediately gives me a pain in the shoulder, as if my muscles were recognizing the mark of its executioner and shrinking with fear. Bathed in a crimson pool diluted by the drizzle a woman's body lies on its back, still stiffened by suffering. The torn clothing shows her bared muscles and flayed bones. Next to her head, placed clearly on view, two thumbs and two big toes have been carefully severed from the victim's hands and feet. Staring at the opaque sky with one sole eye, the woman with long brown hair seems to be begging the heavens to put an end to her torment. Despite the stress hammering at my temples, I try and keep my cool so as not to embarrass my partner. However, only a few weeks earlier I could have found myself in this girl's place...

"Inspectors Chiba and Otawara from Minato district, we're in charge of the investigation," says Gonshiro while the two other policemen retina scan us to check out our IDs, making our irises glow with the small silver device.

As usual, Gonshiro doesn't waste any time and sets out a dozen nano-drones from his jacket pockets while I analyse the corpse with my Metabolimic visor. The tiny silver balls placed on the bloody skin by Gonshiro rapidly open out and begin to penetrate the flesh with their microscopic digging mandibles, their passage through the entrails occasionally visible as the red diode on their carapace shines through the skin. In a few minutes, we'll have enough facts to confirm the time and cause of death. For the moment, I'm happy with just scanning the intact eye of the unfortunate woman to find out her identity. The light from my controller flashes for a split-second in the depths of her cornea, giving her expression the fleeting lustre of a life already extinguished. The data received is displayed instantaneously in my field of vision, while Gonshiro feels the ground and her clothes with his gloves covered in nano-captors to pick up any other chemical traces.

"Matsunaga Fumiaki. She worked in a shop at Asakusabashi, a few metres from here. Thirty-two years old, no criminal record, no significant accidents or biogenic modifications. Do you have anything else?"

Gonshiro seems obsessed by the molecular imagery appearing in his control glasses, looking at all the information transmitted by the drones. After a moment's hesitation, his eyes dazzled by a multitude of luminous screens, he confirms decisively:

"Time of death was precisely 33 minutes and 56 seconds ago, according to cardiac data from the parasites. As usual, there's no trace of any DNA other than that of the victim, nor of any sexual abuse. She was carved up alive, the nerve endings severed. I think it's our Skinner again... I found the same alloy particles in the wounds as last time."

Number six. The sixth victim of the one we've nicknamed 'The Skinner,' who's been busying himself for the past several weeks tearing the skin and flesh from his victims for some unknown reason. He leaves as his signature two thumbs and two toes, having sliced them off like a double thumbing the nose at the taboo of death. Since our last encounter he's increased his violence and brutality: he's no longer happy with just a few surgical cuts, but is flaying his prey with the fury of a lunatic.

I had him at my mercy for a few seconds once, taking aim at him in this little alleyway in Kabuki-cho. I'd happened upon him during a solo patrol, tall, wiry, wearing a long beige trenchcoat with a heavy hat covering his features. He was carefully quartering a little waitress from Hina Sushi behind the door of an optics shop. His hands covered in blood, he hadn't even realised I was ready to fire when an unbearable pain bored into my right shoulder, my own blood splattering the wall next to me. Winded, I fell to the ground without having the time to press the trigger, or to understand what had happened to me. Immediately, my vehicle sent out a distress call to the other sector patrols having analysed the state of my wounds, transmitted by my suit. When I regained consciousness, just a few days after the attack, I was stretched out in the fluid of a medi-shell. I'd been mysteriously spared by the killer, but I don't know why.

Numerous policemen, with their shoulder and its muscles destroyed by a sharp weapon, would have abandoned their post for a desk job or even a new job in a sushi-ya. Most, without the honour to finish it once and for all, would rather than put an end to their careers in the Shin-Edo police like me.

I was lucky enough to have a father working for one of the many laboratories in the city, one of those working with the 'Genocracy' composed of the richest people in the country, cloistered in their apartment blocks of glass, immortal or simply transformed into divinities by the miracles of science and biotechnology. I don't even know where he found the money needed for that costly operation, and I refused to ask him before the end of his life, to not dishonour him or lose his respect. The fact remains that he managed to rebuild my shoulder, replacing the destroyed parts with a new skeleton and a network of biomechanical tissue. This perfect ensemble of cloned organic products and surgical improvements also augmented my strength enough that I might not tremble when aiming at a psychopathic bastard in a trench-coat.

Gonshiro wakes me from my reverie, adding a bit more detail to his first analysis:

"I've confirmed the alloy. It's definitely 135-class plexi-aluminium. The same as for the others and the same we found in your shoulder. Are you thinking of something, Nao?"

"Yes."

I turn to the two agents in the background, without even taking the effort to remove my imposing metallic visor covered in condensation.

"Try and get me the last readouts from these two reactive advertisements please."

They swiftly acknowledge my command with a nod before patching in a call.

"Why? You want to order a Yoshi android to test out your new spirit rope on?" sniggers Gonshiro.

"Listen, we may well be in a pretty quiet street, and it may well be a relatively late hour, but you're never going to make me believe that a single man is so fast that he can tear a living woman to shreds without leaving some traces of blood behind him."

"You're forgetting the rain, Nao, and 33 minutes is pretty long for an expert in his field," added Gonshiro, watching the rare passers-by looking away and speeding up after seeing the body.

"Since that night I've been obsessed by this guy, Gon. There's not a single day, a single night when he's not there, boring through my skull with that absent look. I didn't feel anything from him when I saw him, not a thing. No anger, no fear, no sadness, no soul. He was ten meters from me, busily dissecting that poor girl, and still something managed to get to me while I had him in my sights..."

"We've seen so many bizarre things since the Kuro Incident. Nothing surprises me anymore."

Six months. For six months Japan has been caught in the vice-like grip of a global blockade, after the attempt of the Panasiatic Federation to wipe it out with a several gigaton nuclear strike. Information on that subject is vague, often contradictory and subject to biased analysis by the media. All that we know is that an earthquake of around 8.5 on the richter scale fooled the Federation's defence systems, setting off a retaliatory strike by mistake against its two principal adversaries: India and us. One of the missiles misfired, exploding over North Korea. But just as certainly as North Korea and the millions of victims struck down in a single instant will never recover from the destruction of that missile, we are still standing.

Unless the real truth is that we're all dead.

The remaining missile reached its target correctly, but never exploded. We were all dazzled in the same instant, by a blinding

light emerging at the middle of gigantic blasts of wind, which still continue to sweep the country. But our missile vanished, without creating a single corpse, without destroying the slightest plot of our native land.

Our allies saw an unknown energy shield come into being, a formidable creation certainly aimed at protecting Japan. They decided such a powerful defence could have only one intention, a plan for war. They spoke of breaking Article 9 of our Constitution, of our secret rearmament, and of our desires for conquest, stifled for the last century. The United States demanded answers and the details of this defensive shield. But we didn't know what the shield was either, and our allies were faced with a babbling government, incapable of explaining itself. Outraged by the accusations our Emperor ordered the Prime Minister to deliver a tough response in the face of global opprobrium. Since we had learned to live in a closed country, we would continue to do so without our previous allies. When other countries stopped trading with us and took part in an economic blockade orchestrated by China and the Western bloc, we remained unperturbed.

The blockade has lasted for six months so far. Six months when Japan has only been able to rely on itself, on its capacity to manage its own resources, to recycle, to watch patiently as the blockade ships weave a barrier around its islands. For six months we have had to manage the shortages, the fear, the tensions hiding behind the stoic faces of every inhabitant of this city. And the more weeks pass, the more the strange phenomena occur, the more I tell myself we're trapped with actual monsters. Every day people vanish, or die in inexplicable circumstances, mysterious, surrounded by the indifference of a population too preoccupied with its future.

On May 4th 2046, the day of the impact, something else changed, something dark, but few are ready to believe it.

"I've got the results you wanted from the advertisements, Lieutenant Otawara," announces the second police officer politely. "I'm sending them to your Pod."

As swiftly as light, the gathered data is downloaded to my portable computer, glowing on my wrist in its coloured organic plasma. Like all the capitals of the world, Shin-Edo - the new Tokyo - has become a city of light, where microphotonics have replaced the old printed circuits. Computers, androids, communications terminals, advertisements, pods, all are connected via minute photonic fibres capable of exchanging a whole lifetime of data at the speed of light. Farewell to cables and long live the laser as well as the Universal Memory of new computers, capable of storing all of your conversations since the day of your birth for eternity.

"I hit the jackpot, Gonshiro!"

He looks at me, perplexed, from beneath the misted goggles of his helmet, handling with care the four severed toes and thumbs.

"In these files I've got the tracks of everyone flashed this evening by these wall advertisements. No one could have got past here without being scanned by the reactive lasers, as you can tell by the way I was caught just getting out of the car! In the registry of scanned people, I can only find five people registered a after our victim came past. The first is the man who found the body, just ten minutes after Matsunaga Fumiaki had been scanned. The next are the agents who turned up twenty minutes later at the scene, and the last, that's us."

With a dumbfounded look and his mouth open like a suffocating sunfish, Gonshiro tries to understand the stream of words I've just flung in his face in my excitement. Little inclined to show his confusion, he contents himself with a simple:

"And?"

"And? And? There's no trace of a sixth person! That means simply that our killer wasn't flashed during the whole time he was here, therefore that he didn't have retinas and committed his crime in just ten minutes instead of 33! Fumiaki was still alive when her body was discovered. Don't you understand? There must have been severa..."

I draw my Shockgun with lightning speed before activating its trigger, sending a heavy dustbin placed in the street flying with a magnetic wave. The metal container folds under the shock, and crashes against the entrance of a love hotel. After a second's hesitation, the shadow hiding behind the garbage chute decides to flee if only to escape a second, more accurate, shot.

"GONSHIRO!"

I hurl myself after the silhouette, detected by my helmet while it was spying on us, doubtless since our arrival. My partner, his hands full with severed fingers and toes and his stomach doubtless too weighed down with heavy noodles, takes a few seconds more to fall in behind me.

The subject is fast, heading into the numerous narrow passages to shake me off as quickly as possible. Thanks to my skinsuit, I pick up more and more speed, taking advantage of the improved articulations of the suit to gain ground. Concentrating on my target, I hardly hear the roar of my weapon and the batteries of my uniform, which recharge with my movements in the absence of any natural light. Behind me, I occasionally hear the distant footsteps of my partner and his panting breaths. I don't have that problem;

with enhanced cells in my body busy speeding up the circulation of oxygen in my lungs and muscles.

Railings. The man has already gone over the top and I have no time to lose. I take out my Shockgun, perforating the rusty ironwork ahead with a thumping burst and the fence gives way just before I get there. My quarry keeps going, not looking round. No hat, no trenchcoat, a human body warming steadily, according to my sensors, and a hell of a sprinter.

At a turn in the road I knock down two old ladies coming out their house and just miss a girl on an electro-scooter in acid tones. Gonshiro isn't so agile; he collides with her at full tilt before getting copiously sworn at.

Around us the cars are braking automatically, the few vehicles under authorised manual control just missing the unluckier vehicles that have smashed into each other. In front of me stretches a green park, gloomy under the thick curtain of rain, straight into which the fugitive doesn't hesitate to throw himself. My boots slam against the puddles, my suit is soaked with water, my hair plastered across my face, but I grip my weapon tightly with whitened knuckles. I cross the park steps in a few strides, before finding myself on a long stone lane hung over with foliage. A heavy bright red torii gate indicates the way into a Shinto shrine. Calm and peace softly replace the roar of the city. The creaking of branches and the lapping of water reinforce the sacred aspect of this spiritual path. Frozen before the symbolic archway, I calmly point my weapon towards a tree with moss-covered bark.

"I've not run after you for such a long time just to play hide and seek."

The pressure of my grip on my pistol prepares the burst, and the magnetic fluid readies the barrel coils in anticipation of the shot. The silhouette hidden behind the impressive tree coughs nervously, trying to catch its breath after its headlong flight.

"Fair enough," it murmurs. "But I don't like to pass through a torii when I'm not certain of getting back again. It's all a matter of superstition."

The man comes out of his hiding place, his thin face covered in sweat, his brand-name clothes with fluorescent logos weighted down by the rain. His sombre face is framed by close-cropped hair with occasional white streaks; his neck shows part of an impressive tattoo which quite probably covers his whole body.

"Nice irezumi," I say, nodding at his tattoo. "Just a samurai descendant or from the bosozoku of the Eastern gangs?"

He watches me fixedly, holding under his arm a thick brown paper package darkened by the damp.

"A bit of both, let's say. I like to honour my ancestors."

"What were you doing behind that dustbin?"

"Having a piss."

I'm in no mood to play games and I blast the tree above us with my shockgun. The discharge illuminates the scene, followed by the explosion of a massive branch above his head. I reset my weapon; ready this time to aim at the proper target. He tries to keep his cool, in spite of the smell of wood burned by the shot:

"Okay, okay, I just came to see you."

"We don't know each other."

"No. I had a dream about you," he replies calmly. "But I wasn't expecting this kind of reception. I just got scared."

"I'm deeply sorry, but when some guy is spying on me at the scene of a crime committed by a serial killer, that tends to make me nervous. Why didn't you just come and see me? We could have avoided a sprint across Akihabara!"

"...And say what? That I get premonitions, and that I've been dreaming about you every night since the attack, Otawara-san?"

"Damn it! Are you hitting on me?"

"See. That's exactly what I knew you'd say," he says with defeatism.

Calmly, the young man puts his package delicately on the ground, showing another woven rice rope under the various layers of paper. Under it, a pretty lacquered box shines slightly in the rain.

"Where did you find that?"

"In front of my door, this morning," he says firmly. "The Shimenawa was wound round my front lobby and the box was on the ground. I know it's meant for you, Otawara-san."

"Why?"

"Because I dreamed about it. That's why I came. But I'm never certain that my visions are real, that all this isn't just a simple hallucination of the demons haunting the world."

"Demons?"

"Don't tell me that surprises you, you're a cop after all. You only have to open your eyes and ears to realise that things are getting strange. I've heard people talk of walls screaming in the Waseda district, of a man reduced to a pile of bones in his shop on Miyuki-dori, of the 13th precinct in Ikebukuro being attacked by a starving mob..."

Cautiously I put my shockgun back in its holster, bending over to slide the pieces of paper away from the jet-black case. The small casket has no visible system of opening it, the whole thing made from a single block by an expert craftsmanship. My fingers find a kanji engraved on the top, whose curves reveal its significance despite the absence of light: Oni.

With a click I barely feel, the shiki box finally deigns to open, revealing an ancient 9mm revolver, carefully wrapped in a piece of red silk. Blackened with time, the weapon is engraved with various symbols and mystic pentacles associated with the energy of Ki. Its cylinder is empty.

"What do want me to do with this old thing?"

"I don't know," replies the unknown man, just as Gonshiro's voice is finally audible in the alleyway.

Panting, my partner comes up to us, his face flushed with the trek across the quarter, unable to get his breath back. Standing there, staring at the ground, he finishes by casually dropping the severed thumbs and big toes from the corpse that he was still holding in his hands. They roll on the ground at his feet in the rain; spilling what little blood they still held in the middle of a dark puddle.

"Hey, what's all this crap!?" cries the young man, seeing the digits scattered on the ground.

My attention is immediately drawn by one of them, fallen by chance alongside Gonshiro's reinforced boot. A big toe with a manicured nail and a light violet polish. The others are paler, less fleshy, and devoid of any cosmetics.

"Damn it, Gonshiro! Did you analyse these?"

"Huh?" he coughs between panting, "no, why?"

"Because I think one of them doesn't belong with the others."

My partner lowers his visor again and inserts a fine needle into each of the severed appendages. The blood work is displayed rapidly on one of the multiple flexible screens of his helmet.

“You’re right. This one isn’t hers. What is this shit, Nao? Since when has he been collecting thumbs and big toes?”

“Since he started his collection of eyes, I suppose.”

“What?”

“Neither you nor I have ever asked ourselves why he gouged one of her eyes out. It’s not in the Skinner’s modus operandi to remove anything apart from the skin and muscles, let alone leaving as a signature thumbs and big toes from different people.”

“But what are you expecting him to do with an eye and a thumb, Nao?” asks Gonshiro eagerly.

The voice of the stranger breaks the disjointed rhythm of our discussion, with a neutral and serene tone.

“Personally, those are just the two things I need to open the door to my apartment.”

At a stroke, the blood rushes to my face, and an unbearable rage overcomes me.

“They just needed somewhere to go! They’re at her house! Quick!”

THE KURO PROJECT

The book that you have in your hands is the first concrete manifestation of an old desire that all who worked in **Kuro** have held for a long time: to work together in an original roleplaying game covering all our favourite themes in one coherent whole. As expected this project was not made in one day, and as our ideas accumulated, many choices had to be made so that we finally had exactly what we wanted.

One thing we all agreed on: one game would not be enough. Indeed, just like the different seasons in a TV show, the **Kuro** setting should have several major changes, and these are the very things that make it unique. From a gaming point of view, while the characters and the general setting remain the same, they are going to be profoundly changed by the end. The stakes, scenarios, dramatic focus and themes of the game will be very different by the end. However, some people might not want the game to change so drastically. So, we decided to make two games which each correspond to the two ‘layers’ that **Kuro** consists of. We took care, nonetheless, to make them both compatible with, and independent of, each other.

Kuro is the first setting; **Kuro Tensei** will be the second. As you will see, this game is built on a balance between three very particular components that are the true pillars of the game. They are: Japan and its cultural wealth and paradoxes; science fiction, showing us a near future which we might not always want to face; and Japanese style horror, with its own particular way of terrifying us.

There will be four products in the English version **Kuro** line. The first is this book, which will be followed by a screen. The third is **Makkura**, which offers a series of adventures which will allow the characters to move towards the second setting, delivering all that you need to assure the transition towards the second game. The final product is **Kuro Tensei**, where everything changes.

Kuro will eventually offer three options:

- You can play **Kuro** without making the characters transition, continuing it as a game of investigation and horror in a futuristic Japanese setting.

• You can start with **Kuro** and run the campaign leading to **Kuro Tensei** in the intermediate supplement (**Makkura**) keeping the same characters.

• You can keep the characters, unchanged, and play **Kuro Tensei** directly.

For the Gamemaster, we've created notes for you detailing what lies ahead, in the chapter immediately preceding the scenario 'Origami'. The players should only read the sections on the civilisation and technology, where no secrets are revealed. They will find plenty of rumours, though...

It is up to you whether to move on to **Kuro Tensei** or not, or keep the possibility of doing so later open. Even if you are not using **Kuro Tensei** you can still find the details on setting and campaign detail useful for your game, and creating your own adventures.

Whatever you choose, welcome to Shin-Edo...

WHAT IS A ROLEPLAYING GAME?

A roleplaying game is a form of storytelling game played by several people (usually three to six). Its goal is to imagine together an adventure in which any player can intervene. Thus a gaming session is never written in advance (just the main guidelines) and each player's improvisation enriches it, changes it, making it an unpredictable story.

In order to set up a role-playing game session, one member of the group must take on the role of Gamemaster. This is a kind of special player who knows the setting and the rules very well and creates the adventures (or scenarios) that the other players live out by way of their character, an imaginary alter-ego. The Gamemaster frames events, describes scenes, plays minor characters and also adjudicates the application of the rules. In this department, his word is law.

The other players are far from passive, though. It is up to them to react; through the fictional protagonists they create and play,

to events that the Gamemaster presents them with. They might talk to the extras they meet, investigate the clues of a mystery, unravelling the threads of a diplomatic intrigue, etc.

Everyone gathers around a table (or wherever seems comfortable) the Gamemaster begins to set the scene, and the players react to it, playing out their characters. Together, you weave new tales set in the world of **Kuro**, new adventures in a world where even the glow of neon and plasma cannot quite illuminate the dark supernatural forces that await you...

GLOSSARY

Kuro uses several Japanese terms to describe both culture and technology. Many will already be familiar to any 'Japanophile.'

Anime: Japanese animated television series or films.

Artificials: android robots designed in humanoid shape or to appear human.

Bainin: smuggler, trader.

Biodroid: aka replicants, extremely advanced robotic bodies based on biotech.

Boryokudan: a crime syndicate, Japanese mafia, an organised gang of Yakuza.

Bosozoku: Biker gang members.

Chanoyu: the tea ceremony, a zen ritual designed to focus the mind by very precisely making tea.

Daimyo: a samurai lord.

Diet: Japanese central government.

Gaijin: foreigner, non-Japanese.

Gantai: helmet visor capable of acting as a screen for data display.

Genocracy/Genocrat: the wealthy elite who can afford advanced biomechanical implants.

Go: board game played using black and white stones placed on the intersections of a series of squares. The object is to claim more territory than your opponent.

Gurentai: a gang of thugs, not to be confused with Yakuza or Bosozoku.

Itako: female (often blind) shaman-priests of Shinto that pass messages to and from the spirit world.

Jieitai: the Japanese Ground Self-Defence Force, the limited standing army allowed only for defence after World War 2.

Jinchisai: Shinto ceremony to appease the earth spirits before constructing a building

Jinrikisha: motorised rickshaws common throughout Shin-Edo.

Kaiju: Japanese giant monsters often responsible for levelling Tokyo such as Godzilla, Rodan, etc.

Kaiju: rank, Japanese social class, very specific and covering a range of speech patterns and rights and expectations.

Kami: spirits.

Kamikaze: the divine wind named after the typhoons that drove back Kublai Khan's Mongol invasions in 1274 and 1281.

Kaminarimon: the 'thunder gate' to the Buddhist temple of Senso-ji in Asakusa quarter.

Kanji: Japanese script or calligraphy based on pictograms, considered an art form.

Kannushi: the master of a Shinto shrine, part priest, part caretaker. Usually male, but can be female.

Kansatsui: medical examiner, coroner,

Kaso: the art of telling fortunes based on the layout of a building.

Kitsune: a fox spirit, often mischievous.

Konodama: the spiritual power of names and words.

Love hotel: a hotel that makes rooms available by the hour so that couples can share some privacy together. While they are often a place to find prostitutes, many are a vital service for young couples living in crowded accommodation with family.

Matsuri: a festival, often based on a religious holiday.

Maneki-neko: a good luck token in the shape of a cat (Neko) statue with a waving paw.

Manga: Japanese comics.

Microphotonics: circuit systems using light for data transfer.

Miko: 'shrine maiden' an assistant to a Kannushi.

Mizu: water.

Nanocreatures: tiny robots, often used for analysis and tracking.

Nanofiberoptics: extremely thin fibre optic cable used in microphotonic circuits.

Naturals: ordinary, often poor, individuals not enhanced by biotech or robotics.

Oculotech: totems and spirit fetishes upgraded with modern technology.

Ofuda: Shinto talisman, a strip of paper with the name of a spirit written on it in kanji.

Omikuji: charm box containing a holographic charm token.

Otaku: enthusiast, nerd or geek, depending on your point of view.

Overclocking: the process of illegally unlocking new features in an android.

Pachinko: Noisy vertical pinball game where you win ball bearings that can be traded for prizes.

Panasianic Federation: an alliance between China and both North and South Korea.

Pod: personal computing device used to access the web, much like an advanced smartphone.

Polders: low lying land reclaimed from the sea by a system of dykes and flood barriers.

Puppetbot: small robot often used as a pet.

Ranpaku: a one person holding cell the size of a coffin.

Ronin: a masterless samurai, one who no longer owes allegiance to a Daimyo.

Saki: Japanese rice wine.

Salarymen: Japanese officer workers, the epitome of the 9 to 5 rat race.

Sang-in: the House of Councillors, the upper house of Japanese government.

Sentai: a 'squadron' or 'military unit', but often applied to teams of heroes in action manga or anime series.

Shamisen: a three stringed lute-like instrument.

Shinto: Japanese religion based on negotiating with and living in harmony with natural spirits or Kami.

Shitamachi: the old town quarter of Shin-Edo.

Shinagaki: a catalogue inventory

Shinzenjini: members of a movement dedicated to an anti-technology agenda.

Shogi: Japanese chess variant where captured pieces can be returned to the board under your opponent's control.

Shugi-in: the House of Representatives, lower house of Japanese government.

Softskin suits: highly fashionable business suits filled with nanoscanners.

Sumo: a contact sport for two contestants. The winner is the one to force his opponent out of the ring.

Sumotori: a sumo wrestler.

Sushi-ya: small eatery selling simple sushi and noodle meals.

Synthetics: cyborg human built with over 50% of their original body replaced with robotic parts.

Tokubetsu-ku: an area or 'ward' of a city. Shin-Edo is divided into 24 of these.

Torii: an open and stylised wooden gateway, usually red, usually found at the entrance to a shrine.

Tsunami: Tidal waves.

Uyoku: small political parties or fringe groups.

Yakuza: Japanese crime gang member, ranging from tyrannical organised criminals to Robin Hood-style neighbourhood gangs.

Yakyu: Japanese name for baseball.

Yokai: spirit world.

Yomi-No-Kuni: a dark hellish spirit world, literally 'the Land of Yellow Springs.'

Zaibatsu: old and powerful corporations who took significant economic control of Japan after the Second World War.

Zoku: one of the many youth fashion trends or social groups, such as goths, cosplayers, rockabillys, etc.



2046

THE WORLD OF KURO

The concerns of the first half of the 21st century did not really change, but now almost the whole world has them. Energy and ecology became the two recurrent themes, appearing in every debate and the international media, pointing out the worsening climate and the conflicts over energy resources. Emerging countries like China or India did not have the chance to pollute as much as their Western neighbours, international regulations out of the Kyoto protocol having forced them to limit their emissions since 2020. To limit the inexorable deterioration of the ozone layer and the melting of the icecaps, leading to a rise of the sea levels, governments had to concentrate their efforts towards alternative and renewable energies, thus provoking major crises in certain industrial sectors which were loath to forgo their slice of the cake. With planetary warming and many climate disturbances, no population could continue to calmly refute the more alarming reports and to consume resources as they saw fit. Several coastal populations watched in horror several Pacific atolls were threatened by tidal waves. Climate change made some places too dangerous, causing the migration of thousands of people who left their homes to become 'ecological immigrants.'

Luckily, several advances in nanotechnology allowed the creation of new materials, batteries, engines, fuels, biomass and processors, ending the dependency on oil and drastically cutting down greenhouse gas emissions. Despite the pressure of oil-producing countries, these alternative power sources opened

up new markets, allowing the countries that had researched these new power sources to claim much needed profits. China particularly began to re-emerge after years of an economic recession, made worse by a huge population growth and little arable land. Conversely, the Middle-East, already fighting multiple water wars, suffered from the loss of oil revenues as the world moved to cheaper and more sustainable power sources. Even today, despite international programmes of massive sea water desalinisation by complex biotechnological processes in order to aid the poorer populations of the world, Middle Eastern and African countries are still the greatest victims of planetary warming.

Amid multiple regional conflicts seeking to get hold of the few remaining resources, recyclable fuels or arable land; extremist struggles, as well as deepening tensions between India, China and Russia; Japan took on the role of the mediator of Asia. Quite determined to carve out an Asian Presidency, successive Japanese governments endeavoured to maintain a very active diplomacy, not hesitating to get closer to their neighbours. Preferring to make allegiances with China instead of the United States, the Empire of the Rising Sun invested in the Aosis Alliance, an organisation working on several projects to combat and anticipate rising sea levels. Through Aosis, Japan set up numerous partnerships with China. After the building of several coastal dams and the creation of new biomaterials which would consolidate levees in major cities, Japan used its influence to directly insinuate itself into the Chinese space programme. This news immediately thundered amid the Western countries, especially the USA, which quickly suspected Japan of wanting to use China as a military partner. Fears of having Japan rebuild its army in defiance of Article 9 of its constitution, and possibly helping China retake Taiwan, caused violent debates in the halls of the UN. Piqued, the Japanese government removed all its assets

A Two-Headed Government

On May 4th, 2046, the day of the Kuro Incident, Japan was holding elections for the House of Representatives (or Shugi-in). This house, much like the British 'House of Commons' is one of two bodies that compose the Japanese government or 'Diet.' The other is the House of Councillors (or Sang-in) which functions much like the British 'House of Lords.' While the upper House of Councillors was once the domain of Japan's ancient nobility, its councillors are now mainly elected officials, although they serve a longer term than members of the House of Representatives. By tradition, the leader of the political party with the majority of seats in the diet is nominated to be Prime Minister. The post is then confirmed by the Emperor by the Diet. By tradition, it is.

In 2046, all polls pointed towards a very close call between the Liberal Democratic Party (centre right) and the New Komeito party. New Komeito had grown substantially popular during the last five years under the direction of a charismatic leader, Abe Kaemon. Originally founded by Soka Gakkai, as part of his election strategy, Kaemon would sever ties with this popular Buddhist sect, while also refusing any cooperation with the USA or China. Komeito, like the LDP, has always been a party for middle class white collar workers and rural populations (as the political mover behind the state granaries) but also gained favour with the religious community despite having cut ties with Soka Gakkai. Kaemon also managed to extend the party's voting base to the youth and unemployed.

On May 4th, the New Komeito party was technically the winner of the election. Unfortunately, disturbances due to the Kuro Incident prevented the results becoming official. Partisans of both main parties begun fighting vigorously for control, national tensions enhanced by the international accusations and general confusion. The political chaos gradually worsened and arguments between factions over the electoral result only caused more confusion. With Japanese government on the brink of collapse, the leaders of both political parties agreed to rule jointly while the blockade crisis lasted and issued calls for calm within their factions. Behind the scenes, of course, the understanding behind the agreement to joint rule is less polite, and both parties are moving its pieces towards the taking and maintaining of power. However, no faction has the luxury of being able to promote its personal interests too far beyond those of Japan's, since both parties are trying to take advantage of any faux pas committed by the other party. Every politician is desperately hoping not to have to hold out for yet another six months...


from NASA programmes and offered China its best genetics and robotics experts on a platter. This synergy of expertise and dedication, driven by fierce competition with Europe and the USA, ensured that aerospace science, and especially robotics, advanced prodigiously in the east.

Determined to be the first men on Mars, the Chinese negotiated the construction of an international moon base, and on July 20th 2044 a team of fourteen Japanese androids finally landed on Mars to prepare the ground for the coming of the genetically enhanced Chinese 'taikonauts.' Meanwhile, biotechnology, nanotechnology, computer science and robotics never ceased to improve. Left behind by these events, the Western countries had no choice, but to try and follow Japan's lead. Meanwhile, Japan began adapting its society through birth control policies and genetic manipulations. Obsessed with its newfound power through robotics and biotechnology, Japan's ethical laws were often ignored or changed for the sake of progress.

Unfortunately, China's ulterior motives eventually defeated the alliance with Japan. In 2044, right after the launch of Mission 'Ophir Planum' towards the red planet, China allied with both North and South Korea. This alliance became known as the 'Panasiatic Federation,' its mandate being to counter the economic expansion of India and Pakistan. While Japan was also invited to join the Federation (together with Vietnam) Japan refused, based on an ancient, exacerbated rivalry with North Korea. Seeing China's new alliance with North Korea as a betrayal, Japan chose to break all past agreements with China. To make the point that their friendship was over, Japan formed its own alliance with India, offering India military support in their attempts to recover Taiwan. At the same time, the Japanese government reinforced its policies of food and power independence, under the influence of the New Komeito political party, with the goal of utterly breaking all its ties with China and becoming self-sufficient.

This slap in the face caused a disproportionate response from China, including several border clashes. China forcefully claimed the Sendaku-shoto isles from Japan, and armed North Korea so that the North Koreans might respond to any attack by the Nipponese government. For two years, Asia became the focal point of the rest of the world, who watched with concern the growing diplomatic tensions and the entrenched positions of both sides.

On May 4th 2046, after months of angry words and sabre rattling from both sides, the conflict was radically aggravated due to an unfortunate turn of fate. A violent earthquake with an 8.5 coefficient on the Richter scale violently shook the Chinese



eastern border. Given the paranoia and tension in eastern relations, this was analysed by the Panasiatic Federation sensors as being a nuclear strike. Programmed to respond automatically in case of a nuclear attack, the Artificial Intelligence in China's Border Defence Centre launched a nuclear 'response' at its two enemies India and Japan. Two long range several gigaton nuclear missiles began speeding towards both countries before anyone was really aware of what was going on.

The first missile did not fly very far. Suffering a major malfunction it exploded directly over North Korean soil. The explosion caused thousands of deaths, the destruction of all electronic equipment (androids included) and irradiated most of the country. As for the second missile, it reached Japan, but never exploded. Every monitor recorded the missile reach the Japanese archipelago before vanishing amid an unexplained electromagnetic storm. As for the Japanese, who on that day were in the middle of electing a new government, they just saw a bright flash in the sky. This blinding light flashed for only a moment, after which a violent wind appeared, encompassing every island in the archipelago. This electromagnetic storm caused a two-hour short circuit in all Japanese electric installations, frying the control mechanisms of two airliners that were lifting off at Tokyo Airport at the same time. They crashed in a neighbourhood near the landing zone, reducing hundreds of both the airliners' passengers and the neighbourhood's citizens to ashes.

These were the only victims of the devastating attack. Many citizens weren't even aware of it.

The international community was quick to condemn the actions of the Panasiatic Federation, but China was unapologetic about the incident. It accused Japan of having a secret anti-missile shield, which had been revealed by the unfortunate missile launch. Such a defence could only have been developed to protect Japan from a nuclear exchange, and with such a defence, they must obviously be intending to launch attacks of their own. The grudges and doubts of certain Western countries soon resurfaced, as they also accused Japan of wanting to build a new army and changing the balance of nuclear power with its new shield. In the dreadful political mess, Japan was incapable of either justifying itself or explaining the disappearance of the missile. Unfortunately, without an explanation from Japan, China's accusations began to look like the only possible truth. Japan's position became even more complex due to the results of the Nipponese elections. The confusion and rhetoric over the missile attack prevented a new government claiming a majority in the May 4th election, compelling the country into a kind of forced coalition between two political movements.


The various opposing countries demanded that Japan give them the shield technology, continuing to believe that it was a means for Japan to protect itself while preparing together with India for a massive attack on the Panasiatic Federation. Incapable of justifying itself and determined not to submit, Japan refused. With the support of Europe and the US, China asked for a UN resolution to force Japan to release this technology to redress the balance of power. After all, if every country had these shield, nuclear war would no longer be a threat and Japan's refusal to offer this technology proved the country to be an enemy of world peace. The UN resolution passed, but Japan still refused to kneel to international pressure. In response, China declared that not only should all nations refuse to trade with Japan, but that an international blockade should be set up to enforce this decree.

With electromagnetic traces still lingering through its territory, and Japan's refusal to accept a thorough survey of its military forces, the Panasiatic Federation further accused Japan of having hidden nuclear weapons. The suggestion that Japan had broken Article 9 of its constitution and the nuclear non-proliferation treaty was enough to convince the rest of the world that Japan was indeed the villain that China claimed it to be. A large flotilla of international ships set sail to blockade the Japanese islands. Further, this new international alliance declared that all air traffic in or out of Japan would be shot down without warning.

The foreign stranglehold on trade has lasted more than six months. During which time rationing and shortage problems have begun to affect the poorer sectors of the population. As had been done in the past, the Emperor renamed Japan's capital, in order to affirm Japan's willingness never to yield before the enemy, and their readiness to embrace a new age. So Tokyo became Shin-Edo.

But for how long can Japan hold out? After one of China's ministers was assassinated by a Taiwanese separatist acting in the name of Japan's liberation, can it be long before tensions hit boiling point again? How far will the foreign forces go, especially China, when after 6 months Japan remains resolute? Will they consider an armed engagement to force Japan's contrition? Is the Japanese government telling the truth when it claims not to know anything about a possible anti-missile shield? In a climate of growing hostility and rationing, how long will the present government hold out before giving way to extremists or submitting to international demands?

But what really happened on May 4th 2046, the day on which the event that Japanese now call the Kuro Incident took place? In a country where great questions have been answered and advances made, where biotechnology has compartmentalised



society, where androids walk besides men, where food is cloned, and where nanobots float in your blood, this is not a question that Japan can answer. Meanwhile, her borders are blocked by countries demanding an answer to this very question. But there is still no answer forthcoming.

Now Japan can only count on its own resources in order to subsist. Power failures constantly remind the population of the consequences of the Kuro Incident, made worse by the impossibility of trade or communication with the rest of the world. But while most Japanese watch the ships that prevent them from leaving or anything entering, others realise that something else has changed.

The Kuro Incident somehow opened the door to strange, unexplained phenomena. Even as the 'Wind of the Gods,' as the continued meteorological unrest has become known, still rages over the Archipelago, creating storms, rains and typhoons, most of the inhabitants of Japan are only worried with what they will do tomorrow, but others understand that they are now shut in with the dark. For some there is no longer any doubt: the spirits have returned, and they do not appear to mean well...

THE WHISPER OF THE KAMIKAZE

"Seeing is more important than watching, the rule is to see without seeing, to perceive without fixing our attention, to sense and not parry or respond to an attack, the inner eyes are the ones that see."

-Miyamoto Musashi

A Country of Rites

Japan was always followed many spiritual beliefs, some deeply ingrained in the population. In the same way that the Shinto religion is part (almost unconsciously) of the country's culture, these beliefs are ubiquitous among the Japanese population influencing, in an often intimate fashion, the relationships between people. Most of these superstitions are concerned with that most important of taboos: death. Coming from centuries-old beliefs connected to the diseases carried by corpses, this taboo is still present nowadays and gives birth to many fears. Similar fears arise from the taboos concerning blood which stem

from the bleeding at birth. In Shinto, the soul of the deceased is stained by his own death, and only purification rites can allow it to forget its wrath and become benevolent. Thus all of the individuals that have to 'work with death' (from coroners to slaughter-men working in abattoirs) are sometimes considered to be different to the majority of the populace who do not. It is as if their close contact with death has made them unclean. Even in 2046, many of the rights held by Japan's population are unofficially denied to these people. Some banks even refuse to open accounts for them.

Among the many Japanese superstitions, a notable one is the unease concerning the numbers 4 ('shi,' pronounced the same way as death) and 9 ('ku,' which also means suffering). It is useless to look for a parking space or a hotel room with the number 4, there are none. There are also no brands of car or any devices with 4 in their signs. It is also unadvisable to sleep with your head turned north (this is the direction in which the dead are buried), to put your chopsticks in your rice bowl (a reference to the funeral rite) or not to hide your thumbs when passing beside a hearse or a graveyard.

Even if the population only occasionally visit the temples and shrines, and rarely show an overwhelming belief, most people still follow the old rites and traditions as familiar habits. Everybody has Shinto lucky charms at home, such as a protective wooden arrow. Shinto festivals (or Matsuri), of which there are several throughout the year, are simply seen as popular festivities. Few insist that they really believe in spirits, the kami or even the afterlife. Even though, since the Kuro Incident, unexplained things stalk out of the shadows, everybody prefers to ignore them and put their faith in science or more mundane theories.

A World of Silence

Six months later the question remains: what happened on May 4th, 2046? By what miracle did the Panasiatic Federation missile vanish into thin air, leaving behind only a few electromagnetic disturbances? Today, most of Japan just watches the blockade and doubts the good faith of either its government or of the international community. The rest silently watch with growing dread the strange occurrences that keep happening across the archipelago. Those who have not yet had such encounters themselves do their best to dismiss the reports. They reason that nothing that can drastically change their lives is as obvious as the international pressure of the blockade and the everyday hardships it causes. After all, it is easy to ignore the strange incidents when they are just some short lines in the corner of the newspaper downloaded into a flexible screen.

Water

Since Japan is surrounded by a somewhat unpredictable sea, water (or 'mizu') has always been seen as menacing. Several natural disasters are associated with it, from tsunami (great tidal waves) to typhoons. So it is no surprise that water is often seen as a bad omen, or the signature of dark energies. It is also associated with uncontrollable force and humanity's darker urges and instincts, water is primal and powerful. This means that salt, with its ability to absorb liquid, is used in many rites to repel bad spirits or to purify unclean ground.

How can this population, frightened by the current news, the economic chaos, the layoffs and personal bankruptcies be blamed for turning from the truth? In an atmosphere of intimidation and deprivation, everyone is just trying to live their lives. They keep shopping at Shibuya like they have always done or clubbing by night to forget everyday worries. In such an oppressive environment, people have better things to do than to analyse a murder, a disappearance or an unexplained phenomenon in a housing block in Roppongi. In fact, some primal instinct tells them to make a point of turning away, in case the shadows begin to notice them.

Nevertheless, since the Kuro Incident witnesses speak of noises, odours, screams, and monstrous presences all over the place. Some claim that they are being harassed by the dead, have been possessed by malevolent spirits or been attacked by insane machines.

However, even though these stories are systematically drowned out by sensational stories about the blockade, they have drawn the attention of believers. Such people might simply be superstitious, but some have already been confronted with supernatural manifestations. In a hyper-technological society smothered by its own divisions and asphyxiated by the other countries, they are seen as crackpots or even as birds of ill omen.

It is ridiculous to believe that the Yokai, the spirit world, is open and has let through to the real world all the creatures of folklore, like the yosei, the yurei or the bakemono? Who can believe that the nuclear missile launched by the Panasiatic Federation was not simply stopped thanks to an advanced defence system?

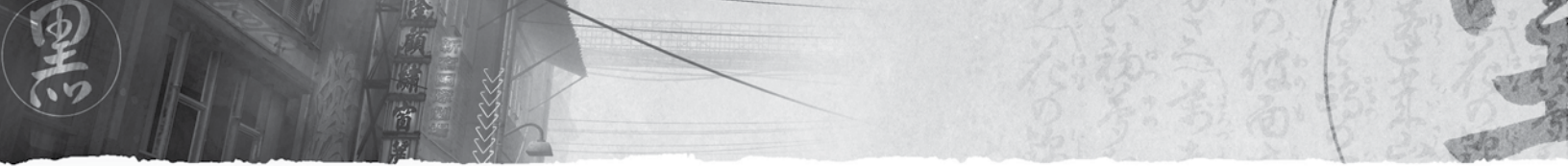
The media maintains a complicit silence on subject of the supernatural, labelling all these disappearances and cannibalistic acts as simply trivia or just mass hysteria brought on by the "psychological consequences of the blockade." However, others have issued more disturbing hypotheses...

A World of Plots

Those who refuse to swallow the media's thin explanations seriously doubt the existence of some anti-nuclear shield. They have come to believe that instead, the doors of the beyond are opening.

These people regularly discuss the Kamikaze, the 'Wind of the Gods' which has protected the archipelago twice in a row in 1274 and 1281, defeating Kublai Khan's Mongol invaders with devastating typhoons. They do not see this as a coincidence; instead they believe that the wind is powered by the forces of the spirit world, forces that are once again taking a hand in Japan's destiny. Why the spirits would have again protected Japan after centuries of absence, destroying the missile, but weakening the border between the visible and the invisible remains a mystery. However, it seems reasonable that while this Wind of the Gods still blows over the isles of Japan, creatures from the Yomi-No-Kuni, the dark places of the spirit world, might take advantage of the situation to come and stain the land. It is only natural after an absence of 800 years.

Shinto priests do not speak of this 'hell,' a realm far removed from the Christian stereotypes of sinister sinners suffering in flames, with so many references to death and corpses. For the Shinto adherent, every being is eventually called to become a kami. These are pure spirits, which exist in the millions, hiding behind all things or as humans that became true living legends. However, not every spirit is destined for such a noble and peaceful fate. Many believe some souls can become unclean through blood, murders and impure thoughts. When these people die, they cannot join the kami and thus end up in the Yomi-No-Kuni, the Land of Yellow Springs, where they become demons or wandering souls, responsible for the disasters and epidemics afflicting Japan. Others, the magamoto, are sometimes too unclean to enter even this hell, refusing the ablutions of the priests and resisting purification. They wander the earth, their



spirits ravaged by evil and the passions of their basest drives.

Is this madness or reality? No one can truly say, but scaly forms are sometimes glimpsed wandering the harbour and avenging ghosts are blamed when the inhabitants of a building in Ochanomizu were frightened to death.

With the blockade often visible from the shore, and rumour running rife, the platitudes offered by politicians do nothing to alleviate public fears. Many cults and factions have become quick to capitalise on these fears, which are found even inside the huge steel and glass buildings of Shin-Edo's wealthy. Who should the Japanese believe? Those claiming that foreign forces are testing chemicals on the inhabitants, those proclaiming the end of the world, the opening of hell or the fact that Japan was destroyed in May 4th and all inhabitants are now in the realm of death? Few options seem very attractive.

Even with the indifference of the man in the street, these minority movements have forums in the NeoWeb, specialised bureau and Occultech artefacts of their own design that mix

technology and ritual. They do not hesitate to approach people in the street or through pirated sites to proclaim their message. The many exorcists in Shin-Edo can try and explain that evil spirits have followed the flow of the Kamikaze, but nothing seems to convince the Japanese of the existence of immaterial creatures. The few witnesses to supernatural events are ashamed to speak of them, for fear of being called mad and being dishonoured. Convinced that they are victims of hallucinations or too disturbed to speak up freely, they just live in fear and bolt themselves in their apartments. The alternative, that the cultists and exorcists are right, is a far more frightening prospect.

Nevertheless, every day there are disappearances that remain unexplained and police forces have great trouble trying to understand certain crimes or the motives of some mass suicides. In the side streets and the brightly lit quarters with façades filled with holographic advertisements, corpses are found drowned, disembowelled, covered with bugs or worse.



A small island of truth

Amid this proliferation of unexplained phenomena and the pressures of the blockade, some manage, sometimes, to get a glimpse of the truth. Often the victims of nightmares, visions and hallucinations that they cannot fathom, they seek to understand the origins of their forebodings before facing these nightmare creatures. Very intelligent and discreet, the latter are like the shadows on the wall, folding like origami so as not to leave any trace of their foul deeds. They remain a hidden and incomprehensible menace.

For normal people, having to fight beings no one is paying attention to, is like fighting the intangible wind of the Kamikaze. But one thing is certain: they are here.

The Soldiers of Mononoke Company

Amid the multiple urban legends appearing in the esoteric circles, in the same vein of the taxi driver-strangling white lady or the little girl that burns sewer workers alive, the one concerning the Mononoke Company is told more and more often. Some more or less credible testimonies speak of small units of soldiers being seen on the streets of Shin-Edo. Wearing ultra-advanced exoskeletons and full helmets with red goggles masking their features, these soldiers are equipped with unknown weapons and seem to search the places reputed to have been the site of supernatural manifestations.

Some think this Mononoke Company is under government orders, the latter knowing about these phenomena and trying to hide them from the population. The more pessimistic ones think that all this is due to government experiments running amok.


Fortean Japan

One of the rare downloadable newspapers available on the net, it reports paranormal events in the archipelago. Comparable, in a way, to Weekly World News, it also deals with abject crimes and reports such as a woman having attached a second head or spy nanobots being placed in the sushi by the government. It is run by Otani Kinzo, an extravagant former journalist famed for his loud shirts and eccentric manner. More importantly, Fortean Japan has a gallery of virtual classified ads through which some small groups trade codes and some offer much more accurate information. However, the biocryptozoology pages are more remarkable for issuing acrid, tough criticisms on the Genocracy and its 'genetically enhanced' representatives than true reports on monsters made in lab vats.

TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIETY

"Science is a public danger. As dangerous as it's been beneficent."
Aldous Huxley – Brave New World

In 2046, the world still teeters on the brink of ecological disaster, despite the efforts of nations to slow the unabated deterioration of the ecosystem. Numerous technological advances have simply made the rich richer, widening the gap between them and the poorer territories. Some habits have changed (energy consumption, food and drink, clothing, consumerism, sexuality...) and every country has changed progressively to better adapt to this new industrial revolution. Man has not become a chromed machine, but androids now walk beside him, offering an efficient and cheap workforce. As for humanity, it has learned much more about its own biology to better understand,



heal and improve on it. Immortality, previously a farfetched concept, might now be within humanity's grasp.

Japan, despite repeated economic difficulties in the last dozen years, is again a technological leader, allowing thousands of small laboratories to challenge the old corporations and make its robotics programme the driving force behind the conquest of Mars. Unfortunately, being so advanced in the world technology chess game, it is no wonder that some nations think Japan has now availed itself of some formidable defensive weaponry.

The Genocracy

Unfortunately, many of these many technologic developments have also generated new divisions in societies worldwide, in Japan more than anywhere else. Already suffering from an inexorable birth decrease, the Nipponese government consciously chose to replace the missing workforce with machines, slowly changing the organisation of labour and the very notion of community. Now there are humans and the 'others,' the machines that need no sleep, money or food.

To top it all, humanity itself has become compartmentalised. Already used to castes based on aristocratic origins, trade or samurai descent, Japan further divided itself with the arrival of biotechnology. The wealthy can now heal minor diseases, make their wrinkles disappear, change their aging bodies and even conceive a perfect child without any sexual intercourse. In comparison, Japan's poor has to bear the weight of the years and easily cured diseases, barely able to save enough money to afford even moderate medical procedures such as repairing damaged eyesight.

A new aristocracy has appeared, one that can pay a lab to create new implants, even to create a whole new organism. Called the 'Genocracy,' this new high society's way of life is based on genetic profile, money and access to new medical technologies, its members protecting themselves within huge buildings. They live in homes the size of a skyscraper, containing all that they need to live without ever having to leave. The Genocrats are not those you see inside stained-glassed limos on the streets of Shin-Edo, those are merely their lackeys. They are always within their high-security towers, wandering through floors ornate with artificial gardens, ballrooms for their guests and the offices of their companies. Often the underground floors of their towers are equipped with vats and cold rooms within which each Genocrat's future implants are designed, or their memories are digitised to prepare for their next resurrection in younger flesh.

The man on the street can only imagine what such lives are

like, watching the imposing steel cubes with shining facades. Like all ordinary people, they will never be able to afford the ruinously expensive medical procedures, if they even know that they exist. Some new teeth, an artificial muscle and a nanochip managing their adrenaline are doubtlessly all that they can afford in a lifetime of labour. They are still 'naturals:' ordinary human beings at the bottom of the social scale.

Women and family

For some time, the birthrate has been decreasing. Having been anticipated for years, government after government saw this phenomenon as the opportunity to reduce the population in the hope of ending Japan's dependency on imports and solving the problem of its dwindling living space. Using and abusing this power, several governments have, little by little, acquired arable fields and several fisheries and livestock farms so as to set up a public food policy.


As for the Japanese, they have adapted to these changes without blinking. Machines replace the dwindling human workforce and poorer people are forced to count on Japan's new strategy of self-sufficiency to feed themselves.

No longer wishing to be limited to the role of mothers, Japanese women have climbed the steps of the great enterprises and have carved a place in every domain as the equals of their male counterpoints. There is no longer any position, no matter how high, that is beyond their reach. Women wishing to stay at home and raise children for life are rare. Even if they wish it, nothing guarantees that the Ministry of Family will grant them permission to have children.

Obviously this evolution of family and gender roles has revolutionised relations between men and women, ending many of the oddities of Japanese culture of previous decades. School uniforms are plainer and less fetishised, used underwear is no longer available in vending machines and escort bars totally devoted to women have opened in many quarters in Shin-Edo.

Microphotonics

Faced with the limits of printed circuits, the computer industry eventually evolved towards silicone microprocessors. These gave way to Microphotonics at the beginning of the 2030s. This term encompasses all computer processors made of nanofiberoptics (cables some microns thick carrying light impulses), capable of



exchanging information at the speed of light. The most advanced computers are made of bioluminescent processors based on moving plasma; the true beginnings of a biotech brain. Called "Universal Memories," this new generation of computers, like the Opticiums, can record a lifetime of data. Thus, since birth, a recorder and a camera might follow all your actions, all your experiences, and then store them in one of these computers having a memory of many 'Yotta-octets.' It is thus possible to digitally record a life, which can be transferred to a knowledge library or to an android artificial brain.

Magnetic Weapons (Nanomagnets)

More efficient and often less lethal than traditional guns, magnetic impulsion weaponry was adopted by most military outfits in Japan. In a society where microphotonics is at the base of everything, it is not surprising that weapons that disrupt electricity and electronics are somewhat useful. Common urban weaponry includes 'Wave grenades' which disrupt magnetic fields in a large area of effect, and the 'Shockgun' a pistol that launches a magnetic wave capable of rendering a target unconscious or throwing them through a wall (which often does the same job). Firearms are still used, but with bullet ammunition being more expensive to produce, magnetic weapons are becoming standard for both security and economic reasons.

Laser and Optic Network

Lasers have become a simple means of carrying information through light impulses, wires and radio waves having become obsolete. Long cables are no longer necessary to connect computers to retrieve data. You just send a simple laser signal. Numerous optical ports are scattered through town allowing the inhabitants to communicate, connecting to their home database to instantly retrieve maps and surf the Web. There are no more phone booths. Now, even the less well off Japanese carry one or more personal computers that can quickly connect to the web, make films, recordings, phone calls, and project small holographic images in colour.

This common pocket computer (similar to an advanced smartphone) is usually called a 'Pod.' They come in various shapes and colours depending on the manufacturer (and current fashion) and are rarely bigger than the palm of your hand. However, it allows you to connect to all urban optical ports and to exchange information with other individuals through their pods. Usually equipped with tactile holographic keyboards (projected on the ground, your arm, your leg, etc...) these portable computers are more often used together with Gantai: enhanced monocles, visors or glasses connected directly to the Pod. These allow you to display the data (or movies, celebrity gossip or porn) directly

in front of your eyes without unduly disturbing or fatiguing your sight.

Besides these enhanced visors, there are also flexible monitors. These are transparent and extremely flexible polymer sheets the size of a thick piece of paper, over which images and movies can be watched. Pliable, inexpensive and easily carried, they are most often used to read newspapers, books and manga in an interactive fashion, replacing paper. The Pod is used as an intermediary, downloading a publication to the flexible screen.

Augmented Reality and Holograms

Now that cities are thoroughly crisscrossed with a network of optic ports and most inhabitants always carry a Pod, masses of data and information can be accessed in moments no matter where you are. The only things as ubiquitous as the Internet are the holograms, 3D animations or images replacing most of all outdoor adverts and 2D video games. As a simple image posted on a wall, an animation the size of a building or a virtual tennis coach, holograms are present in plenty of business and leisure activities .

Let us not forget augmented reality. This is a kind of 'real time exchange' between your computer and receptors placed in a shop, a façade, in a public place or even on another person. Thanks to a simple data exchange, and GPS tracking, augmented reality can place completely virtual elements in your field of vision (if you have a Gantai on) superimposing the virtual world over the real one. While a hologram is always visible, an augmented reality image is only available by those who have their Pod on and are looking at some form of screen. A fantastic building can then appear out of nowhere, virtual champagne bubbles can cross the street calling your attention to the entrance of a restaurant. Many people play games that require them to walk around the real world viewing the augmented reality areas which offer opportunities for points, additional content or achievements. We no longer have to find a way to enter a virtual world, now the latter is superimposed on the real.

Obviously the Internet took advantage of all these many technological advances and became even more interactive, despite the many international laws enacted to eradicate piracy and the illegal downloaded Squid programs (see below). Very different from the one we know today, the internet is much better organised, but is also almost privatised. Personal pages and amateur blogs have all, but vanished due to a very accurate triage by super powerful, corporate owned, search engines. People still keep journals online, but are only able to share them with friends.

This new virtual world is often named the NeoWeb to distinguish it from its heterogeneous and maze-like ancestor, and is more like true television. All TV programmes are now carried by the optic networks, which also carry virtual libraries, discussion forums and online shopping sites. These have replaced most bricks and mortar shops. The gigantic plasma screen in your living room (actually nothing, but a huge monitor connected to your computer) is capable of showing hundreds of programmes, playing music, running a videoconference with Kyoto or researching an interactive site with holovideos or projections, if you have the proper kit.

As you might imagine, after the Kuro Incident some foreign sites became totally unavailable. Most people assume these have simply been blocked, but others suspect there might be more to this virtual isolation.

Retinal Scans and intelligent kettles

Society today is intrinsically connected with lasers and artificial intelligence. Every home appliance has photonic nanoprocessors, capable of communicating with each other through a simple laser signal. This technology is ubiquitous, found in cars, appliances and reactive advertising. Your fridge can even tell you its contents. Nothing could be simpler; a few taps on your Pod can query any device you have access to (which is granted by feeding its serial code into your Pod's accepted devices list).

Japan, just like the USA, has learned to use retinal scanners as an efficient means of controlling and identifying people. All inhabitants legally present in Japanese soil are recorded in one of the city's databases and so are instantly recognised when their pupils are 'flashed' by a retina scanner. A luminous flash takes a snapshot of their eye in a microsecond. Retina scanners are everywhere in the capital, mostly for security reasons, but often for advertising purposes. So there is no need to be surprised to be personally addressed by a hologram praising the latest Mitsubishi convertible.

Everything is made to react to the information you carry on your Pod or your retina, which is nowadays your one and only identification document. The police also have portable 'flashes' that can verify the identity of someone at more than one hundred metres away.

Squids and Jellyfishes

Named for their similar textures to the homonymous marine creatures (soft and squishy) these soft hats allow an individual to send and receive information with simple brain impulses

MAKE A FRIEND WHO WILL NEVER BETRAY YOU!

With the augmented reality programme **COMPANION** ©, you can design a virtual friend in your own image. Man, woman, tall, short, alien, robot, a survey with simple questions will allow you to tweak your imaginary friend to your taste and wishes. An internal programmer allows it to appear when you want it, according to schedule, a specific event or conscious impulses from your Jellyfish. Have you ever dreamed of having an imaginary friend, a confidant, which only you can see?

COMPANION ©, designed by Yamato Studios

(through scanners placed over the scalp). It is much like an enhanced mouse, which decodes information in your brain, transmitting commands directly to a programme or a pointer, without any grafts or internal implants. All it takes to connect is to place this 'soft matter' on your skull, perhaps hidden under a scarf or a helmet or a hat.

The Jellyfish are the cheaper version and are often quite slow, inaccurate and a far cry from being a bioport directly connected to the nervous system. Squids are more advanced, allowing a veritable sensory immersion.

With such a system it is possible to relive all that a person has recorded thereon, all she sensed and felt. Whether it is a real video (like a night spent with a call-girl) or a virtual game. With a Squid everything seems feels real: wind, smells, feelings, gestures, words. All it takes is for you to place it on your head and run a movie made by some other squid in you pod, lie down and relax, and you can enjoy the pleasures felt by someone else. Unfortunately Squids can have detrimental side effects. Many people have found themselves with severe personality disorders after consuming too many immersive movies or even 'snuff-movies.' With a squid it is all too easy to find oneself in the shoes of a serial killer or one of his victims. When you feel the inflicted pain, it is an experience often resulting in a cardiac arrest or severe neural trauma. Considered to be dangerous and too addictive to their users, Squids are forbidden practically everywhere in the

world, including Japan. Nevertheless, it is still possible to procure them in the black market, as well as weird movies immersing you in nameless horrors with the push of a button.

With squid having become illegal, Jellyfish have become the standard computer entertainment interface. Without the same sensitivity options, they allow you to issue commands to your pod, playing games in a virtual setting, without any 'ill effects,' but also without sensing anything whatsoever.

Most virtual games use an enhanced version of augmented reality. The mind of the user does not enter a computer, but the game universe is superimposed on reality. Thus when you play Mario Land Omega, your room is filled with levels and creatures from the game. If you want to play in the subway or in a coffee shop, the game can follow you there as long as you have a screen.

Biotechnology

"What's 'God'?"

"Well, you know, when you want something really bad and you close your eyes and you wish for it? God's the guy that ignores you."

-The Island

The term biotechnology covers all of the discoveries and advances connected with genetics, genetic manipulation, organic modifications and DNA. Having cast aside all religion-derived ethical laws, Japan allows labs to experiment widely with medical goals, which has led to innumerable discoveries and advances. Scientists no longer play at being God when they can do it professionally. While Europe and the USA were still questioning the use of cloning and stem cells, Japan made large-scale advances from its research. While the Western countries have done their best to follow suit, their prudence and regulations have left them lagging behind in the biotech field. Meanwhile, Japan has seen its population divided between those with access to the most advanced technologies, the 'Genocracy,' and the 'naturals,' the name its normal people.

Organ Implants

Coming from non-sentient clones grown in vats, embryonic stems and other organic creations are available to those who can afford them. Several biological implants are available, especially enhanced versions of internal organs. Almost every part of the human body can now be replaced and even improved upon. Skin, teeth, bones, stomach, lungs, heart, eyes, everything can

be grown and reinforced into a more powerful organ. Many members of the Genocracy have totally remade their bodies and only their brain remains from birth as an original organ.

To avoid any rejections, organs are genetically designed to be fully compatible with the recipient, tailor made and based on his own genetic code, making it immunocompatible. It has become common practice for Genocrats to each own private lab rooms filled with vats, each contained half-grown bodies for the sole purpose of making replacement organs.

The vat-grown natural implant is not available to everyone, far from it, due to the complexity and slowness of the process. Besides implanting some natural teeth to avoid ceramic implant, and new hair to avoid baldness, very few Japanese can afford something like a new or enhanced liver. They will have to be placed in a long waiting list for a traditional graft (harvested from a brain-dead person) or financed by the government (with reduced quotas every year and usually conducted under somewhat... subjective conditions)

New drugs

Yakuza, dealers and cunning chemists have taken advantage of all these advances to design new artificial drugs and other opiate derivatives. Particularly numerous and ever changing in the last few years, they have forced authorities to continually adapt their devices so they can detect them with the help of nanotransmitters (usually placed in gloves or in nanocreatures). Every day there is a new kind of technological guerrilla, every day the dealers design subtler, less detectable drugs and the police must constantly adapt their techniques to match this evolution.

Drugs available in the Japanese market include Androspleen with its effects on muscle tissues; Hakuchumu, which has a psychological impact close to that of a Squid; Eyefrag, which causes disturbances in the retinas; and even Blue Light, which is similar to an overdose of liquid tobacco.

Replication and Eugenics

Cloning, gene therapy, replication of extinct animal species; there are no real limits (except financial) to what can be created if a small sample of chromosomes is available for duplication. It is now possible to acquire a 'perfect' child, adapted and 'enhanced' while still a cell, or conceived in a 'rent-a-womb' (a simple artificial uterus). Birth control laws are very strict in Japan and not every woman is authorised to give birth, let alone at a time of her choosing. The government authorises a specific number of births every year to stabilise resources and control birth according to punctilious family criteria. So do not expect to make use of that privilege if your family has congenital defects or other hereditary diseases, even if you have the means of erasing them from your descendants' genetic code.

For many years, women have wanted to be free of the constraints of childbirth, plus many Genocrats can often no longer reproduce naturally. Artificial wombs are used, rented in labs that receive embryos generated in vats designed to bring the foetus to term. The newborn is then delivered to its Genocratic owners. Perfect babies, made and delivered to order.

Married women are usually given the right to have one child, although they must still apply for it (men have no such right), but many poorer women sell this right to wealthier families who want more children. Those who sell their right often find it a lot harder to get the right to have a 'second' child. In very poor areas, criminal gangs run auctions for these rights, making a profit selling them to the highest bidder and granting the seller a small cut of the profit. Thus a woman often sacrifices her right to a baby to the benefit of more wealthy or less lucky people that are able to present her with a comfortable income. All of these new obligations and attitudes towards human reproduction are yet another blow to the poor birth rate of what is an ageing country.

For those who happen, or decide, to have a child without permission, the penalties are severe. Forced abortions are commonplace, but in some cases the child is taken away and given to another couple who have permission to reproduce, but have failed to conceive. Care is taken to move the child very far away, ensuring its biological parents never see it again. In addition, a heavy penalty fine is also imposed, most of which is given to the new parents for the care of the child.

With human reproduction in decline, artificial life is on the rise. 'Biodroids' are a by-product of the latest generation of androids. These are veritable human clones with an advanced photonic brain capable of receiving a whole digitised lifetime. They are ideal for those looking to keep on living in a new body. Why have children if you can duplicate yourself forever?

FORGET THE BLOCKADE CRISIS!

FORGET STRESS!

FORGET ALL YOUR BAD MEMORIES!

You can live all new sensations in an **Eko Sauna** neuromassage centre. With the help of gentle, sensitive programmes, you will live out a relaxing experience in a positively charged plasma bath. There is nothing like it for a virtual holiday, ideal to relax body and mind. If you prefer something more active, our other programmes that offer an outlet for stress with our special brand of ultraviolence™ might also seduce you.

Eko Sauna – 8 centres across Shin-Edo!
Check our site to make a direct appointment

To digitise your memories and transfer them to a new body, scientists have developed a technique called 'Near Death Experience.' Through this principle they can record an accurate summary of the most important memories of the Genocrat who is placed in a state of near death. The experience is much like the notorious feeling of having your 'life flashing before your eyes' while drowning. However, the question remains: will this 'new you' really be you - or just a copy that thinks it is you?

Bioports

Grafting brain cells into microprocessors were just the first steps towards the first Bioports. With the advent of Microphotonics and the numerous biotechnological discoveries, it is now possible to create artificial implants that can be connected directly to the brain or other living organs. Still exceedingly expensive and used only by Special Forces, a Bioport is a sensor placed in the back of the neck allowing a direct connection with synaptic commands to any object containing nanotube processors. All without any wire whatsoever. It is then possible to remotely control the opening of doors, operate a computer system or hack a database all with the 'power of thought.'

The advent of Bioports made a lot of media noise, before being suppressed by the government, who wanted to keep this product for its elite troops. Even today Bioports are almost the stuff of urban legends to the majority of the population, although

rumours of soldiers turned insane by those implants regularly appear in the tabloids. Nevertheless, like the super-advanced Squids, Bioports are seen as the future of biotechnology.

Nanotechnology

Nanotechnology is a form of technology so small it is capable of acting directly at the level of atoms or cells. From a surgeon capable of operating microscopically, to a cell programmed to produce a specified enzyme, to drones the size of a red blood cell that improves oxygen circulation, there are many applications of nanotechnology. Often closely related to biotechnology and robotics, this scientific area is the basis of numerous recent discoveries in manufacturing, polymers and medical treatments.

Nanochips, nanosensors and molecular resonance

Nanochips and nanosensors are microscopic implants used in medicine to analyse the status of an organism and anticipate the appearance of any afflictions such as a virus or cancerous cells. The most fortunate (or wealthy) have their bodies filled with such detectors, accurately analysing the state of their bodies in real time and reacting to keep it working at optimal performance. Some can create serums or increase hormone levels if need be to help this process. By looking at your watch-monitor you can know, for instance, your precise cholesterol rate, and the nanochips can deal with it in case of excess.

A variant of nanochips and nanosensors are the more specialised Brain Chips and Cell Chips. These are a cunning combination of biotech and nanotech products. They are nanochips implanted in brain or other cells and were designed to fight certain deficiencies. Thus Brain Chips are usually used to compensate for irreversible brain damage, allowing you to be able to speak again, recover recent memories or efficiently fight a specific degenerative condition like Alzheimer's disease. Cell Chips intervene at a cellular level to alter hormonal secretions, fight tumours or generate artificial enzymes. The very epitome of nanotech, these implants are now an indispensable staple of modern medicine, and have vanquished many degenerative diseases or viruses like HIV. Unfortunately, they have also found many applications in less savoury trades, particularly the new synthetic drugs that flood the streets of Shin-Edo.

Similar microscopic sensors are now present in many objects and buildings, ready to react to specific chemical emanations. The Shin-Edo subway is equipped with many sensors designed to prevent fires and chemical or bacteriological attacks. These

SAY GOODBYE TO FAT!

With our new food products like the popular brand '**Shichimi**' (government approved) you no longer risk obesity. All foodstuffs manufactured in our laboratories are hypo-allergenic and adapted to bring you all of your daily needs.

Rich in vitamins and minerals, without any fat or sugar, and rich in molecules designed to clear and strengthen your arteries, our noodles and sauces are also delicious for all the family.

With one simple red rationing coupon you can get six boxes of our new product: **Yakitori!** Coming soon, directly from our Yokohama farms.

nanosensors can also be present in clothing, gloves or in many monitoring devices, changing colour to warn their user about the presence of a specified chemical or organic element (like blood or gunpowder).

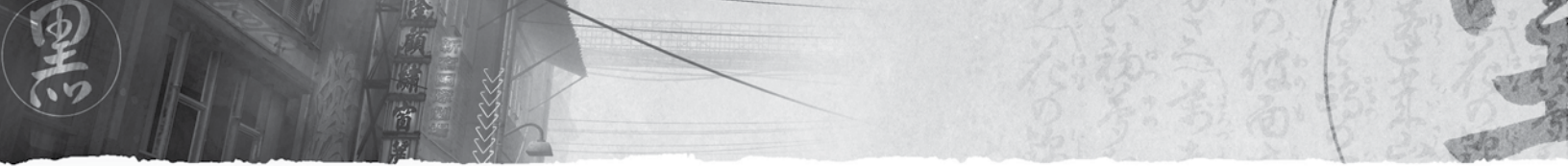
Nanocreatures

'Nanocreatures' is a slang term for microscopic robots, or at least those smaller than the size of a paperclip. Generally used by policemen or coroners to carry out autopsies or DNA analysis at a crime scene. Some are used for tracking, with many spy nanodrones no bigger than a fingernail able to move inside a building to reconnoitre the site of a hostage situation.

Being particularly expensive, these nanocreatures are still out of reach for most average workers. However, a growing number of 'gadget vendors' offer this kind of product for entertainment purposes (like light-emitting nanorobots able to make subcutaneous tattoos) with all the risks such under-priced equipment can represent.

Flexible Polymers and Biomaterials

Being able to combine atoms thanks to the advances in nanotechnology was a major step forward towards creating new materials. This new technology has brought impossible to stain clothing, flexible variants of glass, metal or concrete that is twice



as strong as before. New buildings and urban infrastructure, such as bridges and tunnels, have become more resistant to earthquakes; better isolated to avoid energy losses and so heat efficient that they can keep people warm using only the inhabitants' body heat or simple candles. These new materials have also allowed architects and designers to create buildings and objects in previously impossible shapes and patterns.

Nanotech also allowed the creation of flexible polymers and objects with shape memory: extremely light and solid plastics, liquid mini-screens upon which you can read the newspaper, or even light bulletproof vests that harden with the impact of a bullet.

Let us not forget the epitome of current biomaterial research: the fractal suit. Manufactured with fibres sensitive to the light spectrum, it allows you to change your own electromagnetic spectrum to be outside that of the human perception range. Only visible to infrared devices, the wearer of such a suit has an extended wavelength and is completely invisible to the eyes of a normal person. Obviously, such an expensive piece of tech is not yet sold in the shopping malls.

Robotics

"I've seen things you people wouldn't believe. Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion. I watched C-beams glitter in the dark near the Tannhauser gate. All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain. Time to die."

Roy Batty – Blade Runner

To compensate for the low birth rate, the use of androids in many economic sectors of society seemed like a natural, even unavoidable result. Always at the forefront of robotics technology, Japan's specialists have become world renowned, their inventions ranging from the Puppetbot, which replaced pets, to the androids working in an assembly line or driving taxis. It is even possible to find escort girls with a perfect poise who feel almost human. All these robots are the result of the most recent discoveries in microphotonics, making the current designs able to work quickly and cooperatively by trading information via laser communication.

There are currently four main types of androids, distinguished not only by function, but also by manufacturer.

The first category is the simplest. Puppetbots are little robots designed to replace real pets. While they are often simply toys for children, they are nevertheless gifted with advanced features,

and can become reasonably effective nannies or the companions of invalids and the housebound. They never have a humanoid shape, instead being smooth and curved abstract shapes with many wheels, in striking, primary colours, like the Uko and Papero 1200 models. Some are extravagant copies of pets (dog or cat, or inubotto or nekobotto) imitating them perfectly without the risk of allergies or bites.

The second category is androids. With a purely humanoid shape these 'artificial' were designed for simple tasks. While they have a human shape, they are obviously robotic, made of photovoltaic circuits and synthetic materials. They are powered by nanobatteries that are rechargeable through solar, thermal or kinetic power. They were given human shape so that users were not surrounded by what is seen as cold, mechanical creations, although some find these carefully designed features just as unnerving. They are able to answer basic questions directly connected to their function and pre-programmed into their plasma brains.

Artificial are often used in dangerous jobs (exposure to toxic products, having to carry heavy weights, etc.) or those jobs currently thought of as degrading or low class (cleaning, contact with corpses...). In addition, they might also serve in a number of mundane functions, such as chambermaids, taxi drivers, cooks or delivery boys.

The most expensive, latest generation artificial are covered in polymers designed to mimic human skin and flesh, and good enough to fool the most attentive onlooker. Skin texture, body heat, hair, lips, finger and toenails, beauty spots, all are designed to look like an ordinary human. It goes without saying that these luxury androids are highly sought after by hostess houses and prostitution networks. The programming of these models is often more advanced, so that they might mimic human responses. However, talking to one for a while makes it clear they are machines as they have little experience outside of their function.

The third category is the 'Synthetic,' full or partial (more than 50%) android bodies with a human brain. Rather than being an amputee with a mechanical leg, a synthetic had his body almost totally rebuilt. They are everywhere in law enforcement, the military and special forces. Under very strict control, they are generally considered to be 'enhanced humans' rather than machines, and have often been 'upgraded' after an accident, or even by choice. They are hardly ever seen on the streets and many Japanese do not even believe that they exist.

The fourth and final category is the most recent development, the biodroids or replicants. These are human clones, enhanced or



LADIES, ARE YOU CRUSHED BY LONELINESS?

Instead of subscribing to a virtual speed-dating programme or stalking the escort bars in Kabuki-cho, consider our **Apollo** model. This android will not only do your home chores and repair your vehicle, but will also improvise fine dishes thanks to his Steward 5 Class programming. He can also massage you after a bath, dance with you in the local gala and make you laugh. With a small supplement, our engineers will add self defence capabilities, turning it in a true bodyguard!

What are you waiting for to acquire the perfect lover?

Apollo is a Fuji Corp. labs design

not, with an electronic brain. They are constructed in a lab and, were originally designed as replacement bodies for Genocrats. However, they are more commonly used as efficient henchmen or perfect replicas designed to replace the original models. The last word in robotic biotech, they are still unknown to the general public.

Prosthetics

Basically, prosthetics have the purpose of correcting physical handicaps, allowing a paralysed person to walk or an amputee to use a new arm with the aid of a mechanical creation. A subtle mix of robotics, biotech and even nanotech, prosthetic applications have allowed the development of other technologies, often used in the military arena.

Biomechanical prosthetics

Biomechanics are used as replacements for damaged limbs, muscles, joints or bones. Far from being mere robotic arms, biomechanical organs are hybrid implants reinforced with nanochips and carbon nanomuscular fibres. They are often stronger and hardier, although they are only designed to give someone back the usage of a lost limb and not turn them into a superman. However, the military often use more advanced

prosthetics to augment their soldiers allowing some military groups and elite commandoes to have significantly above average physical abilities.

Exoskeletons, skinsuits and waldos

Designed to allow a paraplegic to walk again or a nurse to easily carry a handicapped person, exoskeletons have found many other applications. Powerful harnesses that are more vehicle than exoskeleton (like the three metre high 'waldo') are used in construction sites to carry heavy loads. On a smaller scale, suits filled with nanofibres (skinsuits) give remarkable enhancements to law enforcement agents, like better speed or endurance. Exoskeletons are directly based on nanotech and robotic innovations and their appearance ranges from huge robots to simple suits filled with microscopic chips.

Environmental Technology

Technological advances had an obvious impact in the areas of environment, ecology, agriculture and habitation. If they had not, then the world might not have made it this far.


Housing

Japan has not grown any larger and, despite the falling birth rates, cities had to evolve, grow, and improve. The advent of new materials, anti-seismic concretes, polymers and carbon fibres, allowed buildings to better resist earthquakes and violent winds. Kaijin ward, built on the sea and made of several platforms, is the direct result of the extensive research in biomaterials.

Modern homes are full of the devices and technologies mentioned above. Vocal commands, retinal recognition and appliances with intelligent programming are all common in residences. A simple vocal command opens your shutters, turns off the TV or changes the channel. As for the rest, from ordering a meal to holographic sports programmes, you can count on your personal computer and the light fibre network in the city.

Ecology and Energy

In the drained world of 2046, resource management became a veritable science. It has led to the development of government hydroponic farms, the use of biotech to clone living species and improve nutritional resources. Huge farms placed on the sea bed each year replicate thousands of tuna or salmon in batches destined for the food industry and restaurants. Livestock farming has not escaped these principles, and the bigger farms are only



supervised by a handful of humans controlling machines and vats that transform (often cloned) cattle and sheep into thin slivers ready for the plate.

Ecology is the central concern for most governments as there is still no miracle solution in sight. Attempts to heal the ozone layer through atmospheric processors have been unsuccessful, so whole populations are obliged to save their resources and optimise renewable sources of power. Recovery and recycling have become widespread in Japan, with entire industries in charge of recycling raw materials and of designing 100% biodegradable and/or reusable products of one form or another.

Vehicles now all have hybrid engines, working thanks to fuel cells, clean biofuels and hydrogen. Japan has done all it could to develop its public transportation, using elevated trains and high-speed rails. We should also not forget the no longer (since the Kuro Incident) satellite-controlled expressways, where speeding is now possible.

As for energy, a new generation of solar panels fitted with photovoltaic nanobatteries provides as much energy as Japan's nuclear industry, while on a personal level, every type of electronic item comes with some sort of recharging capability, be it from light (solar) movement (kinetic) or heat (thermoelectric). So for example, the Pods used by the population work using sunlight by day, and the movements of their users and their body heat by night.

Space

Even a thousand mile journey begins with a single step.
-Japanese proverb

The conquest of the solar system remains a sweet dream. Despite many advances in the last forty years, it is still very complex and onerous to escape the Earth's gravity. The set-up of an international moon base, sponsored by China, and the first ion drive flights have allowed more frequent space missions and the manufacture of satellites in zero gravity rather than on Earth. Now, capsules fitted with solar sails can ferry two or three individuals on extra-orbital trips around the moon to make repairs or upgrades to the existing satellite networks.

Unfortunately, astronauts still suffer from prolonged sojourns in zero gravity and many develop vertigo and other mental problems upon return to Earth after long trips. A secret research programme was set up some fifteen years ago, created to design individuals perfectly adapted to the lack of gravity and doomed

never to set foot on Earth. A product of Chinese biotech and research, the resulting new generation of humans, called Tycho Children, numbered a score of individuals who now live in the moon base buildings. Vat born, they are designed to resist low to zero gravity and unable to live in a heavier gravity they are condemned to live in space and can never visit the world from the science that created them originated. Many of the Tycho Children have trained for years for the forthcoming colonization of Mars.

Before China and Japan fell out, competition for space superiority was fierce between Asia, Europe and the United States. Determined to be first on Mars, Japan voluntarily chose to break its partnership with NASA and supported China with its more generous funding. At the time, the technology was not available to send ordinary humans to the Red Planet without condemning them to a too long, dangerous journey. So, Japanese researchers chose, for the moment, to concentrate on sending androids capable of successfully carrying out the mission. Thanks to their research, robotics progressed prodigiously in thirty years, and on July 20th, 2044, after a nine-month journey in space, the Ophir Planum mission finally landed near Valles Marineris on Mars. Fourteen androids are now in charge of exploring the area and preparing for the coming of the Tycho Children, expected to arrive in 2050.

Annoyed, both Europe and the USA have increased their space research funding to build a second moon base. This base was designed to house a shuttle with the purpose of embarking colonists for Mars. This continued offworld political and economic rivalry with Japan has certainly been part of the reason why the blockade has lasted for so long after the Kuro Incident, the West taking advantage of the misunderstanding between Japan and the Panasiatic Federation to settle its own score.

Occultech

Far from being a true science, 'occultech' is the name given to various inventions designed by weirdoes and mystics following the Kuro Incident. A subtle mix of Shinto rituals, Taoist beliefs, many superstitions and applied technology, Occultech is a modern take on artefacts supposed to fight malignant creatures.

It is very often found in the backrooms of small shops in Shin-Edo, like a small herbalist shop in Asakusa or a lucky charm stall in Shibuya. Such items include the spectral recognition visor, Ouija-pods, holographic pentacles, Oni-detecting nanosensors and consecrated salt grenades, not forgetting the Zen chime, tolling when the supernatural wind blows over the archipelago.

In the wake of the Kuro Incident, a fringe network of shady dealers has built up, creating and trading in such items. Some are making money from gullible people convinced that the hereafter is about to invade the real world. Others are trying to supply those who have chosen to fight the spirit world with the weapons that they need. It all depends on your point of view. Many of these traders do not hesitate to loot private collections; hire mercenaries to steal museum pieces or to set up deals with certain morgues.

It is becoming common knowledge for many of these 'supernatural specialists' that bullets and blades that have caused the death of an individual are particularly effective against some shadow creatures. Many coroners thus sell bullets and metal objects (like pieces of the chassis from car accidents) extracted from the corpses that they examine. The same goes for katanas and knives still soiled with the blood of their victims. Generally speaking, every individual item or person who had any direct contact with death, and is thus stained, appears to have some sort of power over the creatures from beyond.

What was once a combination of traditional beliefs, popular superstition and prayer has been applied to modern technology, the result being a now more specialised and technological trade. Nowadays many seers use thermal spectacles to 'read your aura' or to watch (so to speak) the kami, or heal your stress using psychedelic augmented reality programmes. Ofuda (pieces of paper filled with protection formulae) now exist as projected images or prayers written in a flexible screen. And let us not forget those numerous healers using traditional ointments together with nanotech serums.

WALLS COVERED IN BLOOD?

Fingernails or locks of hair under your pillow? A friend dead of a kanashibari (or heart attack)? A drowned girlfriend has come back to haunt you?

All this may be the work of a yosei or a bakemono seeking to harm you. Do not hesitate to call on a true specialist of the invisible world. Jobutsu agency is here to help you.

Special rates for Naturals.

WE'RE READY TO BELIEVE YOU!

Jobutsu Agency

2-45-2 Kabuki-co, Shinjuku-ku



SHIN-EDO

"Sushi. That's what my ex-wife called me. Cold fish."

Deckard – Blade Runner

bodies are modified to beyond human by nanotech, and whose natural population is doomed to live in fear of the blockade and of the things the Divine Wind brought with it.

AN OVERVIEW OF SHIN-EDO


On the Isle of Honshu, in the Kanto plain, at the mouth of the Sumida River, the city once called Tokyo is still the capital of Japan, a gigantic sprawl of 36 million inhabitants built facing the Pacific Ocean. In time this megalopolis lost the title of the most populous city in the world to Mexico City. The relentless birth rate decrease, the changing family values, the government birth control initiatives and the coming of robotics not only contributed towards the loss of this title, but also deeply changed Japanese society. Shin-Edo followed Japan's closing in on itself, becoming the herald of the country's self-sufficiency drive. The country had already been feeling isolated by the time of the Kuro Incident, not helped by the poor international response to the earthquakes of 2025 and 2037, but the reaction of the international community following the failed nuclear strike by the Panasiatic Federation brought about a new awareness in many Japanese. United under their Emperor, they see themselves as having been completely cut off from the rest of the world – quite literally in the case of the blockade, forced to save on resources, to ration their possessions and to recycle their products. They do all of this proudly so that they can stand strong together. Despite this resolve, Japan remains an aging, decaying society, one whose children are replaced by domestic machines, with an elite whose

The shock of the Kuro Incident was so profound that a new era was proclaimed, the Danketsu (Peace and Prosperity) era, replacing the previous Heisei (Peaceful Accomplishment). While some Japanese embrace this proclamation, most understand it as an attempt to put on a brave face.

Infrastructure

Despite the apparent paradox, Shin-Edo is a state of the art high tech conglomeration, highlighted by a Zen spirituality drawn from a tradition laden past. Whether transportation or communication, the city is criss-crossed with networks designed to regulate the lives of the inhabitants in the best possible way. Everything is optimised according to the country's power saving policies and a desire for safety. Nevertheless, and despite the government's best efforts, the city's infrastructure has been disintegrating bit by bit since the beginning of the international hostilities and the imposition of the blockade.

The Shin-Edo sprawl is made of 24 districts called 'special wards' (or Tokubetsu-ku), 27 townships, a single department and four island districts. Nevertheless, only the 24 special wards are considered to be actually part of the megalopolis, the rest are just considered nearby suburbs. While most Japanese cities are made up of wards, the ones in Shin-Edo are considered 'special wards' as they have a little more autonomy than those found in other cities. Other than this, these special wards are much the same as any other ward in any other city. The special wards have



the following names: Adachi, Arakawa, Bunkyo, Chiyoda, Chuo, Edogawa, Itabashi, Kaijin, Katsushika, Kita, Koto, Meguro, Minato, Nakano, Nerima, Ota, Setagaya, Shibuya, Shinagawa, Shinjuku, Suginami, Sumida, Toshima and Taito.

Interestingly, the capital has only really existed in administrative terms since 1943. Beforehand it was a collection of neighbouring administrations organising the individual wards, with no overall control. Even today, each of the 24 special wards maintains a certain amount of autonomy. This combined with the fact that each of the special wards is further divided into a hundred different quarters makes Shin-Edo far more of a hive of towns huddled together rather than a single city. Still, all of Shin-Edo's inhabitants consider all of these different wards to be part of Japan's capital.

However, somehow it all manages to fit together. A vast and labyrinthine city, Shin-Edo is an astounding mix of modernity and traditionalism, with huge complexes of sophisticated buildings overshadowing the parks, shrines and alleyways of the old city. It is a sprawling, complex conglomeration, where the aluminium passageways of a subway line lead to winding streets with ancient façades. Even in the age of microphotonics, the houses are strung with a web of electric cables crisscrossing above the streets, either a humming spider web or the strings that the puppeteers use to run the city. Shinto priests rub shoulders with surveillance androids, young bosozoku (biker gang members) ride magnetic dragsters, the Genocracy digitises its thoughts so as to live forever and elegant ladies patronise little forgotten shops to exorcise the ghost that is haunting them.

No-one can really find their way in Shin-Edo, except perhaps the robot taxi drivers, who are the better equipped to know the names of the streets in this monumental, diverse and superimposed city. From the skyscrapers in Shinjuku and the giant holograms in Roppongi, to the green garden in the Imperial Palace and the Kaijin Ocean platform, the Japanese capital's many quarters cater to an array of eclectic and refined tastes.

Architecture and the Virtual City

Long before 2040, old Tokyo had the look of a futuristic city. The profusion of buildings designed by virtuoso architects, often placed alongside more classical buildings or near to verdant parks, gave the city the air of a 22nd Century metropolis. In time this impression became even more concrete, as new buildings with sophisticated shapes emerged from the earth, built with subtle mixes of biomaterials, steel and glass. As time passed,

architectural geniuses adapted the existing buildings, surrounding them, readapting them, swallowing them, giving the past a new lease of life. Some ancient temple façades became the entrances to subway stations, or were swallowed by more voluminous buildings or found themselves on the top of skyscrapers. A small sushi restaurant, established in the 1950s, might have had its sign almost completely hidden by blinking neon lights and graffiti. Roads have multiplied, layering on top of each other, creating levels of freeway lanes placed one over another or inside concrete tunnels. In a leisurely drive off the beaten path, it is not surprising to come across an ancient red painted house literally embedded in a wall made of futuristic metals decorated with floral motifs.


Over this very real megalopolis another one is superimposed. With the advent of the photonic network, robotics, holograms and augmented reality, Shin-Edo has been covered in a cloak of lights and technology. Now, by connecting your glasses to your Pod, 3D elements become visible on top of the urban landscape: eye-pleasing virtual monuments, advertisements floating in the air, prototype cars circulating on the road, toys moving in and out of a children toy store, a gigantic, sexy character beckoning you to enter a manga magazine. Hundreds of images are transferred by the optical ports of the stores and advertisement panels to your Pod so that they are superimposed over your normal vision. Even if you wisely keep your glasses in your pocket, you still get holograms attracting your eye or even calling you directly after scanning your retina.

Finally, do not forget the many robots to be found on any street corner, in stores, even in tiny back alleys. There are automatic vending machines for everything, drinks, cigarettes, blank CDs, sandwiches, downloadable newspapers, nanovoltaic batteries, anti-rain cowls and much more.

Transportation

After earthquakes damaged the subway, causing hundreds of deaths in multiple collapses, the powers that be chose to have a much bigger elevated train system built, serving most quarters in Shin-Edo. Baptised the Yamanote Evolve (YE), it replaced as much as possible of the old train line which circled downtown, but some sections of the old railway remain, serving certain quarters. The rail network thus currently resembles a veritable spider web made of different metallic wires, superimposed or crossing over thousands of kilometres.

Unfortunately, most stations in the suburbs are still badly served by ancient lines with slow, obsolete trains. The rest of the original over-ground and subway lines were simply decommissioned. The relative shelter offered by the subways and



decommissioned stations not only attracted the homeless, but became a haven for small-time criminals. Indeed, the thick walls in the underground stations and obsolete electronic equipment do not allow for full surveillance by the city's otherwise extensive security network, so all sorts of fugitives, outsiders and foreigners (called gaijin) illegally on Japanese soil gather together there to eke out a living through begging, unlicensed trade or small-time illegal rackets.

Began in 2042, the Yamanote Evolve developed its new transport lines out through most of Shin-Edo's 24 special wards, including the man-made island of Odaiba. Guided by laser and reaching a speed of 280km/h through electromagnetic levitation, the Yamanote railway takes approximately 45 seconds to go from one station to the next. Despite its speed, travelling via the Yamanote Evolve offers a splendid aerial view of the city, its suspended rail passing over many of Shin-Edo's notable landmarks. It also passes through multiple recreation complexes and shopping centres with many stations actually having been inside these high rise buildings. Travel via the Yamanote Evolve is quick and inexpensive, and in no time at all, the traveller will himself alighting at a shopping gallery or a water park or a temple. While the highest towers obviously remain inaccessible to most travellers, they will still find the view of the elevated terrace's and luxury balconies in panoramic restaurants in Chiyoda enchanting.

While public transportation is still the preferred means of moving around for the inhabitants of Shin-Edo, the road network is still used for heavy transportation and by people living outside of the megalopolis. Like the city itself, the road network is hard to understand for the uninitiated, and all vehicles are automated to follow a programmed route. In order to keep all roads safe, particularly the colossal expressway that connects the capital with Kyoto, a combination of GPS scanners and anti-collision sensors allow cars and trucks to respect safe stopping distances and the legal speed limits. While it is possible to set a vehicle to manual and accelerate beyond the speed limit, the police are watching and your car will refuse to go over the speed limit of the quarter you are in anyway. Any traffic violation risks being immediately noticed by satellite control and the many cameras connected to Shin-Edo's numerous police stations.

One side effect of the international blockade is that all of the foreign or private satellites previously used by Japan became inaccessible, forcing the country to rely on the fistful of satellites it owns currently in orbit. Unfortunately, even with the advances in communications technology, these satellites cannot always cope with the volume of data traffic they are expected to handle and road traffic on Japan's expressways is often subject to delays and disruption caused by bad data transmission. Of course,

the main effect of the satellite blockade is that Japan is literally incommunicado. This communications breakdown goes both ways. While some international information, like CNN, can still be received as radio waves on old technology, other means of communication (like the Neoweb) did not escape this forced break and it is extremely hard for Japan to transmit anything to the outside world.


Security

The subtle presence of the security forces is ubiquitous throughout the city centre complex, particularly in the quarters surrounding the imperial palace. Small police posts are placed every 500 metres and clusters of miniaturised cameras are camped in numerous strategic places. For the most part, Japanese society remains very law abiding and you have as much chance of finding your credit card in a police station if you have lost it as you would being able to carry a heavy suitcase filled with wads of cash to the reception in your hotel without a care in the world.

The Japanese respect for the law has been further reinforced by the abundant retinal scanners that monitor their every activity outside of their homes. Even if the citizens of Japan are accustomed to dealing respectfully with the law enforcement authorities, their identities are still scanned an average of twenty times a day. An optical desk in every subway station connects your identity to your ticket; reactive holographic ads adapt to your profile so that they can better offer you their products; your car scans you to check that you are its real owner; and your apartment door never opens to strangers without your permission. You might even be scanned by your own gantai when you make a phone call. Almost everything has a scanner which will quickly zap your retina with a laser flash to check your identity.

In such environment, a hardened criminal or a foreigner illegally arrived on Japanese soil does not remain unnoticed for long. Obviously, any system has its limitations, and if avoiding the most secure quarters is the primary means of avoiding a long stay in a ranpaku cell (a kind of coffin filled with a thick fluid, egg white like, which suppresses the occupant's emotions) the most effective solutions can be found in the black market or in small, seedy clinics in the Shinjuku quarter. Possible solutions include eye transplants, anti-flash devices, contact lenses or even simple bribes.

Despite the high level of security throughout the city, the streets of Shin-Edo are not without crime. The boryokudan (crime syndicates) continue to operate despite the anti-gang laws and the iron-fisted actions of the police. These Yakuza federations deal in



protection rackets, murder, arms trafficking, illicit gambling and control much of the drugs and sex industries. Often enhanced with a mixture of biotech and nanotech paid for from the proceeds of their criminal ventures, these Yakuza obey some strict traditions, some of which might seem anachronistic in 2046. Vast and efficient, the Nipponese mafia is represented by particularly influential godfathers, like those of the Yamaguchi-gumi, Inagawakai or Sumyoshi-gumi federations. Some time ago these organisations, who operate discreetly under many different façades (religious and political movements as well as trade companies) begun to notice new pawns on the chessboard. They are still deciding what to do with these new arrivals, unknown and supernatural beings, more murderous than these distant relatives of the samurai.

If delinquency and gangs have always been present in society, with its share of larceny, crime and murder, the Kuro Incident provoked a deep seated disruption in the harmony of the Shin-Edo community. The multiplication of strange events, unexplained disappearances, and aberrant testimonies about supernatural apparitions has bred an uneasy environment among a population that is trying to ignore the blockade and live as it did before. Of course, the continuing presence of foreign forces surrounding the archipelago and the regular power outages are a constant reminder of the current threat under which they live.

Power

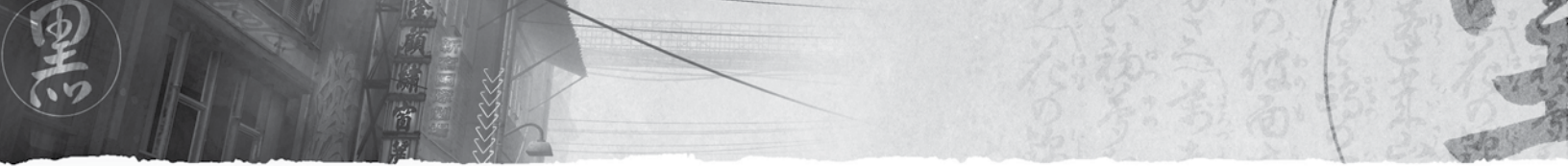
Even though the Kuro Incident protected Japan by making the second nuclear missile vanish inexplicably into thin air, it also caused an electrical blackout that lasted for two hours after the event. The most immediate effect of this blackout was collision of two airliners as they took off from Haneda airport. Their subsequent crash led to the loss of hundreds of lives on the ground in addition to the loss of passengers aboard the aircraft. The Kuro Incident also caused a wave of secondary effects across the Shin-Edo power grid. Like every metropolis in Japan, ancient Tokyo is criss-crossed with an impressive array of suspended power cables fed by an almost as equally impressive array of photo-voltaic or thermal panels scattered all over the city and on off-shore platforms. They can truly be found everywhere, from the top of buildings and the basements of shops to clusters sitting off the coast. In the last half century, thermal and solar power has become the main power sources in Japan, now equal to her nuclear industries in output. Although designed to withstand earthquakes, this energy network was not hardened to withstand the magnetic short circuit that occurred immediately after the Kuro Incident. It disrupted the power relay centres, causing serious damage that persists to this day that manifests in

frequent power outages across Shin-Edo. Many neighbourhoods regularly find themselves in the dark, sometimes for 24 hours at a time. It is easy to imagine what some inhabitants in the poorer or more haunted quarters feel when the public lighting and the neon signs go off. At such times, the incidences of urban legends reported by the media and to which the population tries to pay no attention to, due to fear, disbelief or superstition, take on a whole new and more substantial dimension.

Unfortunately, when these blackouts occur, the neighbourhood's network of optic ports does not go unaffected. Looking like simple metal boxes wrapped up with crystals and greenish optic fibres, the ports can usually be found attached to the façades of buildings the 'laser aerials' having replaced the old telephone lines, the GSM relay antennae and TV cables. When you activate your Pod, it automatically connects to the nearest optic port, allowing you to make a visiphone call, watch a movie, retrieve information from the web, play a game in a virtual network or remote control the programming of your oven. Only a tiny fraction of Shin-Edo remains unaffected by these spontaneous power and information blackouts, much to the consternation of local residents.

Environmental issues

Victimised by volcanic eruptions, earthquakes (about a thousand each year), typhoons and other natural disasters, the Japanese archipelago has tried for hundreds of years to tame nature. Many dams were placed in riverbeds and concrete walls on the sides of mountains to prevent the landslides caused by deforestation or floods. Even the coasts of the islands are covered in tetrapods, gigantic structures designed to contain sea erosion, and reinforced dams to counter a possible rise of the waters. The high demographic density turned the Japanese landscape into a permanent construction site; monumental hydroponic farms now occupy considerable rural space. These are now mostly state owned fields and farms, trying to maintain the country's self-sufficiency programme. In the meantime, while Japan used to incinerate 75% of its solid wastes, the new energy policies have led individuals to rethink the way that they consume power. Now LED light bulbs are ubiquitous, waste is almost completely reused, and recycling and recovery have become the norm. All everyday objects, from the cardboard cup you eat your noodles from to the holographic projector in your home studio, have had several incarnations as other products. An optical component can be recycled some 500 times before being completely destroyed, allowing society to live longer on its own means. Some claim it is even possible to do the same with human organs, if you have the means to do it.



Unfortunately, the famous Japanese self-sufficiency programme has never quite become a reality. Despite the efforts of the state to fulfil the needs of the population by itself and to resort less to imports, international trade never ceased and the Archipelago has always purchased huge amounts of raw materials and power from abroad. With the blockade in place for six months now, ordinary Japanese have begun to discover this unfortunate reality. The government, which bragged of the country's ability to feed and power itself, has lied. While the inhabitants of Shin-Edo keep frequenting the fashion shops as before, the country's grain stores are emptying and a strict rationing policy seems inevitable. Soon private factories will be appropriated by the state, as well as the aquatic farms of Kaijin, and every inhabitant will have to ration his consumption of power and food. Who knows? Maybe next it will be entire cities which will be left without power? And then little by little, the neon lights and holograms will be extinguished.

Meanwhile, Shin-Edo still suffers from meteorological disruptions caused by the destruction of the ozone layer. Despite attempts to reconstruct the high atmosphere with the help of prototype atmospheric processors and the interdiction of greenhouse effect gasses, summers are much hotter, and hurricanes are more and more common. Often Shin-Edo goes straight from the hottest weather to a devastating rainy season without any warning. Since the Kuro Incident, a powerful regular wind blows systematically for some days before a typhoon.

Sports, games and leisure

Japanese society, the inhabitants of Shin-Edo in particular, enjoy a variety of games and leisure activities. The growing number of recreation places across the whole city is proof of this, as is the success of immersive video games. Some would even say that the population tries to forget this dark time by drowning in games and gambling. Rooms once filled with Pachinkos, those noisy vertical pinball games, are now meeting places for virtual gaming addicts, using a pause in the game to savour a Kirin Next beer before reclining on one of the gaming couches to pursue their imaginary adventures. From the outside it seems these places, found all over the capital, are meditation centres, complete with incense smoke for a similar ambiance. In some corners, traditional games of Go and Shogi bring some life to the strangely lethargic environment.

Besides these leisure activities, the crowds are still passionate about Yakyu (baseball). The 55,000 seats of the Tokyo Dome in the Bunkyo ward (which also has shops and a pleasant spa) are regularly filled. But all of this exuberance hardly hides the growing unrest of Shin-Edo's population.

POPULAR QUARTERS OF SHIN-EDO

The best way to discover Shin-Edo is to visit the best-known quarters (out of the hundreds in the Capital). Each one of these quarters is part of one of the special wards that cut through the city like a jigsaw puzzle. Augmented reality signs are regularly superimposed over the façades of the city's streets, the better for an unwary visitor not to get lost. Moreover, many neighbourhoods bear the name of the special ward that they belong to. Despite this, it is still quite easy to lose track of where you are.

It is important to be aware of the notion of rank (or Kaiso). Japanese society has a number of taboos and social gradations, enclosing people in different social boxes that allow them to only open certain doors and possess certain rights. Bloodlines and working with or in close proximity with the dead has already been mentioned, but there are also ranks for housing. Thus, the wealthier you are (like the Genocracy), the taller the skyscrapers where you live, the roomier your apartments and the closer to the ground they will be. This reality has its origins in the frequent earthquakes, making the ground-floor lodgings the safest and thus, inevitably, the most expensive.

In fact, many floors are often reserved for the elite and it is impossible for those of the lowest rank to visit some arboreta. These ranks are classed from 0 (homeless) to 6 (Genocracy) and are recorded in your identity profile and thus obvious to the various retinal scan devices. Woe to the natural who ventures into a luxurious palace in the first floor of the Green-Dori building, for instance. Security androids would soon remind him where he came from and what his true place in society is, meaning the higher floors. Unfortunately, up there, during a strong earthquake you do not have as much time to escape as you would from the floors closer to the ground.

Obviously, the available room is always small and real estate prices especially high, which together with the inaccessible levels, means that common mortals have to make do with tiny one- or two-room studios. . Other working class lodgings are nothing, but simple capsules, hardly allowing you to recline.





Shin-edo
新江戸



Akasaka (Minato Special Ward)

“Akasaka, the salary-men quarter. Since the blockade, they sometimes escape like flights of pigeons by flying through their buildings’ windows. They would rather than suffer the shame of poverty the way those like me must.”

Sojeima Inejiro – Labourer

The Shin-Edo business quarter, Akasaka is occupied by the huge buildings of the biggest laboratories in the country, filled with hordes of ‘salarymen’ in softskin suits (sombre suits filled with nanoscanners, the height of fashion). Every skyscraper seems to challenge the next in its architecture and the way it shows the logo of the company inside. Whether it is FujiLab, Edo-Corp or Grey Skies Zabai, every building is filled with screens, holographic platforms and living lights whose purpose is to attract the eyes of passers-by. Since the economic fall of several large corporations, smaller companies, namely all robotics and nanotech labs, have acquired the real estate of the old zaibatsu and made their headquarters here.

Run by discrete businessmen, cloistered, like all in the Genocracy, within luxurious apartments which they never leave, these companies employ hundreds of dynamic executives and salesmen. Although smaller than international corporations, these laboratories have adapted to the current economy and have so far resisted the international blockade thanks to their flexible way of doing business and their commercial aggressiveness. The blockade caused considerable economic disruption, the Japanese stock market falling in the wake of the Kuro Incident as it became impossible to carry out international transactions. After six months of the blockade many of the city’s international banks are ready to close their doors or (unbelievably!) get bought out by some small family-run financial outfit in Shin-Edo (often connected to the Mafia). The loss of important financial resources, unpredictable markets and a poorer consumer base have also forced banks to change their way of doing business. In addition, layoffs, repossessions, crises, suicides, and loans from less savoury organisations have created a sombre climate across the economic life of the country. Only the hope that diplomacy will manage to bring an end to the blockade allows many companies to continue doing business, even if only at a subsistence level.

Together with these business centres, Akasaka is home to many luxury hotels as well as several embassies. Countless pedestrian-only streets welcome tired executives after a day’s work to bars with fluorescent façades. Following the Kuro Incident, many buildings (namely the United States, Chinese and British embassies) remain deserted and many homeless squat there.

Indeed, several countries have been forced to urgently repatriate their representatives following reprisals from extremist groups, although the political situation has only recently stepped over the line into violence. For instance, on August 24th 2046, the Sekai Kyusei Kyo cult got hold of a flesh-eating enzyme manufactured in a Yokohama clandestine laboratory and attempted to release it in the Chinese embassy.

The Akasaka quarter is not only relatively secure, having many optical ports on the streets, it also has the most robot taxis in Shin-Edo. Belonging to a score of companies distinguished by their different colours, these taxis are all controlled by steward androids whose purpose is to help you reach your destination in the best possible condition. For a few yen, you can get a grey AKTC cab equipped with a simple robot torso with limited conversation capabilities, but YellowCab will guarantee true protection (the android also plays the part of bodyguard in an armoured vehicle) while Pink Taxi promises the presence of a charming artificial escort girl.

Sakurazawa Zen: Bearing the name of the inventor of Macrobiotic Zen, this small chain of restaurants crated by Hiro Kushi offers a set of menus engineered for a healthy body, including many pharmaceutical products. These establishments are renowned for highlighting healthy eating, and even have ‘alimentary regimes’ designed to reinforce individual defence against disease. It is said that the inventor of Macrobiotic Zen received a revelation at the age of 18 and became a prophet with the ability of designing diets capable of overcoming any affliction. The restaurant beside the Capsule Inn hotel, with its pleasing environment of aquarium tables and bluish walls covered with screens showing natural scenes, is a popular place to eat for many of the big shots from the nearby offices of Japan’s leading companies.

Waste Management Company: Behind this company dedicated to the recycling of waste from prosthetic factories is a Yakuza group belonging to the Inagawa-kai federation. Made up mostly of gurentai (gangs of thugs) usually recruited from among the gangs roaming the big shopping centres in the Minato Ward, they identify themselves using light-emitting cosmetic implants under the skin. Primarily charged with extorting funds from company executives through blackmail and threats, many among them also ‘work’ directly with some of the laboratories to control bidding and to silence the competition, just long enough for example, to acquire some public funds or a big contract. The Waste Management Company is run by Mr. Oshawa Michio. A stocky, chubby man, Michio never goes anywhere without having his ‘jintojo’ close at hand. This is a stick that supposedly keeps demons away, the top of which is sculpted with a human head over a moon crescent.

Hie-Jinja Shrine: Located atop one of the Akasaka hills, this place of worship was built to assure the divine protection of the Imperial Palace. Guarding the entrance to the main hall is a statue of a female monkey with her young, a symbol of happy marriage and birth. A veritable isle of tranquillity in a tumultuous quarter, every two years the shrine organises the Sanno matsuri, the great spring festival, and one of the main Shinto festivals in Shin-Edo. Not far from the numerous torii that mark the entrance to the site is the Omikujii tree. Nowadays an Omikujii is a box one finds in many leisure shops in the capital. The user must shake it until a hologram card falls out. This plastic card is then activated in a reader placed alongside the Omikujii and reads the prediction it holds. If it is a good omen, no problem. If not, the card must be attached to a branch of the tree so that the spirits might consume the bad omen. Thus the Omikujii tree is filled with more or less damaged holographic chips, suspended by ropes, ribbons or bands or just embedded into the grooves of the bark.

Unhex Nani Nani: Situated on the great Platinum Avenue in the Minato ward, originally this building was the architectural creation of the famous Phillippe Starck. Resembling a large green metal bunker, its colour having been renewed after several renovations, it has become a nightclub called 'Nani Nani.' Apart from its remarkable appearance, nothing would really distinguish it from any other nightclub, if it had not been a pioneer of Augmented Reality and the fashion of 'Virtual Clubbing' which has done away with the need for foam nights or multi-coloured spotlights. Now the club goers don their glasses, goggles or other gantai and take advantage of virtual animations, extraordinary sounds and shapes floating under their stunned eyes, while they dance. The club has become a sort of psychedelic paradise peopled with marvellous animals. It all comes from the imagination of their designer: Suwa Horu, the DJ of the place, closed inside the booth of thick smoked glass walls that hangs over the main dance floor. Shy, but quite wild, Horu prefers to design new animations on his imposing plasma computer rather than speaking to strangers.

Tokyo Tower: Built in the Minato ward, this big red and white tower with a similar shape to the Eiffel tower is 332.6 metres high. With different lighting according to the seasons, it is one of the biggest metal towers in the world and has numerous optical ports and relay aerials. Open to the public, the Tokyo Tower has (at 150 m and 250 m) two observatories offering a spectacular panorama of the Kanto plain or Mount Fuji. It also contains many stores and coffee shops. Until the opening of the 'Sky tree' (another broadcasting mast, 633m high) in 2011, it was the tallest structure in Japan.


Akihabara (Chiyoda Special Ward)

"It's getting worrying, all these guys amusing themselves by messing round with domestic androids. Have you heard of the guy in Shibuya who had his dick squashed by a pleasure android? You'll see, soon the machines will rebel and will kill us in our sleep!"

Sanada Juro – Car Salesman

With the boom in robotics and androids being proposed as a solution both to the manpower loss and low birth rates, this quarter has become the place from which to purchase both them and the latest in other technologies. This area has earned the nickname 'Electric City' after an invasion of hundreds of computer, tech and electronics shops. From large neon signed outlets many floors tall with access to the street to small shops in the less accessible alleys, you can find any kind of equipment in Akihabara. Any window of any IT store offers the latest fashion gadgets: from the latest model Jellyfish to a customisable gantai to photovoltaic plasma computers pulsing with spellbinding colours. The Cyber Toy Kingdom is doubtlessly the most fashionable store in the quarter, filled all day with hundreds of curious shoppers coming to play the recent virtual game releases or to watch the robots in the testing areas. Filled with deafening noise and colourful spotlights, the shop includes two restaurants

For several weeks witnesses have been talking about the appearance of a strange woman on the Mitsuke station quay. Manifesting only after nightfall, she has a misty shape emitting an intense cold. Others know about a teenager that died on the old subway line, before it was replaced by the imposing Yamanote Evolve. Before anything is built it is customary for a Shinto priest to celebrate the Jinchisai, a traditional ceremony to appease the Spirit of the Earth. The absence of any jinchisai for these new buildings might have provoked the spirit's anger, which dooms the new infrastructure to haunting and destruction. Obviously all this should be taken with a grain of salt, knowing the number of disgruntled employees that frequent the YE after sundown.



and a whole building dedicated to manga, where the aficionados (or otaku) can come to download interactive collections onto their flexible monitors. Plus of course, all of the merchandise, like the soundtracks of their favourite games, collectible holographic cards, etc.

It was in this store that the first Virtual Pets appeared: small programmes allowing (through simple scanners pasted to your clothing) a virtual creature to appear on your body. Thus, just like tri-dimensional commercials, you can see the virtual animal of your choice move over your body in augmented reality. You just need to activate your spectacles and suddenly every teenager you meet has a six-legged lizard or a funny little spider on his shoulders.

No part of Akihabara escapes its hi-tech wealth: escort girls are almost all artificial, restaurants all have perfected electronic meal ordering systems and the video game and manga companies appear like mushrooms. It is a place of vibrant youth, and is suffused with a creative and avant-garde spirit. Akihabara is also home to the Quark Centre with real lawn covering its walls, and to the Steamboat Studio and its mini gaming park, decorated with huge effigies representing characters from their games, such as like Yuri Sword and Yuni Cloud from Ultimate Hiroshi Battle.

As you might expect, Akihabara is filled with androids. Mostly they work as touts for shops, distributing pamphlets for clubs or performing some amazing acts to attract the attention of passers-by. Others simply walk their master's dogs or are simply collecting laundry from the cleaners.

Sadly, this technological evolution has opened the way to new kinds of criminality, particularly hacking and 'overclocking.' The former has become even easier because of the accessibility of the optic network and all its features (data, television, communications) allowing a talented hacker to enter television emissions and personal servers. What makes it harder though is that the security measures are as good as you would expect on a state of the art network, watched closely by the Anti-Hacking Police force. However, clever hackers, often working for the local underworld, are still able to discover and capitalise on security holes in the system.

With robotic systems now so popular, unlocking their additional features, or 'overclocking', is on the rise. There is a growing demand for people wanting to unlock the capabilities of their personal artificials. It is widely known that all androids are equipped with behaviour locks, which prevent them from performing certain actions. These locks also set their behaviour patterns, and delineate clear and precise areas of expertise that they can access. However, they are programmed with more than they need to carry out basic functions so that companies can charge to unlock features rather than layering on new complexities to the machines programming when a customer wants an upgrade. The availability of new behaviour programmes (or templates) downloadable for some models allowed computer geniuses to notice it was possible to modify the machines' behaviour and equip them with extra gadgets using simple adjustments. It was banned after some unfortunate domestic incidents, but it is a rare Japanese consumer that does not use the services of an Overclocker at least once to spice up his daily routine. Overclocking ranges from minor modifications made to gain some additional functions on the cheap to a complete reprogramming.

Q: This little shop next to a huge gaming hall offers a wide range of strange, obscure and unique robotic items. Invented by the owner, Mr. Onoki, these gadgets are wonders of ingenuity that include spy micro-robots, drones to clean aquariums, a holographic projector embedded in a watch, photo-reactive t-shirts (changing colour according to the lighting) and many others. There is a whole range of useless and indispensable items, jokes and novelty items. Many designs are never repeated, as Mr Onoki gets bored repeating himself, making some of his wares collector's items.

The owner of the robotics shop 'Photonics Emporium' worried for months about the disappearance of several of his Puppetbots and other robotics components. At first he thought it was the work of one of the Chyoda district gangs who specialise in nanotech theft and trafficking, and so he called the police to solve the mystery. After several weeks of complex investigation due to the absence of traces and the impossibility of anyone measuring taller than twenty centimetres to enter the building when the shop was closed, the officers found the solution in the sewers. In the centre of a water drain not far from the shop, the police officers found a veritable swarm of miniature robots which were enhancing, repairing and multiplying themselves thanks to the parts stolen from the shops in the street above. This nature of this technological deviance is still a mystery, and not all of the missing machines have been found yet.

Uemura Hirotaka: This 26 year-old young man regularly wanders through the parts market in Iwatomocho-dori Street. He is easily recognisable thanks to his red jacket covered in pictograms and his red glasses connected to the numerous Pods hidden inside his coat. Hirotaka is an extravagant and talkative Overclocker who specialises in designing original templates. Loving pre-2000s cinema with a passion, Hirotaka can offer you programmes that turn your android into Marilyn Monroe in *Some Like It Hot*, Humphrey Bogart in *Casablanca*, Brad Pitt in *Fight Club* or Leonardo DiCaprio in *Titanic*. He is always happy to work on private commissions, in case you want an electronic version of Norman Bates from *Psycho* or *The Bride from Kill Bill*.

Sto-vo-kor: Christened with the name of the Klingon heaven, this Akihabara café is the lair of a whole community of young computer geniuses. Mostly students, they come to discuss and show off their particular areas of interest in an especially geeky atmosphere. Here everyone is equipped with the best, and often the most expensive, computer equipment. There are many computers available for customers and the walls are covered in screens and posters showing many icons of Japanese pop culture (Go Nagai-type giant robots, sentai heroes in armour, Godzilla-style kaiju, cyber-hostesses from children's TV shows, manga characters...). This den has a very lively atmosphere, and a very useful place to find experts on any subject.

Black Flag: This tiny shop is at the deep end of an inner courtyard. You have to descend several steps on a narrow stairway to reach the door, identifiable by its covering of all kinds of stickers. Inside the cramped shop, Wang, the owner, a Chinese man who has lived in Japan for over forty years, makes a living repairing most everyday appliances, anything from toasters to Pods. It is whispered that the tiny shop has an even smaller back shop where Wang offers an innovative approach to technology since the Kuro Incident. Mixing up Chinese Taoist rituals, Shinto and other abstruse gibberish, the old man claims that he can enchant your items. What better than a telephone that allows you to spy on your contacts' conversations, or a data key that brings bad luck to the one carrying it?

Asakusa (Taito Special Ward)

"I'm like everybody else, I believe in the spirits without really believing. I go to temple during the holidays, I have a protective arrow at home, and some lucky charms too. It's our culture, our tradition that maintains this. At the moment, though, I believe it more and more, especially after my parents' house completely disappeared under a cloud of ash."

Kiingto Saori – Laboratory Assistant

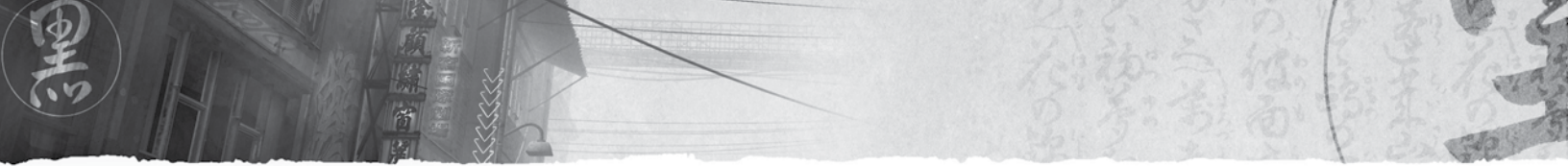
Like all quarters east of the Imperial Palace, Asakusa kept aspects of old Edo. Compared to the modernity of the western Wards, Asakusa is the heart of the old Shitamachi, the old town. It contains some of the oldest buildings in Shin-Edo (although few are older than the 1950-1960s given the post-war reconstruction). This quarter revolves around the Senso-ji Buddhist temple, consecrated to the goddess Kannon, whose golden statue was allegedly found by two fishermen in the Sumida River. Welcoming visitors through the Kaminarimon (Thunder Gate), surrounded by two protective gods, Senso-ji is made up of a splendid five-stage pagoda, a landscape garden and a typical

commercial arcades filled with small stalls and narrow alleys where several jinrikisha (electric rickshaws) rush through.

Built in 1645, the temple, now protected by a hidden but effective security system, is surrounded by many Shinto shrines, making Asakusa Shin-Edo's mystic quarter par excellence. The area is filled with small shops selling holy trinkets, herbalists and bookshops specialising in traditional rituals. A nearby metro station is decorated with a mosaic showing the Kappas (water spirits) that allegedly live in the area. Its streets are regularly enlivened by Shinto festivals and celebrations, despite the pervading sense of gloom caused by the Kuro Incident.

One of the more popular quarters, because of its very special atmosphere, Asakusa has not escaped the exponential growth of urbanisation. Many buildings and apartment blocks have grown around the temples, covering the previously sunny gardens with unpleasant shadows. Some areas are even characterised as bad luck or even haunted by the passers-by, who point fingers towards the many spiritual cults that have found Asakusa to be an ideal base.

The strange Phillippe Starck sculpture that once decorated the Asahi brewery building has long since vanished, giving way to a bulkier building now housing the Soda Zake brand of carbonated beverages. The company offers many free tasting events inside, as long as you are not opposed to genetically modified tastes (such as a soda that regulates your excess sweat).



Octopus Sushi: Just like the great majority of restaurants, Octopus Sushi's customers do not order once inside the establishment, but directly on its doorstep. All the foyers of restaurants have automatons showing the menus, allowing you to choose and pay the bill even before you enter. Normally you will be given a plastic coupon or a magnetic key which should be delivered to the cook behind the counter (whether he is human or not) who will then give you your order.

Most restaurants can make your mouth water when you innocently walk past the door thanks to promotional images sent directly in your Pod (like the menu). Some even post virtual elements in your field of vision (like a singing giant noodle bowl) using augmented reality. There are truly no limits to interactive advertising, whether they are triggered by a retinal scanner or a laser connection to your portable computer.

The Octopus is a typical sushi restaurant (sushi-ya) in a shadowy alley of Asakusa. It is a small place, with blue seats around a large glass counter inside which several fish on ice are

displayed. Cheap, but satisfying, it is mostly used by the quarter's labourers. The main cook (also in charge of taking your order and serving it directly on the counter) is a red android with an extra pair of long articulate arms which allow it to delicately chop down fillets while making small rice balls at the same time.

Yumiko's Kitchen: One of the many establishments specialising in the culinary arts in Kappabashi-dori has a curious architecture. Appearing to be permanently under renovation, all of its northeastern exits seem to have been sealed. Old stairs appear to go up to unbelievable levels filled with cartons, potteries and many utensils that are the height of kitchen fashion. The owner, Mrs. Murakami, is a Kaso aficionado. Kaso is the art of telling fortunes based on the layout of a building. Firmly believing that the entrance of a building in the northeast can allow a demon to enter her home, she has remodelled to keep her shop safe. If worse comes to worst, a little maneki-neko (the statue of a cat lifting a leg, a lucky charm) designed by a Shinto priest to detect the presence of creatures from beyond having crossed her threshold has been placed in each of her windows.



Recently, the balconies of an apartment building in the northern part of Umamichidori have been regularly invaded by hundreds of ravens. Calm and quiet, they make no noise, staying on the edges of windows during the night before flying away by daybreak. Teenagers living in the building have noticed many times a man in black, wearing a big hat, a feather coat and carrying a whip, intensely watching the building's windows. After the recent suicide of a resident, rumours about both the ravens and the man have spread along with a sense of unease. Twenty years ago, in this very place, a man was beaten to death by a group of drunken residents, while the rest did nothing to stop it. Has he returned for revenge?

Jinshi: Right at the end of the winding Buru-Bukku alley you can find Jinshi Konpyu-ta temple. Tiny and quite decrepit, this temple seems to just house a heavy and rusty machine resembling a drink dispenser from the previous century. Nevertheless, when a passer-by approaches, it activates and a panel reveals a retina controller suggesting he should make an offering to the temple. If the passer by puts money in the machine, it offers a receipt with a proverb or a saying that hints at the future. The poorer the donation, the more cryptic the message. Rumour has it that a Shinto priest, a blind man said to be half senile, takes care of the machine. He might give some hints as to the interpretation the messages, but he is rarely there.

Robotto Fuki: Among the many organisations, small groups and cults that abound in the capital, Robotto Fuki is a special case. Presenting themselves as existentialists, the handful of members of this so-called religious faction denounces the oppression and slavery undergone by machines. Regularly appearing on the Akihabara streets, they do not hesitate to issue slogans inviting androids to rebel and to enjoin android salesmen to 'free their brothers.'

Chiyoda (Chiyoda special ward)

"All this scares me. Between the blockade that forces us to ration food, the power cuts, and all those happenings no-one gives a flying fuck about, I wonder what the government is waiting for to declare a state of emergency. I'm getting a clearer and clearer impression we're stuck in some a kind of Hell."

Toyokazu Masao – Night Watchman

Considered the centre of Shin-Edo, Chiyoda quarter revolves around the imposing Imperial Palace. Covering one square kilometre, this part of Shin-Edo is the most secure place in the Nipponese capital. Many police forces, security androids and surveillance drones move through the esplanade, the buildings and the imposing oriental garden that surround the old Edo castle (from where the Tokugawa Shogun once ruled the country). This is no surprise, because besides being home to the Emperor's residence, Chiyoda also contains the Prime Minister's residence, the Diet (parliament) and the Supreme Court. All of these government institutions and administrative centres require protection, especially in such turbulent times.

Tokyo station, which connects the Yamanote Evolve subway to the railways that cover the peripheral suburbs, is watched daily by hundreds of over-equipped police officers. Their prime concern is avoiding another bacteriological attack on the transport network or a foreign or extremist threat. The danger of kamikaze androids is very real for a great number of people.

The continued presence of Emperor Akihito (who is 113 years old) Chiyoda has brought many of the Genocracy to this area of Shin-Edo. They are attracted by the pomp, fame and purity of the Emperor, said to be the direct descendent of the sun goddess, Amaterasu. Many believe that in his presence there is a positive and pure aura, indispensable to their continued research on perfection and immortality. So, they reside in gigantic complexes to the west of the Palace, veritable high-tech palaces themselves. Just like the Imperial Palace, security is high and no one really knows what is contained inside.

Japan has a great number of varied political groups, from the nationalist and militarist extreme right-wing groups to the anarchist anti-authoritarian groups. Between those extremities, there are many parties of all sizes that try to convince the public that they have the solution to the many problems that the country currently faces.

The Kuro Incident has greatly upset the relationship that the Japanese have with politics. At first, the apparent panic of the government, and then its silence during the first days following

the Kuro Incident, deeply discredited Japan's faith in her politicians, especially in the coalition of Prime Minister Ishigake and the Liberal-Democrat Party. The silence in the halls of power, which was actually due to a complete ignorance about the event, came across to the public as an indefensible suppression of the truth. Subsequently, many political groups wasted little time in taking advantage. This was especially true of the hard-line right-wing nationalist movements, even though for the moment they are a relative minority.

Uyoku are small parties with a membership of either a few militants or a couple of hundred people. Their members roam the city in long black trucks and start demonstrations in public places. They are usually equipped with a lot of Japanese flags, digital megaphones and holographic posters. They issue patriotic slogans and sing military hymns from World War II or the 1930s. Few among the passers-by pay them any attention, as the violent actions these groups have taken are no longer a secret.

Just after the Kuro Incident these uyoku took advantage of the social chaos to multiply their public interventions. Their accusations that the government was hiding the truth from the Japanese, and of having being bought out by the West, convinced a certain part of the helpless and frightened population of their cause. Foreigners (namely the Korean and Chinese communities) suffered attacks on their homes or vehicles as many Japanese were incited to commit acts of violence by the uyoku.

The leading uyoku is the Yamatodamashii (the spirit of Japan) party which has recently acquired considerable importance on the political chessboard. Founded shortly after the Kuro Incident, it is apparently lead by Komatsuzawa Kazutada, a politician who rose out of the ranks of the nationalist right-wing splinter groups who left the Nippon party. Of prestigious samurai ancestry, Komatsuzawa's public profile and behaviour is irreproachable. He has managed to forge a federation from many of the other uyoku, bringing his party a large number of dynamic and devoted militants. At the last election some of his candidates and membership caused a stir by entering the House of Representatives wearing military uniforms. The House of Representatives has 480 members, elected though democratic election, who stand for four years. The election of new members of the House of Councillors (with 242 seats, each elected for six years) happens in a year's time. Komatsuzawa is preparing the way and beginning a major electoral campaign, with grandiose rallies that have the air of military ceremonies.

Yasukuni-jinja: The Temple of the Peaceful Country is a monument dedicated to the 2.4 million Japanese killed in combat since 1853. Controversially, it also includes the graves

of numerous war criminals buried in 1979. However, time has faded national memories and returned its air of grace for most people. A place of contemplation since the defeat of August 15th 1945, the Temple of the peaceful country has become the symbol of Japanese resistance to oppression. Numerous nationalist movements regularly appear to camp in front of Yasukuni-jinja and uyoku black trucks are a common sight around the place.

Kyuen Zaibatsu: Based in Chiyoda, this company is famous for its anti-aging treatments, its revitalizing creams and its ultra-advanced research laboratory which is dedicated to developing new treatments. Kyuen Zai is available to all purses, from the white brand anti-wrinkle you find in an Ota supermarket to the overpriced regeneration pills with personalised dosage you can find in Ginza. The CEO of this multi-limbed corporate web is a mysterious man named Nitta Nobuyuki. Like so many Genocrats, he never leaves his tower. His apartments join together the first three levels of the 85-storey Kyuen Zai Tatemono. Recently the company started to purchase a lot of real estate in the Asakusa quarter, purchasing small abandoned temples for ridiculously low prices and then installing shops in the premises. This choice of places is surprising and everybody expects to shortly know the reason. However, such odd behaviour is not unfamiliar, as Nobuyuki is known for the audacity of his marketing strategies, even in the current economic situation.

Kaieda Tokiyori is a famous Kabuki stage actor, who has performed for many years at one of the greatest theatres in the city, Kabuzi-za. A famous media star, he is loved both on the stage and in the city streets. Unfortunately, for some time he has complained of being harassed by an enigmatic android wearing a traditional demon mask. Mysteriously appearing whenever he leaves his home, and always near his lodgings, the unsettling robot just stares him straight in the eye before disappearing in a blink of an eye.

Ginza (Chuo Special Ward)

“More and more I dislike coming to Ginza to choose my evening dresses. I find the naturals more aggressive each time and, let's face it; cocktails are just not as fashionable as they were. It is certainly the effect of international pressure. I'm anxious for all this to be over so I can finally go shopping the way I used to.”

Otsune Miwa – Genocrat

Ginza is a particularly luxurious quarter, devoted to fashion stores and high-end shops. Close to Chiyoda and the Imperial Palace, the security systems are also ubiquitous here, especially the numerous miniature cameras on every corner. With the exception of the curious visiting the place just to stare at the windows, Ginza's customers are part of the Genocracy and the upper echelon families of the capital. They form a rich and powerful segment of the population that the authorities have a special interest in protecting. Many shops in the lower levels are even exclusively reserved for this new Nipponese nobility, offering them any haute couture brand available in the world. With the imposition of the blockade this trend is, obviously, disappearing.

Since the blockade, residents of Shin-Edo have rediscovered and begun to support nationally produced products and design talent from their own country, especially in the arts and leisure industries. So while France has, for many years, been at the forefront of fashion and design, many young and enthusiastic Japanese designers have taken advantage of the closing of international markets to put forward their own creations. These designs that are often modern, ecologically minded and include interesting technological innovations (such as embedded photovoltaic batteries that can be connected to reinforced pockets for carrying Pods). Making fortunes in a matter of months, many (like Sae Yozo or Taeko & Taro) have now opened their own shops in Ginza, replacing the aging Dior or Vuitton outlets.

The architecture of this quarter matches its style: flashy and disproportionate, with some European style buildings jammed together with modern glass cubes. The huge automobile showrooms are filled with strobe lights and hostesses in lowplast bikinis. The best example is the San-ai building and its monumental holographic projector regularly offering 3D ads that enthrall the passers-by. Everybody still remembers being outside the San-ai building to see the spellbinding playmate singing the praises of the Sony X Pod or the team of androids setting foot on Mars.

Especially lively, Ginza is always filled with a massive crowd, watching the shops, the restaurants (many of which specialise in fried krill and melon fritters) and the many street shows. The time of the fire-eaters is gone for good. Nowadays it is dancers, mimes and androids (who have permission from the township to perform on the streets) that are charged with entertaining the passers-by. If this entertainment is not enough, Ginza has plenty of more distractions: Kabuki theatres or No operas, musical cafés and Optimax cinemas. Everything was designed to make Ginza a perfect bubble, insulating the fortunate owners of the most expensive apartments from the real world. That was, at least until the Kuro Incident disrupted the price of real estate.

Ginza-Yurakucho: This part of the quarter is an area of the retro cinemas far from the modernism of the new digital cinemas with their 3D, 360° and many other effects. These old cinemas show old Hollywood and Japanese movies from the 1950s to the 2000s to a small audience of movie lovers. Cinema has never been a passion for many Japanese, mostly because of the price of the seats and society is used to watching films on television. The old posters and popcorn dispensers at the entrance of some theatres give them a delicious dated look contrasting with the technology outside. The Apollo theatre is one of them: a small building with a decrepit red façade and an entrance hall smelling much like the American sixties or the short lived rockabilly revival of the 2030s.

Sadly, for a week now the small cinema has been closed by order of the police. This follows a psychotic attack made on four of its patrons after the showing of a Shinya Tsukamoto (the director of both Tetsuo movies) retrospective. Three of these individuals are now under psychiatric care; as for the fourth, not all the pieces of him have been scraped off the walls and the screen yet.

The Monster Manor: A rather picturesque nightclub, the Monster Manor has the façade of an old manor house straight out of a scene from an old horror film. Using augmented reality, you can see virtual flames and small red imps flying out of the windows. It is divided into several rooms, like a real haunted house, and each is bathed with a different kind of atmospheric lighting. There are bars in almost every room, which often have enough room for dancing. The imposing salon has a huge table decorated with candlesticks, and the corridors are covered with disturbing portraits, some of which appear to move or follow you with their eyes. Do not hesitate to have a drink at the white chamber, where the canopy bed has been replaced with fluorescent tables and chairs. In this restful and relaxing atmosphere you might perhaps see the ghost (really a hologram) of the alleged proprietor.



Harajuku (Shibuya Special Ward)

"It doesn't matter if we're besieged by other countries! We still have to live, right? I have to finish my degree and I need to party! If we need to take up arms, I will, but in the meantime I'm sure the gods are on our side!"

Shoji Otondo – Student

Long seen as the quarter of hip youth, Harajuku has seen many changes in recent years. Takeshita-dori is the main street in Harajuku and the uncontested centre of Japanese style where every fashionable teenager must be seen. The same goes for Yoyogi-Koen park (one of the biggest in the city) which has also long been a meeting place where young people come to show off. Here can be found the most eye-filling outfits of the various zoku (youth 'tribes'), be they cosplay, gothic or any one of a hundred styles and trends. Many just hope to be noticed by tourists and have their photo taken by passers-by.

However, little by little these colourful fashions are giving way to new trends, which have become more common inside the park than the costumes, frills and flounces of previous decades. Neo-tribal and Goth-metal groups, bosozokus and other amphetamine and Squid junkies have made their appearance. Old shamisen (a three-string lute) players have been replaced by more violent rock guitarists in certain areas. Yoyogi-Koen park is no longer visited by casual passers-by as the anger of the city's youth is tangible here. The police are trying to regulate this boiling and rebellious youth, though this may be causing more tension than it cures.

The rest of the quarter is still popular with the young residents of Shin-Edo, especially the student population from the five university campuses in the city, located respectively in the Hongo, Komaba, Kashiwa, Shirokane and Nakano special wards. Most tourists who visit could be forgiven for wondering what happened to all the people over 25. The cafés and nightclubs in Harajuku, normally filled exclusively by the young, have suffered a major drop in clients for over a year now. The blockade is once again to blame here; even though many young people think this international lock down does not concern them. However, the aging of the population has forced young people to grow up faster and take responsibility for finding their own niche in an already compartmentalised society. The time for hedonism seems to be further and further in the past.

The Akai Cho: A Harajuku bar known for being the place for punk and metal concerts, together with other modern genres, like post-punk, glam rock, neo-grunge or rock'n'tek (a subtle mix of modern rock and unbridled techno). The bar, adorned with white hangings, is regularly frequented by a group of rather mysterious people. Many of them have a decidedly strange attitude and are said to be well versed in the areas of occultism and rituals. Particularly a band, called 'Sugomi,' made up of old, almost has-been Japanese rock stars, appears regularly on the small platform serving as stage. It is said their lyrics have allusions that only those initiated in the ways of crafting magical charms can grasp.

100 Yen: This chain of shops offers a range of products at a very low cost, from cooking equipment to remote controls and Zen fountains. With around a hundred shops all across Shin-Edo, the 100 Yen Shops are especially well liked by teenagers, who love to rummage in the lockers looking for some fluorescent gadgets or cheap Puppetbots.

Chika Club: This cubic shaped nightclub, surrounded with golden metal cables, has been the place to be for several months now. While it offers many modern and well-equipped dance floors, its main attraction is Chika. She is a virtual singer, an 'Idol' generated in your field of vision by optical projection. Even with many androids on the covers of magazines, Chika is the first artificial woman of her kind to attract such crowds. Her face now appears on three different music albums, a range of clothing and even commercials for the government showing power saving measures. She is the apple of every high school student's eye, who jostle with each other at the entrance of Chika Club for a chance to glimpse her on scene. A contributory factor to her popularity may be that her designers spared no detail when designing her anatomy.

Meiji Jingu Shrine: Built in 1920 in honour of the Meiji Emperor and his wife Empress Shoken, this Shinto temple is one of the biggest tombs in Japan. Surrounded by a rich, dense, man-made forest of over 700,000 square metres, a bridge connects it to Yoyogi-Koen park. Originally, its main entrance was open only through a cedar arc (a torii) ten meters high. However, a new torii has appeared inexplicably in the heart of the forest. Painted black (which is uncommon), the later has proved impossible to tear down and makes the priests in the shrine extremely uneasy. The dead birds that fall around it do nothing to reassure them.

Kaijin (Kaijin Special Ward)

“For months I’ve watched the International Coalition ships. They almost never budge. They must spy on us by connecting to our optical network. The other day a co-worker heard a deafening noise outside. When he came back his nose bled and he was raving about sea monsters. I think they are testing some new biological weapon on us out here.”

Yodo Tadamasu – Sailor

This special ward was officially recognised and given its own crest in 2038, as its growing size made the residents call for official status, as well as representation in the Shin-Edo administration. The least you can say about Kaijin is that it is quite different from any of the other old Tokyo quarters. Thirty kilometres from the coast, it is a huge aggregate of offshore platforms and underwater stations spread over twelve square kilometres. It was designed originally to be covered in thousands of the latest generation photovoltaic panels to generate power for

a part of the city. However, little by little it was also occupied by small aquaculture companies, subsequently transforming it into a fragmented industrial quarter.

Around 80% of the platforms are covered in solar panels and inhabited by their maintenance crews. The rest of these monumental infrastructures have become the property of several food production companies and weather research laboratories, most belonging to the government. However, these platforms are just the tip of the iceberg. The structure sits on several titanic pillars sinking into the Pacific Ocean. Under the waves, many stages descend into the darkness, each containing maintenance workers and centres dedicated to underwater research. Huge enclosures create underwater aquariums containing entire schools of fish genetically designed specifically for consumption. The fishing companies have all the equipment needed for preparing and packing the fish in these farms before sending them directly to the Tsukiji market. It is a high-tech feeding management solution, of which many similar examples can be found all over Japan.



Very prized by school and collage groups, entire areas are reserved for the Shin-Edo residents who wish to take a closer look at this bromatological (the science of food) centre. There are conference rooms, giant aquariums, demonstration basins, mini-submarines (for the very popular underwater tours) and dormitories available to the hundreds of visitors that come to Kaijin every month.

Nevertheless, the excellent public profile the site has does not diminish the arduous nature of the work here. With the exception of the lab technicians that assure the growth and design of new edible species, the platform workers regularly face the fury of the elements. The support of numerous androids and arthropods (giant loading robots with metal legs similar to those of crabs) are not always enough for carrying out vital work in the middle of a storm. Just like in the Shin-Edo docks, many of the Yakuza families have interest in the maritime personnel that work the ward. Naval construction companies, offshore labs and hyperbaric construction companies often have need of human resources for hard and dangerous tasks. The Yakuza take a cut by acting as go-betweens for the employers and the work force, and they make sure the pay makes their cut worthwhile. All this often makes for a tense relationship on the platforms between the executive staff and the workers. Especially when many were hired at premium prices set by particularly influential gangs, even if the employees see less of their salary than the Yakuza do.

The current tensions are only exacerbated by the silhouettes of the foreign ships that often get dangerously close to some of the Kaijin platforms after nightfall. Perhaps more worrying are the shadows that sometimes appear on the foaming waters near the support pillars.

Sushi Sea: Installed on the BCX-712 platform, this sushi-ya is the hang out for most workers on the site, resting after a hard day's labour. Run by Mrs. Ukitaki and her robot cook Yoshihito, it is a unique place to keep abreast of rumours on this floating quarter. Just like a pirate den, Sushi Sea is filled with marine photos, portraits of people who have disappeared on the sites and vertical aquariums that contain deep-sea species. Today's patrons can confirm that there is little left alive in the oceans, overfishing and pollution having wiped-out most of the edible marine species with many species having been exterminated by man. Only cloning and massive aquaculture have allowed some species to continue. Some platform workers will tell you it is the wrath of Wani, a sea monster and the messenger of the Sea God Owatsumi, but Mrs Ukitaki will always tell you that this is just the sake talking.

What lies beneath?


Fujiwara Kazunori is a deep-sea diver working for the Shin-Edo power company. Specializing in the installation of electric cables and repairing optical beams in a maritime environment, he is helped by a crew of trained divers, as well as drones programmed to connect cables and do welds. Having to work at depths of over two hundred metres, Kazunori uses the most advanced equipment available. This includes his underwater suit, which contains an artificial amniotic fluid allowing him to resist the highest pressures by filling up his lungs. Weighing no less than a ton and a half on the surface, this suit has a reinforced exoskeleton, is equipped with articulated arms and nanotech robot-shells (tiny little metal centipedes closed in the numerous pockets in the suit) that are in charge of repairing it in case of malfunction or external shock. A man of few words who usually keeps to himself, Kazunori speaks more and more often of humanoid shapes seen near some abyssal trenches. These strange creatures have a whitish body with skulls filled with a bioluminescent liquid.

Odaiba (Minato Special Ward)

"I wonder how many of us feel we should have fun today knowing that tomorrow we may not have enough to eat. Everybody seems to want everything back the way it was, but we are not like we were any more! Who can find pleasure in the Odaiba rollercoasters when our country is about to end!?"

Yoroki Miyato – press attaché

Shin-Edo is a deeply maritime city and has an imposing waterfront made up of different polders (land reclaimed from the sea by creating dykes and flood barriers). Surrounded by other cities like Yokohama, Chiba or Kawasaki, Shin-Edo bay is the meeting place of several rivers that irrigate the capital. But it has also become a building place, Kaijin just being an extreme example. No one builds houses on the mountainside. Not only for fear of angering its spirits, but also so they might use that space to install wind and solar panels. This has meant the residents of Shin-Edo have decided to make the city 'advance' towards the



sea. Odaiba is part of this advance, an artificial island build in the bay in 1853 (although at the time it was just a simple series of fortresses) and it has never ceased to evolve since. Unlike the other islands of this kind, which became sites for state-sponsored aquacultures, Odaiba is a quarter in itself.

Odaiba was first used as the site for a 'futurist' exhibition, demonstrating the wonders of several new technologies. Afterwards it became a leisure centre, and Odaiba Island slowly became the cinema and TV capital of Japan. It is a floating mix of amusement parks, Hollywood and Beverly Hills. Accessible through either the Rainbow Bridge or the underwater Minatoku subway line that crosses the bay floor, Odaiba is the site of the main TV studios in Japan and the few cinema studios (an expensive and not very popular entertainment, having become even less attractive after the explosion of the new virtual media). As you might expect, the blockade has had serious consequences on all tourist activities in the bay, like the Sumida river cruises. No longer used by Western visitors, the ferry boats are now empty and the souvenir salesmen have trouble making ends meet. However, there are still many film sets and visitor attractions that draw local tourists, such as the water park, overpriced restaurants, costumed androids selling derivative products, the big (200 metres high) Daikanransha wheel and the magnificent gardens with transgenic plants under monumental plexi-glass domes. This is in addition to the maritime museums and the Japanese Agency of Science and Technology, founded by the eminent astronaut Mamoru Mori.

There are always many visitors on the narrow, metallic Odaiba streets, each hoping to see their favourite show hostess outside a film set or to join the long waiting line to see one of the more popular TV game shows being recorded (like 'Fun & Surgery' a where contestants attempt several ridiculous events to win nanotech enhancements, or even K-1 World War, a combat show where humans face androids in a ring using devastating techniques). Another popular show is 'Kill Power Ball.' Only shown in reruns after it was denounced by several other nations as cruel and inhumane, the show pitted dangerous habitual criminals fighting each other in a virtual arena using Squids (even though these are illegal). A violent defeat would frequently result in irreversible brain damage, or even brain death, whereby the victim's organs were systematically recovered by one of the labs sponsoring the show.

Zepp Tokyo: For many years the greatest night club in Tokyo, Zepp suffered a veritable tragedy when in the winter of 2022 an unidentified suicide bomber blew himself up inside the famous club, spreading a bio-engineered virus similar to that of Ebola hemorrhagic fever, but with a near instantaneous effect. Panicking, the authorities had no choice but to isolate the

virus inside the reinforced compound of the nightclub to stop the contagion spreading. In a matter of minutes, after police recorded the bacteriological alerts, the Zepp doors were sealed and the contaminated people shut inside. Using bio-resistant materials, Zepp Tokyo was buried inside a huge hermetic casing and some 1255 corpses abandoned inside the concrete block. This event and its radical solution was a major controversy in its day and the public outcry forced the resignation of the Prime Minister, Mr Iromi Keizuke.

More than twenty years after, the condemned building is still in the same place, within its protective blob. Silent. A new project to dispose of it is the order of the day, despite the protestations of the families that now consider the Zepp Tokyo building to be a modern tomb and have delayed the building's disposal for years. Plenty of other people fear the virus may still be live and fear any attempt to disturb the site.

Dai-Roku Daiba: In the middle of Shin-Edo bay, Dai-Roku Daiba is a tiny artificial private island visible from the bridge connecting the city to Odaiba. Purchased by the family of the rich Nipponese industrialist Futaki Taneo in 2013, it has long been used as a secondary residence. Amid green and lush vegetation, their modern manor with architecture imitating Victorian mansions was used to receive Genocratic celebrities for lavish, and much envied soirees. The darlings of the media, the wife and children of the billionaire (known for his numerous investments in Japan's many pharmaceutical laboratories) appeared regularly on the front covers of glossy magazines and reporting the escapades of his older daughter in the elite Harajuku nightclubs became a tradition in itself. That was until July 20th, 2046, the day of Umi No Hi (the festival of the sea), when Taneo was found prostrate in his manor's salon, completely naked, his hands blackened with the blood of an unknown origin covering the walls of the big main room in enigmatic designs. Placed in psychiatric care, completely mute, Taneo has never explained what happened that day, and his family is still nowhere to be found. As for the island, it is now completely abandoned.

Taki-Tso-Hiko: This is the name that some lighting technicians working on film sets give to a silhouette appearing in the rain. As soon as the sky gets leaden and storm clouds cover the structures of Odaiba, a humanoid shape appears between raindrops just like a rainbow. Sometimes moving a few metres, this 'rain god,' that only some seem able to glimpse, likes to walk over the waters of the bay and step across the highest buildings.

Sega Joypolis: This imposing theme park in Odaiba is made up of many game rooms, virtual animations and the ghost trains of 'Zombie Zone.. The whole place is bathed in a futuristic ambiance, filled with neon lights, many escalators and bluish

holograms. There are pavilions dedicated to the latest gaming novelties, and every year many tournaments are organised in 'the Gigaplex,' a huge conference room shaped like a geode mineral crystal.

Roppongi (Minato Special Ward)

"I came here to enjoy the mysteries of the East and I got more than I bargained for. Instead of fondling Japanese girls in Roppongi, I'm washing dishes in a café to pay for my hotel room. I hope that millionaire wasn't kidding, last night, when he explained he would certainly have need for my brain."

Steven York – Archaeologist

Meaning 'six trees' in honour of six daimyo named after bushes from the Edo era, Roppongi is where many of Shin-Edo's foreigners live, although it also houses many of the working class. The fortunes of the area have often swung wildly between prosperous times and economic recessions and the whole area is home to enough legal vices to suit anyone's pocket, being filled with clubs, nightclubs, strip-tease bars and cabarets, many aimed at rich tourists. Needless to say, this tourist trade has fallen considerably since May 4th, 2046.

Letting go of one's drives and surrendering to baser instincts (called 'water trade') is an ill regarded, but tolerated act in traditional Japanese society. So it gives Roppongi an image of decadence, which has little to do with the reality of the quarter, which is, in truth, a very quiet one.

An experienced visitor will usually notice the three giant complexes that have replaced the tiny Roppongi Hills tower, the first recreational centre of its type. Mizushobai 1, Mizushobai 2 and Mizushobai 3 each reach a height of 436 metres, or 106 floors, and are veritable cities within the city. There are levels made up of restaurants, fashionable clubs, casinos, supermarkets, museums, hotels, theatres, banks, swimming pools, man-made gardens and luxurious apartments. Just like the huge ocean liners, it is possible to live forever inside these pharaonic towers and never leave. Numerous Shin-Edoans like to come to one of these skyscrapers to feel what the daily life of the Genocracy might be like, as their buildings containing all they need to live without the outside world.

Roppongi is notable for being the Shin-Edo quarter with the greatest number of expatriates, many trapped in Japan by the International Blockade and the slowness of diplomacy and bureaucracy in extracting them. The presence of these outsiders among the imprisoned residents often causes substantial friction.

Kiyowara Kijuro: The son of a rich Shin-Edo businessman, Kijuro refuses to leave his luxurious Mizushobai 2 loft following a recent and violent kidnapping attempt at a Shinjuku club. Protected by a squad of bodyguards acting on his every whim, Kijuro has adopted an almost autistic lifestyle. Lying for hours on his living room carpet, he just stares at the ceiling and the exotic fish holograms that wander through his apartment. Without knowing exactly why, Kijuro feels all the ills of Shin-Edo. He suffers when a building is destroyed, when some piece of plumbing bursts, when toxic matter is dumped on the sewers. He knows the city is in agony, and it will only get worse until as the final cataclysm approaches.

Cho-han bakushi: This is a traditional dice game also known as 'Cho Ka Han Ka.' Two six-sided dice are shaken in a black bamboo box and are placed on a tatami (mat). Every player must wager on either 'Even' (Cho) or 'Odd' (Han) and many bet considerable amounts. Especially popular among the tradition bound Yakuza, Cho-han allows players to acquire large sums of money in a very short time. In the backroom of the White Tiger cabaret, near the

Around Shin-Edo Bay

The Fujiyama and Mihara mountains, both near Shin-Edo bay, both hold a special significance to the inhabitants of Shin-Edo. The Fujiyama volcano (about a hundred kilometres from Shin-Edo and sometimes visible in clear weather) is a sacred mountain whose rumblings are interpreted as the wrath of the gods. Any eruption would be seen as that wrath unleashed.

The Mihara Mountain is on Oshima Island. It was called for many years the 'suicide volcano,' as its narrow crater with a depth of 1500 feet has welcomed hundreds of Japanese wishing to meet their death. For many years it was believed that people would simply disappear into the afterlife when they jumped into the endless chasm, until it was explored by an expedition. The expedition found the bodies of the suicides piled at the bottom of the crater, so access was forbidden to end the mounting number of ritual suicides.

Ark Hills, an old Yakuza named Sadafusa may offer to play a game of cho-han on a large crimson tatami. Dollars and yen will be the first wagers, but later the stakes will be increased to telling secrets or betting memories, if you are unlucky...

Kim Min-Seun: An old North Korean asylum seeker who arrived miraculously by sea a little before the Kuro Incident, and so before the blockade, his asylum request remains unanswered, the service in charge of such requests having closed down. So Min-Seun wanders around Roppongi, finding odd jobs so that he might buy a bowl of rice. Half insane, he claims to have predicted the Kuro Incident and to have escaped his country to come and warn the Japanese of the impending catastrophe. Obviously, nobody believes him. Anyone taking the time to buy him a bowl of rice and some cheese yakitori (his favourite, he is truly fixated with the stuff) will learn many revelations about the Kuro Incident.

Donburi Twin: This restaurant is located within the Mizushobai 2 subway station, on the second floor of the complex. Of modest size, it resembles a black stone cube embedded in the stone walls of the building. Specialising in Fukagawa-Meshi (a dish made up of rice and covered in chives and cloned clams simmered in miso) the Donburi Twin is run by the Kobori twins: Ennosuke and Hirohisa. By day they prepare dishes for their clients, by night they join a small group of residents in a room in their basement. Anti-nationalistic, they organise sorties to destroy holograms and messages left by radical movements, and plan counter-rallies. Wishing to disorganise the political movements taking advantage of the blockade to spread xenophobic feelings among the population, these little groups do not hesitate to vandalise businesses and hack servers. Among them there are conspiracy theory buffs convinced that there was never a blockade, and that the government knows more that it is telling or that the international forces are here to prevent 'something' from leaving Japan. As for the Kobori brothers, they just want to prevent their fellow citizens succumbing to the ideas spread by many of these brutal movements.

Sengakuji Temple: This Zen Buddhist temple is located in Takanawa quarter, near Roppongi. It is noteworthy for housing the tombs of the 47 Ronin of the famous national legend. Set in the early 18th century, this tells of how a Daimyo (lord) of 47 samurai was ordered to commit seppuku (ritual suicide) after having assaulted Kira Yoshinaka, master of ceremonies of the household of shogun Tokugawa Tsunayoshi, who had insulted him. Their Daimyo's death made the 47 samurai masterless, or ronin, and instead following in his path and also committing seppuku, they lived with the dishonour, waiting for a chance to avenge their master. Eventually they were able to assault Yoshinaka's compound and beheaded him, placing his head on their leader's tomb. As they expected, they were condemned and

ordered to commit seppuku for the murder on February 4th, 1703 inside the very compound of the Sengakuji temple. This story is the origins of many tales, movies and stage plays, and the tombs are still a major symbol of honour and justice for the Japanese people.

Roppongi is not just a conglomerate of monstrous complexes above ground; it is also an underground city. While most of the installations are located in the open to avoid earthquake damage (as well as being an unattractive place due to its close relationship with death) the Mizushobai complexes infrastructures continue underground. Water systems, garages, waste retrieval, warehouses, and plenty of other infrastructure systems are divided across and accessed via the basements of the special ward's buildings. Urban legend or not, some employees that regularly use the corridors recently speak of a watchman having been found dead in a Mizushobai 3 parking lot. His body was allegedly discovered in the B-627 corridor, without a face. Supposedly his eyes, nostrils and mouth were 'erased.' Despite what the rumours say is a stretch to assume that a face-stealing monster (a nopperabo) is now stalking the underground...

Shibuya (Shibuya Special Ward)

"I know my mother opposed it, but I really wanted that retinal implant. With this artificial iris I can change my eye colour as I like and match it to my wardrobe. I can even apply motifs and textures, I love it! But I have to return to the lab, because I sometimes see these odd white silhouettes in empty rooms."

Izumi Tokuko – student

Having the most important railway stations in the city, Shibuya is a trade quarter. Once massively frequented by youths hanging out near the statue of the dog Hachiko (a dog who remained faithful to his master's memory even onto death) or in one of the shops near Harajuku, the quarter has become the official showcase for the Japanese laboratories.

Nombei Yokocho or 'drunken lane,' is a side street filled with bars where numerous residents wander every night, their eyes fogged with alcohol. The bars and clubs fight to attract the greatest number of customers inside with deafening music, coloured façades, blinking neon lights, virtual bubbles floating into the street and other distractions. Recently, an event took place that got Nombei Yokocho talked about in less pleasant terms. A drunken man was allegedly discovered in an alley, his body half eaten by a clowder of cats. Natural pets are subject to strict regulations, so a whole clowder of cats wandering through the quarter is surprising, to say the least, for the residents. Especially when at least one wild-eyed crackpot claims that he saw two-tailed cats wandering at night in front of some buildings along the lane.

The former restaurants, discotheques and hip gaming rooms located in a maze of alleyways, have given way to different clinics and biotech workshops. At a time when implants have become a luxury product, similar to high-priced jewellery, competition is fierce and the various clinics go to any length to offer a range of affordable products.

So even if state-of-the-art medical tech remains unreachable for the common mortal, numerous young naturals come to Shibuya to procure the latest cosmetic revolutions. Besides giant screens singing the praises of the great prosthetics labs, an unbelievable number of small shops allow you to acquire an ever-changing tattoo, hair implants that change colour according to your whims, photonic nanopiercings (an earring connected to your Pod), enzyme shots to make your wrinkles temporarily disappear or even a magnetic ring that can give your hair an extraordinary lift without any fixating gel.

These kind of cosmetic innovations are extremely popular with young girls, who have created a veritable sub-culture of excessive, ultra-hip looks (called NeoKogaru). These proto-fashionistas are regularly condemned by some parents, who see this augmentation as unacceptable for what they see as children. Many think the more extreme adaptations that some NeoKogaru adopt do not even make them look human anymore. Indeed, it is not rare to come across women whose faces have been monstrously transformed by excessive nanosurgery. With the

technology capable of rebuilding their skin, their skull and even their teeth, many appear to be almost made of smooth plastic.

Also to be found in Shibuya are the various establishments devoted to genealogy and procreation. At the Ministry of Families offices, women can obtain the right to bear children according to the numerous categories defined by the government, while others will offer to be surrogate mothers for the less fortunate (the Genocracy use artificial wombs directly). Giving life is subject to drastic laws, to ensure the careful control of population growth, and woe to the woman who would give birth to a child without any sort of permit. Countless abortions are carried out every year by chemical means, despite the contraception policies having been in place for more than twenty years.

These aborted children, called 'water children,' are a sort of paradox in an aging society bent under the weight of modernity. Foetus cemeteries are dedicated to them in some Shin-Edo quarters, as are several brands of shame towards the women who have not followed the principles dictated by society.

The Sunrise: A bar on the 12th floor of Shibuya's Cerulean Tower owned by Nabeshima Matsuta. He is a friendly and cheerful artist who is part of the Noh troupe that occupies the theatre in the second basement. The Sunrise has a pleasant if muffled atmosphere, and is equipped with a small, old-style Karaoke stage and has a magnificent view of the quarter's streets. Matsuta is an extremely skilled cocktail mixer, making him a recognised and renowned mixology 'artist.' His bar is a call to the pleasures of booze, the long lacquered bar top being sculpted with mythological shapes and covered in multiple decorated glasses. Regulars say that Matsuta has psychic gifts and that he can regularly guess many details about you by reading your voice, your body language and your favourite drink.

Hacha Okichi: Possessed of a graceful face and an exquisite silhouette, this woman has a tiny shop in a Shibuya side street. At the end of an inner court whose walls are covered in vegetation, with a Zen garden containing plenty of bonsai, it appears almost out of its time, amid the labs making up most of the quarter. While she was working as an operator in the tuna cutting chains in the Tsukiji market in 2028, she lost both her hands after the accidental explosion of a robot cutter. Unable to work, she managed to get compensation from her company by threatening to take the case to court. The money allowed her to obtain first-rate biomechanical prosthetics, enough to allow her to hold objects and even have a slight sense of touch. Meanwhile, little by little, Okichi started to develop the ability of 'jo rei,' the capacity to heal some diseases by the laying on of hands. Not understanding the origin of this mystery, Okichi now receives regular patients in a room in her lodgings reserved for such a

purpose and eases their pains, be they natural joint pain or those of an ill-grafted implant.

Sendagaya Dome Library: This huge virtual library is regularly filled with students from the surrounding universities, doing research for their exams. With a big glass dome and many strangely empty pathways that lead between the large reading areas. The library allows you to download hundreds of works of any nationality onto Pods or flexible monitors in the comfort of the reading areas. Even if most works are now in a digital format, there is a wing in the building containing traditional books. In the middle of the building there is a spectacular planetarium, in a modern amphitheatre with 1200 seats, offering beautifully rendered holographic animations. It is noteworthy that at the entrance of the library there is usually a golden android named Kigo who is programmed to only speak in haiku (short poems consisting of seventeen syllables over three lines).

The Ako Gishi: One of the many unbelievable places appearing sometimes amid cold and sophisticated buildings of the quarter, this is a little, ancient house with a pagoda-like roof, literally surrounded by huge buildings with steel pillars. The Ako Gishi is a little tea house bathed in a soft orange light from numerous lanterns. A privileged meeting place for many elderly folk in the quarter, the Ako Gishi smells like incense and Japanese history. Ancient swords and paintings of samurai enrich the panelling and bamboo walls. It is not rare to see old men playing Go in a corner of this unique shop. The manager, Mrs. Tsukinoyo, is a charming, but quite frail old lady. She is a veritable well of knowledge and an adorable person, not hesitating to openly accuse the government of lying to the people and being responsible for the blockade. Descending from one of the 47 ronin buried in Sankaku-ji temple, she has a very strong character. When she is not behind the little cherry table she uses as a counter, she is in the only terrace in the house, growing plants and hydroponic hybrid vegetables.

Shinjuku (Shinjuku Special Ward)

“This scar? Hmm, I got it in Shinjuku-gyoen Park. I was walking home that night and was attacked by something. It was really big and really strong and I think it came out of the water. I believe it was some tramp trying to mug me who got scared when help came. All in all, I can’t remember much except that terrible slimy odour...”
Hanzuke Moritoki – Cook

If any quarter is said to be typical of Shin-Edo, it is Shinjuku quarter. Behind its bright shop fronts it hides many dark corners and places of ill repute. Many cutthroats lurk in the quarter’s side

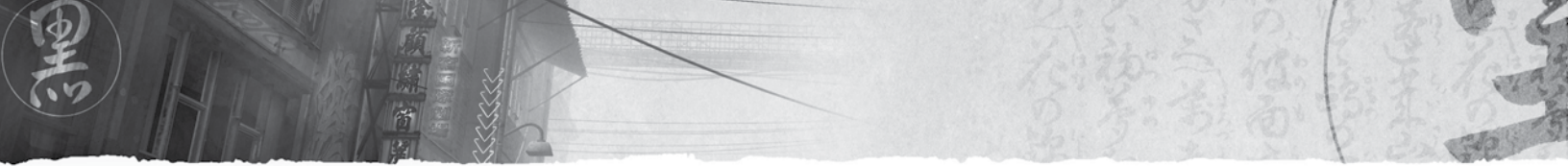
streets where the worst crimes are organised and carried out in the dark corners, such as organ theft. Both the inhabitants of the quarter and regular visitors know this reputation well and take great care as to where they go.

Hypermodern infrastructure has changed Shinjuku into an example of Shin-Edo’s architectural design, a kind of poster-child for modernity. Trade and leisure oriented, Shinjuku is a place where anything can be found: big malls, trade galleries, restaurants, bars, hotels and huge crowds. This is in addition to the nearby Kakuki-cho (Sic.), the Nipponese capital’s renowned ‘red light district’, where sex is king (see below).

An amazing mix of a business quarter and a huge shopping centre, Shinjuku has the tallest building in Shin-Edo: the Skytower, where the new administrative offices for the city are found. It replaces the old city hall towers and is 442 metres high, higher than the Tokyo tower, but not quite as tall as the Sky tree tower. Shinjuku is home to the greatest number of skyscrapers in the capital, the latter are all owned by huge business companies and rich people belonging to the Genocracy. This explosion of high-tech buildings has led to considerable changes in Shinjuku. Once a quarter welcoming a great number of foreigners,

Purikura

Out of fashion for more than thirty years, miniature photo stickers, or purikura, from automated photo machines have recently become fashionable again among schoolgirls. Thanks to more modern booths, equipped with a system of augmented virtual reality, it is now possible to achieve an almost perfect image of yourself and friends in the environment of your choice, with the appearance of your choice, thanks to digital automated edits. Young Japanese girls love to pose (you stand up inside a purikura booth) with their classmates and their favourite virtual stars, in photos or mini-movies downloadable to their Pods. A popular booth in one of the Shinjuku NS Building galleries has been under repairs for some time. Many customers were astonished to find a silhouette appearing in their photos. The image is that of a sickly young woman with long hair in a white robe. This optical phenomenon is still to be explained by the photo technicians working on the machine.



including an important Korean community, Shinjuku has driven them to the borders of Roppongi to build atriums, galleries and supermarkets where their old lodgings had been. Some residences have remained intact, but been emptied of occupants, becoming ideal dens for less reputable people.

With giant, arrogant and narcissistic holographic propaganda and advertising covering the façades of this uncaring municipality, Shinjuku is a showcase for all of the cultures found in 2046 Japan. All it takes is for you to walk down the crowd-filled avenues to see androids, students with luminous hair, ultra-rich women wearing designer dresses, drug pushers, Squids and other synthetic brainchips, as well as preachers announcing the unleashing of hell on earth. Police units, just like those protecting the Imperial Palace, are numerous and often equipped with waldo exoskeletons with inbuilt Shockwave cannons. In this place of illusion and appearance, the most modern vehicles drive through the streets of Shinjuku, including the new 'Magnéto Dynamique' propulsion cars (a kind of oversized hovercraft). Under the huge neon lights and holograms over shops, Shin-Edo residents

desperately try to continue to live as if the blockade didn't exist. As long as Japan stands strong, what else can happen to them?

Cotton Club: This is a pink cabaret known for its human hostesses entirely rebuilt by nanosurgery and its android waitresses with fuchsia corsets. Stealing from Broadway and Las Vegas style, but in a completely Nipponese way, dancers play musical comedies on stage in somewhat revealing costumes (to say the least). The owner of the place is Mr. Shogoro, an old Sumotori (sumo wrestler) who left the sport after a disagreement over a match rigged by the Yakuza and who now owns several Shin-Edo dancing clubs. Known for his imposing stature and his booming laugh, he is also a great collector of 'strange' items. In a big room in his Kita-Shinjuku apartment he keeps a hodgepodge of supposedly magical artefacts retrieved from all over the world, including an impressive amount of dolls used for Hina matsuri (Girl's Day on March 3rd). Many of these trinkets of doubtful taste have no special properties, but many of the pieces from



Thailand or Hokkaido Island may be quite interesting to the initiated.

Shinjuku-gyoen: This vast, 58 hectare park is filled with cherry blossoms which many of the population love to visit and meditate under. Besides containing many ornamental gardens and a big lake filled with Koi carp of considerable size, it also houses the 'Unkyaku-Chakai,' a café specialising in teas and built in honour of the ancient tea ceremony known as chanoyu. However, there is only one special pavilion reserved for performing the chanoyu, the rest of the Unkyaku-Chakai being just a comfortable teahouse with 3D walls projecting Zen landscapes.

The Black Kitsune: Located at the centre of a huge working-class residential block, this is the meeting place of a gang of young hoods called the 'Lords of Death.' Mostly harmless and wearing sombre, dark clothing with occult symbols, they spend their time playing magnetic pool in the main room over old ports for virtual arcade games. Teenagers rebelling against society or school dropouts, they sometimes work for a Yakuza gang dealing in art objects smuggled through the docks. After the Kuro Incident their activities decreased substantially, forcing them to turn to trafficking light drugs and amphetamines. Weirdly, the restroom walls of this quaint old boozier are filled with enigmatic symbols and phrases in between obscene graffiti.

Tsukiji (Chuo Special Ward)

"There's a veritable black market appearing around the rationing coupons. We are investigating it, but that kind of racket should have been expected from the Yakuza. The blockade screwed a lot of their business, so they try to compensate in other ways. One of those 'ways' is exploiting the need of the poorer population to feed itself."

Suganuma Hyobe - Police Officer in Chuo Special Ward

Tsukiji is the greatest fish market in the world, the main centre for the sale and preparation of products coming from Kaijin and the rest of Japan. All fish farms in the archipelago, private or not, work with Tsukiji to supply the different restaurants in Shin-Edo and the other cities in the bay. The pelagic farms in Kaijin are, obviously, the main suppliers of this huge market, exceeding in volume the largest ports in rest of the country. Daily dealing with over 3000 tons of fish (tuna, caviar, krill, salmon, fugu...) destined to be made into sushi, sashimi, maki and pharmacological nutritional products, this trading quarter sees thousands of salesmen and middlemen ply their trade. Among them are numerous government representatives in charge of regulating the market, trying to anticipate the upcoming shortages that

will come with overfishing while allowing the industry to remain economically viable. The output from the different State-run farms and fields is concentrated in bulky buildings comparable to co-operatives. Only the less fortunate residents, including most labourers in Shin-Edo, have access to the 'government stockpiles' thanks to the different rationing coupons delivered by their employers. The rest of the market focuses on selling to the city's restaurants and wealthier families.

This centre of activity has, obviously, allowed other trades to take advantage of its dynamism, and numerous independent vegetable sellers and specialists in transgenic meat have opened stalls around the huge buildings dedicated to sea products. In addition, there are the restaurants and the different noodle bars that multiply around the fish markets where many of the buyers that frequent the market have their lunch break between rounds of negotiations to supply a private restaurant in a Genocratic tower.

The tumult and the quantity of persons in and around Tsukiji make it the obvious place to collect information and make riskier transactions than the sale of comestibles. The Yakuza gangs that claim a cut from quite a few maritime labourers are also present inside the covered markets where they can 'negotiate' the sending of sailors out to sea or organise a surprise general strike across the harbours in order to raise bids. Unfortunately, because of the blockade, this activity has been in decline, making the Yakusa look for other sources of income or place greater pressure on those that they already have.

Magomei Sumimoto: A regular sight on the streets around the markets, Magomei drives a Tsukiji electric car, transporting cases filled with still living fish. He has worked in this place for more than 30 years and he knows a lot of things about the market, like old warehouses abandoned after a fire or places forbidden to the public where you can find containers filled with curious creatures found in the depths of the ocean. He can even lead you to huge fridges containing thousands of tuna carcasses destined to be chopped into tiny cubes by robotic machinery. With a little bit of luck, he can even tell you which of the harbour's fishermen disappeared last week, their boat still in the dock, while they prepared to go to sea one misty morning.

Kabuki-Cho (Shinjuku Special Ward)

"Come inside sir! Here our escort girls make love for longer! Their batteries last longer than everyone else's!"

Ryuzoji Kadonomaro - Strip-club barker

It is often said that Kabuki-cho is for sex what Akihabara is for electronics. The heir to the 'pleasure quarter' of yesteryear, the

brothels, the escort bars, the massage parlours, the love-hotels and the night clubs that line its streets form the majority of businesses here. These establishments go from the pitiful mobile peep-show booth at the end of a dead end street to a licensed, rank 5 massage parlour reserved for a selected clientele and offering personalised service.

The state of this part of town is unintentionally due to one man: Suzuki, a Kabuki aficionado, who launched the reconstruction of this quarter after the war and named it after the theatre style he loved so much. Originally it was destined to become the Shinjuku cultural centre. Unfortunately for him, the quarter soon took to its current orientation, when the myriad restaurants started offering prostitutes to make ends meet. The Kabuki theatre was never built.

During the day the quarter is almost deserted. Some nightclubs offer 'nightcaps' that last until late in the day, and the restaurants welcome some clients at noon, but nothing compared to the wildlife (more than a million and a half people, not counting androids) that invades the streets after nightfall. Salary-men coming to forget their hard day's labour, big bosses wanting to sign contracts in festive surroundings, students from neighbouring campuses and young couples wanting a room larger than their studio for some privacy, all patronise this quarter and feed an economy that generates hundreds of millions of yen. However seedy it sounds, all of this exists in an atmosphere of relative harmony and the greatest tranquillity.

Obviously, because of this extremely lucrative trade, many factions of the industry clash over territory and business interests. Even some shops have been in the hands of the underworld for a long time. Different Yakuza clans fight to extend their control, and establishments change hands regularly, while the official owners, paper tigers with clean criminal records, are not even aware of it. Nevertheless, any drunken or perverted ruckus is soon contained, if it disrupts the public order. Only the bloody settling of scores stains the picture. All of the Yakuza recognise that open violence in this quarter is bad for everyone's business.

One of the things that become obvious as you walk through this quarter is that Shin-Edo is a city of night owls. Giant holographic signs sing the charms of robotic escorts looking like movie stars while robotic touts offer custom models with the number of arms, breasts, mouths or anything else adapted to the clients' fantasies. It seems that as technologies have changed, a major aspect of how the Japanese take their pleasures has also changed. Plastic and artificial skin has taken the place of warm-blooded flesh. Indeed, to avoid a somewhat ambiguous legislation and the problems arising from staff management, most pimps and brothel keepers have opted to use sex androids ('Gynoids' or 'Lovebots'). Such 'employees' have no legal existence, so

The Yamaguchi-gumi

The most powerful Yakuza clan in the quarter, is led by a woman with a mysterious past, Ko Tsukinoyo. Not only Yakuza gangs work in this quarter though, as for many decades Shanghai triads (especially the Invisible Empire) have also wanted a piece of the pie. Even a coalition of several Yakuza clans failed to throw these rivals back across the sea, unable to match the Triad's determination and ruthless methods. The savagery of Triads has frightened even the Yakuza, who are no saints themselves. True, the Kuro Incident cut the Triad organisation off from its base in China, but for now it still successfully fights a fierce resistance against the nationalistic local underworld, mainly thanks to the powerful Chinese community in Yokohama's Chinatown. Some Yakuza clans have even allied with these remorseless foreigners after noticing this swing in the balance of power.

The Invisible Empire is currently the most powerful Shanghai Triad gangs. It is led by Fang Shen, the self-titled 'Blood-Striped Tiger,' a Chinese man who arrived in Japan without a penny in his pocket. Utterly immoral, he has managed to forge an impressive crime syndicate with ruthless efficiency and a limitless capacity for malevolence, swallowing all of the other Triads like an insatiable ogre. This modern, Asian Scarface shares the megalomaniac ravings of his American model. He lives in unheard-of luxury and rents several suites in the most prestigious hotels. It is said he has contacts among the Genocracy. With a host of police officers and special services investigators on his trail (and in his pocket) Fang Shen is about to be charged with illegal residence in Japan. If proved, this would, according to the 2031 Japanese law (which was very strict towards foreign immigrants) invalidate all of his later applications for residency, and revoke his current residence permit. That such a powerful and feared godfather like the 'Blood-Striped Tiger' might fall because of an insignificant residence permit alludes to arrest of Al Capone, more than a century earlier, for tax evasion. Fang Shen's lieutenants, unwilling to wait for the verdict, have already begun the fight for succession.

that the illegal and exploitative, in human terms at least, side of prostitution and pimping is ancient history. Androids are the ideal workers. There is no need to feed them, supply them with drugs, hide them from the authorities or to limit their working hours. Androids docilely accede to the demands of these traffickers in their synthetic flesh. Many androids can be set with several personalised templates, which also allow them to offer some unique services in the area of pleasure. Traditional, natural prostitutes are still available, but are relegated to select establishments that cater to a demanding clientele.

Paradise Jocko: The biggest establishment devoted to 'client pleasure,' Paradise Jocko is an immense pink and white building covered in stained glass, advanced holographic advertisements, and the last word in holographic lasers drawing the company logo in the night sky. This temple to the art of massage offers many different services, designed to suit any income or social status. The lowest allows clients, executive officers and other manager level Salary-Men, to have a massage, but none of the 'supplemental services.' On the other hand, the lower levels of the building house courtesans that, it is said, have Genocrats coming to see them. The helicopter landing pad behind the building gives a certain amount of credit to the rumour.

Hanamachi: This is a luxury establishment, one that offers a vast choice of prostitutes of breathless beauty, both slender youths and traditional geisha girls perfectly educated in the arts of entertainment. These women, experts in traditional music (especially the shamisen), singing, tea ceremony (chanoyu), flower arrangement (ikebana) or poetry, are in great demand during parties for big companies, banquets or contract signing meetings. They can minister in-house or visit their clients, but always accompanied with a heavy escort. However, be warned, Geisha are experts in the art of relaxing and seducing, but they are not prostitutes. They are the ones that choose to honour their clients, or not, in those terms. The most famous are paid royally. Since last year, Hanamachi started to use android geisha to enlarge its market for a more diversified clientele, but it is the human employees that, for the moment, are preferred by the public. It is true that they represent one of the rare perfectly intact Japanese traditions almost untouched by modernity.


Love Night: The very opposite of the Hanamachi, this sordid whorehouse stands at the end of a square filled with recycling bins. Inside, a Yakuza with oily, fluorescent hair serves as manager while in tiny rooms androids emulating men and women of any age (including children, as no law forbids the use of 'child' android models) work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Only the most destitute or those whose perversions demand discretion use this kind of place, of which there are, unfortunately, hundreds near Dogenzaka Hill.

The Natural Ellipse

This house is a prototype modern home built in the beginning of the 2000s by architect Masaki Endoh. Having seen many generations and the reconstruction of the part of its structure that failed to resist the passage of time, this round (like a grain of rice) residence set amid the Maruyama-cho Love Hotels was purchased by Gido Yu Hirayo. The industrialist, who runs a company that designs photonic processors, is also known to the authorities for his many clashes with the underworld. Having fallen in love with the ellipse-shaped building, he did not hesitate to buy it as well as some of the surrounding buildings to guarantee a certain tranquillity in an area frequented by pimps. His wife and children ignore the fact that Hirayo is a seikikai, a biological android, a perfect clone. He himself is not aware of it at all. No one knows to what ends such an expensive replica was placed with this family, replacing the real Hirayo.

Master Dabo Martial Arts School: This is a very discreet establishment, located in between two sex shops with loud signs. This little dojo does not advertise, or belong to any national federation, and never takes part in any tournaments. The old sensei gives lessons several evenings per week to conscientious students. Only Japanese martial disciplines are taught, even if they are a little mixed up according to the sensei's moods. The existence of this tiny school is ignored by nearly all martial arts students until they receive a small, roughly handcrafted brochure in their mailbox. Only a few people get this leaflet, but of those that do, many of them enrol immediately; following a very strong impulse that only goes away after the form has been filled in. No one knows what Sensai Dabo's persuasion methods are, or what his purpose is. Nevertheless it is said this dojo trains excellent martial artists.

Kikatsu: With a name meaning 'hunger & thirst,' this roaming bar-restaurant is a big truck around which little circular tables and stools can be unfolded. The owner, whom everybody calls Fat Kubi Achi, is a specialist in donburi, large rice bowls topped with scrambled eggs, fried chicken, beef, etc. According to him, they are the best in the city, and most agree that they are at the very least rather good and that Fat Kubi Achi does offer generous



portions. Kikatsu often stays in the same place, besides the huge Shinjuku intersection (almost as big as the one in Shibuya) and he draws crowds all night long.

Blue Velvet: This private club is one of many ‘companionship’ establishments catering solely for women, the demand for which has steadily risen over the last few years. Having asserted their femininity and their right to the same pleasures as men, women (usually executives) meet in these tasteful places to watch shows, talk with escort boys or perhaps more if they choose. No man other than staff and dancers is ever admitted inside and androids are particularly rare.

Buru-Sera Pink: A shop specialising on the resale of old schoolgirl uniforms – pleated skirts, sailor costumes, puffy socks, etc. Such uniforms have changed with the evolution of society, but even so, no schoolgirl ever wore these somewhat fetishised variants to school. Buru-Sera is a contraction of the words for bloomers, gym shorts, and sailor. The clientele is mostly made up of dirty old men, exhausted labourers with no emotional life to speak of and otaku unable to say a word to a young lady.

The regulars of the shop know to ask Terasawa Ippei, the greasy haired geek with the eternal stained Sailor Moon t-shirt who manages the shop, for the ‘under the counter’ merchandise. It is nothing especially reprehensible, but rather sad, since Terasawa feeds a market for used, unwashed lady’s underpants. They are available in several varieties depending on their previous owner. Some are stolen, but a few schoolgirls have been known to supply the store as they command a good price.

The shop also offers immersive, holographic erotic films. These allow you to be surrounded by the actors, playing their role next to you. Moreover, if you connect your Jellyfish to the patch enclosed with the disc, you will feel a certain ‘itch’ in certain parts of your anatomy. It obviously cannot compare with the squids that, sometimes, discreetly circulate in the shop, which allow a complete virtual sexual experience.

Terasawa Ippei is a specialist in Nipponese porn, an expert on bondage, fetishism and other specialties. He can identify any of the actresses in a movie, the photographers of a shot or the producer in a series of naughty feature films. A useful contact if your investigations bring you to such an environment. He also knows all the stats of the Kaiju (Godzilla, Gamera, Rodan... etc.) of Japanese monster movies, but such information will doubtlessly be of less use.

Kamata (Ota Special Ward)

“Looting is on the increase here. There is no food, no money, no nothing. My parents have to work even harder to make a few yen and get ration tickets only by the goodwill of their boss. So I help'em when I can. There are lots of rich people downtown that have too much. So I help myself from them.”

Okamoto Kaneda – Bozosoku

Kamata quarter was ravaged in the 2025 earthquakes. Twelve years later, a second earthquake finished off the remaining infrastructure. The first rebuilding was about to start when the Kuro Incident again smashed the quarter. The crash of the two airliners that were taking off from the nearby Haneda airport carved a deep trail of destruction, concrete, steel and blood through the area. The electromagnetic blackout that lasted several hours caused by the Kuro Incident had disrupted enough of the planes’ electronics to force them to crash.

Miraculously, there were not as many victims on the ground where the airliners crashed as was expected. Interestingly, the quarter had become the headquarters of many companies specialising mainly in weaponry. On May 4th, when the blackout took place, it was Kokumin no Kyujitsu, the nature holiday and the offices of the companies were almost empty of staff. Nevertheless, both crashes, happening within a 44 second interval, produced a massive fireball which fed by the contents of the warehouses used as storage for firearms and other weapons, ravaged a great part of the quarter.

Although most of the passengers aboard both aircraft were killed either in the collision between the two or when they hit the ground, 3 passengers from each liner survived the crash. Even more miraculously, in both planes it was the passengers on seats 8, 9 and 3 that survived the crashes of the aircraft they were aboard.

An old mecca of post-war film sets; Kamata received multiple investments from numerous companies after 2027, allowing it a new dynamism. However, by 2046, the cinema industry was in substantial decline and weaponry had become the area’s main industry. The Jieitai Defence Force, an army in a country that had been forbidden rearmament after the end of World War II, had become with the help of state-of-the-art technology, a dangerous fighting force. To expand further the JDF needed more equipment and business was booming.

The twin airliner crash did not halt production for long. Very soon, the companies took stock and rebuilt their factories and warehouses. Unfortunately, the working class lodgings in the



quarter did not have the same kind of resources available. The budget panic following the news of the International Blockade turned the public and political attention away from the problems of reconstruction for these modest dwellings. Thus, this quarter has a striking disparity between the areas filled with brand new secured buildings with reflective surfaces and the hastily rebuilt residential areas and the areas still left in ruins, almost forgotten by all.


In this quarter are gathered Japan's big military-industrial complex zaibatsu, like Ikusa Inc., Raifuru Corporation and Sakakibana & Sano. Test areas surround the company's tall towers and you can regularly hear the bursts of experimental weapons. Plenty of administrators with seats on the boards of these companies are also members of the Diet, even ministers, like Pai Kyuubanji, an Ikusa special consultant and representative of the Liberal-Democrat Party. This unscrupulous man, capable of anything for profit, was a specialist consultant for directing stock for countries ravaged by civil guerrillas or border clashes. The blockade around Japan has forced him to reconsider his

strategy and he is now studying the trading potential of youth gangs. For that purpose, his company is the spearhead of the pro-arms lobby, 'Buki Freedom.'

Sakakibana & Sano constantly sits at the cutting edge of military design. Its too-modern products do not yet interest the military, but it has a very promising future. Its headquarters are famous for having its security conducted by experimental

military androids originally designed to clear minefields and other potentially suicidal tasks. Nevertheless, recent technological advances made engineers see several other possibilities in them and these first robot-soldier models are being tested as security guards.

While Kamada is not a typical quarter, but taken with the rest of its quarters, Ota ward is the most populous in Shin-Edo. Essentially it houses a working class population, working in factories in the periphery and living in tiny lodgings piled up on top of each other shaped like concrete cubes. After the



earthquakes and two crashes many homeless have come to find shelter in the vestiges of the working-class residences, making makeshift shelters in the ruins. The clearing effort has so far spared a few areas and other partly ruined buildings, now occupied by homeless communities.

Hi-no-tori Shinbum: Shin-Edo's futuristic daily newspaper has its headquarters in this district. Offering a downloadable edition, and also a flexible screen edition, the paper is widely read. Trying as much as possible to be politically neutral, it deals with Japanese news as a whole and tries to maintain an editorial line of interest to most Japanese without falling into sensationalism. Its cultural pages are well thought of and its political articles are respected by millions of readers. It is not rare to see a number of people reading on the subway or while walking and holding a coffee.

Iga Benjiro: This homeless man is convinced that he is a mage. He has gathered together a small community after having left everything behind to devote himself to magic. With a long, rather sparse beard, huge-framed glasses, a plaited shirt covered with grease and many pendants, Iga wanders the area around his squat, dispensing his wisdom among his disciples and preparing magical rituals. Obviously, Iga Benjiro has never managed to cast a single spell, but he recently acquired an old manuscript found in the ruins of the quarter. He is in the process of deciphering it and has already sent some disciples to find the necessary book required for the translation.

Bayshore Expressway Interchange: This part of the expressway was blown apart by the explosion of the first plane crash, which caused the explosion of a firearms warehouse nearby. Abandoned after the Kuro Incident, the long six-lane road whose main bridge has fallen down has become a racecourse for many rival biker gangs. Riding racer bikes modified for enhanced speed and power, these bozosoku are mostly marginalised students fighting for a portion of this ruined turf.

Ueno (Taito Special Ward)

"I don't understand why those people burgled me. They stole almost nothing, just the old talisman my great-grandmother gave me. They didn't even take my latest generation drone or my son's Opticum computer. Do you think they were trinket collectors?"

Yoshitane Masami Masumi – Pensioner

Ueno is a vast quarter, famed, among other things, for its park, a rare island of green and quiet in a modern, stressed megalopolis.

This quarter is known for its prestigious museums, like the Shin-Edo National Museum (and its exhibit of national treasures), the National Museum of Western Arts and the National Museum of Science. These entirely automated and discreetly modern museums are in tune with the times. Thus you can rent the services of an android tour guide who will be an expert on the paintings of Breughel the Elder or Fragonard. Numerous walls have 3D frescoes displayed around the visitor, making it possible to enjoy very realistic interactive exhibits; you can step inside an atom or live through the battle of Sekigahara. Better, if you have a subscription, the visit is completely interactive. Let yourself be drawn into paintings whose subjects come to life, guiding you through the collection or telling the story of the work of art you are admiring. During the Kuro Incident, the national museum of Western Art housed a temporary exhibition of Andy Warhol paintings. With the blockade, these works by 'the pope of pop-art' are now stuck in Japan.

Ueno has a very spiritual side as well, with numerous temples, such as Betendo, a temple built on a small island and dedicated to the goddess Benzaiten. The quarter is also known for the Kan'eiji pagoda, dating from the Tokugawa era, which nowadays sits right in the middle of a zoo. This zoo is known for housing numerous different species, and was the first of its kind to house the first clones of endangered animals. These include the inevitable Panda, and a vivarium of 'species entirely created by science.' The zoo is staffed entirely by androids, but something about them upsets the animals. The unnatural handlers distress most animals and accidents are not uncommon. While the zoo

has an insurance policy covering the damage that can be caused, the spectacle of an android crushed in an elephant charge, or torn to pieces by lions always shocks the visitors.

An agglomerate of Shinto shrines and temples dedicated to Tokugawa Ieyasu (third unifier of Japan and the first shogun in a long dynasty that decided to close Japan to foreigners) attracts huge crowds. The similarities between 18th Century Japan and the new post-Kuro Incident Japan has led to a resurgence of many old traditional beliefs, which has made this area an important holy place. Pilgrims come from all over the country to contemplate, cross the torii or meditate in the long shady corridors in these richly decorated palaces. National guards especially trained to maintain the security of this national treasure prevent any vandalism or theft. These guards had to be stationed here after a mob attacked a pavilion and caused the collapse of a pagoda. 'Osuki Sakai's Children' claimed this act, an anarchist group named after an anarchist-militant from the beginning of the 20th Century. Active since the Kuro Incident, these extremists attack any shogunate or imperial symbol in Japan.

As an old working class quarter in Shin-Edo despite the myriad number of temples, the place also houses the old Ameyayokocho market, which contains a mix of regular shops and street sellers. This market is the economic lung of the residents in the quarter. Law enforcement is lax, intervening only for major disruptions or obvious unrest that might frighten the rich pilgrims. Walking through the little corridors between the sellers' stalls, it is possible to find really greasy skewered snacks and cheap sake, but you can also find people selling forbidden items, like patches for unlocking androids or weapons.

On the eastern border of the quarter there are tracks for racing bikes and experimental vehicles, such as single seat hovercrafts. In the evenings there are competitions and wild races aboard makeshift machines loaded with advanced and even illegal fuel that has already caused the death of many hotheads (literally and figuratively).

Toda Kawanomu: This young Genocrat a bit less mysterious than the rest of her 'caste.' A model with an ageless beauty, she became known after she opened the Shiawase Hakubutsukan. This is a small museum discreetly attached to the side of the imposing National Museum of Western Art; its different galleries house the biggest collection of Shinto lucky charms in Japan. Usually accessible to the general public every day of the year, it is sometimes closed for many hours. It is said that, during these periods, Toda Kawanomu walks the corridors, worshipping her talismans before returning to her building. It is supposedly the only time the 'young lady' comes out, although this is just a rumour.

The Teshin Concert Hall: This vast arena has a capacity of 135,000 people, and is the second largest of its type in the world (after the Wang Gong in Shanghai which can hold 150,000 spectators). Built in 2029, it was the venue of choice for the most fashionable international stars when performing in Japan, but after the Kuro Incident, it welcomes only popular song celebrities and local bands, most notably the Tine-ja band which with their track 'Strawberry Pie' managed to enflame a capacity crowd at the Teshin for three days in a row. The venue is regularly used by television companies to record several prime-time popular and trashy game shows with teenage singers for broadcasting to their pre-teen audiences. The hall is also used for the meetings of political parties, but not many manage to fill the place. Up to now the only party that almost managed that is Yamatodamashii. In its second meeting, the nationalist party managed to attract 120,000 people, a fact that roused a great deal of apprehension in both the media and those who fear the rise of radicalism.

Hoko (treasures): An antique shop run by Berthold van den Woldeberg, who is known for collecting superb pieces from all around Asia. Without any specific theme or specialisation, Van

den Woldeberg accumulates talismans, Buddhist statues, tanto or tea pots crafted by grandmasters of the arts. It is suggested that Toda Kawanomu is one of his clients, but the old German antiquarian has never commented on the subject. Passionate about antique items from all over the continent, this sixty-year-old has not left Asia in 14 years. As you might imagine, he is a vital contact for those who need information about antiques or antiquities. His shop can be found in the arcades under the railway of the old JR Yamanote subway.

One of the androids of the Sakakibana & Sano security detail has left its post and joined a homeless community. The company has kept the incident secret and are trying to locate the rogue unit. Meanwhile several robotics engineers are trying to find out the reason for such a 'malfunction'.

DAILY LIFE IN 2046

Even though forty years of technological evolution, new divisions in the caste system and the Kuro Incident have considerably altered the life of the Japanese, some things do not change. Among these eternal traditions for the Japanese is their choice of food, the rules of politeness, table manners and several other beliefs.

The purpose of this chapter is for you to be able to add a bit of Japanese flavour to your adventures by describing the dishes, traditions and habits that can be found here. These details help to ground this futuristic environment and make it more real. It also helps players understand the setting so they can add more realistic elements to the descriptions of their characters. This is obviously not a comprehensive guide to Japanese habits in 2046, but it should help the Gamemaster bring a more 'Nipponese' tone to his adventures.

Food and drink

In 2046, the food of the average Japanese is increasingly industrialised, meat coming from cloned animals, vegetables coming from the State farms, fish and other artificial creations having been bred in aquatic farms. Nevertheless, the basis of food has remained almost the same: little meat, many vegetables, algae, fish, soya, little fruit and almost no dairy products. Rice and noodles is still the staple of inexpensive dishes. Most of these foodstuffs have had their very nature modified thanks to biotech principles, making them tastier, richer in fibre and mineral intake, and lower in calories. Technological advances in food processing allow the injection of active ingredients in food, making it capable of unclogging arteries, delaying cellular aging or reinforcing the body against common diseases.

There are also some very strange artificial foodstuffs, far from the traditional sushi and maki, like noodles with strange tastes and colours, baby foods with sour tastes and fruits grown in multi-coloured jellies.

Kampai! What to drink in 2046 Shin-Edo

Tea is still the most popular drink in Japan, which is drunk green or black without the addition of sugar or milk. However, fluorescent coloured sodas are always preferred by teenagers. Today's varieties are even more popular because some also include chemical ingredients for health or entertainment. Some can aid the functioning of nano-implants, others temporarily modify the colour of your tongue.

Beer is still the most consumed alcoholic beverage since its introduction to Japan in the Meiji era. Japanese beer follows the American tradition, it is usually amber, with a slightly bitter taste and a pronounced hoppy flavour (and it is never served over 6°). While industrialists have tried produce different beers (or those of the so-called 'sixth kind') with bluish hues or with softer aromas, 'traditional' beer is still ubiquitous.

Japanese sake (rice wine) results from the fermentation of special rice. It is usually drunk hot, but is often chilled during the summer. It is a clear, colourless alcoholic drink with a strong odour. Its alcohol content varies between 10 to 16% (although this is usually diluted from an original 18-20%) and is very different from Chinese sake.

What to eat in 2046 Shin-Edo

While the Japanese like to eat at home, their long work hours ensure sushi-ya-style restaurants and ramen bars are regularly overcrowded at mealtimes. Often quite small, sometimes little more than a simple counter, a few stools, pieces of fish in a window and just one cook, human or robot, they allow you to eat well for a reasonable price.

In 2046, you can always eat synthetic noodles with different flavours, and different soya skewers (that usually taste like chicken) but this is mostly reserved to those who do not have the time to go somewhere to eat. Rather than going to a sushi-ya, those in even more of a rush make use of the automatic vending machines provided for that purpose and available twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. Made available directly by the food labs and companies (each fighting for the more lucrative locations) these big automated windows offer everything from simple self-heating packets of noodles to whole meal trays. However, nothing beats the sociable occasion of a group of co-workers or friends around a good traditional dish washed down with beer, tea or sake.

The most current and popular dishes include:

- **Ramen soup:** in a meat or miso broth.
- **Donburi:** a big rice bowl covered in stewed meat, fish slices, scrambled eggs, vegetables and tempura.
- **Gyoza:** lightly fried meat and vegetable ravioli.
- **Yakisoba:** fried buckwheat noodles with meat and vegetables.
- **Nigiri sushi:** little pickled rice balls covered with a slice of raw fish, scrambled eggs, shellfish, soaked in a mix of shoyu and wasabi (a kind of very strong green condiment used as a paste and similar to horseradish). There are six types and it is usually eaten with your fingers, after the slice of fish has been generously soaked in soya sauce.
- **Sashimi:** chopped raw fish, shellfish or seafood. It can be compared to a kind of 'Carpaccio,' but with seafood.
- Nabemono:** a stew in a pot, including the famous chanko-nabe, the traditional and very rich dish of the Sumotori.
- **Bento:** bento is just a box carrying a meal. It is different from one region to the next, but inside is generally found some sugarpalum, steam cooked rice, little meat balls or slices of fish, pieces of scrambled eggs and vegetables, pickled or not. In 2046, the bento is sometimes the size of a simple Pod and has many freeze-dried foods.
- **Oden-nabe:** one of the specialities of Shin-Edo, an octopus, potato, bean curd and boiled egg stew.

Table manners

Food is greatly respected by the Japanese and meals are as much a rite as they are a pleasure. Rules for eating are strict, but there are not many of them:

- Never plant your chopsticks in the bowl, and never pass food with them. It alludes to a funeral rite during which the family of the deceased passes his ashes that way. Recalling death is always a taboo in Japan.
- The chopsticks you use for eating are not used to serve your plate. Also, you should never use them to point to anyone.
- Oshibori (little hot napkins) are only used to clean your hands. It is very rude to use them on your face or neck.
- Never fill your own glass. First you fill your neighbour's glass and he will return the courtesy. Afterwards you say 'kanpai' (Cheers! Your good health!). When you have had enough, you cover your glass with your hand to avoid it being filled up again, if you do not it will be for sure.
- Start eating only when all dishes are on the table, and you alternate, eating a little from each. While it is rude to completely finish a plate, the rice must be consumed to the last grain.
- Avoid excessively soaking your food in sauce, and see that the rice is not mixed with the other food. Foodstuffs should be dipped in the soya sauce, in a little side container.
- At the beginning of a meal you say 'Itadakimasu' which means 'I receive' and 'Gochiso-sama deshita,' 'it was a feast,' at the end. Or even 'Oiihhiii!' to indicate you find a delicacy delicious.
- You should always give the impression that you are going to pay the bill if you are in a restaurant, even if you are the guest or the least wealthy.
- Never walk down the street while eating or drinking. It is only done by rude youths or drunks.

Beliefs and customs

As mentioned in the beginning of this book, Japanese culture is marked by numerous specific beliefs, usually connected to the fear of taint, ancient tradition and Shinto or Buddhist rites. It can be said that the Japanese are not very religious, but they are very spiritual.

We have already mentioned the number 4, which allegedly brings bad luck because it is pronounced 'shi,' like death. The Japanese carefully avoid pronouncing it and say 'yon' instead. The number 9 is equally unpopular because its pronunciation 'ku' also means 'suffering.' Thus most people try to avoid getting room number 9 in hospitals.

There are several other beliefs of this kind, although many are practiced more for convenience and in order not to offend someone than out of any real superstition.

- Never send greetings to a bereaved family or offer potted plants to a patient in a hospital, otherwise his stay will last longer.
- Do not throw away dolls, because they might house a spirit. It is preferable to bring them to a temple. Some sects say that the same goes for androids and they should not be scrapped or sent to the recycling centre.
- If your shoe strap breaks (normally that of the 'geta,' traditional Japanese shoes), it means bad luck for sure.
- Salt protects you from the evil spirits and unwholesome drives (even those sent from beyond) and it is advisable to spread it on your threshold to stop an evil creature from entering your home.

There are many other beliefs of the same kind, like never clip your nails in the evening, never whistle in the dark to avoid attracting snakes, and saying 'Kuwabara Kuwabara' to prevent lightning from striking you, and the reputation of several numbers to bring good or bad luck. In addition to the traditional ones, other more recent superstitions have also appeared or had a brutal rebirth in Shin-Edo after the Kuro Incident.

Hotaru is a practice developed from the ancient custom of firefly catching (during summer nights) and the green lights of optical ports. Fears of night-time power failures, which bring down the optical network and therefore isolate users from the rest of the population, have created this odd habit. Come nightfall, many light green phosphorescent candles in their lodgings. These are supposed to prevent the light of the ports from going out and repel the monsters waiting for the cover of darkness that move in the shadows.

Since the 2025 earthquakes, almost all inhabitants of Japan are now equipped with small spherical lanterns filled with multi-coloured reactive plasma (commonly called Earthballs). This sensitive fluid is supposed to change hue when an earthquake is about to take place by reacting to very high-frequency noises that the human ear cannot perceive. After the Kuro Incident, some people claim the fluid became black or changes in hue to announce electromagnetic disturbances.

Manners

Sama, San, Kun and Chan

In Japanese a suffix is often added to names depending on the degree of deference, relationship, rank or profession of the person you are talking to. For a family member, you use the personal

name with or without the suffix or one's position (mother, father, etc...). Deference and social position define the level of language used.

San is used the most. It is the classical polite formula, equivalent to Mr., Mrs. or Ms.

Sama is rarer and denotes a great level of deference.

Kun is used for a boy you are friends with by either gender.

Chan is a slightly cute suffix used for girls by their friends or boyfriends, babies or very young boys.

Boys and girls do not express themselves the same way in Japanese. The language makes a lot of use of the unspoken and the implied, and few affirmations, so as not to risk making the person that you are speaking with ill at ease or contradicting him. The Japanese never directly say 'no,' but have a hundred ways of desisting politely, which often makes westerners think that they have not actually disagreed with them.

Some basic manners

- Never shake hands or kiss cheeks as a greeting, you should bow instead as you say good morning.
 - Never walk inside a house with your shoes on. Japanese houses have small areas just inside the door where you can take off and store shoes. Not taking off your shoes shows a lack of respect for the occupants. Carefully put away your shoes, the left one together with the right one turned towards the door, when you are invited into to someone's home.
 - Offer a gift with both hands, making a comment depreciating the gift. The latter will not be opened in front of you as it suggests the gift is more important than your company.
- It is essential to be on time. Lateness is a form of rudeness.
- When girls laugh they should put their hand in front of their mouth, to avoid showing their teeth. Men walk in front of them and do not open doors for them.
 - Do not smoke in public, even Blue Light liquid cigarettes.

Japanese names

Before 1875 only Japanese nobles had family names, the others just had forenames as their families were not considered as important. So, since 1875, non-nobles have had to choose family names, sometimes connected to their geographical place of origin, a famous family name, or from the register of 10,000 names randomly created and made available by the State. Personal and family names are generally made up of two kanji.

Family name examples: Abe, Aoki, Fujiwara, Hashimoto, Hayashi, Ikeda, Inoue, Ito, Kimura, Kobayashi, Matsumoto, Mori, Nakagawa, Nakajima, Nakamura, Ogawa, Sasaki, Shimizu,

Suzuki, Takahashi, Tanaka, Watanabe, Yamada, Yamaguchi, Yamashita, Yamazaki, Yoshida.

Examples of male personal names: Aki, Akira, Daicho, Daiki, Hayato, Hideaki, Hiroki, Hiroshi, Kaito, Kazuki, Kenta, Kento, Kohei, Koki, Kôta, Kosuke, Masaki, Ren, Riku, Ryo, Ryosuke, Sho, Sota, Takeshi, Taisho, Takuma, Takuya, Tatsuya, Tomoya, Tsubasa, Wataru, Yuki, Yusuke, Yuta, Yuto.

Examples of female personal names: Ai, Aoi, Akane, Akemi, Asuka, Jungo, Keiko, Kimiko, Mai, Mana, Mayu, Miku, Minami, Mieko, Misaki, Miyu, Mizuki, Nanami, Nao, Natsuki, Oki, Ran, Rei, Rin, Saki, Sakura, Shiori, Tani, Usagi, Yoko, Yui.

Currency

The official Japanese currency is still the Yen. It is currently divided into coins of 1, 5, 10, 50, 100 and 500 yen, while bills have values of 1000, 2000, 5000 and 10,000 yen. These are now made of a very light, entirely synthetic paper, feeling like cold plastic to the touch, but completely biodegradable.

Since the construction of the first optical networks and security systems that pushed credit cards to common usage, cash is rarely used by most of the population. In the interest of economy and convenience, banks offer many forms of credit cards, from a card with a chip for simple purchases in a shop to the hyper cards which only allow you access to your bank account at special ports provided for this purpose. However, even if the Japanese are now in the habit of using credit cards, cash has not disappeared and it is still very prized by the older generations and in the markets of the Archipelago.

The cost of living has always been excessively high in Japan, especially in Shin-Edo, and unfortunately the consequences of the Kuro Incident did nothing to help matters. With the closing of the Japanese stock exchange and the severing of international cash flow, the yen has been immensely devalued and products previously imported now reach exorbitant prices. Despite the food policies set up by the State, scarcity and profiteering has seen price increases for several foodstuffs. There is a strong risk that certain parts of the population may fall into destitution. In this tense economic context, society avoids implosion thanks to the family-run financial establishments that acquired international banks and focused finances (just like the new labs) into local activities.

In the same fashion, in order to aid families below a certain threshold of yen/hour, the government grants employers coupons that they must distribute to their less well off workers. Working

like price reduction vouchers, these tickets allow you to purchase State products at privileged prices. Unfortunately, since May 4th, 2046, the State's reserves are drying up and little by little it is realising it will be powerless to support most of the population if the blockade continues to last for more than a year.

Currently, after its rates dropped following the blockade, 220 yen buys 1 Euro (1 British pound = 264 yen, 1 American dollar = 154 yen). Meanwhile, the price of some products, like computers, hydroponic fruits, vehicles or fuel, has never stopped rising.

A minimum wage system was set up since 1968, but it varies enormously from one region to the next, even from one professional sector to the next (laboratories and car manufacturers fix their own minimum wage, for example). In Shin-Edo this is around 919 yen per hour, monthly salaries attaining between 162,000 yen (737 euros, £614 or \$1,052) to 748,000 yen (3400 Euros, £2,833 or \$4,857) according to your qualifications, for 22 working days (a daily basis of eight hours).

Some standard prices

- A quick meal (automated): 800 to 1500 yen
- An average meal (sushi-ya): 2000 to 5000 yen
- A quality meal (panoramic restaurant): 6000 to 15,000 yen
- A budget hotel room (capsule): 3500 to 5300 yen
- An average hotel room (ryokan or love-hotel): 6700 to 15200 yen
- A luxury room (hotel complex): 22,000 to 44,000 yen
- A rank 1 flat in Ota: 44,800,000 yen
- A rank 6 apartment in Chiyoda: 268,800,000
- A subway ticket: 220 yen (annual pass for 7000 yen)
- A trip in a shikansen (high speed train) to Kyoto: 16,000 yen
- A taxi route: 150 yen every 350 metres
- A budget Pod: 20,000 yen
- A latest generation Pod: 60,000 yen
- A Gaidan: 42,000 yen
- A flexible monitor: 500 yen
- A photovoltaic computer: 68,000 yen
- An Opticum computer (Universal Memory): 1,280,000 yen
- A blood nanodrone: 600,000 yen
- A Magnéto Dynamique speeder: 470,000 yen
- A Mitsubishi hovecar: 32,600,000 yen
- A biofuel litre: 330 yen
- A home android: 1,120,000 yen
- A Gynoid pleasure android: 1,600,000 yen
- A Puppetbot nanny: 250,000 yen
- A first-rate skinsuit: 500,000 yen
- A Gunshock pistol: 150,000 yen

THE WAY OF THE GODS

*“Kekare o, Let impurities
Harai tamae be washed away and
Kiyome tamae purity returns”*

Norito (prayer) of Yamada Hiro, Shinto priest

Shinto

Shinto, or shinagarra, kami no michi, the Way of the Gods, is the oldest religion in Japan. There are myriads of gods or kami (88 million) because they represent all the manifestations of the world's natural energies. Allegedly, in Japan a kami hides under every stone. These are both heavenly spirits (like the old gods) and earthly ones (exceptional people such as warriors or artists, etc.) who have joined the pantheon. These spirits are more than gods; they are guardians and it is best not to offend them. Shinto offers no dogma, except that you should find and follow the path to spiritual purity.

The Japanese are called to consciously participate in universal harmony, the purity of the divine and offer respect for nature. They must avoid impurity, and the spiritual stains brought on by murder, baseness and ugliness. Death is the ultimate taboo, the ultimate taint (kegare). With such an importance laid on purity, purification rites, or harae, are very important. They can consist of simply washing the mouth, hand and eye, but can also mean washing the whole body in natural flowing water such as under a waterfall or in the sea (misogi). Purity is the main virtue in Shinto ethics. A purity of both body and mind.

The afterlife is hardly mentioned, but is not a particular concern to the Japanese. Shinto promises nothing for a future life. It is usually assumed that you become a spirit yourself

after death. However, what is important is life, and the present moment. The impermanence of things makes looking towards the unreachable future somewhat futile. It is not death itself that is a problem, but the taint that it may entail (the cause of the trip to the hell of Yomi). Shinto thus focuses on purification. It is about being part of the world, not separating yourself from it.

Shinto Texts

In ancient Japan, shaman-priests were women who entered a trance to deliver messages from the kami and appease the spirits. This practice is still carried out in the countryside by the 'Itako.' These blind women dressed in white (the colour of mourning and the dead) have the same role as the shaman-priests of old and let themselves be possessed by the kami. Many have assimilated Buddhist ritual and often recite a sutra to reach a trance state.

Shinto texts were written in the later parts of 7th and 8th Centuries (Common Era) after Japan had adopted and assimilated many Buddhist traditions in the 6th Century. These texts are the 'Kojiki' and the 'Nihonshoki' (The 'Record of Ancient Matters' and the 'Chronicles of Japan'). While these texts appeared seemingly quite late, we must remember that Japan had no written language until the adoption of Chinese script around the 5th Century CE. So prior to this, Shinto belief had a purely oral tradition. Today, the practice of Shinto is mostly dissociated from those somewhat mythological narratives that mainly seek to grant a divine legitimacy to the Emperor (insisting that he is a direct descendent of Amaterasu-Omikami, the sun goddess). Shinto is therefore not a religion 'of the book.'

Shinto prayers are uttered in an ancient form of Japanese by priests and 'Kannushi' (who look after the shrines) with the

assistance of 'Miko' (once shamanistic diviners and priestesses now 'shrine maidens' who help the Kannushi). The manner in which the words are pronounced is important, because they contain a spiritual strength (called 'konodama') the beauty and accuracy of which can only lead to good. Understanding by the faithful is secondary, the words themselves have power. Either way, few people (even among priests) understand ancient Japanese anymore in 2046.

Shinto rituals

Rituals consist of offerings and purifications, usually on fixed dates. The dominating colour in the shrines (Jinja) is red and they are ministered by priests (Kannushi and Miko).

Shinto celebrates every step of life except death, which is where Buddhists take over: children are presented to the local shrine for good fortune, new-borns at 7 days old, then children at 3.5 or 7 years old. Shinto priests also preside over marriages. Other celebrations are festivals originally associated with agricultural festivals are simply called 'matsuri' (festival). To ensure good harvests or be protected from natural disasters, processions are performed carrying 'mikoshi,' little shrines carried in palanquins, and by ritual dances. They are very joyful parties, celebrating happiness and purity. They include many different shows such as kite flying, archery contests, Noh theatre performances, ritual dances (kagura) and sumo wrestling. The latter is a ritual, a sacred confrontation that crushes evil, and not considered a true sport. It is filled with Shinto traditions, like the fistful of salt thrown to the ground at the beginning of each match.

A Shinto prayer

"Our eyes can see the taint, but do not allow our spirit to see impure things. Our ears can hear impure things, but do not allow our spirit to be soiled by taint."



Oracles, lucky charms and objects of worship

Shinto has three sacred items: a mirror (Yata no Kagami) kept in Ise Shrine, the jewels (Yasakani no Magatama) in the Imperial Palace, and the sword (Kusanagi no Tsurugi) kept in Atsuta Shrine. They are considered to be emanations of Amaterasu-Omikami, the sun goddess, and are symbols of wisdom, benevolence and courage. They are also the symbols of imperial legitimacy. Apart from these unique items, Shinto practice has many other freely available charms and totems:

- Ema are little pieces of wood behind which a prayer or a wish is written. Then they are attached to the inside of a shrine so the kami may fulfil them.
- Omikuji are strips of paper containing a prediction. If the omens are not good, they should be attached to a tree in a shrine so the kami cancel the bad luck. In 2046 there is a new kind of Omikuji in the form of simple pre-printed cards.
- Kamidana are shelves, always very clean and well lighted, on which is placed a little tablet with the name of the deceased between two vases, a little rice, water and salt. It must always be oriented towards the south or the east. It may sit perfectly beside a butsudan, a little Buddhist altar.
- Shimenawa is a rope made of rice straw braided from left to right, marking the limits of a sacred place (just like a torii, the big open arch marking the entrance to a shrine), or around a tree or a rock designating the territory of a kami. Gohei are pieces of folded paper that have a similar purpose.
- Omamori, a kind of amulet, are little embroidered cloth pouches closed with a cord. Inside there's a piece of paper (or a piece of wood) where a charm is inscribed. The pouch must not be opened or the charm will not work, and it is only valid for a year. After that it must be returned to the temple.

Shinto-Buddhism syncretism

Buddhism arrived in Japan around the 5th Century. It was well received by Shinto which saw it as something of a godsend as Buddhists are able to deal with the dead where Shinto followers cannot. By mutual agreement, the Japanese decided that all Buddhist 'gods' were kami (Buddhas included) and that both faiths could both be worshiped together. The Japanese sometimes have a hard time telling them apart, although while many Japanese are Buddhists, almost all of them are Shinto. Generally, all ceremonies, except from burials, are Shinto.

Exorcists

"I don't give a damn about the will of God."

John Constantine

While exorcism is considered a purification ritual by Shinto priests, others have adopted those ancient methods and adapted them to combat an alarming rise in mysterious possessions. Psychics, mediums or simple con men have learned to handle the prayers and the objects of worship to expel demons or manipulate the darkest magic. The Ofuda, pieces of paper inscribed with protection formulas, have become spiritual weapons burning in the air to hurt a spectre. Pistol bullets are filled with salt or dipped in the blood of a dead person to penetrate deeper into a creature from Yomi.

The katashiro and the Anesama-nigyo, paper effigies, have become true voodoo dolls able to down an adversary or to repel germs. Technology is often mixed with ancient beliefs, turning the new exorcists into demon hunters, their bodies tattooed with dragons, who use rituals invoking the kami.

GAME SYSTEM

ROLLING DICE

When your character attempts to do something you will need to make an 'Action Check' to find out if it is successful. However, if this is an action of little consequence; something that the character could do in his sleep; or something he can simply make continual attempts at until he succeeds, then no roll is usually necessary.

Kuro only uses traditional six-sided dice (referred to as 'D6') to resolve actions. Players will roll dice often during play (equal to the appropriate Characteristic); and the dice results are usually just added up to see if you have beaten a target number determined by the Gamemaster.

Shi: Sometimes the gods of chance can turn against you. Rolling a '4' ('Shi,' or 'death') on any die is a special result. Rolls of 4 do not count at all towards the final total. Each time a die turns up the 'cursed number' it is considered to be zero.

Exploding Dice: Luckily, the gods of chance can sometimes be your friend. If you roll a '6,' then you immediately roll again. You can keep the original score of 6, and roll that die again, adding the new result to the total. If the second roll is also a 6, keep that and roll again. Keep on rolling until you get a result other than a 6. If you roll a 4 at any point, it counts as a zero. You should keep a running total until you stop rolling.

Example: If you rolled 3 dice (abbreviated as 3D6) and get a 2, 5, and 5, the total would be 12. If you roll 4D6, and get a 1, 1, 4, and 5, the final result is 7 as the 4 is ignored. If instead, a roll of 4D6 resulted with a 2, 4, 6, and 6, the 4 does not count, but you can roll the two sixes again. If they result in 4 and 5 respectively, the second 4 is ignored again, making a final total of (2 + 6 + 6 + 5) or 19.

Optional Rule - Botches

If you roll a majority of 4s in a single roll, the roll is considered to be a Critical Failure. Not only have you failed in your attempt, but something bad has also happened (your gun jams, you slide down the wall you were climbing, etc.). The nature of this disaster is in the hands of the Gamemaster to decide.

ACTION CHECKS

When the Gamemaster asks her players to make an 'Action Check,' the following elements are involved:

- **A Characteristic:** Specified by the GM, this corresponds to the number of D6 to be rolled in the check.
- **A Skill:** Either a Specialisation or Skill Area, this is again specified by the Gamemaster (although the player is free to make suggestions). The skill level is added as a bonus to the total of the dice roll.
- **A Target Number (TN):** Determined by the Gamemaster, this is the minimum score required on the dice roll (after any bonuses from skills or Gimmiku are added) to succeed in the Action Check.

So an Action Check works as follows:

**Characteristic (as number of D6)
+ Skill/Specialisation level must equal or exceed the
Target Number or opposed Action Check**

Characteristic Checks

Sometimes, no skill will apply to a situation. In this case the Gamemaster can ask the player to make a 'Characteristic Check.' In this case, the player rolls a number of D6 equal to the Characteristic score as normal, and then adds a bonus equal to twice the characteristic score itself. It is important to note that Characteristic Checks are for times when no skill applies and not for when the character simply does not have the required skill (see unskilled checks below).

Example: Mariko finds herself in the presence of a virus. The Gamemaster asks her player to make a Vigour check against the pathogen's potency. Mariko has a Vigour score of 3, and so rolls 3D6 and adds a bonus of +6.

Simple Checks

This is the basic, standard Action Check that characters will most often make in the game. The Gamemaster decides on a target number based on the circumstances of the action. The player attempts the roll using dice based on the appropriate characteristic, adding to it the value of the skill involved (or 0 if the character does not have the right skill).

Example: Yamamoto is trying to climb up the front of an apartment building. The Gamemaster declares that this action has a target number of 12, using Reflexes and Climbing. Yamamoto takes an amount of dice equal to his Reflexes Characteristic and adds his Climbing Specialisation or Athletics Skill area rating to the result.

Target Numbers

The following table lists Target Numbers and their associated Action Check difficulties. Most actions will fall between a Target Number of 12 to 20. If failing the action carries no consequences and there is time to make as many attempts as it takes to succeed, no roll will be necessary.

| <i>Difficulty</i> | <i>TN</i> |
|-------------------|-----------|
| Very Easy | 4 |
| Easy | 8 |
| Average | 12 |
| Above Average | 16 |
| Difficult | 20 |
| Very Difficult | 24 |
| Improbable | 28 |
| Impossible | 32 |

Opposed Checks

If the target number of an action check depends on the actions and skills of other characters rather than the environment, we call this an 'Opposed Check.' Each character involved in the action makes an Action Check as specified by the Gamemaster, including the Characteristic, Skill Area or Specialisation, modifiers, etc. The results are all compared, and the highest total wins.

For example: Yamamoto reaches the summit of the glass-covered skyscraper and enters an unlocked office. However, a security guard is making his rounds just at that moment. Yamamoto hides as best as he can behind a heavy curtain. The Gamemaster asks Yamamoto's player a Reflexes + Sneaking (Deception) check and makes a Perception + Awareness (Investigation) check for the security guard. Yamamoto gets a final result of 12; the GM gets just a 7 for the security guard. The guard continues on his rounds without noticing anything, for now.

Margins of Success and Failure (MS / MF)

Sometimes it is necessary to know how well an Action Check succeeded or failed. The Margin of Success, or Failure (MS/MF), is the difference between the Action Check result and the Target Number (or Opposed Check). If the margin is positive, it is called a Margin of Success; if it is negative, then it is called a Margin of Failure. The margin (positive or negative) indicates the magnitude of the result. The greater the margin, the more the action check is a brilliant success or miserable failure.

MS or MF = Action Check Result – Target Number (or Opposed Check result)

Unskilled Checks

Generally, if a character does not have a skill for what he is attempting, then he is unable to make an attempt. However, if the Gamemaster believes it is a simple enough task to attempt without training, she can allow an Action Check (not a Characteristic Check) where the skill is considered to be zero. So the character does not get to add his Characteristic as a bonus in lieu of skill. However, if the skill that should be used requires a prerequisite, then the action cannot be attempted unskilled as it defiantly requires training. Actions like brain surgery are not something you can just 'have a go' at and expect to be successful.



CHARACTERS

CHARACTER CREATION

The following chapter will allow you to give birth, so to speak, to your own heroes. You can use or adapt the archetypes following this chapter as inspiration or design your own character according to a totally original concept. All of the players should work with the Gamemaster in creating their characters, as it is up to her to integrate the characters, the adventure and the setting together.

Character creation follows several steps, which are detailed below. Each of these various attributes are described later on. So if you want a clearer definition of the various skills and characteristics, and how they are used, just keep reading!

Creating a character

- 1- Concept:** Consider who and what your character will be.
- 2- Characteristics:** Spend 16 points on the 8 Characteristics. The minimum level is 1 and the maximum is 3.
- 3- Secondary characteristics:** Based on what you have assigned to your characteristics you can calculate your secondary characteristics.
- 4- Choose age:** This also determines the points you will have for skill areas and specialisations.
- 5- Skill areas:** Assign points across the 32 skill areas. Not every skill area must have a rating, but the maximum level you can assign to any one skill is 6.

6- Specialisations: Assign specialisation points. You may only assign points to specialisations listed under skills you already have a level in. Specialisations begin at the same level their governing skill is rated at, and can be increased to a maximum of 11.

7- Social rank (Kaiso): Choose the social rank your character belongs to. You may pick one from 0-5, but you cannot choose to be part of the Genocracy (6).

8- Equipment: Select any biotech, nanaotech and general equipment your character might have, subject to the Gamemaster's approval.

9- Finishing touches: Make sure that your character has a name and the various points you have assigned have created the character you imagined.

Concept

Try to imagine your character as a whole. Who are they? Is it a man or a woman? How old are they? What do they do for a living? What do they look like? What is their name? What do they do when they are not adventuring? What will or has made them investigate the *Kuro* setting? What is their history?

Creation Point Distribution

Each player has a number of Creation Points he can allocate to the various elements that define his character. He divides them as desired between all of the character's abilities to match, in game mechanics, the concept that he imagined.

Creation points

| Age Group | Under 20 Years old | 21 to 35 Years old | 35 to 50 Years old | Over 50 Years old |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Skill Area Points | 20 | 25 | 30 | 35 |
| Specialisation Points | 15 | 20 | 25 | 30 |

Social rank

| Social Rank | Typical career | Income |
|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 0 | Homeless, paperless foreigner | Less than 50,000 yen per month |
| 1 | Job seeker, temp worker, student | 100,000 yen per month |
| 2 | Labourer, clerk, sushi-ya cook, PI, Exorcist | 200,000 yen per month |
| 3 | Robotics salesman, lab assistant, Overclocker, dealer, cop, soldier | 400,000 per month |
| 4 | Executive, Salary-man, Idol, Yakuza gang boss, computer technician, genetics scientist | 700,000 yen per month |
| 5 | CEO, politician, businessman, renowned inventor | More than 900,000 yen per month |

Characteristics

A player gets 16 Creation Points for Characteristics. There are eight basic Characteristics and each must be allocated a minimum score of 1. The maximum value a characteristic can be assigned during character creation is 3. Creation points buy characteristic points on a 1 for 1 basis (for example, to buy a Dexterity of 2 costs 2 Creation Points).

Calculating Secondary Characteristics

There are several other attributes that your character has that are defined by your primary characteristics. You do not assign any points to these attributes; instead you calculate them from the ratings assigned to your characteristics. The secondary characteristics are Hits (HIT), Serious Wound Threshold (SWT), Death Threshold (DT), Defence (DEF), Reaction Speed (REA), the number of Actions (ACT) and Movement score (MOV).

The calculations are:

$$\text{HIT} = ((\text{Stamina} \times 2) + \text{Willpower}) \times 5$$

$$\text{SWT} = \text{HIT} / 3 \text{ (rounding up)}$$

$$\text{DT} = -(\text{SWT})$$

$$\text{DEF} = (\text{Dexterity} + \text{Reflexes} + \text{Perception}) \times 2$$

$$\text{REA} = (\text{Reflexes} + \text{Willpower} + \text{Intelligence}) / 2 \text{ (rounding up)}$$

$$\text{ACT} = \text{REF} / 2 \text{ (rounding up)}$$

$$\text{MOV} = \text{DEX metres per move action}$$

Age

The number of points each character gets to spend on skill areas and specialisations depends on the character's age. The longer that he has lived, the more professional knowledge that has he acquired and the more life experience he has. The table below shows the number of points granted for each age range.

Player characters are assumed to be in their mid twenties, so usually fit into the 21-35 age group. If you want your character to be older or younger than this, you must get your Gamemaster's permission (as your character will get more or less skill points than the others). However, within each age group you are free to pick any age that you like.

Skill Areas and Specialisations

Skill Areas represent broad areas of knowledge on a particular subject including the specialisations listed under it. There are 32 different Skill Areas, divided into 5 categories (Combat, Academic, General, Technical and Engineering) for ease of use. A player can divide his points between the 5 categories as he wishes. He need not assign points to all of them, but no score in any area can exceed a level of 6. Each Skill Area Creation Point increases the Skill Area's rating by 1. Any Skill Area not assigned points remains at level 0, and is a Skill Area that the character has no experience with.

Some Skill Areas have prerequisites, as they build on knowledge gained from a separate discipline. The prerequisite Skill Area required is listed with the skill descriptions, and is different for most of the skills. If you want to put points into a skill area with a prerequisite, you must have the prerequisite skill listed at a level of at least 3.

Specialisations are more advanced and detailed areas of knowledge within a Skill Area. They represent aspects of the Skill Area that the character is particularly well versed or experienced with. Again, age determines how many points you can assign to specialisations. However, you can only assign these points to Skill Areas that you have a rating in. Specialisations are considered to start at the same rating as the Skill Area they apply to, but can be improved up to level 11 during character creation. Specialisation Points are spent on a 1 for 1 basis as usual.

Example: Miko is age 27, so she has 25 points to spend on Skill Areas and a further 20 points to spend on specialisations. Her player spends 4 of her 25 Skill Area points to gain a rating of 4 in the Deception Skill Area. Miko is going to be an expert gambler, so when it comes time to spend specialisation points her player puts 6 of her 20 specialisation points into Gambling. As Gambling is under the Deception Skill Area Miko's Gambling specialisation is now rated at 10.

Social Rank (Kaiso)

The notion of social rank (or Kaiso) is very important in **Kuro** as it tells us so much about a character. It determines the kind of job, standard of living, and wealth that a character can have, and also determines the level of housing that a character can aspire to. Ranks go from 0 (homeless) to 6 (Genocrat), and at this stage of character creation you can freely determine your character's Kaiso so that you understand the kind of life your character leads and their social status. However, Rank 6 cannot be chosen, being reserved for the mysterious Genocracy.

To guide you, the table below shows the jobs usually associated with the different ranks. Rank also determines the places a character will have access to (private ground floor, fashionable shops, posh restaurants) but also his average income (see table). While a high Kaiso leads to a more comfortable life, it will stand against you when investigating the darker areas of the city. So a good mixture of social classes in the player character group will be helpful.

Equipment, Biotech and Nanotech

Many modern technologies are biological rather than technological in 2046. With the exception of the military and other elite groups, as a 'natural,' your character will have little chance of having the numerous implants or latest discoveries in their possession. If at all available, such technology comes at a price, sometimes one so high that the cost of purchasing a biotech implant will result in a loss of social rank.

Be that as it may, many players will be wondering what they need to do in order to get hold of this cool tech. Technology that serves no game effect other than making a character seem cooler or adds to their background should generally be allowed by the Gamemaster. This could be nanobots that regulates a blood disease, a Brain Chip that enhances a damaged optic nerve, a biomechanical arm transplanted after a car accident, an endoskeleton allowing a character to use his legs again, a new heart, etc.

However, if the player wants something advanced enough that will grant his character some new abilities (like an arm that has enhanced strength or a new eye with telescopic vision), then he needs to come to some other arrangement. Depending on the complexity and importance of the enhancement, the Gamemaster can ask the player to reduce his character's Kaiso by one, or even two levels. While he keeps the same job, his income has dropped because of the payments he still needs to make on the loan that he took out for the tech. If the character does not want to drop in social level, he might have used one of the illegal labs or surgeons to replace his eyes or defective organs. In which case the financial debt is paid, but now he owes some dangerous people a favour, or two...

In chapter 10 'Shinagaki' you will find a more extensive catalogue of technology and equipment. You might allow players to begin the game with their monthly salary (or even twice that) in hand to 'buy' what they like from the listings there. Some expensive items might be available from the character's employer, or even be standard issue depending upon a character's occupation. So while they might have to replace what they lose,

they might begin the game with some items that they could not otherwise afford.

In general you should be able to pick whatever equipment your character is likely to have to do their job. A thief will have lockpicks, a police officer will have a weapon, a scientist will have access to a lab and a student will have a Pod loaded with music and interactive textbooks. For everything you choose, try and make it personal. If you own a Pod, what music is on it? If you own a puppetbot how did you get it and why?

You need not list everything that your character owns. Saying you have a wardrobe of stylish clothes is fine, you do not need to list every tie that you own. Owning a weapon you have a skill in is acceptable, but owning an armoury is not. Final equipment picks must always be cleared with the Gamemaster, but a little common sense should make this a simple process.

Last details

Once you have chosen your equipment, breath a little life into your character. If you have any contacts you should note who they are and where you might find them. Jot down a few points about your character's past history too, their life story and motivations. Consider as well what they were doing on May 5th when the Kuro Incident happened. What did they see, how did it affect them?

Now you are ready to join the world of *Kuro*.

CHARACTERISTICS

Characteristics represent the innate potential of a character. They measure his or her fundamental physical and mental attributes. The value of a characteristic corresponds to the number of six-side dice (D6s) rolled during an appropriate skill check. Any characteristic might be matched with a skill, allowing a broad range of ways in which your character can perform an action.

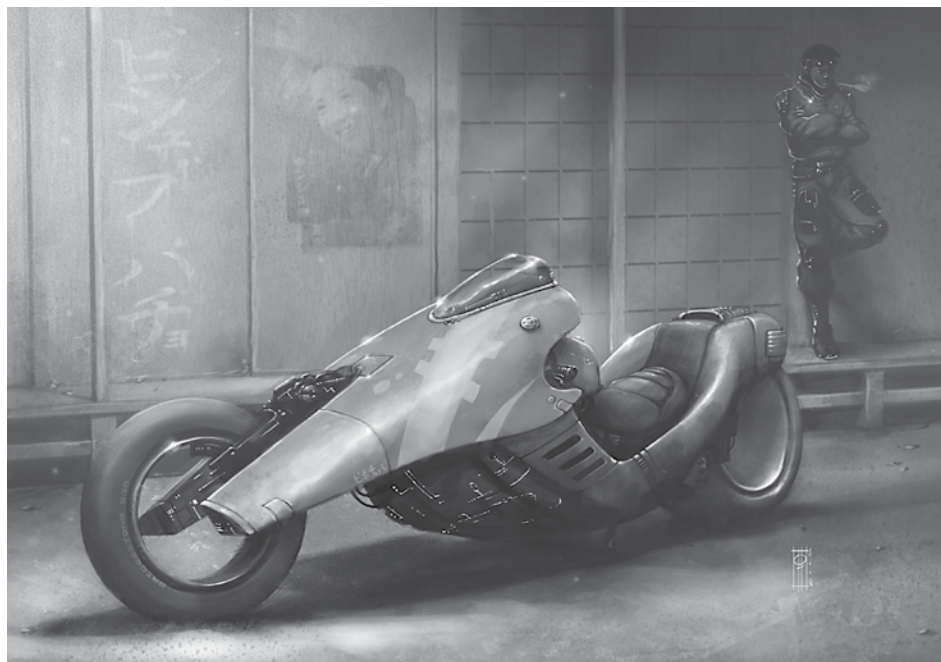
Example: Dexterity + Firearms: to fire on a target.

Perception + Firearms: to identify the weapon used when hearing a shot.

Charisma + Firearms: to intimidate an opponent.

Characteristics have a value ranging from 1 to 6 (although beginning characters have ratings of 1-3). These scores roughly correspond to the following levels:

- 1 Weak
- 2 Average
- 3 Strong
- 4 Very Strong
- 5 Superhuman
- 6 Inhuman



Characteristics are divided into two major categories: Physical (bodily aspects) and Mind (mental aspects). Each category has four Characteristics for a total of eight.

Physical Characteristics

Dexterity (DEX): This encompasses manual dexterity, the character's accuracy and also his agility and body control.

Strength (STR): This characteristic represents the character's brute strength, his muscular abilities.

Stamina (STA): This encompasses the character's constitution and physical resistance to wounds and also to fatigue, poisons and diseases.

Reflexes (REF): This corresponds to the character's reflexes and overall speed. It is also used to calculate the character's body speed.

Mind Characteristics

Intelligence (INT): This describes the character's ability to analyse, process and retain information and to make connections.

Perception (PER): This details the alertness of the character and how well they use their five senses.

Charisma (CHA): This encompasses the character's personal magnetism and communication ability.

Willpower (WIL): This represents the character's determination and mental strength, and also his ability to resist intimidation and torture.

Secondary Characteristics

These attributes derive directly from the Characteristics shown above. The Secondary Characteristics quantify in mechanical terms several important aspects of the character: how much damage they can sustain; how able to defend themselves they are; and how quickly they can move and react to a situation. There are seven Secondary Characteristics, each is summarised below.

Hit Points (HIT): This Secondary Characteristic shows how many Hit Points the character has. The more the Hit Points, the more the character is able to resist the effects of wounds.

$$\text{HIT} = ((\text{Stamina} \times 2) + \text{Willpower}) \times 5$$

Serious Wound Threshold (SW): This is equal to the third of the character's Hit Points. If the character suffers damage higher or equal to this score in one attack, he has a Serious Wound. After that, he has a -1D penalty (remove a die from all skill tests) on all actions he wishes to undertake. This effect lasts until he receives the appropriate care. Note that if a character suffers several Serious Wounds, the penalties are cumulative.

$$\text{SW} = \text{HIT}/3 \text{ (rounding up)}$$

Death Threshold (DT): This threshold corresponds to the number of Hit Points below zero that a character can soak before dying. Thus between zero and this fateful threshold, the character is in a coma, unconscious and in need of immediate care so as not to fall closer to oblivion. The Death Threshold is equal to the Serious Wound score, but in negative. Thus a character with a SW of 9 has a Death Threshold of -9 and will only really die once he hits -10 hit points.

$$\text{DT} = -(\text{SW})$$

Defence (DEF): This Secondary Characteristic defines the character's natural defence aptitude. It corresponds to their ability to dodge, side step and feint during a confrontation. The Defence score is the Success Threshold (see later) required to hit the person targeted by an attack.

$$\text{DEF} = (\text{Dexterity} + \text{Reflexes} + \text{Perception}) \times 2$$

Reaction Speed (REA): This Secondary Characteristic is the capacity for analysing a situation, anticipating the opponents' actions and acting accordingly. It is part of the calculation for determining Initiative (who acts when) for a character.

$$\text{REA} = (\text{Reflexes} + \text{Willpower} + \text{Intelligence})/2 \text{ (rounding up)}$$

Number of Actions (ACT): This Secondary Characteristic determines the number of times a character can act in a turn. He has as many actions as his Reflexes divided by 2 (round up to the next whole number).

$$\text{ACT} = \text{REF}/2 \text{ (rounding up)}$$

Movement (MOV): This Secondary Characteristic is the character's speed. For any action spent on movement, he simply moves up to this distance in metres, which is equal to his Dexterity Characteristic.

$$\text{MOV} = \text{DEX metres per move action}$$

Combat Skills

Archaic Missile Weapons

Blowguns
Bows
Crossbows
Hand Crossbows

Hand-to-Hand

Brawling
Grappling
Improvised Weapons
Martial Arts

Heavy Weapons

Machine Guns
Rocket Launcher
Shockwave Cannon

Firearms

Ancient Guns
Assault Rifles
Handguns
Magnetic Guns
Shotguns
Sniper Rifles

Melee Weapons

Axes
Daggers
Flexible Weapons
Polearms
Shields
Staves
Swords

Throwing Weapons

Bolas
Grenades
Hatchets
Javelins
Shuriken
Throwing Knives

Academic Skills

Humanities

Archaeology
Arts
Foreign Languages

Geography
History
Linguistics
Literature
Philosophy
Psychology

Natural Sciences

Biology
Biotechnology
Genetic Engineering
Geology
Meteorology
Oceanography
Zoology

Physical Sciences

Astronomy
Chemistry
Mathematics
Physics
Thermodynamics

Social Sciences

Accounting
Anthropology
Bureaucracy
Economics
Law
Politics
Sociology

General Skills

Athletics

Acrobatics
Climbing
Dodging
Jumping
Running
Sports
Swimming

Communication

Acting
Empathy
Fast Talk
Intimidation
Persuasion
Music
Seduction

Deception

Forgery
Gambling
Lockpicking
Sleight of Hand
Sneaking

Drive

Bikes
Cars
Hovercrafts
Industrial Vehicles
Lorries
MagnetoDynamique
Propulsion
Speeder Bikes
Trains

Investigation

Awareness
Data Retrieval
Interrogation
Legal Expertise
Searching
Shadowing

Pilot

Helicopters
Jets
Propeller Planes

Popular Culture

Celebrity
Corporate
Current Events
Gaming
High Society
Media
Politics
Sports

Spiritual

Buddhism
Christianity
Legends
Mythology
Occult
Occultech
Shinto
Theology

Survival

Aquatic
First Aid
Forests
Mountains
Orienteering
Urban

Watercraft

Cruisers
Hovercraft
Jet Skis
Sailboats
Speedboats
Tallships

Technical skills

Electrical (Prerequisite:

Physical Sciences)
Domestic Systems
Electrical Engineer
Electronics

Explosives (Prerequisite:

Physical Sciences)
Charge Positioning
Demolitions
Detonation Systems
Explosive Forensics
Landmines

Mechanics (Prerequisite:

Physical Sciences)
Aeronautics
Car Mechanics
Hydraulic Systems
MagnetoDynamique Engines

Medicine (Prerequisite:

Natural Sciences)
Emergency treatment
Forensics
Paediatrics
Pharmacology
Prosthetics
Psychiatry
Surgery
Veterinary Medicine

Microphotonics
(Prerequisite: Physical Sciences)

Data Hacking
Encryption
Hardware
Holography
Laser
Optic Network
Programming
Software
Squids

Engineering skills

Biomechanics (Prerequisites: Medicine, Robotics)

Exoskeletons
Prosthetics
Prosthetics Design
Repair
Skinsuits

Biotechnology (Prerequisite: Medicine)

Bioport
Biotech Installation
Biotech Medicine
Replication
Vats

Energy technology (Prerequisites: Microphotonics, Systems)

Cold Fusion
Hybrid Fuels
Kinetic Energy
Magnetic Energy
Nuclear Power
Photovoltaic Nanobatteries
Power-saving Systems
Thermal Power

Nanotechnology (Prerequisites: Microphotonics, Applied area)

Biomaterials
Molecular Imaging
Nanodomestics
Nanodrones
Nanomedicine
Nanoprocessors
Nanorobotics
Nanosensors

Robotics (Prerequisites: Electrical, Mechanics, Microphotonics)

Advanced Electronics
AI Programming
Artificials
Biodroids
Cybernetics
Industrial Robots
Overclocking
Puppetbots
Templates

Surveillance systems (Prerequisites: Electrics, Microphotonics)

Alarms
Intrusion
Retinal scans
Video surveillance

Contacts

Academic
Banking & Business
Faith
Judiciary
Law Enforcement
Maritime
Media
Military
Organised Crime
Politics
Smugglers
Street

ARCHETYPES



The following archetypes should help players to get a good idea of the kind of character they can play in *Kuro*. Each is designed to match a strong concept in the setting rather than precisely follow the character creation rules. Archetypes can also help you start a game quickly. Each is designed to be chosen as a fully created beginning character. Just pick one, copy the details into a Character Sheet and you are ready to go. Taking this approach can make your initial contact with *Kuro* a lot easier. Later on, or with more seasoned players, you can use the character creation rules as presented previously and give life to heroes born of your own imagination.

FIXER

History

The modern world with its crazy pace, spider web of choice and decisions and impersonal cities has made life hard and it's only going to get harder. Many people are ready to make any sacrifice to obtain a few minutes of the happiness that eludes them, even if ultimately it is no more than an artificial paradise. You are the one that can get them that short lived satisfaction. You can also supply everything the black market has to offer: weapons, biotech items, hacked Pods and even Squids.

You can gauge at a glance the needs of your customers, and how to make them dependent on you. You are a shark, adapted to swim in troubled waters, a peddler of dreams connecting dangerous men to desperate people. You know how to get a hold of all those illegal (or at least nowadays very rare) delicacies. The job may have become harder since the blockade, but profits have also increased.

On the fringes of the system, you're someone that many depend upon, and there are plenty who would love to take your place. Some despise you for your love of money and luxury, or for being a show-off. But none of them understands your role in this new world. You are the glue, the last symbol of free enterprise in a society that is threatening to collapse overnight. Who is better placed than you to notice how everything is falling apart? This ancient world to which its inhabitants still cling, threatens to disintegrate, and you don't want to give up your piece of the pie of what will be born from the ruins.

| | | |
|----------|-------|--------|
| Age: 26 | DEX 2 | INT 3 |
| Kaiso: 3 | STR 1 | PER 2 |
| | STA 2 | CHA 3 |
| | REF 1 | WIL 2 |
| HIT 30 | SW 10 | DT -10 |
| DEF 10 | ACT 1 | MOV 2 |
| | | REA 3 |

Skills

Combat Skills

Firearms 3
Handguns 4

Academic Skills

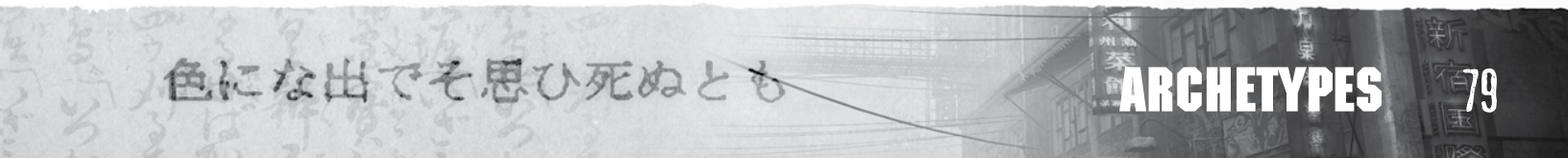
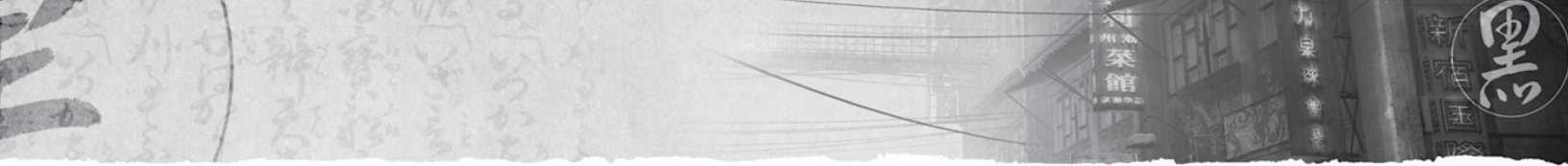
Physical Sciences 3

General Skills

Deception 3
Forgery 4
Sneaking 4
Communication 4
Fast Talk 4 (Boost)
Persuade 7 (Mastery)
Empathy 4
Drive 2
Cars 4
Popular Culture 2
High Society 4
Politics 4
Survival 4
Urban 4 (Expertise)

Contacts 4

Politics 5 (Expertise)
Smugglers 5 (Expertise)
Street 6 (Accuracy)



色にな出でそ思ひ死ぬとも

ARCHETYPES

STUDENT

History

Your teachers used to say you were rather a good student. They were even expecting you to enrol in one of the great universities or get a prestigious job with one of the zaibatsu. And then there was that terrible and baneful day. You were looking out of your class window. The sky suddenly changed colour and you quickly understood the world had changed forever.

For four days in a row you stayed in front of your TV and your computer screen, connected to the rest of the world. You watched it rush towards disaster, and only just seem to stop at the brink of the abyss.

The world has changed since that day; nobody can deny it. However, your parents, your friends and all the strangers on the street pretend to live just as before. So you do the same. You get up in the morning and go to class, but your body is heavy and your mind detached. You play your part perfectly, but what for? You have learned so many things that now seem to make no sense at all. You feel as if you are passing through the world without touching it, like it has no place for you. Perhaps, one day, an unlikely encounter, a small spark, a tiny detail will rekindle your interest for the things around you.

Age: 19 DEX 2 INT 3
Kaiso: 1 STR 1 PER 2
 STA 1 CHA 2
 REF 2 WIL 3

HIT 25 SW 9 DT -9
DEF 12 ACT 1 MOV 2 REA 4

Skills

Academic Skills

Humanities 2
Natural Sciences 4
 Biology 5 (Accuracy)

General Skills

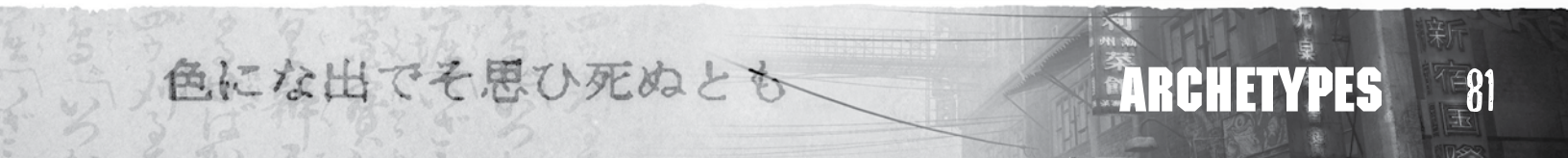
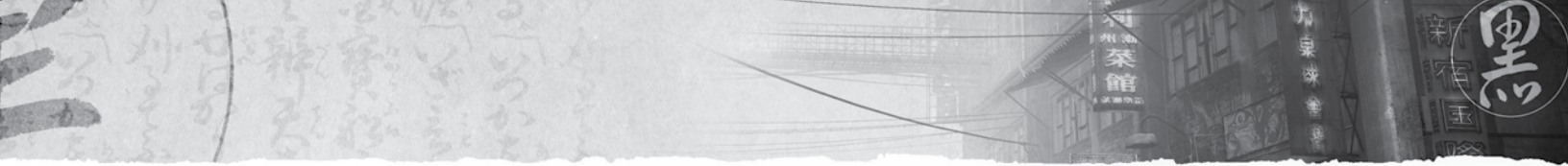
Communication 3
 Empathy 4
Driving 2
 Bikes 4
Popular Culture 3
 Celebrity 2
 Politics 2
 Media 5 (Boost)
Spiritual 2
 Mythology 3

Technical Skills

Medicine 2
 Surgery 5 (Expertise)

Contacts 2

Academic 5 (Mastery)
Street 3



色にな出でそ思ひ死ぬとも

ARCHETYPES

COP

History

The day the bombs flew towards Japan, everybody expected to see death and chaos fall over your beloved country, but then, nothing happened. No cataclysm brought down Japanese society. You can't say this event hasn't brought many changes, but they were subtle. No catastrophe, no apocalypse, more like a slow descent into Hell.

Your world has become tougher, more violent. The law followed suit. Your job now demands much greater skill in a wider number of areas. It's a consequence of technological evolution, and the evolution of criminality. The blockade hasn't stopped anything, new crimes and new criminals are appearing faster than you can contain them. You watch as society is cut with deeper and deeper divisions. The haves watch you from the top of their towering glass towers, the have-nots get deeper into the mud and the misery. And the criminals you swore to track down can be found hiding in any of these worlds.

Of course the tools at your disposal have also evolved. Better equipment, extended powers, stricter laws. But crime evolves faster still. And for the first time since you swore an oath to protect your fellow citizens you are starting to be afraid.

Afraid of no longer being equal to the task. Afraid of not being tough enough. Every day you are aware of new horrors that make you doubt the normality of this world. You often feel disarmed. You often get up in the morning and the mirror gives you the terrible image of an exhausted and feverish spectre. But you will not quit. You have taken an oath.

| | | |
|----------|-------|--------|
| Age: 28 | DEX 2 | INT 2 |
| Kaiso: 3 | STR 2 | PER 2 |
| | STA 2 | CHA 1 |
| | REF 3 | WIL 2 |
| HIT 30 | SW 10 | DT -10 |
| DEF 14 | ACT 2 | MOV 2 |
| | REA 4 | |

Skills

Combat Skills

- Firearms 3
 - Handguns 6 (Expertise)
 - Magnetic Guns 4
- Hand-to-Hand 3
 - Martial Arts (Ju Jitsu) 4
- Melee Weapons 3
 - Staves (nightstick) 4
 - Shields 4

Academic Skills

- Humanities 1
 - Psychology 2
- Social Sciences 2
 - Law 4

General Skills

- Athletics 2
 - Dodge 3
 - Running 3
- Communication 2
 - Empathy 3
 - Persuasion 3
- Drive 3
 - Cars 4
- Investigation 3
 - Awareness 5 (Accuracy)
 - Searching 4
- Survival 1
 - First Aid 2

Contacts 2

- Law Enforcement 3



色にな出でそ思ひ死ぬとも

MEDIA IDOL

History

The public is afraid. Afraid of tomorrow, of losing their jobs, of this increasingly artificial world evolving at full speed, tossing all too many people aside. So they need dreams. That's where you come in. You're talented, of course, but most of all you have charisma and that little extra spark that makes a difference. Your first album sold more than three million units. The publisher skilfully managed the advertising, but you know all the work you put in to achieve that result.

You know the new media well and you know how to use it masterfully. You analyse you looks in the smallest detail, your body language too, even your choice of words; nothing is ever left to chance.

As a child you dreamt of your favourite stars, and now you're one of them. The media fall over themselves to get an interview or videos of your latest escapades. Thousands of fans scream with joy, or faint, just to see you at each of your concerts. In the grey daily grind your countrymen work under, you are a light, a star shining on their apathetic spirits. And they haven't seen anything yet!

| | | |
|----------|-------|-------|
| Age: 23 | DEX 3 | INT 2 |
| Kaiso: 4 | STR 2 | PER 1 |
| | STA 2 | CHA 3 |
| | REF 2 | WIL 1 |
| HIT 25 | SW 9 | DT -9 |
| DEF 12 | ACT 1 | MOV 3 |
| | REA 3 | |

Skills

Academic Skills

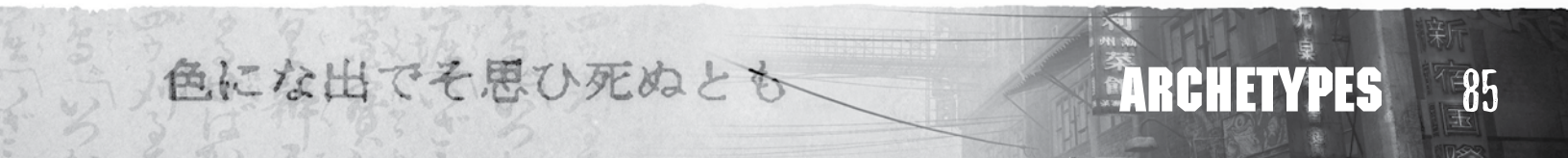
- Humanities 2
- Foreign Languages 3
- Psychology 4

General Skills

- Athletics 3
 - Jumping 4
 - Sports (Gym) 4
- Deception 3
 - Gambling 4
- Communication 5
 - Acting 6 (Expertise)
 - Empathy 6 (Accuracy)
 - Fast Talk 6 (Boost)
 - Music 7 (Mastery)
 - Seduction 6 (Expertise)
- Driving 3
 - Cars 4
- Popular Culture 3
 - Celebrity 5 (Boost)
 - High society 2
 - Media 5 (Boost)
- Spiritual 3
 - Legends 4

Contacts 3

- Organised Crime 4



色にな出でそ思ひ死ぬとも

ARCHETYPES

PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR

History

In May 4th, 2046, the whole population of Japan was watching the skies, everyone, but you. You were too busy sleeping off the previous night's binge. You'd solved a juicy case which finally brought you some real money, the first in a long time.

As a teenager you were a fan of American Film Noir movies from the 1950s, the hard bitten characters were your heroes. You wanted to follow in their stead and went to police school, but the discipline wasn't for you. On the other hand you were very proud the day that you hung a sign beside the glassed door to your office. Okay, it was tiny and in a seedy neighbourhood. But you were like your heroes at last, a private investigator.

Sadly, you were quickly disenchanted. Bills piled up, the phone was silent for too long between jobs. Shadowing wayward wives or indiscreet employees quickly bored you. Bitterness turned you to the vices of your heroes, but you prefer sake and beer to whisky.

And then you accepted a job for an insurance company. It was well paid. You played your part superbly. The widow you investigated was exposed in court thanks to the clues you dug up. The company avoided paying a ridiculous amount of money. You got 10% of it, enough to drown your self-loathing in a monumental binge. And then there was May 4th .

That day everything changed for you. It was incredible how many people lost loved ones in the few weeks following that date. Jobs piled up in your office. You even had to hire a secretary. Finally, you were living the life you dreamed of. Well, almost.

All too often, your enquiries go nowhere. Or lead to clues too weird to reach any conclusion whatsoever. That is unless, as you are now beginning to wonder, all this has a hidden meaning. It would mean a conspiracy too vast to fathom. There is no way you are taking that on, not without a drink first anyway.

Age: 32 DEX 2 INT 2
Kaiso: 2 STR 2 PER 3
 STA 2 CHA 1
 REF 2 WIL 2

HIT 30 SW 10 DT -10
DEF 14 ACT 1 MOV 2 REA 3

Skills

Combat Skills

Firearms 4
Handguns 6 (Boost)
Hand-to-Hand 3
Brawling 4

Academic Skills

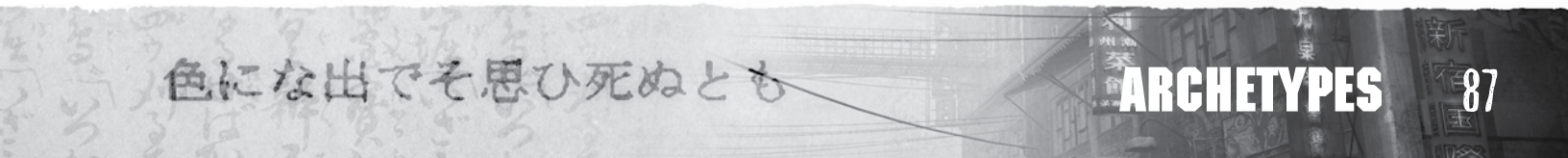
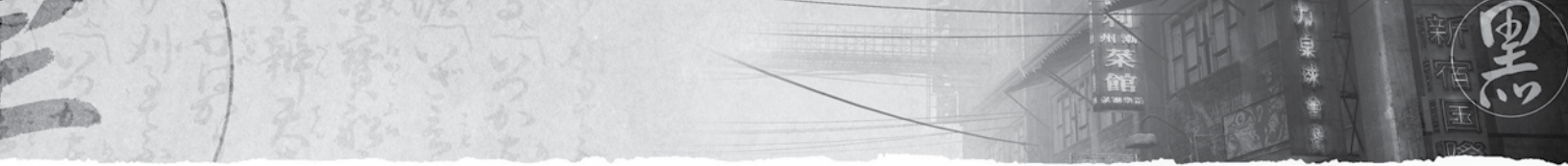
Social Sciences 2
Law 3

General Skills

Athletics 2
Dodge 4
Communication 3
Empathy 4
Fast Talk 4
Intimidation 4
Deception 3
Lockpicking 5 (Boost)
Sneaking 6 (Mastery)
Driving 2
Cars 4
Popular Culture 1
Investigation 2
Searching 3
Shadowing 4
Survival 1
Urban 2

Contacts 2

Law Enforcement 3



色にな出でそ思ひ死ぬとも

ARCHETYPES

87

OCCULTIST

History

Your mother had the gift, your grandmother too, and many others before her, according to what is said about your family. Your twin sister also had those strange visions. But she died too young, too soon. You have a hard time remembering the exact circumstances, or you don't want to. But little after that, you started to have strange dreams; you heard her voice; and you begun to see the world in a different way.

Your mother was a stubborn woman and she didn't want the family heritage to disappear. The family elders tried to dissuade her, but she wouldn't listen. She began your apprenticeship, and you have listened, learned, understood and finally seen.

Nowadays plenty of people make fun of you. They only swear by science, technology and progress. However, those same people often hang occult protection over their doors. The old traditions have not disappeared; the old beliefs live deep within every Japanese heart. They are part of them, because they are part of Japan. Behind its glass and concrete façades, the modern world still has an ancestral heritage deep inside. The upsurge in religious belief and the renewed passion for Shinto after that fateful day should be proof enough.

In any case, this other world fascinates you and opens its secrets for you. You know that science does not explain everything. The minds of men need to understand that not all answers come from labs, some are found in old tomes, dreams and visions.

Your mother told you that you had the gift. Your sister had passed it on to you at the moment of her death. As a child you had seen it, once, but never again. At least, not until that day, May 4th, 2046, even if it was only a shape, an aura, an impression.

The world changed that day. You are certain of that, but you still need to understand how, and to that vision see again. You need to be ready, because all of the science and technology in the world will not protect Japan from the menace that you feel rumbling at your feet.

Age: 29 DEX 1 INT 2
Kaiso: 2 STR 1 PER 2
 STA 2 CHA 3
 REF 2 WIL 3

HIT 35 SW 12 DT -12
DEF 10 ACT 1 MOV 1 REA 4

Skills

Academic Skills

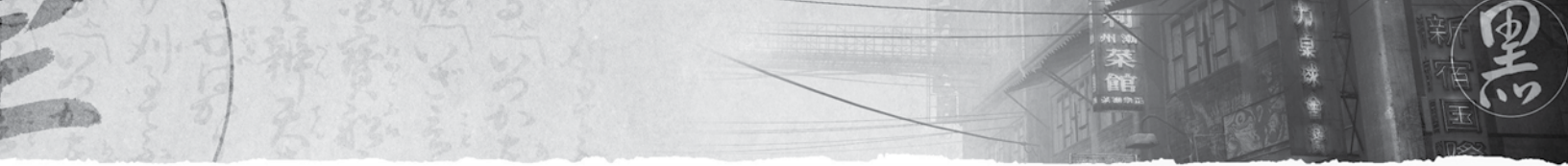
Humanities 5
Psychology 7 (Mastery)

General Skills

Communication 4
Acting 6 (Expertise)
Empathy 6 (Expertise)
Fast Talk 5 (Expertise)
Intimidation 5 (Boost)
Persuasion 6 (Boost)
Deception 4
Sleight of Hand 7 (Expertise)
Driving 3
Lorries 4
Popular Culture
High Society 3
Spiritual 5
Legends 6 (Accuracy)
Mythology 6 (Accuracy)
Occult 6 (Boost)
Occultech 6 (Mastery)

Contacts 2

Celebrity 3



色にな出でそ思ひ死ぬとも

ARCHETYPES

89

OVERCLOCKER

History

You are a genius. You always have been. The other kids may have made fun of you in school because of your glasses or because your mind just worked differently to theirs, but they also envied you. You were brilliantly successful in your studies and joined the prestigious ranks of a renowned university laboratory. With state-of-the-art technology, always inventing new designs and new solutions, you had found your place.

Unfortunately the authorities found your work 'dangerous to State security.' Men in black came one day and took all your notes, and there was nothing you could do. They even took your new prototype, an artificial android you were so proud of that would have revolutionised the industry. It was also a betrayal; it had been your very peers that delivered the coup de grâce. The professor who had welcomed you with open arms into his lab, the one you admired so much, took all the credit for your creation. When you tried to assert your rights, you were reminded of your 'trouble with government security,' and how it could be made more permanent if you didn't let it go.

Disgusted, you left the once reassuring routine of the university, but you never abandoned your projects. Your 'old friends' ensured that you were blackballed in the industry and no zaibatsu would hire your services. But that world no longer mattered to you. Instead, you escaped the inquisitive eyes of those who robbed you by finding a place in the poor quarters of Shin-Edo. You offered your talents as a genius repairman and handyman to ensure your reputation and your livelihood.

If only they knew. No template, no AI can hold any secrets from you. Your concepts are five years in advance of current research. If no one wants to let you do it, no problem. You'll tinker in your own corner, advancing your work away from their oppressive gaze. Of course all of this is extremely illegal; the law forbids altering robotic programmes. So what? Sooner or later, whether they like it or not, they will be forced to recognise your genius. Everybody. Especially those who wanted you to tow the line all those years ago.

Age: 37 DEX 3 INT 3
Kaiso: 2 STR 1 PER 2
 STA 1 CHA 2
 REF 2 WIL 2

HIT 20 SW 7 DT -7
DEF 14 ACT 1 MOV 3 REA 4

Skills

Academic Skills

Physical Sciences 4

General Skills

Driving 2
Lorries 4
Popular Culture 3
Sports 4
Survival
Urban 4

Technical Skills

Electrical 3
Electronics 5 (Accuracy)
Microphotonics 5
Hardware 7 (Expertise)
Mechanics 4
Car Mechanics 7 (Mastery)
MagnetoDynamique Engines 5 (Mastery)

Engineering Skills

Robotics 3
Overclocking 7 (Boost)
Templates 6 (Expertise)
Surveillance Systems 2

Contacts 5

Smugglers 5 (Expertise)
Street 4



色にな出でそ思ひ死ぬとも

SKILLS

Skill areas and Specialisations

All the potential applied knowledge of your character is grouped into a series of Skill Areas. These areas group various abilities under a common theme. For example, the 'Firearms' Skill Area encompasses the use of all of this kind of weapon. So Skill Areas represent a broad knowledge of a field of expertise. When a Skill Area applies to an action it adds its value as a bonus to the die roll.

Specialisations

From their choices at character creation, or later experience, a character can acquire one or two Specialisations within his Skill areas. A Specialisation represents a more detailed knowledge and experience with a specific aspect within the general Skill Area. A Specialisation has a base value equal to the value of Skill Area to which it belongs, above which it can be improved independent of its governing skill area. Once it rises above its Skill Area's value it evolves and improves independently of the Skill Area, unless the value of the Skill Area catches up with it (see page 113 - Evolution).

Example: Hiroshi has a level of 4 in the Firearms Skill Area. He decides to specialise in 'Handguns' at character creation and spends 1 point to raise its score to 5. Gaining experience during his adventures, he decides to improve that value. The level of his Handguns Specialisation rises to 6, but the value of his Firearms Skill Area remains at 4.

Gimikku

A 'Gimikku' is a special ability, training, stunt or extraordinary aptitude acquired by a character when the value of a Specialisation is high enough. When the score of a Specialisation reaches 5, the player is immediately able to choose a Gimikku to associate with it. Further Gimikku can be added at higher levels of Specialisation according to the table below.

Gimikku are always associated with a Specialisation and never with a Skill Area. When you are allowed to assign a Gimikku to a Specialisation you can choose from any of the five available (Expertise, Accuracy, Focus, Mastery and Boost). It is fine to choose the same Gimikku as one you have already attached to a Specialisation. In this case, its effects are cumulative. By the same token, different Gimikku can be used on the same dice roll (as long as they apply) if the player wishes. Using a Gimikku is never mandatory; and occasionally a player can opt not to use any of them.

Gimikku Acquisition

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|----|----|----|----|
| Specialisation Level | 5 | 11 | 17 | 23 | 29 |
| Number of Gimikku | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Gimikku Options

Expertise: The player can reroll the lowest die in the dice pool, but he must keep the second result even if it is worse than the previous result. When using this roll, if the result of the reroll is a 4, the result adds to the total without taking into account the '4/shi Rule'. Should the rerolled die roll a 6, however, the exploding dice rule still applies.

Accuracy: If the check is successful, 4 points are added to the Success Margin.

Focus: The character benefits from an extra +2 bonus in the dice roll.

Mastery: A result of 5 in a die can be rerolled just like a 6. The effect only allows for one 5 to be rerolled, but the exploding D6 rule applies as usual.

Boost: The character rolls an extra die. It is added to the other D6 from the characteristic used in the check. This D6 follows the same rules of D6 rolling, that the exploding dice and '4/shi' rules applies.

Skill Areas and Specialisation Descriptions

Skills in *Kuro* are divided into Specialisations, the Skill Areas they are covered by and the wider categories that group these areas together. While we offer a comprehensive list, it does not cover the sum total of human knowledge! If you want an ability or skill not listed here you can ask the Gamemaster to include it in the lists. This is doubly the case for Specialisations, and the Gamemaster is free to create new ones to adapt the range of Specialisations available to the needs of the group.

Combat Skills

This category includes all of the skills required to use the different kinds of weapons, from the most sophisticated guns to traditional katanas and other machines of mass destruction. Knowledge of these skills includes, not only the necessary skill to use them in practice, but also their maintenance and the laws regulating their use.

Archaic Missile Weapons

This Skill Area encompasses archaic missile projection weapons. Their use is infrequent in 2046, but some dedicated hobbyists practise their use as a hobby. Most Japanese will be able to recognise these weapons from having watched chambara stories or participated in augmented reality games. It includes weapons that use the physical might of the user and instruments that use a mechanical shooting system.

Specialisations:

Blowgun: The use of tubes to launch missiles, like little arrows or darts (poisoned or not), powered by the user's breath.

Bows: The use of traditional bows of all shapes and sizes (recurve, compound, longbow, Mongol).

Crossbows: The use of two-handed crossbows and their derivations, such as grappling hook throwers and harpoon launchers.

Hand Crossbows: The use of small size crossbows, usable either with one hand or attached to the wrist.

Hand-to-Hand

This Skill Area corresponds to the overall ability to fight without weapons, or almost. All hand-to-hand techniques are included in this area. Using brass knuckles or metal gloves is covered by the unarmed skills, Brawling and Martial arts.

Specialisations:

Brawling: Boxing, Savate, wrestling or simple rough and tumble.

Grappling: Skill in applying locks, holds and chokes to a target

Improvised Weapons: The use of pool cues, broken bottles or whatever else comes to hand to protect yourself.

Martial Arts: A specific martial arts discipline (or a mixture of several) when fighting hand-to-hand. Examples include aikido, karate, kung-fu, judo etc.

Heavy Weapons

This Skill Area groups high-powered weapons that, for the most part, need some kind of support to be used, like tripods, or mounts in vehicles or on exoskeletons. They are usually the most destructive weapons that a single person can wield and are usually issued to trained members of the military.

Specialisations:

Machineguns: The use of all heavy machineguns on tripods or mounted in vehicles.

Rocket Launcher: The use of bazookas, grenade launchers and all other kinds of portable missile launchers.

Shockwave Cannon: The use of magnetic projection and magnetic wave cannons.

Firearms

This Skill Area encompasses all modern firearms as well as the more recent designs based on the advances made in electromagnetic propulsion or projection. With these skills a character can use a firearm, maintain it, and even hack it to enhance its effects.

Specialisations:

Ancient guns: The use of black powder guns, such as flintlocks, muskets and other ancient muzzle loading guns.

Assault rifles: The use of all automatic rifles, assault weapons, machine pistols and submachine guns or SMGs.

Handguns: The use of firearms usable with one hand like pistols or revolvers

Magnetic Guns: The use of both types of magnetic powered guns. The first type is the shockwave pistol (Shockgun), which projects a violent vibration at the target. The second type is the magnetic projection pistol (Magnet Gun) which uses a magnetised polymer rail to project metal balls at a target.

Shotguns: The use of all shotguns, semiautomatic or not, such as hunting rifles, pump action shotguns or sawn-off shotguns.

Sniper Guns: The use of advanced guns and sniper rifles fitted with telescopic sights or laser guided systems.

Melee

The Skill Area represents the character's ability to fight using a close combat melee weapon. This group covers pretty much anything you can hold in your hands to hurt someone at close range.

Specialisations:

Axes: The use of axes not designed for throwing (ono, fire-fighter's axe).

Daggers: The use of short blades (tanto, knives and bayonets).

Flexible weapons: The use of flexible weapons (whips, chains and nunchaku).

Polearms: The use of weapons which have a blade attached at the end of a pole (naginata, tetsubo and yari).

Shields: The use of shields (metal, plexi or wooden) for attack or defence.

Staves: The use of blunt weapons and combat staves (bo, jo, tambo, truncheon etc.).

Swords: The use of long blades (katana, wakizachi, rapier, broadsword etc.).

Throwing Weapons

This Skill Area encompasses all throwing weapons whose impact power essentially rests on the user's muscular power.

Specialisations:

Bolas: The use of this weighted 3 roped (or chained) weapon to attack someone, usually to knock him out or trip him up.

Grenades: The use of all kinds of grenades (defensive, offensive, phosphorous, magnetic etc.).

Hatchets: The use of small sized axes designed for ranged attacks.

Javelins: The use of all spears, long and short, that can be thrown (Nage-yari, yari).

Shuriken: The use of the traditional Japanese small throwing weapon (spikes, stars etc.).

Throwing knives: The use of all blades and knives balanced for throwing.

Academic skills

This Skill Group aggregates most academic and cultural knowledge acquired by the character, from the humanities to physical sciences. The skills indicate knowledge of those sciences, the principles and rules that regulate them and their practical applications. Given the wide area of knowledge this encompasses, the present Specialisations are certainly not exhaustive.

Humanities

This area covers the understanding of human cultures and history. It deals with art, music, language and history.

Specialisations:

Archaeology: The study of ancient civilisations and their people.

Arts: The practical and academic knowledge of the different artistic forms and their respective histories (painting, sculpture, primitive art, music etc.).

Foreign Languages: The knowledge of one or more foreign languages, other than Japanese.

Geography: An understanding of the Earth's surface, both physically and politically.

History: Knowledge world historical events and facts.

Linguistics: The analysis and study of the structure of human languages.

Literature: Knowledge and critical awareness of literary works and movements.

Philosophy: An understanding of philosophical movements, their authors and concepts.

Psychology: Academic knowledge and the practical awareness of human behaviour.

Natural Sciences

This Skill Area groups an understanding of the living world, its workings and various ecosystems. It covers the biological basis for the planet and the life on it.

Specialisations:

Biology: The knowledge of the science behind living organisms.

Biotechnology: An understanding of the principles, ethical laws and manufacture of the various new biological technologies.

Genetic Engineering: The ability to analyse and understand human genes, and then modify and enhance them.

Geology: The knowledge of the composition, shape, structure and history of the Earth's crust and the various minerals found there.

Meteorology: The study of the Earth's weather and atmospheric phenomena.

Oceanography: An understanding of the Earth's oceans, seas, currents and marine ecosystems.

Zoology: The study of the Earth's animals, how they live, their nature, evolution and origins.

Physical Sciences

This area encompasses the knowledge and research on the physical world.

Specialisations:

Astronomy: The knowledge of the stars, the solar system, how they evolve and related theories.

Chemistry: The knowledge of the compositions and reactions of matter.

Mathematics: The knowledge of mathematical theories and studies.

Physics: The knowledge of the laws of physics including forces, flows, energies, gravity and on.

Thermodynamics: The knowledge of thermal principles and machine propulsion.

Social Sciences

This Skill Area deals mainly with anthropological studies, how human societies work and organise themselves. It also covers aspects of social philosophy such as law, justice and ethics.

Specialisations:

Accounting: The knowledge of accounting tools and principles.

Anthropology: The knowledge of how human groups, societies or tribes function and relate.

Bureaucracy: The knowledge of ideas connected to administration, its workings and rules.

Economics: The knowledge of economic theories, how markets work, cash flow, financial principles and the economic policy of a country.

Law: The knowledge of the laws, rules and principles that regulate a society.

Politics: The knowledge of the workings and organization of a State and a society.

Sociology: study of human social institutions (belief, culture, etc) and how humanity relates to them.

Gaijin

Generally we assume all **Kuro** characters can speak a functional amount of Japanese. However, it will not be the native language of any foreigners trapped on the islands. The Gamemaster might insist foreign characters must spend some of their skill points on Japanese as a foreign language. As long as they have the right level to understand what is being said the Gamemaster might not insist they roll to understand every conversation (which would get boring very quickly!).

Alternatively the Gamemaster might decide to just make language a problem for foreign characters whenever she feels like it. She might decide an NPC has a weird accent they don't understand, or a vital warning leaves them clueless at a critical time, but otherwise they can talk to most people without any problem. A kind Gamemaster might just allow foreign characters to be fluent in Japanese and their native language, but if so she might like to offer a few more skill points to the other characters to balance the advantage.

General Skills

This group encompasses most general and common knowledge. It includes trivia, sports, social interaction, driving skills, and the ability to find information he needs among others. Most of the skills in this group are things that anyone might learn, and that few people have no skill in any of them.

Athletics

This Skill Area encompasses the many physical activities that a character might undertake. The better the score a character has in this Skill Area, the better his general physical condition.

Specialisations:

Acrobatics: The capacity to use your body to perform acrobatics, somersaults and other gymnastic feats.

Climbing: How to scale vertical surfaces, abseil down them, and use harness equipment.

Dodge: The ability to avoid a blow or a missile.

Jumping: The capacity to jump over a chasm or barrier.

Running: The ability to run long distances or quickly so as to evade a pursuer.

Sports: The practice of a particular sports discipline (swimming, rock climbing, horse riding, baseball, football, handball etc.). This Specialisation can be taken multiple times, each time to cover a different sport.

Swimming: Skill in moving around in the water

Communication

This Skill Area includes the social graces, the ease with which a character communicates, and the techniques of seduction or intimidation.

Specialisations:

Acting: The ability to pass for someone else.

Empathy: The understanding and perceiving other peoples' emotions.

Fast Talk: The ability to drown someone in a flow of words and fallacious stories so as deceive or verbally overcome the target's immediate objections.

Intimidation: The ability to frighten or disturb someone.

Persuasion: Knowing how to make someone come around to your views or to captivate an audience.

Music: The ability to compose or perform, either by singing or with a musical instrument.

Seduction: The ability to charm or manipulate a potential paramour, using the implied promise of sex.

Deception

This Skill Area includes more or less illegal skills allowing you to obtain what you want by underhanded means.

Specialisations:

Forgery: The ability to replicate administrative documents, credit cards and other legal documents. Artistic skills are required to forge artwork.

Gambling: The knowledge of how to bet sensibly and play the odds in games of chance as well as how to play games like poker.

Lockpicking: The ability to open doors, both those with classical locks and those with electronic passes. Can also be extended to include an understanding of basic security systems.

Sleight of Hand: The skill of prestidigitation, including the picking of pockets and minor feats of dexterity like palming a coin.

Sneaking: The ability to move without making any sound and keep to the shadows.

Drive

This Skill Area allows driving all sorts of land vehicles.

Specialisations:

Bikes: The ability to drive all two-wheeled vehicles with hybrid, combustion or hydrogen propulsion.

Cars: The ability to drive all types of hybrid, combustion or hydrogen driven motorcars.

Hovercraft: The controlling hovercraft vehicles. It is also a Specialisation of watercraft as hovercraft are amphibious.

Industrial Vehicles: The ability to manoeuvre scissor lifts, forklift trucks, exoskeletons, and all hypertrucks, giant trucks and super-carriers.

Lorries: The ability to manoeuvre heavy goods vehicles, both rigid and articulated Lorries.

MagnetoDynamique Vehicles: The ability to drive all MagnetoDynamique propulsion vehicles other than bikes.

Speeder Bikes: The ability to pilot MagnetoDynamique propulsion bikes which run at up to 6 metres over the ground.

Trains: The ability to drive vehicles that run on rails, both classical or with magnetic support (subway, train, high-speed train).

Investigation

This Skill Area includes all inquiry and evidence collection skills.



Specialisations:

Awareness: The ability to notice something 'out of place,' the smell of gunpowder, signs of struggle, strange silences etc. This involves the passive use of Perception.

Data Retrieval: The skill of cross-checking testimonies and researching records, old files, criminal records etc.

Interrogation: The ability to get a subject to tell you what you need to know, covering techniques such as interviewing, actual interrogation and even torture.

Legal Expertise: An awareness of the law and how it applies in criminal investigations.

Searching: The ability to properly check a place or an individual to find an object or clues. This involves the active use of Perception.

Shadowing: The skill of following someone without being noticed, either on foot or in a vehicle.

Pilot

This Skill Area allows you to pilot all airborne vehicles.

Specialisations:

Helicopters: The ability to pilot all rotor driven vehicles, including small choppers and big carriers.

Jets: The ability to pilot reaction driven planes including most commercial airliners and military combat aircraft.

Propeller Planes: The ability to pilot propeller driven aircraft.

Popular Culture

This vast Skill Area groups knowledge about the daily life of Shin-Edo residents. Thus it includes a lot of information about TV programmes and celebrities, as well as a mountain of trivia about sports, leisure, show business and society gossip.

Specialisations:

Celebrity: Knowledge of the world of celebrities in 2046, including the actors, actresses, models, television personalities,

who they are and what they've been up to.

Corporate: An understanding of the various companies in Japan, who runs them and what their subsidiaries and products are.

Current Events: An awareness of current news, mainly concerning Shin-Edo and Japan as foreign news coverage is prevented by the International Blockade.

Gaming: Knowledge of both television game shows and popular virtual games.

High Society: Knowledge of the movers and shakers of the upper class and the history of Japan's old families.

Media: An awareness of television shows, popular books and magazines, advertising brands and virtual culture.

Politics: An understanding of the various political parties, factions and politicians.

Sports: Knowledge of popular sports, the teams and celebrity players and managers.

Spiritual

This Skill Area represents a character's esoteric and mystical knowledge.

Specialisations:

Buddhism: An understanding of Zen philosophy and Buddhist practice.

Christianity: Knowledge of the mythology and beliefs of Christian practice.

Legends: Knowledge of Japan's old superstitions, stories and popular beliefs.

Mythology: Knowledge of the myths and pantheons of the old classical gods of Japan.

Occult: Knowledge of the forbidden books, black magic, forbidden rites and sorcery.

Occultech: Knowledge of how to design and construct artefacts mixing traditional rituals and modern technology.

Shinto: Knowledge of the Shinto religion, its traditions and rituals.

Theology: The study and knowledge of world religions, beliefs, religious facts and religious practices rather than a single religion such as Buddhism or Shintoism.

Survival

This Skill Area covers skills that will help a character survive or act under hostile conditions or in hostile environments. His skill level will allow him to anticipate the dangers menacing him, to orient himself, to find food and water and even track prey and follow trails etc.

Specialisations

Aquatic: Knowledge of how to find your way in an aquatic or marine environment and where to gather the basic needs required to ensure your survival.

First Aid: The ability to perform basic first aid on a person who is wounded, sick, asphyxiated or poisoned.

Forest: Knowledge of how to find your way in a wooded area and where to gather the basic needs required to ensure your survival.

Mountains: Knowledge of getting around and finding your way in hilly or mountainous terrain and where to gather the basic needs required to ensure your survival.

Orienteering: The knowledge of how to use a map or the stars to navigate your way by, in any environment and under any conditions.

Urban: Knowledge of how to find your way in an urban environment and where to scavenge the basic needs required to ensure your survival.

Watercraft

This Skill Area allows you to pilot all water vehicles.

Specialisations:

Cruisers: The ability to pilot large ships such as ferries and cruise liners.

Hovercraft: The ability to pilot air-cushioned vehicles.

Jet Skis: The ability to pilot water bikes.

Sailboats: The ability to manoeuvre or sail small sailboats.

Speedboats: The ability to pilot motor driven high-speed boats.

Tallships: The crewing and manoeuvring of large sailing ships.

Technical Skills

This skill group encompasses all state-of-the-art technological know-how, as both an academic pursuit and as a practical application.

Note that these different areas need the character to already have a basis in a Science (Physical or Natural) Skill Area. This prerequisite must be a minimum of level 3 for the character to acquire the particular technical skill.

Electrical

(Prerequisites: Physical Sciences)

This Skill Area groups mechanical or electrical systems of normal or industrial use.

Specialisations:

Domestic Systems: The ability to install or repair domestic appliances and home control systems.

Electrical Engineer: The ability to fit or repair electric installations, (such as rewiring a house) or repair general electrical devices.

Electronics: The ability to work on electronics and design and build circuit boards and computer chips. It is useful for installing or repairing many types of control systems.

Explosives

(Prerequisite: Physical Sciences)

This Skill Area encompasses the knowledge and training necessary for the use, manipulation and manufacture of explosives.

Specialisations:

Charge Positioning: The knowledge of where to place explosives so as to damage a structure or demolish it safely.

Demolitions: The knowledge of how to safely handle and use raw explosives (C4, dynamite etc.).

Detonation Systems: The knowledge of how to handle, design, use and disarm detonators and complex explosive triggering systems.

Explosive Forensics: The ability to analyse traces, bursts and the results of an explosion.

Landmines: The ability to manipulate, place or disarm anti-personnel or anti-vehicle landmines.

Mechanics

(Prerequisite: Physical Sciences)

This Skill Area deals with the knowledge of engines and automatic mechanisms.

Specialisations:

Aeronautics: Knowledge of how to design, repair and maintain aircraft.

Car Mechanics: Knowledge of how to design, repair and maintain cars, lorries and bikes.

Hydraulic Systems: Knowledge of how to design, repair and maintain industrial machines.

MagnetoDynamique Engines: Knowledge of how to design, repair and maintain vehicles with a MagnetoDynamique engine

Medicine

(Prerequisites: Natural Sciences)

This Skill Area groups all medical skills and knowledge about the workings of the human body.

Specialisations:

Emergency Treatment: This includes basic First Aid, but is specifically the ability to perform emergency medical treatments, like stitching a wound, stopping a major bleed or possibly even extracting a bullet!

Forensics: The ability to perform an autopsy and determine the cause of death.

Paediatrics: The knowledge necessary to diagnose and treat a child.

Pharmacology: The analysis and production of medicines and medicinal substances.

Prosthetics: The understanding of the process of grafting artificial implants onto a patient, from small devices to artificial limbs.

Psychiatry: The ability to diagnose and treat a person with mental disorders

Surgery: The skill of repairing, removing or replacing organs and tissues in the human body.

Veterinary Medicine: The ability to treat wild and domesticated animals.

Microphotonics (Computing)

(Prerequisite: Physical Sciences)

This Skill Area encompasses all of the necessary skills for the use of computers and the understanding of codes and networks.

Specialisations:

Data Hacking: The knowledge of how to illicitly access servers or networks to retrieve or modify information that they contain.

Encryption: The knowledge of computer security systems including encryption keys, decryption programs and the ability to decode encrypted information.

Hardware: An understanding of the design and repair of different computers and their accessories (Gantai, Pods, Jellyfish etc.).

Holography: The knowledge of how to design and repair of holograms and other virtual images.

Laser: The knowledge of how to design, repair and maintain laser communication ports and laser projection devices.

Optical Network: The knowledge of how to design, repair and maintain optical ports and networks.

Programming: The understanding of how to compile, design or modify computer software.

Software: The knowledge of how to operate (and even debug) computer programs.

Squids: The knowledge of how to use and design Squids and how to hack them.

Engineering Skills

This group of skills encompasses the new knowledge of the more advanced technologies present in 2046. So both biotechnology and nanotechnology are included in the Engineering Skills.

Note: these skills also require prerequisites before the player spends Creation Points on them. He also must have a score of at least 3 in each of those prerequisite skills.

Biomechanics

(Prerequisites: Medicine, Robotics)

This Skill Area includes knowledge of advanced prosthetics, their installation and repair. The reverse of biotech, biomechanics primarily deals with the installation of technological enhancements in human beings.

Specialisations:

Exoskeletons: The knowledge of how to design, repair and manufacture exoskeletons.

Prosthetics: The knowledge of how to graft or enhance a biomechanical implant.

Prosthetics Design: The knowledge of how to manufacture a biomechanical implant.

Repair: The knowledge of how to repair a biomechanical implant.

Skinsuits: The knowledge of how to design, repair and manufacture biomechanical suits

Biotechnology

(Prerequisite: Medicine)

This Skill Area groups the technical know-how that allows the repair and handling of biotech devices. These devices are man-made biological constructs, such as clones and biological enhancements for machines.

Specialisations:

Bioport: The knowledge of how to design and install bioports.
Biotech Installation: The knowledge of the surgical procedures necessary to graft organic or hybrid implants.

Biotech Medicine: The knowledge of how to design and use biotech implants, organs and tools for medical use.

Replication: Knowledge of clones and how to design them.

Vats: The knowledge of how to design, maintain and repair cloning vats and associated technologies.

Energy Technology

(Prerequisites: Microphotonics, Systems)

This Skill Area groups several types of technical knowledge that cover the installation, repair or enhancement of the various power systems available in 2046.

Specialisations:

Cold Fusion: The knowledge and exploitation of cold fusion or low powered nuclear fission.

Hybrid Fuels: The knowledge of biomass and design of non-polluting fuels.

Kinetic Energy: The knowledge of how to design, repair and manufacture systems that harness the power created by human or mechanical movements.

Magnetic Energy: The knowledge of how to design, repair and manufacture magnetic technology able to induce or disrupt electricity, or create specific effects (guns, shields).

Nuclear Power: The knowledge and exploitation of nuclear power.

Photovoltaic Nanobatteries: The knowledge of how to design, repair and manufacture the latest generation of solar panels and batteries.

Power-saving Systems: The study and enhancement of houses, cities or vehicles so as to reduce their power consumption.

Thermal Power: The knowledge of how to design, repair and manufacture sensors and other devices capable of retrieving the power created by heat (human, natural, mechanical)

Nanotechnology

(Prerequisites: Microphotonics, plus an Applied Area for each Specialisation, as listed in description for each Specialisation)

This Skill Area covers the knowledge of the latest developments, applications, and novelties in the field of nanotechnology, as well as the practical use of nanocreatures.

Specialisations:

Biomaterials: The knowledge of how to design materials with the help of nanotech (Applied Area: Medicine).

Molecular Imaging: The knowledge of how to use scanners, IRM and using devices able to see at the nanometre scale (Applied Area: None).

Nanodomeotics: The knowledge of how to use the nanotech built into a houses' automatic systems (Applied Area: Electrical Systems).

Nanodrones: The knowledge of how to use nanotech to the design and operate nanocreatures (Applied Area: Medicine – Veterinary Medicine).

Nanomedicine: The knowledge of how to use nanotech in medical analysis and nanosurgery (Applied Area: Medicine).

Nanoprocessors: The knowledge of how to use nanotech in the area of computer science (Applied Area: None).

Nanorobotics: The knowledge of how to use nanotech in robotics and artificial intelligence (Applied Area: Robotics).

Nanosensors: The knowledge of how to use nanotech with chemical and physical scanners (Applied Area: Surveillance Systems).

Robotics

(Prerequisites: Electrical, Mechanics, Microphotonics)

This Skill Area covers all skills that deal with robots, from the most basic to the most advanced.

Specialisations:

Advanced Electronics: The knowledge of how to design and repair processors for robotics.

AI Programming: The knowledge of how to design and construct Artificial intelligence networks and control systems.

Artificials: The knowledge of how to design and repair standard androids.

Biodroids: The knowledge of how to use design and repair clones with robotic brains.

Cybernetics: An understanding of the robotic implants used to augment human beings.

Industrial Robots: The knowledge of how to design and repair robots used on assembly lines and to carry heavy loads.

Overclocking: The knowledge of how to hack an AI's programming and alter its workings.

Puppetbots: The knowledge of how to design and repair small home robots.

Templates: The knowledge of how to program and alter robotic behavioural programmes.

Surveillance Systems

(Prerequisites: Electrics, Microphotonics)

This Skill Area includes the technical know-how needed to install and operate surveillance systems from the most basic to the most advanced. It also covers how to mislead and bypass them.

Specialisations:

Alarms: The knowledge of how to install, modify, and repair alarm systems.

Intrusion: The knowledge of how to install, modify, and repair motion detectors and presence detectors.

Retinal Scans: The knowledge of how to install, modify, and repair retinal controllers.

Video Surveillance: The knowledge of how to install, modify, and repair camera systems.

Contacts

This Skill Area represents the character's connections with various communities, rather than a talent or ability that he has. Using the Contacts skill, a character knows from where, and from whom, to get information on places, individuals, commodities, laws and customs and news concerning those networks. Such contacts are not usually friends; they are more like business associates. Characters do not get any free 'Contact Points' for any careers their character has chosen, such as a policeman having Law Enforcement contacts. Not having such contacts suggests that the character has simply failed to make any useful contacts in his workplace. So it is recommended that players should spend a few points gaining the appropriate Contacts skills for their character's background.

When a character wants to learn something from their network of contacts, he makes a skill roll using the skill or Specialisation that most applies. A success results in useful information. As failure might bring erroneous information, the Gamemaster can decide not to reveal the target number, simply telling the player what his character learns after seeing the dice result.

As well as general contacts, the character might have a special relationship with an individual in some of these communities that might help him in his investigations. These privileged contacts might be old friends, informants, or even relatives who will be more inclined to give more specific aid and possibly be the source of more adventure subplots. Upon creation, a character has as

many privileged contacts as the number of Gimikku they have in each Specialisation (so, a character with level 6 Underground will have one privileged contact in that community). This is in addition to any already existing Gimikku, and these contacts should be at least named and given a little more detail than ordinary contacts.

Specialisations:

Academic: Connections to the university and research institutions, from students to professors.

Banking & Business: Contacts among financial establishments, investment firms and banks as well as local businesses and even corporations.

Faith: The character knows priests, fervent believers or scholars.

Judiciary: The character has contacts in the judiciary, judges, lawyers or simple clerks of the court.

Law Enforcement: The character knows people connected to law enforcement, such as inspectors, lieutenants or patrol officers.

Maritime: The character has contacts in the docks and harbours and in Kaijin and the local fishing communities.

Media: The character has contacts in the Japanese media, press, radio and television.

Military: The character knows mercenaries and military personnel, and possibly has access to restricted weapons.

Organised Crime: The character knows one or more members of an organised criminal gang or even the Yakuza.

Politics: The character has contacts and support in the local government (neighbourhood, district) or national political scene (political party, government).

Smugglers: The character has connections with smuggling groups, which despite the International Blockade, trade with other countries and can obtain rare products.

Street: The character knows many people who live or work on the streets such as prostitutes, homeless people and street vendors.



ACTION AND EVOLUTION

COMBAT

The world of *Kuro* is a dangerous place. Characters frequently find themselves in conflicts, sometimes despite their best efforts, which risk degenerating into full and open combat. The following handful of rules allow the Gamemaster to run highly cinematic action scenes.

Game time

When in a fight, people take many actions very quickly. So we need a few expressions for dealing with smaller units of time.

Combat Phases

A 'game turn' is the length of time required to perform a few simple actions. On average it is about three seconds long. This game turn is divided into 'combat phases.' There are as many combat phases in a turn as the highest number of actions (see next section) possessed by any participant. Starting with the first phase, each participant carries out his first action, and then the second action in the second phase, and so on until no one has any actions left to perform.

Number of Actions per Turn

Each character can make a number of actions per turn equal to his Reflexes score divided by 2 (rounding fractions up).

Initiative

At the beginning of each game turn, each participant should determine his 'initiative order.' The players and GM each roll a number of dice equal to each character's Reaction Speed, and add double that score as a bonus (as you would a Characteristic check).

$$\text{Initiative} = \text{REA (as number of D6)} + 2x \text{ REA}$$

The character with the highest initiative acts first, carrying out his first action. Then other participants each take their own actions in initiative order. In the case of a tie, all characters with the same initiative act at the same time (simultaneous actions).

Many characters will be able to do more than one action each turn. So, character with a second action gets to act again, once more in initiative order. This carries on until no character has any remaining actions left. At that point the game turn ends and a new one begins. You roll initiative again and begin another series of actions.

Melee Combat

Melee attacks are close combat, where the participants are in arm's reach of each other. They can be unarmed or use one of several melee weapons such as swords, knives, clubs or even broken bottles. Whatever a character using, to score a hit on his target he must make a simple check. If his opponent chooses to parry or dodge the roll is an Opposed Check.

Attacking

Characters in melee combat have three options when they attempt an attack: Power Attack, Normal Attack or Fast Attack.

Normal Attack: This attack is a straightforward attempt to land a blow on your opponent. The character tries to hit his opponent using his Dexterity and relevant combat skill (for the weapon that he is using). The player makes an Action Check of (Dexterity + appropriate skill) with a Target Number equal to his opponent's Defence score.

Power Attack: Here, the character deals a violent blow to his opponent in an effort to cause as much damage as possible, though at the cost of both speed and accuracy. As a result, he relies more on his muscle strength than on his agility. The player must make an Action Check using (Strength + appropriate skill) with a Target Number equal to his opponent's Defence score, plus the Strength invested in the attack by the attacker. The player can control the strength of his attack, choosing to invest some or all of his Strength score in the attack (at least 1 point, but not more than his Strength score). The Strength invested becomes a positive modifier to the target's Defence and increases it temporarily, but adds to the damage inflicted if the power attack is successful. If the Power Attack manages to hit, the damage done is increased by an amount equal to double the Strength invested.

Example: A character with a STR of 3 decides to make a Power Attack with a strength of 2. The TN is increased by +2, and if he manages to hit his opponent, the damage done is increased by a total of +4 (double the +2).

Fast Attack: This time the attacker tries to get through his opponent's defences, relying on his accuracy and speed to make sure that his attack hits home. However, he sacrifices power to land a hit, reducing the potential damage. The player decides how much of his character's Reflexes he will invest in the roll (at least 1 point, but not more than his Reflexes score). Then he must succeed in an Action Check of (Reflexes + appropriate skill) with a Target Number equal to his opponent's Defence score, minus the Reflexes invested in the attack by the attacker.



The Reflexes invested becomes a negative modifier to the target's Defence and decreases it temporarily, but also subtracts from the damage inflicted if the Fast Attack is successful. If the Fast Attack manages to hit, the damage done is decreased by an amount equal to double the Reflexes invested.

Example: A character with a REF of 3 decides to make a Fast Attack and invests 2 points of Reflexes in the attack. In this case, the TN is reduced by -2, and if the target is damaged, the damage inflicted is reduced by 4 points (double the Reflexes invested). In both cases, the base Strength or Reflexes used to make the roll is unmodified. The Action Check is made with the character's usual Strength or Reflexes no matter how much of either characteristic is invested in the attack.

Melee Attacking and Defending

Normal Attack:

Simple roll (Dexterity + Skill) Vs. Target's Defence

Power Attack:

Choose how much Strength to invest.

Simple roll (Strength + Skill) Vs. Target's Defence (+Strength invested)

Add double Strength invested to the damage done on a successful hit.

Fast Attack:

Choose how much Reflexes to invest.

Simple roll (Reflexes + Skill) Vs. Target's Defence (-Reflexes invested)

Reduce damage done by double Reflexes invested on a successful hit.

Dodge or Parry:

Sacrifice a remaining action if you have been successfully hit (before damage is applied).

Simple roll (Reflexes + Skill) Vs. Attacker's attack result

(unarmed defenders halve their skill against armed attackers)

If roll is successful, no damage is taken and the attack misses.

Non-lethal Damage

Declare a non-lethal attack and apply a +5 penalty to the roll.

If successful, target takes a quarter of the attack damage.

They must also roll Willpower Vs. a Target Number equal to the full attack damage.

If roll fails, target rendered unconscious for 1 minute times the Margin of Failure.

Dodging and Parrying an Attack

If an attack succeeds, all is not lost. The defender can immediately sacrifice one of his remaining actions (but only if he has one remaining). This allows him to attempt to dodge or parry the blow and counter the effects of the attack.

A dodge means a side step, a leap or any other movement to leave the path of an attack. A parry blocks, deflects or fends off a blow. It is very dangerous to parry an armed attack empty handed. However, if a character wants to do it anyway, his Skill Level is divided by two (unless he knows an appropriate Specialisation). This modifier does not apply to an unarmed person dodging, as they are getting out of harm's way!

In both cases, dodging and parrying, the player makes an Opposed Check where the Target Number equals his opponent's Attack Check (so you should declare a dodge or parry before the attacker forgets what they rolled!). A dodging character uses Athletics (Dodge) as his skill. A parrying character uses the weapon skill for whatever he is armed with.

Grappling

Sometimes you just want to pin your opponent rather than hurt them. To do this you must make a normal melee attack using Hand-to-Hand, and declare your intention before rolling the dice. If you succeed and the target fails to dodge or parry your blow you have managed to grab hold of him. You do no damage, but should note down the Margin of Success that you achieved.

Your opponent can still attempt to break your hold. On his action he can make an opposed Strength + Hand-to-Hand roll against you. However, you can add the Margin of Success you got in the initial grab to this roll. If you lose, your opponent breaks the hold. If not, you maintain the hold, but must record the new Margin of Success and use this on your opponent's next attempt to break free.

Characters who are grappling or being grappled cannot perform any other actions and any attempts to dodge attacks are reduced by 3 + your grappling opponent's Strength. If a grappler manages to achieve a Margin of Success equal to twice his opponent's Strength, then he has pinned the target so well that no further attempts to break free can be made. The grappler can then put his target in handcuffs, or even make other one handed attacks against his pinned opponent. The penalty for these attacks is equal to the grappled victim's strength.

Sometimes the grappler does not just want to pin the target, but strangle him instead. In this case, the grappler must successfully pin his target first. Then he can force his victim to make a Stamina check each round. The check begins at Easy, but is raised by one level of difficulty each round that the grapple is maintained. If at any point the victim fails his Stamina check, he passes out unconscious.

Melee Combat Modifiers

Several factors might modify the Target Number when trying to land a blow of your target. These bonuses and penalties are applied to the Target Number based on the target's Defence and are cumulative.

Attacker is:

| | |
|------------------------------------|-------------|
| On higher ground | -1 |
| Using a longer weapon | -1 |
| Behind an unsurprised opponent | -2 |
| Behind a surprised opponent | -6 |
| On unstable ground | +2 |
| Using their off-hand | +4 |
| Blinded | +6 |
| Prone or with restricted movement | +3 |
| Fighting several opponents | +3/opponent |
| Attempting to knock out the target | +5 |

Defender is:

| | |
|---------------------------------|----|
| Blinded | -6 |
| Prone or restricted in movement | -3 |
| Using a longer weapon | +1 |
| Immobilised | -8 |

Non-lethal Damage

Not every attacker seeks to kill his opponent. A strong, well-placed blow can render an opponent unconscious, and knocking a victim out is often enough to get rid of him.

A character wishing to knock an opponent out must declare this attempt to the Gamemaster before striking the blow. Of course, the situation must allow for such an action as well, such as having surprise or being behind the opponent. The character makes his Attack Check normally, but with a 5 point penalty to the Target Number. If the attack succeeds, he determines damage normally, and the victim must make a Willpower check versus a Target Number equal to the total attack damage rolled.

If the victim is successful, he remains conscious. If not, he is knocked unconscious and remains so for a number of minutes equal to the check's Margin of Failure. After which the victim

slowly recovers from unconsciousness. In any case, he suffers damage equalling one quarter of the attack damage, rounded up.

Ranged Combat

Attacking

Ranged combat is any attack made at a distance from your target. Ranged weapons can be used in melee combat, but this is considered to be a ranged attack made at 'point blank range.' Just like melee combat, a character has three options when using Firearms, Thrown weapons, Archaic missile Weapons or Heavy weapons. In a ranged combat, he can choose between a Precision attack, a Normal attack and a Fast attack.

A simple check is used to resolve all ranged attacks. The player must succeed a check with an equal or higher value to the ranged Target Number (see below). Each ranged weapon has several ranges associated with it. The Target Number depends on those ranges, rather than the target's Defence, and can be altered by modifiers depending on the circumstances.

Basic Ranged Combat Target Numbers

| Range | Short | Medium | Long | Extreme |
|-------|-------|--------|------|---------|
| TN | 8 | 12 | 20 | 32 |

Normal Attack: The player must succeed a in an Action Check (Dexterity + Skill) equal to or higher than the Target Number defined by the range the target is at (See Ranged Target Number table). Each weapon's range categories are defined individually on the range table. The Target Number depends on them and can be altered by modifiers depending on the circumstances.

Precision Attack: In this instance, the character aims for the most vulnerable area of the target, seeking to cause the worst wound possible. He uses his Perception to locate a weak spot, and his skills to strike it. This works in a similar way to the melee Power Attack, but is based on Perception rather than Strength.

The player decides how much Perception to invest in the attack (at least 1 point, but not more than his Perception score). The Perception invested becomes a positive modifier to the Target Number to hit and increases it temporarily, but adds to the damage inflicted if the Precision Attack is successful. If the Precision Attack manages to hit, the damage done is increased by an amount equal to double the Perception invested.

Ranged Attack Rolls

Normal Attack:

Simple roll (Dexterity + Skill) Vs. TN dependant on the range to the target.

| Range | TN |
|---------|----|
| Short | 8 |
| Medium | 12 |
| Long | 20 |
| Extreme | 32 |

Precision Attack:

Choose how much Perception to invest.

Simple roll (Dexterity + Skill) Vs. range TN (+Perception invested)

Add double the Perception invested to the damage on a successful hit.

Fast Attack:

Choose how much Reflexes to invest.

Simple roll (Reflexes + Skill) Vs. Target's Defence (-Reflexes invested)

Reduce damage by double the Reflexes invested on a successful hit.

Point Blank range

Use any of the above systems, but take the target's Defence instead of the range as the base TN. If using a gun gain a -3 bonus to the TN.

Example: A character with a PER of 3 decides to attack and invests 2 points of Perception in the attack. In that case, +2 will be added to the ranged TN and if the victim is hit, 4 points will be added to the damage (equal to double the Perception invested).

Fast Attack: Here the goal is to take your opponent by surprise, when you need to hit at any cost even though you are unlikely to get a solid strike. The player must decide how much of his Reflexes to invest in the attack (at least 1 point, but not more than his Reflexes score). The player must succeed in a (Reflexes

+ Appropriate skill) Action Check for which the Target Number is the opponent's Defence minus the Reflexes invested in the attack. However, if the Fast Attack hits, the damage will be more superficial and is decreased by an amount equal to double the Reflexes invested.

Example: A character with REF 3 wants to make a Fast Attack and invests 2 points of Reflexes into it. In that case, the TN will be reduced by 2 and, if the target is wounded, 4 points will be subtracted from the damage (equal to double the Reflexes invested).

Point Blank Range

Sometimes you might enter melee combat with a ranged weapon. In this case the defender's ability to dodge and defend himself comes into play as he can see what you are doing or even push the weapon away. So, in this case you use the target's Defence as the base Target Number rather than the base Target Number given for the weapon's range. Additionally, while some ranged weapons like bows can be unwieldy at very close range, firearms are a lot more dangerous. When using a gun at point blank range you gain a bonus of -3 to the Target Number. The Gamemaster can choose to modify the Target Number using the melee combat modifiers instead of, or as well as, the ranged modifiers. Thrown weapons cannot be used as ranged weapons at point blank range, but some (such as knives) make excellent melee weapons.

Range modifiers

As with melee modifiers, these are cumulative and apply to the attacker's Target Number:

Target is:

| | |
|----------------------------------------------|------------|
| Unmoving | -3 |
| Moving slowly | +1 |
| Moving quickly | +3 |
| Moving very quickly | +6 |
| Behind cover | +1 to +4 |
| (depending on the degree of cover) | |
| Target size | -10 to +10 |
| (Lorry (-10), Man (0), Bullseye (+10)) | |
| Suffering bad visibility (rain, night, etc.) | 0 to +6 |

Automatic fire

If you have weapon capable of automatic fire, you have an additional option if you want to hose the area down with bullets. When using automatic fire you can target several opponents in the area in front of you, and although it is highly inaccurate, it can be a quite devastating form of attack.

You must announce your intention to use automatic fire before making your attack, and you suffer a +3 penalty to your Target Number for each target you are aiming at after the first. If you succeed in the roll, every target in range in front of you suffers your weapon's normal damage. However, you gain no bonus for the Margin of Success. If you want to be especially mean you can direct automatic fire at a single target. The +3 penalty remains as the weapon will shake and recoil violently, but on a successful hit the damage inflicted is doubled.

Dealing Damage

Once an attack hits the target, it is necessary to determine the inflicted damage. Each weapon has a damage rating which should be rolled first. You then add to this result the Margin of Success achieved with the attack roll. The defender subtracts the value of any protection that he might have from this total. When rolling for the weapon's damage the 4/shi and exploding dice rules do not apply.

$$\text{Damage} = \text{Attack MS} + \text{Weapon damage} \\ - \text{target's protection (if any)}$$

Serious Wounds

As mentioned in character creation, should you take damage equal to your Serious Wound Threshold (a third of your Hit Points) from a single attack, you have suffered a Serious Wound. For each Serious Wound that you have, the amount of dice you roll for any action is reduced by 1. So if you usually roll 3 dice for an action and you have 2 Serious Wounds, you can only roll 1. If you are left with no dice to roll you can still apply your skill, but the Gamemaster may rule that you are simply too weak to attempt the action.

WOUNDS

The world has always been changing, and these changes come faster and faster in the modern age. Life has become harder, more violent, more unequal, and neither Shin-Edo nor Japan can escape this general rule. The Kuro Incident did not make things any better either. The characters live in a dangerous world. Moreover, often for reasons that they do not even understand, they will find themselves right in the middle of dangerous plots. There will be no shortage of occasions when their lives will be in danger.

Hit Points correspond to the physical integrity of the character. Their level describes the character's general health status. The more that they decrease, the more that the character's health declines. A massive Hit Point loss can entail serious consequences, even the death of the character. Fortunately, medicine in 2048 can accomplish veritable miracles on a daily basis. So it is worth us detailing the various sources of damage and Hit Point loss that the characters might suffer.

Combat

Whether it is a simple brawl in a seedy bar or a heavy weapon shootout in a tumbledown side alley, combat is always a risky proposition. Rules concerning weapon damage and conflict can be found in the combat section (page 103).

Falling

There is a risk of getting seriously wounded if a character falls a considerable height. To put it simply, a fall does 1D6 damage for every metre fallen minus one. So a four-metre fall would do 3D6 damage to a character on impact.

However, if falling from a 3 metre height or less, the character can make a Dexterity Check versus a Target Number of 12 plus the height in metres. If he succeeds the character incurs no Hit Point loss. If falling from a height of 3 to 6 metres, the character can make the same Dexterity Check versus a Target Number of, again, 12 plus the height in metres. If he succeeds, the Hit Point loss is reduced to half (rounding down).

Asphyxiation

In the middle of a tear gas cloud, toxic fumes or pollution, a character risks death through lack of oxygen. A character can hold his breath for a number of minutes equal to his Stamina. After that, he suffers an automatic 2 damage points every turn. Obviously if a character without any help or a means of escaping the situation is doomed to die in more or less short order.

Strangling

Similar to grappling, sometimes an attacker might seek to crush the life out of their victim rather than just render them unconscious. If so, apply the usually rules for grappling. However, the Gamemaster may insist the victim also automatically loses 1D6 + the Strength of the assailer in hit points per turn, from the pressure crushing his neck.

Drowning

There is a minimal risk of drowning even in calm water if you cannot touch the bottom. So, a failed Swimming Check can have unpleasant consequences. In such a case, the character immediately makes a second check versus the same Target Number. If he succeeds, he is able to float on the surface, but no more. Otherwise, he begins to drown. The above asphyxiation rules then apply.

External conditions determine the difficulty of the Swimming Check and the interval between checks. Even if he begins drowning, a character can still attempt Swimming Checks, but failed ones get him no further across the water. A successful Swimming Check means they are okay, at least until the next check.

| Conditions | TN/Period |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Calm water (swimming pool) (just 1 Swimming Check required) | 8 |
| Running water (stream) | 12/1 minute |
| Rough water (torrent, rough sea) | 16/5 turns |
| Storm, cold sea | 20/2 turns |
| Gale, freezing cold sea | 24/1 turn |

Burns

Damage from a heat source depends on its intensity and the length of exposure with a character suffering damage for each turn that he is in contact with the heat source. Burns cause very painful and disabling wounds, which often require immediate care. The table below gives some guidelines and a scale to help you deal with this potential danger.

| Source | Damage |
|---------------|---------------|
| Fireplace | 1D6 |
| Blowtorch | 2D6 |
| House fire | 3D6 |
| Chemical fire | 4D6 |

Pathogens

Viruses and diseases, toxins and poisons are all a real danger for the characters. Whether they have a natural origin or come from biotech manipulation, pathogens, drugs and diseases all function using the same rules system:

Name: Simply the name of the disease or toxin.

Virulence: This is the Target Number for a Stamina Check the character must pass in order to resist infection or poisoning by the pathogen.

Diseases also have a mode of transmission (how you might be exposed to it) and a period that corresponds (should you fail the Stamina Check) to the duration of infection. After each period of duration has elapsed, the character must make another check against the same Target Number plus one point for every new attempt. If he succeeds, he recovers normally (see natural healing). If not, he continues to suffer the effects of the disease and should make another check at the end of the next period.

The description of each toxin describes its method of administration (ingestion, inhalation, injection or contact). Should the character fail to resist the drug twice in a row, the Gamemaster can rule that he has formed an addiction to the substance if appropriate to the substance.

Effects: This paragraph describes the symptoms, Hit Point or Characteristic loss, or the penalty the character suffers while the character is under the pathogen's effect.

Drugs and Toxins

There are a variety of substances available in the Japanese market, and we have listed a few below. Due to the blockade, the traffic of drugs coming from South America or the United States has practically dried up (although small scale, but efficient smuggling continues to bring contraband and foreign goods into the country).

Androspleen (drug)

Virulence: 16 (injection)

Effects: A muscle tonic which also blocks pain receptors, Androspleen was first developed as a means for enhancing performance in sports. Its effects last for some six hours. During that time the character has a bonus on all Strength checks. He also ignores all muscular fatigue sensations, including the first Serious Wound penalty he that he suffers.

Unfortunately Androspleen has a rather unpleasant side effect. As soon as he becomes dependent, the character's muscles suffer a slow decay. Every month he must make an unmodified Stamina Check versus the drug's Virulence. If he fails, his Hit Points are permanently reduced by 1 point.

Blue Light (drug)

Virulence: 12 (injection)

Effects: Sold as subcutaneous ampoules, Blue Light's effects are comparable to overdosing on liquid tobacco. This drug eliminates

any sensation of fatigue. More powerful than amphetamines, it allows the user to deprive himself of sleep for up to 36 hours without any penalty. Unfortunately, after this period the character has a Target Number penalty of +3D6 on all actions until he gains a full night's sleep. If addicted, he needs to get a fix every week or suffer this penalty all of the time.

Eyefrag (drug)

Virulence: 8 (inhalation, ingestion, contact with the eyes)

Effects: The most commonly consumed substance in Shin-Edo, this drug presents several aspects. Beyond the simple feelings of well being it causes, Eyefrag greatly disrupts the user's retinal balance. Thus it renders all automatic identification impossible. Another recently discovered advantage is that it magnifies visual acuity. An hour following its absorption a character under the effects of Eyefrag has a 1D6 bonus to all visual Perception Checks. However, the apathy caused by the drug also enforces an equal penalty to his Reflexes and Reaction speed. If addicted, a character needs a daily fix. If not, that penalty applies until the fix is taken.

Hakuchumu (drug)

Virulence: 12 (inhalation, ingestion)

Effects: Hallucinations, feelings of well-being, euphoria or nightmares. The user experiences an illusionary journey influenced by either his dreams or his surroundings. The 'trip' is so real that the character physically feels every experience, be it sexual pleasure or even a heart attack in case of a bad trip. The effect lasts for one to two hours.

Any use of Hakuchumu after the first one increases its virulence by +1 until addiction occurs. Once addicted, the virulence remains unchanged, but the character must have his fix at least once a week. If not, he becomes nauseous, tired and depressed. With each use he must also succeed on a Stamina Check against the current Virulence. Failure means that he has suffered an abnormal reaction to the drug and a second, identical test must be made. If successful, it will take two hours to get over it (with a 2D6 penalty on all actions during that time). If he fails this second check, he dies of a heart attack.

Heroseed (drug)

Virulence: 12 (inhalation)

Effects: Heroseed induces a feeling of clarity, but also detachment, in the mind of the user. He benefits from a +2D6 bonus to all actions requiring logic and mental acuity. On the other hand, he has a penalty with the same value on all social interactions, the character's emotions and relational capacities being inhibited by the drug. Highly prized in scientific and technical environments, Heroseed is often used together with Blue Light. Once addicted,

a user needs a daily fix or suffers the shakes and nervous spasms, reducing his Reflexes and Dexterity scores by 1. The player should also note down every failure in a resistance check. As soon as that number goes beyond his Stamina plus his Willpower, he becomes insanely paranoid.

Kappa (poison)

Virulence: 20 (contact)

Effects: Skin pains and bleeding. Loss of 1D6 hit points per hour until an appropriate antidote is administered.

Lightning (poison)

Virulence: 16 (ingestion)

Effects: Total muscular paralysis in 2D6 turns followed by death from heart failure.

Striker (poison)

Virulence: 16 (injection)

Effects: Pains and headaches, progressive sight loss followed by loss of the other senses, loss of balance and of perspective. Coma after 24 hours.

Tear gas (poison)

Virulence: 20 (inhalation)

Effects: Irritation of the eyes and mucus membrane, coughing, suffocation. These effects can last for more than one hour. Rinsing with fresh water or using a countering agent can help recovery.

Diseases

In 2046, medicine and biotech allow the treatment of most diseases known at the beginning of the 21st Century. Nevertheless, others have appeared; including evolutions of old viruses and strange new pathogens more suited to the era. Cures are becoming harder to manufacture, as the International Blockade that Japan has suffered since the Kuro Incident forces the labs of Japan to do research isolated from the rest of the world's scientific community.

Kubota Syndrome

Virulence: 12 (one week)

Effects: First appearing shortly after the Kuro Incident, this syndrome seems connected to modern living conditions, since it seems to affect mainly people who have access to state-of-the-art technology. It manifests through a passionate delirium that leads to violent acts, irregular muscle spasms and a decay of the nervous system. After contracting the disease, the character must make a resistance check every week. If he fails he has an

attack. This attack lasts from between one minute and one hour, during which time the patient is extremely violent and sexually aggressive. After the attack he makes another resistance check. A new failure means the patient loses 1 point from one of his Characteristics (determined at random). He enters a vegetative state if any of his Characteristics drops to zero. There is currently no known treatment to this disease, the origins of which remain unknown. The infection seems to target organs at random without any apparent logic (liver, heart, lungs, kidneys, etc...). Only an organic implant replacing the infected organ blocks the disease's progression.

Virus SpR7*

Virulence: 12 /24 (through the air, every three days/daily)

Effects: This retrovirus exists in two forms, the 'culture' form and the 'enhanced' form. Genetically engineered, it was originally designed to be used for genetic therapy. In its basic (or culture) form (Virulence 10) it provokes nausea and intestinal internal bleeding (1D6 Hit Point loss per day). The enhanced form (Virulence 22) is a special genetic modification to match a specific genome, and thus a specific individual. The symptoms are the same, but more intense (3D6 hit point loss per day). Treatment against this form is also much less effective.

Contaminating Eruptive Dermatitis

Virulence: 16 (sexually transmissible / one month or one week)

Effects: This disease lies dormant for several months after contamination, showing no symptoms. After the first period, if a character fails the usual resistance check (except the first one that determines if the character has contracted it or not), the disease manifests itself. Meanwhile, the character might have contaminated other people. After the first symptoms appear, checks must be made every week. A failure means the permanent loss of 1D6 hit points. The character sees his body get covered in painful and ugly reddish skin eruptions. The feeling of burning is so intense that only a cold bath can ease his pain. The sick character also suffers a -1D6 penalty (rolling 1 fewer dice) on all his actions. Physical or mental actions are disturbed by constant suffering, and social actions suffer due to the unpleasant appearance of the patient.

HEALING AND TREATMENT

New technologies, especially nanochips, the advances in genetics in particular and science in general have benefited the medical sector. Doctors in 2046 Shin-Edo achieve true feats every day, some go as far to say true miracles. That is, of course, as long as the patient can afford it.

Natural Healing

The human body is a wonderful machine. Its natural self-repair and regenerating capabilities are still amazing, even when many environments and injuries can make healing difficult.

In optimal rest conditions, a wounded character can recover his Stamina divided by 2 rounding up (STA/2) in Hit Points per day. Each Serious Wound must be completely healed before the next one can really start healing.

Example: Bill's character had two Serious Wounds inflicted upon him in the last adventure and has a Stamina of 2 (1 Recovery Point). Thus he has a -2D penalty on all actions. The first nine Hit Points he recovers are enough to heal one of his Serious Wounds. So he now only has a -1D penalty. He must rest for another nine full days to heal the second Serious Wound.

If a character performs moderate activity (studying, walking) during convalescence, he just recovers Hit Points equivalent to his Stamina divided by 2 rounded up every two days (STA/2 every two days). In all other cases, natural healing is just 1 Hit Point per week. Some biochips that enhance hormone management and regulate vital functions can double Hit Point recovery if a character can obtain and fit them.

Emergency Care

Emergency care has also hugely evolved, whether in diagnostics or taking care of the wounded. A character who reaches a Hit Point total between zero and his Death Threshold needs immediate, professional medical care to stabilise his condition and be saved from certain death. A doctor or a competent paramedic must then make the appropriate check. The Target Number is 12 plus the wounded character's number of negative Hit Points. A success

means that the character's Hit Ppoint total is immediately restored to 1 and his condition is stabilised. If the roll fails, the character loses another Hit Point making it harder for another attempt to succeed. If no successful attempt can be made before the character reaches his Death Threshold, the character dies.

Example: Hiroshi has just been shot at point blank range. His Hit Point total is now -7. Any character wanting to stabilize him must make a Medicine (Emergency Treatment) check versus a TN of 19 (12 + 7).

ER miracles

Even for a dead character, all may not be lost. Professional emergency reanimation techniques and emergency interventions have been known to save lives in extreme conditions. If taken into the care of an ER team, an apparently dead character can have a real chance of returning to the world of the living.

The ER professionals then make a check versus a Target Number equalling 24 minus the character's Death Threshold plus the number of minutes between the declared death and their intervention. If they succeed, the character is reanimated and stabilised. His Hit Points are now his Death Threshold minus 1, but they will not slip down any further. He must now wait for natural healing to bring him back to consciousness.

Useful Medical Statistics

To make life easier for the Gamemaster, we present some average Skill Levels for medical professionals who might be treating wounded characters. These are an average though, so the ones that the player characters might meet could be better, or worse...

EMT (Paramedic)

Medicine 3 (Surgery 4, Emergency Treatment 9)

Nurse

Medicine 3 (Paediatrics 4, Pharmacology 6, Prosthetics 4, Emergency Treatment 5)

Doctor

Medicine 5 (Paediatrics 7, Pharmacology 7, Emergency Treatment 8)

Surgeon

Medicine 4 (Surgery 9, Paediatrics 6, Pharmacology 6, Prosthetics 6)

Example: When an armour-piercing bullet cut through her bulletproof vest, Keiko collapsed on the wet pavement. The shooter ran, but luckily for Keiko some passers called for help which quickly arrived on the scene. Keiko's DT is 8, and the medics start working some 7 minutes after clinical death was declared. The TN of the medic's Medicine (Emergency Treatment) Skill is 23 (24-8+7). If the medic makes the check, he succeeds in reanimating Keiko, who is now in a coma, but in a stable condition. Keiko's current Hit Points are now -7 (One Hit Point under her DT).

Medicine and Wounds

When in the hospital or under the care of a doctor, a character's chances of recovery increases significantly. The doctor must make a Check with a Target Number equal to half the Hit Points (rounding up) that his patient has lost. If successful, the Margin of Success is added to the Hit Points which are recovered naturally during the same period.

Medicine and Toxic Substances

This time the doctor rolls a Check versus a Target Number equal to the pathogen's Virulence. As above, the Margin of Success allows for a quicker recovery. Moreover, the symptoms will disappear in (6 - Stamina) days.

Medicine and Hit Points

Under no circumstances will emergency care or medicine raise a character's Hit Points to his maximum score. At least 1 Hit Point will have to be recovered solely by natural healing.

Medicine and New Technologies

Modern science and new technologies give medicine advanced techniques to treat patients.

High-performance means of making a diagnosis, most often based on nanotech, supplement a doctor's task. They can grant him a significant bonus to his Checks and so increase the Margin of Success and the patient's level of recovery.

Prosthetics allow the recovery of lost limbs and destroyed organs. This is still a very traumatising procedure. Even with complete rest, the patient can never recover naturally more than one Hit Point per day, though but the doctor's Success Margin still applies.

Brainchips that favour or regulate the chemical activity in the body also modify its defence capabilities against pathogens. Such an implant, and one completely dedicated for that purpose, allows a character's Stamina score to be doubled when making a Resistance Check.

There are also brainchips which act upon the body's secretion of endorphins. They allow a character equipped with one to ignore the first -1 caused by a Serious Wound.

EVOLUTION

In *Kuro*, characters learn and evolve throughout their adventures, acquiring experience and new understanding. At the end of each adventure, the Gamemaster can grant between 4 and 8 Experience Points (XP) to each player, depending on the intensity of the adventure and the difficulties that they faced. Thus, solving a minor inquiry, with no great impact over the following events or the habitants of Shin-Edo will generate 4 Experience Points. On the other hand, unmasking a nationwide conspiracy or destroying demonic creatures planning to take over the city or send a subway line into hell will generate 8 Experience Points.

Improvements

Experience points can be spent between adventures or saved up for a big improvement. They can be used to improve a character's Characteristics, Skill Areas and Specialisations as follows:

A Characteristic can be increased by spending as many Experience Points equal to 4 times the intended level. Thus to raise a character's Dexterity from 2 to 3, it is necessary to spend 12 Experience Points (3x4).

Obviously, it is impossible to skip levels, such as going from 1 straight to 3 in a Characteristic with this process. The character must first acquire a score of 2 (spending 8 Experience Points) before considering going to the next level. Increasing Characteristics is limited by the maximum possible for a human being. After raising a Characteristic, a player should remember to recalculate his character's Secondary Characteristics.

A Skill Area can be raised by spending as many Experience Points equal to twice the intended level. Thus to raise a

character's 'Firearms' Skill Area from 6 to 7, it is necessary to spend 14 Experience Points (2x7). Just like with Characteristics, it is impossible to raise the score beyond the next higher level through this process. So a character cannot go directly from a Firearms Level of 6 to 8. He must first acquire the level 7.

A Specialisation can be raised by spending as many points equal to the intended level. Thus to raise a character's 'Handguns' Specialization from 6 to 7, it is necessary to spend 7 Experience Points. Once again, the character cannot jump several levels in one go, he must progress one level at a time.

Skill Areas and Specialisations evolve independently. Improving a Specialisation does not raise the Skill Area it is based on. Conversely, increasing the level in a Skill Area does not raise its Specialisations either. Nevertheless, there is one exception: when the level of a Skill Area becomes higher than one of its dependant Specialisations. In this case the Specialisation is raised to match the Skill area. Thus, if a character's Firearms Skill Area increases to 7, but his Handguns Specialisation is only 6; the latter automatically goes up to 7.

Gimmiku

Some Specialisation levels allow the automatic acquisition of Gimmiku. When a character reaches that level he can choose a Gimmiku for that skill at no additional cost in experience points.

Gaining new skills and Specialisations

Acquired or accumulated points can also be used to develop new Skill Areas or Specializations. However the character should have some way to learn the new skill. Sometimes it may be possible to teach yourself, but often a tutor is required.

A new Skill Area can be acquired at level 1 by spending 15 Experience Points. Any prerequisites must be fulfilled. As a rule, acquiring a new Skill Area must be justified by the player, for example, by having the character learning under a master or from experience in a specific part of an adventure.

A new Specialisation can be developed by spending as many Experience Points equal to twice the next level in the Skill Area it is based on. Thus if a character wishes to develop a new 'Heavy Weapons' Specialisation while his Firearms Skill Area level is 4, he must spend 10 experience points (2x5) and receives the specialisation at level 5.

SHINAGAKI

We have spoken a lot about the tech of 2046, but what can you actually find to buy on the streets of Shin-Edo? This chapter details a variety of legal and not-so-legal weapons, gadgets and devices that the player characters can buy to equip themselves. It is up to the Gamemaster to decide what might be available (or affordable) to her player characters. However, many of the items listed here are quite ubiquitous in Shin-Edo, even during the International Blockade. Players should be warned though, that no matter how powerful their weapons or advanced their technology, few of these devices will save them when the darkness comes calling...

SHINJUKU ARMOURY

*“Frak! How do you deal with all this crap? Between the blockade, the things that tear apart people up at night and the increase in looting, I don’t think I can count on my kendo lessons to defend myself. What is the government waiting for to change the Gun Control laws? It is really hard to legally get a damn Taser and the yakuza make s***loads of money selling firearms! Damn it! I don’t feel like walking by the docks when I’m only carrying a simple bamboo stick!”*

-Yoshi, concerned citizen

The laws in Japan concerning the carrying of weapons have always been very strict, especially with regard to firearms. Of late, the country’s tight weapon control policies are being challenged,

as the population, scared by the blockade and supernatural rumours, no longer trust the government to see to their defence. However, the laws remain quite strict, even in the current climate. Owning a few swords and knives at home is generally accepted (if only for the sake of tradition), but no citizen can freely procure a gun or even a non-lethal sidearm. Even in 2046.

Apart from law enforcement agencies or the military, the rare Japanese citizens that own a gun or rifle permit are those practicing shooting sports and other competitions. In the main, this means that just a few executives and Genocrats own guns, but these must still be carefully registered, approved and checked annually by the police. So the player characters should not expect to find a gun shop at every corner, and those that they do find will not have bazookas or pump-action shotguns. Handguns, submachine guns and even non-lethal (magnetic or sonic) military-grade weapons are just plain forbidden. Most civilians are only able to acquire a few tear gas bombs or low powered electric Tasers to defend themselves.

Nevertheless, with the development of new technologies, weapons have evolved as well. While firearms are still popular, new methods of propulsion and bioengineering have been used in advanced weapons design. Now, small metal balls can be put through a metal plate with electromagnetic propulsion, and lasers can cut up a car like it was made of butter.

However, for most people, carrying any weapon that falls under Japan’s Gun Control laws is a serious offence, usually entailing a heavy fine, or even some jail time. Law enforcement agencies operate many scanning systems allowing them to detect the vibrations of a Shockgun hidden under your coat. There are also security androids and nanocreatures with many radiation, thermal, x-ray or infrared scanners.

Even with all of those regulations (or maybe because of them) the Yakuza and all kinds of Boryokudan have been running a thriving black market in illegal weapons for many years now. Weapon smuggling is one of the main activities of the crime syndicates. Feeling threatened? Cannot imagine facing an Oni carrying only a katana? Then you should make use of the Yakuza and the black market to procure a more 'efficient' weapon. Customers should be warned to expect very high prices, as the International Blockade has made smuggling from the USA and Russia particularly risky.

Below can be found a (non-exhaustive) list of the main lethal and non-lethal weapons available on the black market. Some are quite conventional equipment, others are prototypes currently reserved for elite units. Some are enough to stop a raging spirit for a few seconds, if you have no effective rituals, but they will also get you into a heap of trouble if you get too close to a police scanner.

Melee Weapons

There are several close combat weapons available to the characters. Most are illegal and risk attracting unwanted attention at best. Each weapon has a damage rating, and a Reaction adjustment. The Reaction adjustment is a modifier to the wielder's Reaction due to the elegance or clumsiness of the weapon. It adjusts the character's Reaction score for any roll made using the weapon in combat, most especially initiative.

Axes: More a tool than a weapon, an axe still has a devastating impact power.

Damage: 2D6+3, REA -2

Blackjacks: This includes both specific and improvised weapons used to inflict blunt force trauma on an opponent, such as baseball bats, crowbars, tonfa, electric batons, fencing sticks...

Damage: 1d6* (+2 for electric batons and fencing sticks), REA +0

*Electric batons and fencing sticks add 2 to the damage of a blackjack.

Flexible Weapons: This category groups chains and flails, weighted ropes and whips. While unwieldy, weapons like the *Nunchaku* become deadly in the hands of an expert.

Damage: 1D6+2, REA +1

Damage (Nunchaku): 2D6, REA +1

Knives: This category includes all short bladed weapons. It includes daggers, combat knives, tanto, and hatchets.

Damage 1D6+1, REA +1

Naginata: This is a kind of halberd with a curved blade on the end; it was traditionally used by samurai women to defend their homes.

Damage: 2D6+3, REA -1

Swords: Straight or curved-bladed, Japanese swords are renowned for the excellence of their manufacture, the result of a centuries-old and still living tradition. The traditional Japanese sword is the *Katana* which was carried by a samurai together with the shorter bladed *Wakizashi*, a pairing known as a *daisho*. The *Nodachi* is a larger and heavier version of the *Katana* meant to be wielded two-handed.

Damage (Katana): 2d6+2, REA +1

Damage (Wakizashi): 1d6+2, REA +1

Damage (Nodachi): 3D6, REA -2

Tetsubo: A heavy staff covered with iron studs or bands from the middle to the end. It is wielded one- (minimum 4 Strength) or two-handed depending on the size and the strength of the wielder.

Damage: 3D6, REA -1

Yari: A straight spear.

Damage: 2d6+2, REA -1

Unarmed Attacks: Attacks made against an opponent using the body rather than a weapon.

Punch Damage: Strength*, REA +2

Kick Damage: Strength +1, REA +1

Head Butt Damage: Strength +1, REA +0

*Knuckle-dusters or metal gloves add 2 to the damage of a punch.

Archaic missile weapons

This category includes all mechanical propulsion weapons, such as bows and crossbows. Refer to the weapons table for range and damage.

Throwing Weapons

This category includes all throwing weapons, from knives and shuriken to spears and grenades. Refer to the weapons table for range and damage.

Melee weapons

| | | |
|-------------------------|---------------|--------|
| Axe | Damage: 2D6+3 | REA -2 |
| Flexible Weapons | Damage: 1D6+2 | REA +1 |
| Nunchaku | Damage: 2D6 | REA +1 |
| Blackjack | Damage: 1d6* | REA +0 |
| Katana | Damage: 2d6+2 | REA +1 |
| Wakizachi | Damage: 1d6+2 | REA +1 |
| Knife | Damage: 1D6+1 | REA +1 |
| Nodachi | Damage: 3D6 | REA -2 |
| Naginata | Damage: 2D6+3 | REA -1 |
| Tetsubo | Damage: 3D6 | REA -1 |
| Yari | Damage: 2d6+2 | REA -1 |

*Electric batons and fencing sticks add 2 to the damage of a blackjack.

Unarmed Attacks

| | | |
|------------------|---------------------|--------|
| Punch | Damage: Strength* | REA +2 |
| Kick | Damage: Strength +1 | REA +1 |
| Head Butt | Damage: Strength +1 | REA +0 |

*Knuckle-dusters or metal gloves add 2 to the damage of a punch.

Ranged Weapons Table

| <i>Archaic missile weapons</i> | <i>S</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>L</i> | <i>E</i> | <i>Damage</i> |
|--------------------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------------------|
| Longbows, Composite Bows, Crossbows | 2-30 | 31-60 | 61-100 | 101-105 | 2D6+3 |
| Hunting Bows, Hand Crossbows | 2-20 | 21-40 | 41-60 | 61-80 | 2D6 |
| <i>Thrown Weapons</i> | <i>S</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>L</i> | <i>E</i> | <i>Damage</i> |
| Throwing Knives, Tanto, Kunai | 2-5 | 6-10 | 11-15 | 16-20 | 1D6+1 |
| Throwing Axes | 2-5 | 6-10 | 11-15 | 16-20 | 2D6 |
| Spears | 2-5 | 6-15 | 16-25 | 26-40 | 2D6 |
| Shuriken | 1-2 | 3-5 | 6-8 | 9-12 | 1D6 |
| Slings | 2-5 | 6-10 | 11-15 | 16-20 | 1D6+3 |
| Offensive grenades* | 0-10 | 11-20 | 21-30 | 31-40 | 2D6 (5metre radius) |
| Offensive grenades* | 0-10 | 11-20 | 21-30 | 31-40 | 6D6 (4 metre radius) |
| Improvised missiles | STR | STRx2 | STRx3 | STRx4 | 1D6 |

*Grenades do half damage if the target is behind solid cover.

Firearms

In 2046 firearms still exist, although they are tightly controlled on Japanese soil. More ergonomic, more powerful and lighter, they now use more complex payloads, from explosive bullets to biotech ammunition. Indeed, the ammunition often has far more properties than the weapon that fires it, like paralysation, anti-coagulation, nanoreactive and many more.

This vast category is divided into several sub-groups, from modern automatic weapons and modern magnetic propulsion guns to heavy weapons and early firearms from the turn of the century. Given the vast array of firearms available, the following gives a selection of general types and more specific weapons to suit all tastes. However, this list is by no means exhaustive.

Characteristics include type of weapon, damage, clip capacity and if it supports automatic fire (three or ten round burst). Type refers to the category of the weapon. Damage is its Damage Rating. Clip capacity tells you how many shots can be fired before the weapon requires reloading (assuming that it was fully loaded). If there is a yes under the entry for automatic fire, the weapon is capable of using the automatic fire combat option.

Revolvers: An early type of firearm in which the ammo is loaded into a cylinder in the centre of the weapon. Revolvers usually hold fewer shots than an automatic, but are more reliable.

Pistols: Semi-automatic firearms where the ammo is loaded into the handle as a clip. They are more prone to jamming than revolvers as they are more complex.

Early Guns: This covers any firearm manufactured before World War 2. Handguns are predominately revolvers, although pistols are not unknown, while rifles are single shot weapons that require each round to be fed into the breech from a small clip by working the bolt. Submachine guns and machine pistols provide an early, portable form of automatic fire. Both are capable of autofire.

Submachine Gun: A carbine (short rifle) capable of automatic fire. Not usually of a high calibre, so have been superseded by the assault rifle for military use. They are often now employed by urban tactical police units.

Longarms: Essentially rifles and shotguns. Hunting and sniper rifles do much the same job, but to different targets at different distances. Shotguns offer a wide dispersal pattern. Assault rifles are usually standard military issue.

Carrying a gun in Shin-Edo

Considering security devices (cameras, beams, retinal imprinting, nanoscanners, etc.) are somewhat more advanced in 2046, walking around a popular district in the capital while carrying a firearm is an almost suicidal option. As is always the case with technology, however, some ingenious minds always find a way to circumvent the current detection technology, forcing security devices to ceaselessly evolve as well.

Whether it is nanoscanner jammers, coats with plaslead-fibre pockets or weapons built around ceramic structures or in unexpected shapes to fool cameras, there are many solutions to the problem of carrying a handgun undetected.

Obviously, walking around a Chiyoda street while handling an assault rifle will end up with you being thrown on the floor by multiple Shockgun bursts, but carrying a well-hidden Gauss pistol in a working class neighbourhood is a lot easier.

The Gamemaster can make the characters' lives more complicated if she decides they that have not been careful enough or just wants to show the strictness of security in some parts of Shin-Edo. To help her out with such moments, the following is a list of the suggested percentile chances of being noticed by the authorities while carrying a weapon (without using any kind of 'shado' device to conceal):

Isolated Street / Small shop: 5%

Working-class district / Building with

Kaiso below 3: 10%

Shopping district / Shopping complex: 20%

Popular street / Shibuya-type District: 40%

Luxury shop / Business district: 60%

Kaiso 6 Building/Chiyoda Subway: 90%

The percentage chance of a weapon being detected can be lowered, or even completely annulled, by some of the devices described below.

9mm Palladium: This handgun is a 9mm American revolver often used by the Yakuza. With a light alloy cylinder that can carry up to 8 bullets, it can use all kinds of special ammunition. Some models are equipped with digital scanners that stop anyone other than their legitimate owner from using it.

| S | M | L | E | Damage | Clip | Auto |
|-----|------|-------|-------|--------|------|------|
| 0-5 | 6-20 | 21-40 | 41-60 | 3D6+1 | 8 | no |

Price New: 99,000 Yen

Price Black Market: 190,000 Yen

Daewoo DP600: Very popular on the black market, this handgun of Panasiatic design has a considerable stopping power. It has a clip capable of holding twenty 13mm bullets.

| S | M | L | E | Damage | Clip | Auto |
|-----|------|-------|-------|--------|------|------|
| 0-5 | 6-20 | 21-40 | 41-60 | 3D6+3 | 20 | no |

Price New: 100,000 Yen

Price Black Market: 160,000 Yen

Tombstone Shotgun: The poor, but fearsome reputation of this pump-action shotgun is built on the fact that it has two barrels rather than the traditional one, allowing the user to fire two cartridges at a time. Unfortunately, the ammunition feed mechanism does work effectively unless both barrels are empty, and if the user has fired one rather than both cartridges, the weapon has a tendency to jam, and thus has been responsible for some unfortunate 'accidents.' It was withdrawn from the Chinese market in 2024.

| S | M | L | E | Damage | Clip | Auto |
|------|-------|-------|-------|--------|------|------|
| 2-10 | 11-20 | 21-40 | 41-60 | 3D6+2* | 2/8 | no |

*Double shot 4D6+2

Price New: 200,000 Yen

Price Black Market: 250,000 Yen

Arisaka Type 800: This particularly fearsome submachine gun is the standard assault weapon of the Japanese special units. Using explosive bullets, it can cause heavy damage to personnel as well as to equipment and vehicles.

| S | M | L | E | Damage | Clip | Auto |
|------|-------|-------|--------|--------|-------|------|
| 0-10 | 11-30 | 31-60 | 61-100 | 3D6+2 | 20/30 | 3/10 |

Price New: 450,000 Yen

Price Black Market: 600,000 Yen

Sharpshooter MX: This sniper rifle is equipped with a macro telescopic sight which features everything that the user needs to lock into a target including thermal lenses, infrared, Helpsoft software* and targeting by eye movement. It also uses special

ammo, made of a polymer alloy, capable of hitting a target more than two kilometres away in clear space.

| S | M | L | E | Damage | Clip | Auto |
|-------|---------|----------|-----------|--------|------|------|
| 2-200 | 201-500 | 501-1000 | 1001-2500 | 3D6 | 2 | no |

*Helpsoft software grants a +2 Bonus to any shot, see page 130.

Price New: 410,000 Yen

Price Black Market: 710,000 Yen

Special Ammunition

There are several forms of special ammunition that can be loaded into a firearm, usually a pistol or rifle. A player character must specify what his weapon is loaded with before entering combat or the Gamemaster can rule you are only using standard ammunition.

Armour-piercing: Bullets with a hardened steel or tungsten alloy core and sharper points to help them punch through armour. The police take a very dim view of their use as they suggest an intention to kill rather than injure. Often called 'cop killers' as criminals use them to attack armoured police. Sold in boxes of 10.

Weapon Damage Bonus: Reduce the Armour Value of the target by three points, but reduce damage inflicted by three points as well.

Price Black Market: 40,000 Yen

Exo Steel Core: A bullet with a reactive metal core designed to penetrate thick armour, like those on exoskeletons. Sold in boxes of 10.

Weapon Damage Bonus: +2 vs. unarmoured individuals, +4 vs. armour

Price New: 20,000 Yen

Price Black Market: 32,000 Yen

Hollow Head: Streamlined hollow-point bullet with a bipolar core specifically designed to penetrate flexible polymer vests. Sold in boxes of 10.

Weapon Damage Bonus: +2 vs. flexible polymers

Price New: 35,000 Yen

Price Black Market: 55,000 Yen

Hollow Point: These bullets are designed to flatten and shatter on impact, greatly increasing the damage that they do, the fragments often remaining in the target, but significantly reducing their penetration ability. This 'controlled penetration' helps avoid collateral damage, such as punching through an aircraft wall or

Firearms

| <i>Handguns</i> | <i>S</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>L</i> | <i>E</i> | <i>Damage</i> | <i>Clip</i> | <i>Auto</i> |
|---------------------------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|---------------|-------------|-------------|
| Revolvers (small calibre) | 0-5 | 6-20 | 20-35 | 36-50 | 2D6+1 | 6 | no |
| Revolvers (large calibre) | 0-5 | 6-20 | 21-40 | 41-60 | 3D6+1 | 6 | no |
| Pistols (small calibre) | 0-5 | 6-20 | 20-35 | 36-50 | 2D6+2 | 12 | no |
| Pistols (large calibre) | 0-5 | 6-20 | 21-40 | 41-60 | 3D6+2 | 12 | no |
| Submachine guns | 0-10 | 11-30 | 31-60 | 61-100 | 2D6+2 | 20/30 | 3/10 |
| 9mm Palladium | 0-5 | 6-20 | 21-40 | 41-60 | 3D6+1 | 8 | no |
| Daewoo DP600 | 0-5 | 6-20 | 21-40 | 41-60 | 3D6+3 | 20 | no |
| <i>Early Guns</i> | <i>S</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>L</i> | <i>E</i> | <i>Damage</i> | <i>Clip</i> | <i>Auto</i> |
| Pistols (Revolver) | 0-5 | 6-15 | 16-25 | 26-40 | 2D6 | 8 | no |
| Rifles (Bolt Action) | 2-10 | 11-20 | 21-30 | 31-50 | 3D6 | 5 | no |
| Machine Pistols | 0-5 | 6-15 | 16-25 | 26-40 | 3D6 | 20 | 10 |
| <i>Longarms</i> | <i>S</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>L</i> | <i>E</i> | <i>Damage</i> | <i>Clip</i> | <i>Auto</i> |
| Hunting rifles | 2-10 | 11-20 | 20-40 | 41-60 | 3D6 | 2/3 | no |
| Pump-action shotguns | 2-10 | 11-20 | 21-40 | 41-60 | 3D6+2 | 2/8 | no |
| Carbines | 2-20 | 21-50 | 51-100 | 101-150 | 2D6+4 | 6 | no |
| Assault rifles | 2-20 | 21-50 | 51-100 | 101-250 | 3D6+4 | 15/30 | 3/10 |
| Sniper rifles | 2-200 | 201-500 | 501-1000 | 1001-2000 | 3D6 | 1 | no |
| Tombstone Shotgun | 2-10 | 11-20 | 21-40 | 41-60 | 3D6+2* | 2/8 | no |
| Arisaka Type 800 | 0-10 | 11-30 | 31-60 | 61-100 | 3D6+2 | 20/30 | 3/10 |
| Sharpshooter MX** | 2-200 | 201-500 | 501-1000 | 1001-2500 | 3D6 | 2 | no |

*Double shot 4D6+2

**Bonus: +2 to shooting by using Helpsoft

from bullets bouncing around a room. Sold in boxes of 10.
 Weapon Damage Bonus: +3 damage to an unarmoured target
 Price new: 20,000 Yen
 Black Market: 30,000 Yen

Light Wave Ammunition: Bullets with an electromagnetic charge designed to disrupt exoskeleton servomotors and stop skinsuit liquid metals from working. Sold as individual rounds.
 Weapon Damage Bonus: If the weapon causes at least one hit of damage, the armour is electrically damaged. Skinsuit protection is thereafter divided by two, and exoskeletons suffer -2 REA.
 Price New: 11,000 Yen
 Price Black Market: 25,000 Yen

Nano Glaser: A bullet that liberates 'dispersible' nanofragments upon impact to cause heavier damage. Sold in boxes of 10.
 Weapon Damage Bonus: +2
 Price New: 16,000 Yen
 Price Black Market: 30,000 Yen

Plastic: While they can hurt and even kill, these are technically non-lethal rounds. They are designed to stun and knockdown a target rather than inflict serious damage.
 Weapon Damage Bonus: Damage done by this ammunition is halved, but the target must make a Stamina Check vs. the unmodified (full) damage. If he fails he falls to the ground, prone.
 Price new: 10,000 Yen
 Black Market: 15,000 Yen

Virusu Ammunition: Hollow point chrome bullet designed to house a bacteriological payload (virus, toxin, etc.). Sold in boxes of 10.

Weapon Damage Bonus: Varies according to payload

Price New: 15,000 Yen

Price Black Market: 40,000 Yen

Gauss Weapons

Considered the state of the art in terms of projectile weaponry, Gauss Guns make use of a magnetic rail capable of propelling tiny projectiles in order to cause heavy damage. These projectiles are usually small chrome metal balls, but other models also shoot tiny blades or needles able to run a body through. The other advantage of a Gauss Gun is that with no explosive charge as a means of propellant, they are virtually silent when fired.

As Gauss Guns are based on magnetic power, they must be recharged regularly. For that reason their barrel and stock are usually equipped with voltaic and thermal sensors, and their holsters are designed to recharge from the energy released by the movements of their wearer. Whole shelves are filled with rechargers in the armouries of military units so they might quickly charge up their electromagnetic arsenal.

Fukuibari Magnet 'Undertaker': This streamlined magnetic handgun is designed to shoot 1.5cm metal spikes. These are kept in a double clip that can house one hundred projectiles.

| S | M | L | E | Damage | Clip | Auto |
|-----|------|-------|-------|--------|------|------|
| 0-5 | 6-20 | 21-40 | 41-60 | 4D6 | 100 | no |

Price New: 300,000 Yen

Price Black Market: 590,000 Yen

CZ Shark Teeth: This repeating Gauss Gun has the power of an assault rifle. Its Plexiglas clip, placed atop the rifle, is filled with hundreds of solid metal micro-balls. Its magnetic rail can propel these tiny balls at a rate of 20 balls/second, turning any target into micro-perforated Swiss cheese.

| S | M | L | E | Damage | Clip | Auto |
|------|-------|--------|---------|--------|------|------|
| 2-20 | 21-50 | 51-100 | 101-250 | 5D6 | 200 | 20 |

Price new: 600,000 Yen

Price Black Market: 900,000 Yen

Yato Tracer: This extremely easy to handle gun has no other purpose than to shoot nanotracers. As soon as the target is hit, the nanorobots lodge themselves under the target's skin and start

to work immediately. They can be easily detected with a laser and any GPS detection programme.

| S | M | L | E | Damage | Clip | Auto |
|-----|------|-------|-------|--------|------|------|
| 0-5 | 6-20 | 21-35 | 36-50 | 1D6 | 5 | no |

Price New: 450,000 Yen

Price Black Market: 650,000 Yen

Hakkotsu Rifle (Netbones®): Based on the Netbones® system (see below), this pistol has no trigger. It is activated by preset bone stimuli, like the position of the thumb, the arm or a jaw movement. Entirely built of biomaterials similar to ceramics, it is very light and difficult to detect. However, it has a rather low stopping power, shooting ceramic tiny balls using a nanomagnet rail.

| S | M | L | E | Damage | Clip | Auto |
|-----|------|-------|-------|--------|------|------|
| 0-5 | 6-20 | 21-40 | 41-60 | 3D6+3 | 12 | no |

Note: Requires a Netbones® biological network to be installed in the user's body to be used.

Price New: 900,000 Yen

Price Black Market: 1,300,000 Yen

Directed Energy Weapons

These weapons use energy instead of projectiles to do their work, such as sound waves, vibrations or laser beams. All require a considerable amount of power, far more than commonly available from power supplies such as photovoltaic scanners and the like. To work properly, they need dedicated independent power supplies, such as backpacks or portable batteries attached to the belt. These batteries must be recharged regularly to give the weapon optimum power.

Laser: The standard laser weapon is usually shaped like a shoulder rifle connected to an imposing backpack through a cable. The former encloses a cold fusion generator able to generate the power needed to make the weapon work. Many specialists consider the laser one of the most powerful assault weapons, albeit one that is limited in its use because of its power requirements. A portable laser is often able to cut up concrete and metal like sheets of paper.

| S | M | L | E | Damage | Clip | Auto |
|------|-------|--------|---------|--------|------|------|
| 2-20 | 21-50 | 51-100 | 101-250 | 7D6 | - | no |

Allows some thirty short-range shots or ten long-range before the pack needs recharging.

Price New: 15,000,000 Yen

Price Black Market: 30,000,000 Yen

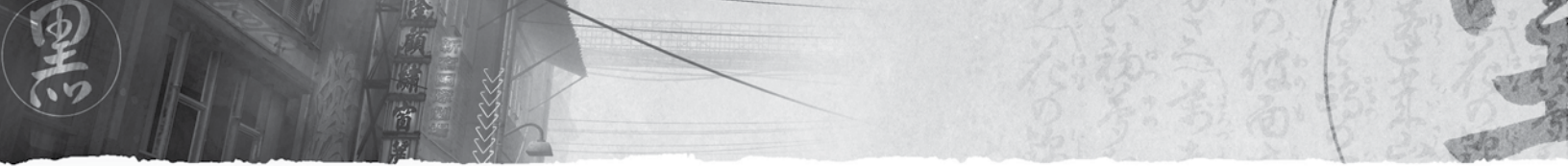
Special Ammunition

| <i>Ammunition</i> | <i>Weapon Damage Bonus</i> | <i>Price New</i> | <i>Price Black Market</i> |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|
| Armour-piercing | Reduce target's Armour Value by three. Reduce damage inflicted by three. | N/A | 40,000 Yen |
| Exo Steel Core | +2 vs. unarmoured individuals, +4 vs. armour | 20,000 Yen | 32,000 Yen |
| Hollow Head | +2 vs. flexible polymers | 35,000 Yen | 55,000 Yen |
| Hollow Point | If the target is not wearing armour or other form of protection, add +3 to damage. | 20,000 Yen | 30,000 Yen |
| Light Wave Ammunition | If the weapon causes at least one hit of damage, the armour is electrically damaged. Skinsuit protection is thereafter divided by two, and exoskeletons suffer -2 REA. | 11,000 Yen | 25,000 Yen |
| Nano Glaser | +2 | 16,000 Yen | 30,000 Yen |
| Plastic | Damage done by this ammunition is halved, but the target must make a Stamina Check vs. the unmodified (full) damage. If he fails he falls to the ground, prone. | 10,000 Yen | 15,000 Yen |
| Uirusu Cartridge | Varies according to payload | 15,000 Yen | 40,000 Yen |

Gauss Weapons

| <i>Weapon</i> | <i>S</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>L</i> | <i>E</i> | <i>Damage</i> | <i>Clip</i> | <i>Auto</i> |
|-------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|---------------|-------------|-------------|
| Fukuibari Magnet "Undertaker" | 0-5 | 6-20 | 21-40 | 41-60 | 4D6 | 100 | no |
| CZ Shark Teeth | 2-20 | 21-50 | 51-100 | 101-250 | 5D6 | 200 | no |
| Yato Tracer | 0-5 | 6-20 | 21-35 | 36-50 | 1D6 | 5 | no |
| Hakkotsu Rifle (Netbones©) | 0-5 | 6-20 | 21-40 | 41-60 | 3D6+3 | 12 | no |





UV Laser: With lower power requirements, the UV laser is a portable heavy shoulder cannon capable of ionising the air to generate an electric shock. It usually paralyses the target by electroshock and can inflict heavy damage to the eyes, as well as cause heart attacks.

| S | M | L | E | Damage | Clip | Auto |
|------|--------|---------|---------|--------|------|------|
| 2-50 | 51-100 | 101-250 | 151-300 | 5D6* | - | no |

*Can be used for stunning (see page 106).

Price New: 18,000,000 Yen

Price Black Market: 40,000,000 Yen

Ultrasound Cannon: This small device has a cone-shaped elongated barrel which projects high-pitched sounds at the target's ears. These sounds usually cause a paralysis or catatonic effect on the target, but can also lead to bleeding and brain damage with excessive exposure.

| S | M | L | E | Damage | Clip | Auto |
|------|-------|--------|---------|--------|------|------|
| 2-20 | 21-50 | 51-100 | 101-250 | 4D6+2* | - | no |

*Can be used for stunning (see page 106).

Price New: 9,000,000 Yen

Price Black Market: 16,000,000 Yen

Infrasound Cannon: Unlike ultrasounds, infrasounds are undetectable and are able to go through the walls of a building or a vehicle to hit their target. These longwave emissions cause biophysical effects like nausea, disorientation, vomiting and possible damage to internal organs (which with prolonged exposure can lead to the death of the target).

| S | M | L | E | Damage | Clip | Auto |
|------|-------|--------|---------|--------|------|------|
| 2-20 | 21-50 | 51-100 | 101-250 | 6D6* | - | no |

*Can be used for stunning (see page 106).

Price New: 20,000,000 Yen

Price Black Market: 50,000,000 Yen

Non-lethal Weapons

Japan has focussed a lot of its weapons development on non-lethal weapons in order to quell civil unrest without the use of deadly force. In 2046, most police officers only carry a Shockgun or other non-lethal arms during their regular duties. Non-lethal weapons are now so advanced that, for some, the notion of waging a victimless war is almost a reality.

This desire to solve conflicts without resorting to lethal violence has somewhat changed the relationship citizens have with violence. Law enforcement will do their best to stun you or defeat hostage takers with psycho-technological means. However, the Yakuza still murder their opponents in the middle of the street.

Antipersonnel non-lethal weapons are designed to neutralise individuals, alone or in groups. They are usually inefficient against electronics, vehicles or large objects. Anti-materiel non-lethal weapons are designed to disrupt the working order of a piece of equipment, a vehicle or any other inert material.

Taser: Very easy to use, a Taser is a simple baton capable of delivering an electroshock in order to stun an opponent.

| S | M | L | E | Damage | Clip | Auto |
|-----|------|-------|-------|--------|------|------|
| 0-5 | 6-10 | 11-15 | 16-20 | 4D6* | 6 | no |

*Stun damage (see page 106).

Price New: 33,000 Yen

Price Black Market: 40,000 Yen

Shockgun: The standard weapon for the Japanese police force, this high-tech pistol uses a magnetic coil to cause a shockwave. It is capable of violently knocking back an individual in order to stun or disarm him.

| S | M | L | E | Damage | Clip | Auto |
|-----|------|-------|-------|--------|------|------|
| 0-5 | 6-20 | 21-30 | 31-40 | 4D6* | - | no |

*Stun damage (see page 106).

Price New: 90,000 Yen

Price Black Market: 120,000 Yen



Shockgun Blaster: The 'rifle version' of the Shockgun, it looks like a pump-action shotgun with a kinetic charging stock. The 'pump-action' can be used (ideally after each shot) to charge the weapon up by making the barrel spin on its axis. The energy generated by this rotation is enough to charge up the barrel's magnetic coil.

| S | M | L | E | Damage | Clip | Auto |
|-----|------|-------|-------|--------|------|------|
| 0-5 | 6-20 | 21-40 | 51-60 | 5D6+1* | - | no |

*Stun damage (see page 106).

Price New: 200,000 Yen

Price Black Market: 500,000 Yen

Gel Cannon: Also known as a 'spider gun,' 'web cannon' or 'slime throwers,' this weapon, which consists of an imposing twin-barrelled canon connected to a backpack container, shoots a sticky substance at an opponent that literally glues them to the ground. Similar to chewing gum, this goo solidifies in a matter of seconds, entrapping the target in a hard to break sarcophagus. The substance is air permeable, allowing a victim to breathe, but excessive use has been known to cause suffocation.

| S | M | L | E | Damage | Clip | Auto |
|-----|------|-------|-------|--------|------|------|
| 0-5 | 6-10 | 11-15 | 16-20 | 5D6* | - | no |

*Paralysing damage. If the target does not succeed an Opposed Strength Check versus the weapon damage, he is unable to free himself.

Price New: 200,000 Yen

Price Black Market: 500,000 Yen

Electric Net: This is a three to four metre net made of nanocarbon fibres that emits 150-volt electric shocks whenever a victim trapped inside struggles to free himself. Only by remaining completely immobile will the entrapped victim avoid the painful shocks and even superficial burns, inflicted by the Electric Net.

| S | M | L | E | Damage | Clip | Auto |
|-----|-----|-----|------|--------|------|------|
| 1-2 | 3-5 | 6-8 | 9-10 | 4D6 | - | no |

*Stun damage (see page 106).

Price New: 100,000 Yen

Price Black Market: 150,000 Yen

Flashball: This short canon shoots a hard rubber ball in order to knock the wind out of an opponent or make him fall down.

| S | M | L | E | Damage | Clip | Auto |
|------|-------|-------|-------|--------|------|------|
| 2-20 | 21-40 | 41-60 | 61-80 | 3D6 | 5 | no |

*Stun damage (see page 106).

Price New: 60,000 Yen

Price Black Market: 130,000 Yen

MkGaz: MkGaz is an invisible hallucinogen kept inside gas-releasing grenades or cartridges. An individual breathing it acquires a particular behaviour pre-programmed into the nanoparticles inside the gas. It may be a 'flight' response, crying, extreme fright or terribly violent hallucinations. A MkGaz victim usually takes more than two hours to completely recover from the pre-programmed effects.

| S | M | L | E | Damage | Clip | Auto |
|------|-------|-------|-------|--------|------|------|
| 0-10 | 11-20 | 21-30 | 31-40 | 5D6* | - | - |

Area of effect: 20-metre radius. The victim must make an Opposed Willpower Check vs. the damage to escape the effects of the gas which will other last for approximately two hours.

Price New: 60,000 Yen

Price Black Market: 130,000 Yen

V2K (Voice to Skull): Based on the Netbones© technology, the V2K uses a pulsing microwave system that can transmit 'silent' sounds into the skull of a person or animal. The information can be transmitted as a voice or subliminal audio messages, and it has a powerful hypnotic effect of the target. Used initially in airports to scare away birds, the V2K is now used during hostage situations, often mounted as a cannon on the arm of an exoskeleton.

| S | M | L | E | Damage | Clip | Auto |
|------|-------|--------|---------|--------|------|------|
| 2-20 | 21-50 | 51-100 | 101-150 | 4D6+1* | - | - |

*The victim must pass an Opposed Willpower Check to resist.

Price New: 60,000 Yen

Price Black Market: 130,000 Yen

Holograms: Regularly used by the police, holograms are used particularly to create diversions or a psychological effect using different sounds or stimuli. Emitted from small projectors, and remotely controlled by a Pod, they allow a commando unit to make someone believe that one of them has penetrated a building, or create visions capable of scaring criminals (i.e., more troops arriving, a fire, an explosion, etc.)

Effects: Variable

Price New: 900,000 Yen

Price Black Market: 2,000,000 Yen

Rampaku: Based on the same organic fluid used in prison cells, Rampaku is a psychological product that inhibits any manifestation of emotion in a victim. Similar to egg white, it is shot by a portable canon inside plastic ammunition that breaks upon impact. Simple contact with Rampaku makes the target lose any willpower and feeling for a few minutes, instantly calming an enraged individual or a hysterical crowd. Unfortunately,

Directed Energy Weapons

| Weapon | S | M | L | E | Damage | Clip | Auto |
|--------------------|------|--------|---------|---------|--------|------|------|
| Laser | 2-20 | 21-50 | 51-100 | 101-250 | 7D6 | - | no |
| UV Laser * | 2-50 | 51-100 | 101-150 | 151-300 | 5D6 | - | no |
| Ultrasound Cannon* | 2-20 | 21-50 | 51-100 | 101-250 | 4D6+2* | - | no |
| Infrasound Cannon* | 2-20 | 21-50 | 51-100 | 101-250 | 6D6* | - | no |

*Can be used for stunning (see page 106).

Non-Lethal Weapons (Antipersonnel)

| Weapon | S | M | L | E | Damage | Clip | Auto |
|------------------|-----|------|-------|-------|--------|------|------|
| Taser | 0-5 | 6-10 | 11-15 | 16-20 | 4D6* | 6 | no |
| Shockgun | 0-5 | 6-20 | 21-30 | 31-40 | 4D6* | - | no |
| Shockgun Blaster | 0-5 | 6-20 | 21-40 | 51-60 | 5D6+1* | - | no |
| Gel Cannon | 0-5 | 6-10 | 11-15 | 16-20 | 5D6 | - | no |

Paralysing damage. If the target fails an Opposed Strength Check vs. the weapon damage, he is unable to free himself.

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------|------|-------|-------|-------|------|---|----|
| Electric Net | 1-2 | 3-5 | 6-8 | 9-10 | 4D6 | - | no |
| Flashball | 2-20 | 21-40 | 41-60 | 61-80 | 3D6* | 5 | no |
| MkGaz | 0-10 | 11-20 | 21-30 | 31-40 | 5D6* | - | - |

Area of effect: 20 meter radius. Victims must make an Opposed Willpower check vs. the damage to escape the effects.

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|------|-------|--------|---------|--------|---|---|
| V2K (Voice to Skull) | 2-20 | 21-50 | 51-100 | 101-150 | 4D6+1* | - | - |
|----------------------|------|-------|--------|---------|--------|---|---|

The victim must pass an Opposed Willpower check to resist.

| | | | | | | | |
|---------|------|-------|-------|-------|-----|---|---|
| Rampaku | 0-10 | 11-20 | 21-30 | 31-40 | 6D6 | - | - |
|---------|------|-------|-------|-------|-----|---|---|

The victim must pass an Opposed Willpower Check in order not to suffer the product's effects which last for 10 minutes.

*Stun damage (see page 106).

Non-Lethal Weapons (Antimateriel)

| Weapon | S | M | L | E | Damage | Clip | Auto |
|-------------|------|-------|--------|---------|--------|------|------|
| TachyonNuke | 2-20 | 21-50 | 51-100 | 101-150 | - | 10 | no |

Area of effect: 4 metre radius. Disruption duration: 5D6 minutes.

| | | | | | | | |
|--------|------|-------|-------|-------|----------|---|---|
| Switch | 0-10 | 11-20 | 21-30 | 31-40 | Special* | - | - |
|--------|------|-------|-------|-------|----------|---|---|

*Area of effect: 4 metre radius. Any electronics inside are fried.

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Dragonfly Drone | Damage: 2m area of effect. Any electronics touched is disrupted for 7D6 minutes. | | | | | | |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|

Rampaku only works by direct skin contact, being completely ineffective if the victim is wearing clothing or any suit covering the whole of his body.

| S | M | L | E | Damage | Clip | Auto |
|------|-------|-------|-------|--------|------|------|
| 0-10 | 11-20 | 21-30 | 31-40 | 6D6* | - | - |

*The victim must pass an Opposed Willpower Check in order not to suffer the product's effects which last for 10 minutes.

Price New: 1,200,000 Yen

Price Black Market: 3,500,000 Yen

TachyonNuke: At first sight, the TachyonNuke Rifle resembles a sort of short grenade launcher, with a screen over its stock. It shoots chromed tubes which function as magnetic jammers. When they explode, they release an electromagnetic powder across an area that can temporarily disrupt Pods, Gantai and laser transmissions.

| S | M | L | E | Damage | Clip | Auto |
|------|-------|--------|---------|--------|------|------|
| 2-20 | 21-50 | 51-100 | 101-150 | - | 10 | no |

Area of effect: 4 metre radius.

Disruption duration: 5D6 minutes.

Price New: 700,000 Yen

Price Black Market: 950,000 Yen

Switch: This long range electromagnetic grenade (unlike a TachyonNuke grenade) instantly and definitively fries any electronic or photonic material inside its area of effect.

| S | M | L | E | Damage | Clip | Auto |
|------|-------|-------|-------|--------|------|------|
| 0-10 | 11-20 | 21-30 | 31-40 | 31-40 | - | - |

*Area of effect: 4 metre radius. Any electronics inside are fried.

Price New: 90,000 Yen

Price Black Market: 200,000 Yen

Dragonfly Drone: Remotely piloted using Metabolomic visors or any kind of military Gantai, the dragonfly drone is a nanobot a few centimetres long that can be used to spy on your opponents using its onboard cameras. It also carries an electromagnetic generator that can disrupt the electronics on the spots where the dragonfly lands.

Area of effect: 2 metre radius. Any electronics touched are disrupted for 7D6 minutes.

Price New: 3,000,000 Yen

Price Black Market: 10,000,000 Yen

Heavy Weapons

Most heavy weapons are more imposing versions of some of the weaponry described in the previous pages. These weapons have a fearsome firepower and are usually placed on exoskeletons, waldoes and other military vehicles.

Machine Gun: A large belt fed firearm, usually mounted on a tripod or a vehicle, capable of covering a wide area with deadly, suppressive fire. Very messy, very noisy and absolutely deadly. Some versions are ironically called a 'mini-gun,' although this is actually because they compare with artillery. Interestingly, supplying a minigun with ammunition is often more expensive than the gun itself, as it fires so many bullets in such a short time.

| S | M | L | E | Damage | Clip | Auto |
|------|--------|---------|----------|--------|------|------|
| 2-50 | 51-200 | 201-500 | 501-1000 | 7D6 | 100 | 10 |

Price New: 15,400,000 Yen

Price Black Market: 20,000,000 Yen

Shockwave Canon: The 'artillery version' of Shockguns and the Switch grenade, this weapon is capable of turning a car over with its shockwave and destroying every photonic device around the point of impact. Very power-hungry, it usually needs to be supplied energy from a series of generators.

| S | M | L | E | Damage | Clip | Auto |
|------|-------|-------|--------|--------|------|------|
| 2-20 | 21-40 | 41-60 | 61-100 | 8D6+4* | 1 | no |

*Stun damage (see page 106). 3 metre radius.

Price New: 12,000,000 Yen

Price Black Market: 30,000,000 Yen

Thermal Wall: This microwave canon can shoot through concrete and metal and raise the temperature of a room, a human body, or even melt them. Its user can define the parameters and it can also be used for psychological purposes, such as rendering the heat inside a room unbearable. Otherwise, it is capable of reducing a battalion of soldiers to a set of corpses melted from the inside if used at full power.

| S | M | L | E | Damage | Clip | Auto |
|------|--------|---------|---------|--------|------|------|
| 2-50 | 51-200 | 200-250 | 201-800 | 7D6* | - | no |

*Can be used for stunning (see page 106). 10 metre radius.

Heavy Weapons

| Weapon | S | M | L | E | Damage | Clip | Auto |
|-------------------|------|--------|---------|----------|--------|------|------|
| Machine Guns | 2-50 | 51-100 | 201-500 | 501-1000 | 7D6 | 100 | 10 |
| Shockwave Cannon* | 2-20 | 21-40 | 41-60 | 61-100 | 8D6+4* | 1 | no |
| Thermal Wall* | 2-50 | 51-200 | 200-250 | 201-800 | 7D6* | - | no |
| Mini Bolt Cannon | 2-50 | 51-200 | 201-250 | 250-800 | 9D6* | 1000 | 50 |

*Can do Stun damage (see page 106) on a lower setting. Shockwave 3m radius, Mini Bolt 10 metre radius.

Price New: 15,000,000 Yen

Price Black Market: 40,000,000 Yen

Mini Bolt Cannon: This Gauss Cannon can be mounted on a light vehicle or installed in a waldo arm, or it can even be installed in the arm of an exoskeleton. With an imposing rotational canon, just like a minigun, it can shoot hundreds of metallic tiny balls in one minute.

| S | M | L | E | Damage | Clip | Auto |
|------|--------|---------|---------|--------|------|------|
| 2-50 | 51-200 | 201-250 | 250-800 | 9D6* | 1000 | 50 |

Price New: 10,000,000 Yen

Price Black Market: 45,000,000 Yen



Protection

If you are going to get into a fight, a little protection might save your life. A bullet-proof or Kevlar vest or even a simple leather jacket may lessen the efficacy of an attack. The following types of protection are the most commonly available, at least to law enforcers and military professionals. Each item has a protection value that reduces damage from each attack. While they are not especially bulky, only one form of protection can be worn at a time.

With the advent of biomaterials and new flexible alloys, bulletproof vests have reached the next level in their ability to absorb impacts and the most violent shocks. Flexible polymers (plastic sheets that harden on impact) offer security and lightness, both in bulletproof vests and even in some items of everyday clothing.

Besides these flexible protections, advances in prosthetics and exoskeleton technology have allowed the creation of suits that can improve on a human being's physical abilities. Where a skinsuit can offer a protective envelope and a slight improvement (strength, reflexes, anti-magnetic shielding and so on) through the carbon nanotubes covering its surface, military exoskeletons are formidable articulated armours able to withstand the most violent of shocks and capable of lifting heavy loads thanks to their nanoengine-powered robotic joints.

Finally, waldos are effectively huge robots controlled by a human pilot inside them. Most waldos are not designed for combat, but are used for transport and maintenance tasks. Despite this, the Japanese military is starting to use WaldoTanks with weapons instead of arms and an armoured casing that can withstand missile salvos.

Bulletproof Vests: Simple jackets or tabards that wrap around the torso. Some can be worn under clothes, but all look quite bulky.

Reinforced Kevlar Protection 6
Flexible Polymer Protection 8
*Liquid Metal** Protection 10

*Filled with liquid metal that hardens on impact thanks to the magnetic field produced by the moving projectile.

Shin-Edo Police Issue Special Unit Combat 'Skinsuit': Full body protective suit, complete with helmet and extra padding for the shoulders, elbows and knees. Mostly constructed of Kevlar and flexible polymers and available in several colours!

Light Version Protection 6
Strike Version Protection 8
Conflict Version Protection 10
(includes helmet)
*MagLine Skinsuit** Protection 12 (vs firearms)
Or 10 (vs magnetic weapons)

*Generates a magnetic field able to minimise the effects of projectiles fired from firearms and gauss weapons. The magnetic field also nullifies the shockwave effects.

Edge Suit: This whole-body suit was designed for bikers to give them maximum protection should they come off their vehicles. . It is double-layered with liquid-metal pockets which dilate upon impact to dampen the heavy shock of a crash or collision, much like a cushion or car air-bag.

Protection: 5
Bonus: None
Price New: 95,000 Yen
Price Black Market: -

Daimyo Skinsuit: The top of the MagLine Skinsuit range, this nanotech suit offers not only remarkable protection against traditional and magnetic weapons, but also physical improvements thanks to biomechanical elbow and kneepads. These noticeably improve the wearer's strength and speed using his own kinetic power (i.e., while running, power accumulates on the knee pads, which take over from the muscles). This skinsuit is used by elite law enforcement units.

Protection: 12 (firearms) / 10 (magnetic)
Bonus: +1 STR, +2 DEF, +3 REA
Price New: 450,000 Yen
Price Black Market: 650,000

Fractal Suit: This suit is made of a fibre able to refract light, rendering the wearer almost invisible. Only his movement can attract attention of the viewer. Its shape appears as a fluid, translucent silhouette.

Protection: 6 (firearms) / 8 (magnetic)
Bonus: 28 TN to be noticed
Price New: 2,500,000 Yen
Price Black Market: 5,000,000

Shogun 5.0 Exoskeleton: A perfect example of a combat exoskeleton, the Shogun is basically articulated armour, using servomotors to relay the muscle commands of its user. Like most protective suits of this kind, its helmet is equipped with a Jellyfish granting the operator command and control of any weapons it is equipped with. It is also installed with Helpsoft targeting software that considerably improves the operator's firing accuracy. It takes training to be able to use the suit properly, and more than one amateur user has found himself stuck in place or falling over with the slightest of movements.

Protection: 15
Bonus: +2 STR, +4 DEF, -2 REA
Weapons: Minibolt canon
Price New: 1,900,000 Yen
Price Black Market: 3,000,000 Yen

Solid Class Combat Waldo: Particularly impressive, this monumental three metre exoskeleton is like a jointed robot with a pilot inside its cockpit. The pilot can control the waldo's arms and legs like his own and directly command the guns and missiles by mental or optical control. Often used to back up high-risk operations, it carries state of the art weaponry.

Protection: 30
Bonus: +5 STR, -2 REA
Weapons: Shockwave canon, Minibolt canon
Price New: 30,000,000 Yen
Price Black Market: 10,000,000 Yen

Argyre Class Construction Waldo: This widely used oversized exoskeleton is unarmoured, consisting only of two huge jointed arms and legs. Equipped with pincers, it can carry loads of several tonnes and it is usually used as a construction machine. Some of them, when covered in alloy sheets for protection, are used for defence by some Kamata quarter gangs.

Protection: 10
Bonus: +5 STR, -2 REF, -2 REA
Price New: 5,000,000 Yen
Price Black Market: 6,600,000 Yen

Protection

Bullet-proof vests

| | |
|-------------------|---------------|
| Reinforced Kevlar | Protection 6 |
| Flexible Polymer | Protection 8 |
| Liquid Metal* | Protection 10 |

*Filled with liquid metal that hardens on impact thanks to the magnetic field produced by the moving projectile.

Shin Edo Police Issue: Special Unit Combat 'Skinsuit'

| | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Light Version | Protection 6 |
| Strike Version | Protection 8 |
| Conflict Version (includes helmet) | Protection 10 |
| MagLine Skinsuit* | Protection 12 (vs firearms) Protection 10 (vs magnetic weapons) |

Edge Suit

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Protection 5 | Bonus: no |
| Price new: 95,000 Yen / Black Market: 5,000,000 Yen | |

Daimyo Skinsuit

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Protection 12 (firearms) Protection 10 (magnetic) | Bonus: +1 STR, +2 DEF, +3 REA |
| Price new: 450,000 Yen / Black Market: 650,000 Yen | |

Fractal Suit

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Protection 6 (firearms) Protection 8 (magnetic) | Bonus: 28 TN to be noticed |
| Price new: 2,500,000 Yen / Black Market: 5,000,000 Yen | |

Shogun 5.0 Exoskeleton

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Protection 15 | Bonus: +5 STR, +4 DEF, -2 REA |
| Weapons: Minibolt Canon | |
| Price new: 1,900,000 Yen / Black Market: 3,000,000 Yen | |

Solid Class Combat Waldo

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Protection: 30 | Bonus: +5 STR, -2 REA |
| Weapons: Shockwave Canon, Minibolt Canon | |
| Price new: 30,000,000 Yen / Black Market: 10,000,000 Yen | |

Argyre Class Construction Waldo

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Protection: 10 | Bonus: +5 STR, -2 REF, -2 REA |
| Price new: 5,000,000 Yen / Black Market: 6,600,000 Yen | |

Shado

These are devices designed to conceal a weapon from environment scanners and other sorts of controls. Of course, these can only work for the most inconspicuous of weapons and armour. Canons, exoskeletons and lasers are far too bulky to fool anyone. This equipment is only available on the back market.

Ceramic holster

This relatively thick holster is made of a biomaterial impervious (like lead) to any x-ray scanner or metal detector. A weapon inside will remain undetected while passing through a gate. Nevertheless it can still be detected by chemical or thermal contrast scanners.

Bonus: 20% decrease in detection chances
Price (Black Market): 195,000 Yen

Nano Jammer

Doubtlessly the most efficient shado device, this small chip is placed directly on the gun and systematically jams all forms of detection (except for organic ones, like sniffer dogs).

Bonus: 30% decrease in detection chances
Price (Black Market): 195,000 Yen

Endothermal Jacket

One of the jacket's pockets is designed to carry a weapon around which the pocket generates a thermal effect, similar to body heat. The carried weapon is thus completely invisible to thermal detection.

Bonus: 10% decrease in detection chances
Price (Black Market): 80,000 Yen

Pulse Jammer

The pulse jammer is an older version of the nano jammer that just emits waves that disrupt the images of any scanner investigating the place where the gun is hidden. A trained eye will know that the indistinct black blot under your jacket actually hides a weapon, but it might give you enough time to run. The pulse jammer is shaped like a small metal emitter and placed with the weapon it is supposed to hide.

Bonus: 15% decrease in detection chances
Price (Black Market): 110,000 Yen

AKIHABARA SHOP

"Mr. Hiro, show me the list of debtors. Hum... I believe we should task our esteemed Yojimbo android to send a few messages in Roppongi quarter. I see here a group of labourers seem to have forgotten to repay us their loans for their recent lung implants. Let us refresh their memories. Oh, and spare the children. We must think on our future clients."

In a society where technology is found in every economic sector, most individuals have at least a Pod to communicate with his neighbours or to watch NeoWeb television programmes. Here can be found several examples of accessories, gadgets, vehicles and other 2046 objects common in many Shin-Edo households. From indispensable tools to completely useless, but very fashionable gadgets, there is enough here to personalise the player characters and the places or people that they meet on the way.

All of the items present in the following pages, whether computer equipment, nanotech or biotech implants, are presented with a description, a price and their Kaiso level. The latter is the recommended level of accessibility for that technology (some are only open to the Genocracy) and its average cost. A person wishing to possess a level 3 accessory, for example, will have no trouble if he has a Kaiso of 3 or higher.

In fact, luxury gadgets sometimes require a small fortune, and many people put themselves into terrible debt to acquire a 'must have' item. When a lower level character wishes to purchase a higher Kaiso item, he must succeed at an Opposed Kaiso Check versus the item's Kaiso. If failed, the item will remain impossible to acquire through normal means.

If the character succeeds, he can purchase the object of their dreams but, at the same time, will lose 1 Kaiso level (minimum 0). This represents the character's progressive debt and impoverishment due to the huge credit commitment.

Obviously, all of this (whether the purchase is legal or not) can offer the seed of a secondary plot or even a full scenario. After all, while the black market has very flexible credit terms, it is far harder to pay off, and has far more severe default penalties.

Hardware and Accessories

Sun-X-Rain® (Kaiso: 0 – 6):

The Sun-X-Rain clothing range is a bit experimental, but has already attracted the interest of both the public and many designers. This brand's clothes are made of a programmable fibre. Parameters are input through a nanochip hidden on top of the collar, which detects humidity rates, sun brightness, wind and temperature. Next, the chip sends preset instructions to the clothes and the fabric meshes tighten, swell or open, allowing for better ventilation.

If it is quite cold, or a light, continual drizzle falls, your sweater becomes waterproof. You board your Yamanote Evolve carriage and the many passengers already aboard mean that there is a stifling heat, the meshes in you clothing immediately enlarge, allowing your skin to breathe better. With the ever-changing Japanese weather patterns after the Kuro Incident, Sun-X-Rain is the perfect clothing. Unfortunately, for the moment, only a few models are available and many of them are in short supply, except that is for the jumpers.

It is said that some Yakuza are already thinking of ways to short-circuiting Sun-X-Rain programming. One fear is that they will re-programme the jumpers to strangle you because the collar tightens extremely fast at the first drops of rain.

Raincoat: 5800 Yen

Jumper: 4400 Yen

Trousers: 4600 Yen

Dress: 5200 Yen

Code-Clothes® (Kaiso: 0 – 6):

The original versions of this t-shirt brand could be programmed with a code, and would change colour in proximity to someone in another t-shirt using the same code. It was a popular way for people to meet and find each other in crowds, and wearers would even organise themselves in groups for fun or political demonstrations. The new versions of this range go much further. They can actually display messages, either your own or ones that you accept from other people. They can also display your mood by monitoring bio-signs and changing colour appropriately.

Criminals have already customised the shirts for their own use. These versions can send more discreet messages to another wearer, making their shirt slowly change colour, as they get closer to a particular person. In this way, organised drug dealers offer their merchandise through this coded communication. For instance, if you are wearing this kind of t-shirt and it slowly turns

green, that means someone in the neighbourhood can supply you with doses of Androspleen.

The clothing can also transmit data with subtle changes of colour. The shifting amplitudes and waveforms of these colour changes (often indiscernible to the naked eye) can be read as data by anyone using the right Gantai or similar receiver. This is the reason why law enforcement agents are currently equipped with Gantai that detect these tiny changes in colour.

Price: 6700 Yen

Helpsoft Learning Software (Kaiso: 0 – 6):

Originally this type of software, based on augmented reality, was dedicated to technical work and only available to the military to help them in their daily work. With this software the user makes use of a Pod and a Gantai, which by visual and vocal processes thoroughly analyses a problem. Thus when a mechanic faces a malfunctioning engine, he activates his software, which scans the engine. Then the Pod asks the user specific questions to find the correct procedure for repair. Finally, the software (with the help of graphic animations and mini-videos appearing in the user's field of vision) shows the user step-by-step, the means of solving the problem, or, at least, of further determining the cause.

It is a bit like having all the instructions to build the kit of a piece of furniture right in front of your eyes, together with support demos, big moving arrows and other icons and the answers to your questions. Obviously this kind of software made a killing in the public domain, by offering private individuals the necessary skills to solve those little daily worries, like cooking, electrical wiring, drawing, sewing and even simple robotics (such as troubleshooting a Puppetbot, for instance). Martial arts software has proved to be very popular, with no end to the titles available, each of which can teach the user self-defence (with a voluntary sparring partner) detailing exactly how and where to hit.

Of course, such devices have found other uses among the criminal community, like software that guides you when creating biotech drugs (which are by nature complex and fragile). Criminals and the military have also found the software useful for targeting as it can offer both an extremely accurate sighting system and detail the target's vital spots.

In game terms, using Helpsoft grants a bonus of +2 to any existing skill. If the skill is unknown to the user the software grants a skill level of 3.

Price: 22,000 to 250,000 depending on the software complexity

Pocket Bakemono® (Kaiso: 0 – 6):

This very popular game among children and teenagers, comes as a small casing that can be connected to your Pod and/or your Gantai. Heavily criticized by certain well-meaning institutions, it allows the player to raise the monster of his choice (kappa, oni, mujina, tengu among others) to feed it by making it hunt humans and to make it evolve by fighting the monsters of other players. Using a Gantai, you can watch your monster fight or run around the real world.

All this requires special attention: meals must be given every ten hours, more or less. An internal device allows the nearest players to be located so that you can remotely play and chat with them. Some parents already worry about seeing their children spending an inordinate amount of time caring for their creatures. Lately it seems these worries are not without good reason, as many Pocket Bakemono 'breeders' have been found in a catatonic state.

Price: 29,300 Yen

BeamSpy® (Kaiso: 0 – 6):

Do you ever wonder what your next-door neighbours are saying, beyond their glass windows? Load BeamSpy® into your Pod and point it in your chosen direction and BeamSpy® takes care of the rest. Your Pod will reproduce the conversation as if you were there. It even works through thin walls (a few centimetres thick) and almost any material (glass, plastic, paper, wood, etc.). A basic Pod has a range of 100 metres. Laser amplifiers can be added to increase the range to one kilometre! Be warned though, private ownership and use the BeamSpy® software is a criminal offence.

Price (Black Market): 140,000 Yen

Rage & Bone Guitar® (Kaiso: 1 – 6):

This guitar is the first of a whole new generation of musical instruments. Like current guitars, it has access to the net and can download and play certain music scores. It adjusts itself using voice commands according to the style you want to play and has plenty other options now widely in use.

The Rage & Bone Guitar® has a little something extra; it actually improves your playing. Using a similar technology to the Netbones© system, the guitar actually transmits data into your finger bones, helping to encode the best finger positions onto your very nervous system to get the best chords. Your metacarpal and other finger and arm bones integrate those corrections in an almost unconscious fashion, slowly turning you into a peerless guitar player. Soon you will be able to play the solos of Shiro Bunshikawa, leader of the Sotoroku band!

Price: 550,000 Yen

Plankton Silo (Kaiso: 0 – 6):

Among the objects present in many homes, plankton silos have pride of place in any kitchen. The term 'plankton' is misleading, since they are just algae aquariums. They come in all sorts of designs at a wide range of prices, and some include, thick chrome fountains or vertical trays the size of a child. With artificial lighting and advanced pumps, these basins are capable of producing beverages and/or food.

At their most basic, a Plankton Silo can produce water improved by micro-algae and enriched with nutrients, with this type of model commonly found in waiting rooms. They are also aquariums, which grow aquatic plants that can be consumed in soups or salads. Many specialised shops offer all that you need to grow your own algae at home, with a wide selection of species, with their own taste and even 'medicinal' qualities.

Price: 7,300 to 87,600 Yen (depending on the capacity and purpose)

Visual Mov'ment Kit® (Kaiso: 1 – 6):

This 'kit' consists of a soft contact lens and a small cylinder the size of a small matchbox. When the lens is placed over the user's eye and the cylinder is connected to a Pod, the user can control his home's domestic systems.

The access codes of all your home appliances and systems must be entered into the device. You also need to spend some time letting the system get used to your eye movements. Once set up you can adjust your TV set, change channels, increase the volume, vacuum the apartment, open your shutters or even open your garage and have your car roll down the driveway ready for you to leave the house, all without lifting a finger.

Obviously it was originally designed to be used by handicapped people, but it quickly became popular with all manner of couch potatoes. It is said that, if you wear two lenses at once, your apartment can become a remake of the broom ballet from Fantasia!

Price: 550,000 Yen

Naked Vision® (Kaiso: 0 – 6):

What would you say if you could see your colleagues, your female co-workers or even passers-by in their birthday suits? Equipped with this state-of-the-art form recognition and prediction programme, together with a huge reference database, you can! Naked Vision® uses two very high-resolution mini-cameras (which can easily and discreetly be installed in your Gantai), returning a live modified image. Dare to live your fantasies!

Well, that is what the marketing department says. The police on the other hand have declared such devices illegal.

Price (black market): 145,000 Yen

Love Music® (Kaiso: 0 – 6):

This chip is implanted in the back of the hand and offers the user a new musical experience. The chip's biometric sensors connect to a nanoprocessor and a large music database. Collecting data about the user's mood and following parameters previously set by the user (moods, music preferences, etc.) the system selects and plays music to suit the tastes of the user automatically, even songs you might never have heard before.

To do it, the software is itself connected to a considerable database of music tracks available through a very affordable subscription. Also, the user's location is used to determine local weather conditions, this information being factored into the musical choice.

Price: 410,000 Yen

SubVocalization® (Kaiso: 0 – 6):

Do people complain that you are too noisy when talking on the phone? Or do you need to be more discreet when calling your contacts? This little device (similar to a necklace) placed over the throat is exactly what you need. Form the words without pronouncing them and they will be understood and directly transmitted by your Pod or Gantai. It is the best way to 'speak silently' using this simple analysis of your articulation.

Price: 165,000 Yen

Virtual Child® (Kaiso: 0 – 6):

If you do not have procreation rights and/or you are incapable to give birth, the Virtual Child® is for you. Equipped with the latest advances in AI, this elaborate programme is like a real child, a newborn full of potential and eager to learn. You will be able to educate it as if it was a real baby. The Virtual Child can either be completely created by how you care for it, or chosen from a database made available by the designers. The basic programme is installed in a simple Pod with the basic Virtual option. However, it can be upgraded to the AR or 'Augmented Reality' version where (it can go anywhere and you can use a Gantai to interact with it as if it were almost real.

As you educate it, it becomes smarter, more reactive and will be as affectionate as a true child. It is also possible to transplant it in a more 'solid' shape, as its template and experience data files are totally compatible with most artificial bodies, clones and

androids available on the market today. Who said Pinocchio was just a story?

Price: 370,000 Yen

Chitin (Kaiso: 0 – 6):

Your Jellyfish no longer offers the virtual immersion you crave? Wish you could use a squid? Just for you, we have created Chitin, the ultimate stealth squid.

Chitin is not placed on the head, but instead at the base of the neck, descending along your spinal column. Very discreet, completely invisible under your clothes, you can now completely enjoy this wonderful immersive technology.

Nanoneedles insert themselves in your spinal column and cerebellum to create perfect osmosis. As Chitin inserts foreign bodies into your body, despite the anti-bacterial treatment that comes as standard we recommend using antiseptic creams and to never loan your Chitin another user. We are obliged to point out that a Chitin is completely illegal, and possibly dangerous to your health. But when you experience it you will see that it is worth the risk.

Price (Black Market): 610,000 Yen

Karaoke (Kaiso: 0 – 6):

Still fashionable, Karaoke is as much a part of Japanese culture, as sumo wrestling, baseball or K-1 kickboxing. These days several gadgets help to turn you into a singer, alone or with friends, and the gadgets continue to grow in numbers and their ability to improve your performances.

From a mike capable of modifying your voice to prevent you from singing out of tune to the holographic dancing machine or a complete karaoke stage equipped with a virtual orchestra, there are numerous accessories available, each capable of making you a singing star for a night! There are rumours of occultech karaoke, capable of changing your voice into a weapon or making your emotions visible to an external observer. Then there are the stories of a haunted old jukebox which randomly plays ancient vinyl records that always carry a special significance for the listener.

Price: 30,000-100,000 Yen

ELO (Electroluminescent Organic) Pod® (Kaiso: 1 – 6):

This portable computer from Intech Systems, took the photonic plasma system used in the Opticium computers' AIs and adapted it to smaller processors. These work like a processor

and a battery, storing the power in the photovoltaic bars and working like a primitive 'brain,' filled with basic commands. The principle of the ELO gives the Pod a slim-line design, and allows it to maintain many holograms that never fade and always remain completely visible, even in highly illuminated environments. Its organic tissues also allow it to respond to external stimuli, lowering its power consumption in low light, and it is continually connecting to the net, always updating its content.

Products equipped with a latest generation ELO are often compared to creatures from the depths, covered in diodes and strange 'electric' bluish tissues.

Price: 750,000 Yen

Lightyear Markers® (Kaiso: 0 – 6):

A simple projector in your pocket, a special marker in your hand, and you can draw in the open air or on a wall with luminescent lines. Using holographic technology, your sketch is generated by the projector and remains as long as you stay within 5 metres of it. This accessory is compatible with any Pod or projector, which can record your creations or allow you to draw over an image projected directly in thin air. This software has many options (copy/paste, crop, resize), allowing you to manipulate a holographic image the way you want to.

Price: 400,000 Yen

Flexible Thermal Battery (Kaiso: 0 – 6):

The size and the thickness of a playing card, this ultra-flexible thermal battery can be placed over the skin or clothing where it will sit and recharge on your body heat. Carrying a dozen such batteries on you, in a day you will have stored enough energy to power a Pod for four continuous hours. Shock resistant and with a working life of over 20 years, flexible batteries can be connected together and then to an appliance or can discharge their power into a central accumulator which might be linked to several devices.

Price: 3,000 Yen (unit), 50,000 Yen (accumulator)

Shoes (Kaiso: 0 – 6):

Just like clothing, shoes have also taken advantage of the many technological advances. These include the 'Liquidproof' range with their watertight coating that keeps the wearer's feet dry in any environment; the 'Walkmaps' line which have an integrated GPS system, so the distance you have walked and your location are transmitted directly to your Pod and Gantai; and finally, the 'Cityboots' range that help you navigate in the city by rocking your feet, literally guiding you through a Netbones© network.

Liquidproof: 26,000 Yen
Walkmaps: 44,000 Yen
Cityboots: 154,000 Yen

Virtual Games and 'Black Jack' (Kaiso: 0 – 6):

The number of virtual and immersive games that have invaded the market for the past ten years or so are countless. The most popular in 2045 was 'Premium Golf Japan,' a particularly realistic golfing game. You only need to place a Jellyfish on your head and your apartment becomes a green golf course, superimposed on your walls and furniture. All your movements are detected by the Jellyfish and analysed in order to allow you to wield a virtual golf club just like it was a real one. You can even 'walk without moving' to go from one hole to the next.

Besides this gaming software, the black market also offers an incredible array of 'Black Jacks.' These are violent 'snuff' movies created by means of a Squid. They promise all manner of vicarious thrills, 'unique' sensations and visions of horror. Many also offer (together with a lot of hyperbole and other marketing lies) interesting clues as to a lot of unexplained criminal trivia.

Virtual Game: 22,000 Yen

Black Jack (Black Market): 35,000 Yen

Air Photocatalyst (Kaiso: 1 – 6):

Despite numerous worldwide efforts to try and combat pollution, the air in most major urban sprawls is still subject to ozone spikes and can prove mildly toxic to more fragile individuals. With the recently built atmospheric processors having so far proven to be ineffective, most Shin-Edo inhabitants now use air photocatalysts. A number of these can be found in the centre of the city and in the most important buildings. Generally, a photocatalyst resembles a flat air conditioner, which is essentially what it is. However it is capable of purifying the air, without generating any toxic discharge or consuming excessive power. The Japanese also sometimes use micro-catalysts in the form of transparent masks, when the air in the city becomes less breathable.

Home Photocatalyst: 750,000 Yen

Mask: 180,000 Yen

Electric Nanogenerator (Kaiso: 0 – 6):

With black outs becoming more and more frequent across Japan, some companies have developed small auxiliary generators that run on different recycled materials. They were designed to work when power fails, replacing (for an absolute maximum of two hours) the electrical system of a single storey dwelling or a group of industrial devices. Unfortunately, their efficiency leaves a lot to be desired and many electromagnetic failures also affect

these spare generators (although no-one really knows the exact reason why they do).

Price: 230,000 Yen

Holographic Projector (Kaiso: 1 – 6):

Quite fashionable in recent years, but often prohibitively expensive, a holo projector allows the projection of a 3D movie. While the objects and scenery remain two dimensional, the actors in the movie can come out of the background as holograms and perform in front of you as they walk around the room where you are. What could be more immersive than being in the heart of the action without having to resort to using a Jellyfish?

Personal camscopes are also available, allowing you to direct your own family movies that are completely compatible with the projector.

Rumours suggest that in a specific movie, called ‘Hokkaido Death,’ the characters’ holograms have actually hurt people, their weapons hitting real blows inside the projection space. Pirated copies of the film are often sold on the black markets as the ‘ultimate experience.’

Price: 1,650,000 Yen

Transport

Rora Blades® (Kaiso: 1 – 6):

Having arrived on the market in February, 2046, Rora Blades are now a veritable public craze, which has only increased their price as they became scarcer due to the International Blockade. An American brand, these roller-skates are equipped with a light MagnetoDynamique device, allowing the wearer to ‘skate’ without any wheels, hovering 10 cm above the ground. The advantage of the Rora Blades® is that they look exactly like ordinary design shoes up until the moment they are activated and become magnetic skates. Be careful, though. With the blackouts and other disruptions after the Kuro Incident, falls are a certainty.

Price: 1,130,000 Yen

Mitsubishi EPX-800 “Kayuma” Hovercraft (Kaiso: 2 – 6):

This hovercraft from the Mitsubishi Proto Drive series is one of the most common cars in Shin-Edo. Moving over an air cushion, powered by biomass, it combines sexy curbs, comfort and room. It includes the latest options, like auto-guidance, carbon-injection in case of accident, a touch screen, an on-board photonic connection, and also a rainproof windscreen. Thanks to

its folding and removable seats, designed by Isho Fumaki, it can carry up to ten people in a cosy room area, with a small table in the middle offering virtual games and a holographic screen.

Price: 7,000,000

Yamaha Midnight Vision (Kaiso: 2 – 6):

This bullet shaped hoverbike has a unique shape, resembling two cut cockpits soldered together, and is equipped with the latest Yamaha Xenofluid MagnetoDynamique engine. It allows this two-seater bike to reach a height of fifteen metres in constant flight, at speeds reaching 150 km/h. Its radio guidance system allows it to scan for obstacles ahead in order to avoid them, even at top speed. In case of malfunction the Yamaha Midnight has a spare air cushion engine and an automatic beacon that immediately calls for help in case of major malfunction or accident. The integrated Helpsoft software allows the driver to improve his driving skills and introduces him to all the best ways to get the most out of the Midnight Vision’s capabilities.

Price: 6,500,000

Robotics

The greatest factor in differentiating between robots is not their intrinsic capabilities, but more a factor of their Artificial Intelligence (or AI). The AI of each type of machine is often very different, due mainly to their function and operational uses.

A Puppetbot or a labourer android, for instance, has a simplistic AI Template and little ability to improvise beyond their basic programming. It is this last point that makes all the difference. Even if a Puppetbot is naturally less intelligent than an artificial (simple photonic processor, limited memory, restricted movement capabilities due to its shape), but it is mostly the fact that it can’t improvise very much or learn from its mistakes, that makes them less intelligent than higher class robots. The more an AI is developed, the more it allows a machine to improvise and continually improve through experience.

Hacking templates and overclocking allow these natural limitations, these imposed ‘Laws of Robotics,’ to be broken (or at least bent). A hacked Puppetbot is unlikely to consider any metaphysical questions about its own existence, its AI is still limited, but it immediately becomes able to circumvent obstacles and make its own decisions. People often speak of free will in these circumstances. The more human-like a robot (like a Gynoid or a biodroid) the more we consider the notion of conscience in the machine-- its ‘Ghost.’

Hardware and Accessories

| <i>Item</i> | <i>Kaiso</i> | <i>Price</i> |
|-------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sun-X-Rain | 0-6 | Raincoat: 5800 Yen Jumper: 4400 Yen Trousers: 4600 Yen Dress: 5200 Yen |
| Code-Clothes* | 0-6 | 6700 Yen |
| Helpsoft software | 0-6 | 22,000 to 250,000 Yen |
| Pocket Bakemono* | 0-6 | 29,300 Yen |
| BeamSpy* | 0-6 | (black market): 140,000 Yen |
| Rage & Bone Guitar* | 1-6 | 550,000 Yen |
| Plankton silo | 0-6 | 7,300 to 87,600 Yen |
| Visual Mov'ment kit | 1-6 | 550,000 Yen |
| Naked Vision* | 0-6 | (black market): 145,000 Yen |
| Love Music | 0-6 | 410,000 Yen |
| SubVocalization | 0-6 | 165,000 Yen |
| Virtual Child* | 0-6 | 370,000 Yen |
| Chitin | 0-6 | (black market): 610,000 Yen |
| Karaoke | 0-6 | 20,000-80,000 Yen |
| ELO Pod* | 1-6 | 750,000 Yen |
| Lightyear Markers* | 0-6 | 400,000 Yen |
| Flexible thermal battery | 0-6 | 3,000 Yen (unit) 50,000 Yen (accumulator) |
| Shoes | 0-6 | Liquidproof: 26,000 Yen Walkmaps: 44,000 Yen Cityboots: 154,000 Yen |
| Virtual games & 'Black Jacks' | 0-6 | Virtual game: 22,000 Yen Black Jack (black market): 35,000 Yen |
| Air Photocatalyst | 1-6 | Home photocatalyst: 750,000 Yen Mask: 180,000 Yen |
| Electric Nanogenerator | 0-6 | 230,000 Yen |
| Holographic Projector | 1-6 | 1,650,000 Yen |

Transport

| <i>Item</i> | <i>Kaiso</i> | <i>Price</i> |
|------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Rora Blades | 1-6 | 1,130,000 Yen |
| Kayuma Hovercraft | 2-6 | 7,000,000 Yen |
| Yamaha Midnight Vision | 2-6 | 6,500,000 Yen |

AI

Replacing the usual Intelligence characteristic, all machines have an AI characteristic, representing the robot's capacities for understanding and adapting. When it is confronted with a situation not in line with its function and skills (determined by its Template) it must make a check using this characteristic. If the roll fails, the robot is unable to overcome the problem and, generally, will just stop or move on to another. On the other hand, if the roll is a success, its Artificial Intelligence has managed to improvise and learn how to solve the problem. It can then begin to develop a new skill at 1 on the subject, thereby circumventing the template. This acquisition allows the progressive improvement of the AI score. After 5 new skills have developed in this way, the artificial's AI score increases by 1. Increasing scores in Skill Areas or Specializations that the robot already has do not affect its AI, as the robot is just refining the skills already managed by its Template.

Nevertheless, in order to avoid this uncontrolled evolution, the Template is there to lock this progression. Made up of a strict set of directives, a body of behavioural and operation rules, the Template is a lock limiting the progression of Artificial Intelligence. Also having a score from one to six, it limits the top score the machine can attain in AI.

A Puppetbot with an AI score of 1 and a 'Nanny' Template of 1 will thus never be able to modify itself or really improve. Except, obviously, if an Overclocker unlocks the template, changing its score and/or the functions it affects. After acquiring an Artificial Intelligence of 2, a robot risks developing a 'Ghost' with every new skill it acquires.

This Ghost is considered the parallel to a spirit or soul in the machine; it allows introspection and remorse, even an understanding of life and death. This last point is essential, because as soon as an android realises that it is a living being, that it is nothing more than a servant (or even slave) and that its death has no importance to humans, it sometimes adopts deviant, even dissident behaviour. These can go from simple escape attempts, to an extremely developed survival instinct, which can drive the android to the worst extremes.

But what about the three Laws of Robotics?

For older generation (OG - before 2040) artificials, it is simple. They are programmed to recognise a human being. For these artificials, a human is a being, animated or not, with a humanoid shape, releasing heat (between 30°C and 45°C, a range explained by the doubtful reliability and the non-optimal conditions of measurement) and with a complexion (colour histograms are entered into its database showcasing the whole range of human colour). When a robot recognises a human, it either avoids them outright or it is obliged to weakly interact with them, minimising all possible direct contact. Moreover, if the human being attempts any hostile action against it, the artificial will run away or stay in place, withstanding the damage. It is quite possible that an OG artificial will usually detect a new generation artificial as a human being.

For the latest generation artificials, the question is more difficult as they are often required to interact with humans regularly. The OG scanning mechanism is not enough, although it is also implemented in the robot's artificial intelligence. These new androids use scanners to detect a wide and very accurate series of vital signs. Using an onboard Pod the robot can scan a human's basic vital signs. Doppler Effect telemetry can be used to detect blood flow if it cannot access the Pod; there is also nanoink or organic chip detection, breathing and voice tone scanning. When a new generation artificial detects anomalies in the data that seems to match a risk for humans, it will do anything possible to make those anomalies disappear within the limits of its programming. This can cause unexpected, even comical situations and actions, like a welcome hostess capable of applying CPR or an artificial servant making you spit out the peanut you were choking on.

Of course, all this is part of the artificial's deepest level of coding; it lies right inside the hardware, in the very structure and centre of the machine. So it is very difficult to remotely manipulate these functions. If you wish to do it, you must be in physical contact with the artificial in order to hack its system.

Of course, it is possible to circumvent these limitations, but never discreetly. The different manufacturers do their best to make their machines in such a way that every alteration at this level would render the artificial inoperative, but unfortunately it would mean a considerable drop in sales. Some Overclockers are able to work at this level, not to simply alter the machine's 'mentality' and functions, but to turn it into a sophisticated killer.

Puppetbot (Kaiso: 0 – 6):

The entry level in robotics, Puppetbots always have limited AI and Templates. Designed as toys for children, to clean floors, to take care of cloned animals or cooking, they generally have a non-humanoid shape (round, square, wheeled, multiple arms...) and their scope is limited to an individual home.

Price: 220,000 Yen

Yojimbo - Artificial (Kaiso: 2 – 6):

A two metre high skeleton, built up in the shape of a tough, humourless man, the Yojimbo is an artificial bodyguard. Equipped with a security template, it is the master of a dozen combat techniques, from aikido to gun-combat. Its programming forbids it to kill any human being as long as its master's survival

is not at stake. Nevertheless it has the capacity to neutralize an opponent in a non-lethal fashion through pressure points and even breaking the right bones.

Its skin is equipped with a flexible polymer epidermis, rendering it resistant to many kinds of blows and impacts. Note that the most recent models carry 13 on-board weapons hidden around their bodies such as: tanto, shuriken, brass knuckles and even a small calibre pistol.

Price: 1,850,000 Yen

Kusanagi - Artificial (Kaiso: 2 – 6):

Why bother training in a dojo with an elderly killjoy steeped in tradition? The Kusanagi is a true expert in the art of Kendo and will teach you the best techniques in the time and place of your choosing. No more constraints on your training and soon you will be able to become one of the best swordsmen in the world.

There is also a Musashi Template that, besides teaching you Kenjutsu techniques, will infuse you with the wisdom of bushido and the 'Go Rin No Sho' (Book of Five Rings).

'Yojimbo' Robot Bodyguard

Template – Humourless Protector

| | | | |
|--------|-------|--------|-------|
| DEX 5 | STR 5 | STA 5 | REF 5 |
| AI 2 | PER 5 | CHA 1 | WIL 5 |
| HIT 75 | SW 25 | DT -25 | |
| DEF 30 | ACT 3 | MOV 5 | REA 6 |

Combat Skills

- Hand-to-Hand 5
- Martial Arts 7 (Specialist)
- Firearms 5
- Handguns 7 (Mastery)
- Magnetic guns 7 (Mastery)
- Melee Weapons 5
- Swords (Katana) 7 (Mastery)

General Skills

- Athletics 5
- Acrobatics 7 (Mastery)
- Dodge 7 (Mastery)
- Running 6 (Boost)
- Drive 4
- Investigation 2
- Interrogation 4
- Survival 2
- First Aid 6 (Mastery)

We also have the following models available:

- * Yokozuna for the art of Sumo
- * Funakoshi for Karate
- * GastonLenotre for Cooking (where the teacher also functions as a cooking bot)

Price: From 1,000,000 to 2,500,000 Yen according to the model

LoveBot (Kaiso: 2 – 6):

What a terrific lover! It lasts for as long as you like and includes several preset behaviours: dominator, Latin charmer, tender and lovestruck ingénue, plus there are many others available in our catalogue! If you are married, no problem, it is not a human being, just an object for your amusement.

No cheating, you can satisfy your needs with peace of mind! Models come in both genders, with all manner of size options available as well as integral lubrication and self-cleaning systems as standard. The tongue and sex organs are so well designed that you will think that they are real. Contact us for more exotic models.

Price: 1,200,000 Yen

Senworth (Kaiso: 2 – 6):

This butler robot has several Templates available, from the English butler to the French maid.* It will go shopping, manage your time, wash, do the laundry, and will perform several time saving tasks, freeing your day from drudgery. If you do not have a cleaning Puppetbot, it will even clean the house!

*French maid model can include other functions as well. Call for details.

Price: 1,600,000 Yen

Biodroid Replicant (Kaiso: 5 – 6):

Few people are even able to tell a Replicant from a human being. With a body of flesh and blood, only its positron brain makes different from one of us. Particularly expensive, biodroids are perfect human beings, often with an especially developed artificial intelligence locked to no Template. More and more common among the Genocracy, industry and some particularly fortunate crime syndicates, biodroids can 'replace' a person that might have 'disappeared' (possibly to the bottom of Shin-Edo bay) or even serve as the perfect escort girl. Unfortunately, some are so real that they often become victims of their 'Ghost', driving them to find a reason for their existence, as well as a past (like the exact origin of their biological body).

Price: 10,000,000 Yen

NanoSwarms

By 'swarm' we mean a set of small sized robots working in concert, just like a hive or anthill. In each swarm there is an alpha leader. The nanorobots in the swarm synchronize with the alpha's behaviour through the beta leaders placed in different areas of the swarm so that the swarm can act both locally and globally. Communication between the members of the swarm is made through either radio waves (WiFi) or laser. There are even bio-swarms capable of communicating by odour or sound. Swarms can be used for different purposes including weapons (metal devourers), anti-pollutants, medical analysers, spies, custodians and even moving works of art.

Hacking a swarm

If an alpha leader is destroyed, another member immediately takes its place (a random choice, modified by the member's condition: i.e., no leader will be chosen from among damaged swarm members). The only means of hacking a swarm is to introduce a personally controlled member that is capable of making itself the alpha. Thus you can control the whole swarm. To render a swarm inoperative, it is enough to introduce a reverse synchronization between two swarm members, essentially jamming their ability to communicate and co-ordinate.

HiveLook Appearance Jammer (Kaiso: 4 – 6):

If you want to change appearance, it is easy to undergo a little surgery or to project a hologram over yourself. Nevertheless, if you want to keep your face intact, but you want to hide it from the advanced eyes of the machines and fool the living, the best solution is HiveLook. A robot swarm moves around your body projecting extremely realistic holograms.

Because of its very structure, the swarm hides you from machines (not from any anomaly detection programming, though) and makes you look different to your peers.

Price: 4,000,000 Yen

Queen (Swarm Controller) (Kaiso: 3 – 6):

A Queen is what you need to get rid of bothersome swarms. This nanorobot is equipped with the best robot swarm hacking technologies, including WiFi and laser technology, and can either jam or attempt to take control of most swarms. However, it is much less effective when attempting to jam or control bioswarms.

Price: 1,000,000 Yen

Robotics

| <i>Item</i> | <i>Kaiso</i> | <i>Price</i> |
|-----------------------|--------------|---------------------------------|
| Puppetbot | 0-6 | 200,000 Yen |
| Yojimbo – Artificial | 2-6 | 1,850,000 Yen |
| Kusanagi – Artificial | 2-6 | from 1,000,000 to 2,500,000 Yen |
| LoveBot | 2-6 | 1,200,000 Yen |
| Senworth | 2-6 | 1,600,000 Yen |
| Biodroid Replicant | 5-6 | 10,000,000 Yen |

Swarms

| <i>Item</i> | <i>Kaiso</i> | <i>Price</i> |
|----------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| HiveLook Appearance Jammer | 4-6 | 4,000,000 Yen |
| Queen (swarm controller) | 3-6 | 1,000,000 Yen |

SHIBUYA LABORATORY

“Obviously our most advanced products are not within reach of everyone. We have treatment and operations with level 6 accreditation in the ground floor of our building. However, we also have a catalogue for the humblest of homes. Has your wife ever dreamed of skin with an eternal tan? Perhaps never-breaking nails?”

Transplants, implants, genetic modifications, nanorobots in the blood, almost anything now seems possible as long as you have the means. Immortality itself is within reach, with the help of mind transfusions and cloning that allow the Genocracy to move through the ages as they watch the world from their huge, tightly secured complexes.

Biotechnology

Organic implant (Kaiso: 2 – 6):

There is nothing as efficient as replacing a worn or sick organ with a new, completely compatible one. Often reinforced with slight cellular and genetic improvements, the new organ is designed in a growth vat and collected from inert clones specifically designed as universal donors.

Whether it is a new liver, lungs, spleen or a heart, everything is possible, but even today it requires some financial investment. In order to help the waiting applicants, the Japanese State has set up a ‘new organ donation’ policy that many citizens compare to a vile form of lottery. Faced with an all-powerful Genocracy in matters of organic reconstruction, naturals are still quite fragile and remain at the mercy of death and disease.

Note that, while most transplants have no legal controls whatsoever, the authorities draconically control the use of skin and eye implants. There are plenty of criminals looking to ‘disappear’ with new identities by modifying their eyes and their fingerprints.

Lung: 3,000,000 Yen
Heart: 4,000,000 Yen
Eye: 3,500,000 Yen
Liver: 2,600,000 Yen

Samegawa (Kaiso: 3 – 6):

Called ‘Shark Skin,’ this biotech modification alters a person’s epidermis, generating an under layer of skin-hardening micromesh that sits below the skin. Initially designed to military programmes, this application has found other uses among different professional branches that needed a better physical resistance.

Far from turning an individual into an indestructible being, the Samegawa simply improves skin toughness and elasticity, allowing it to avoid scratches in case of falls or attacks that try to pierce the skin with a needle or a small blade.



An interesting phenomenon, this second skin seems to be very sensitive to electromagnetic alterations, having pores with natural sensors. Some individuals can feel the impending arrival of a blackout some seconds before it actually happens. They get odd 'goose bumps,' or feel the distinct the presence of someone behind them.

Price: 3,500,000 Yen

Bonus: DEF +1, Protection +3

Bioport (Kaiso: 4 - 6):

Presented as the true future of man/machine connection, the bioport is still classified as a prototype and is solely available to some military units. Directly connected to the nervous system in the spinal column, it resembles a tiny glass contact lens placed in the lower back which can be connected to optical ports by a standard photonic connection.

As soon as it is in place, it becomes possible for a person to communicate with machines and to use his brain like a kind of organic pod, able to connect to the whole of the net. Regularly criticised as being unreliable, the Bioport is of sufficient interest to certain people to make many dubious copies appear in the black market.

Price: 6,000,000 Yen

Cosmetic Correction (Kaiso: 0 - 6):

Thanks to the advances in biotechnology, it is not only possible to choose the physical criteria of an unborn infant, but it is also easy to make in-depth alterations to one's physical appearance. With a simple DNA 'recoding,' you can change eye, skin and hair colour, change your body hair, have coloured nails all the time and several other 'enhancements.' The possibilities are infinite for those who can afford it.

This kind of correction has logically led to the emergence of a whole freak show of cosmetic modifications, mostly consisting of rich heiresses and other extravagant individuals wishing to distinguish themselves in an outrageous way from their peers. If these cases of weird skin colours, un-pigmented patches that form messages and even vampire teeth have made the headlines, they are a still a minority when compared to the other cosmetic surgeries of this type that are being performed (and generally require a dozen sessions in a private lab, punctuated by injections and long baths in a specific bioluminescent liquid).

Eye Colour Change: 290,000 Yen

Skin Modification: 400,500 Yen

Hair Adjustment: 470,000 Yen

Nail Adjustment: 340,000 Yen
Light Facial Modification: 400,000 Yen
Heavy Facial Modification: 950,000 Yen
Body Modification: 1,300,000 Yen

Genetic Tests (Kaiso: 2 – 6):

A complete DNA sequencing is expensive. At IGN'Tech, we offer to sequence just a small part of your genome. It will allow you to know if you are predisposed to any ailments, physical or mental disorders. Knowing it now may allow you to prevent it developing or, in a worst-case scenario, to ease its symptoms. We offer a series of sequencing options, including:

Depression/bipolar disorder
Diabetes
Cardio-vascular diseases
Dementia and Alzheimer's disease
Several types of Cancer
And also custom sequencing on specific subjects

Price: from 800,000 to 1,000,000 Yen

Artificial blood (Kaiso: 1 – 6):

Standard in hospitals and among doctors, artificial blood has made transfusions easier because of its universal nature and synthetic design. Blood donations are a thing of the past, now that artificial blood is the standard, adapting to the blood type of the receiver. First aid kits now all have a pocket of artificial blood as well as a robot needle that automatically finds the vein.

Price: 800,000 Yen (litre)

NeoPet (Kaiso: 1 – 6):

Do robot animals frighten you? Prefer a pet made of flesh and bone? Neopet is for you! Genetic engineering gives you access to any animal (or plant), living or extinct. You can even make your own from scratch and design it to your whim. However, it is better to use established models in order to avoid the possibility of severe behaviour problems in your new best friend.

Rodent: 73,000 Yen
Fish: 65,000 Yen
Cat: 100,000 Yen
Dog: 120,000 Yen
Snake: 100,000 Yen
Monkey: 500,000 Yen
Bird: 300,000 Yen
Hybrid: 850,000 Yen

Mind Upload (Kaiso: 6):

The mind upload, also called 'thought digitalisation,' is a means of virtually attaining immortality. Particularly popular among the Genocracy, this principle allows the transfer of your experiences, your mind and your memory into an organic replica or a more artificial structure (like an android). There are several important procedures to follow when performing this 'replication' of the mind.

There are actually two main methods: transfer and copy. From the outside, you can say it is the same thing, but 'philosophically' the results differ.

In a transfer you move the mind from one body to another. It offers the idea of immortality, with the continuity of your mind through different organisms (some might call it reincarnation).

On the other hand, you might instead choose to make a copy, placing a replica of your mind into another body. In this case, although it is a copy, this being is an individual, since the original model can coexist simultaneously. It is almost a cloning or doubling technique.

The question that keeps being asked though is, "Is this copy still me?"

Among the many mind upload techniques used, you have:

noMorph: Little by little, nanomachines read a neuron and its axons and then replace it with an artificial neuron. Progressively, the whole brain is processed. The subject can remain conscious and 'personal continuity' is still intact.

brainScan: A complete 3D brain chart of the subject is made, as accurately as possible. Then a positron brain (for biodroids) is modelled to be as faithful as possible to the chart. Obviously, the copy is not perfect and can have errors.

brainSlice: The brain is removed and cut up in very thin slices. Each is thoroughly scanned and immunohistochemical products are injected to reveal the protein signatures of the functions of the scanned neurons. With all this data, the subject's brain is integrally and biologically recreated.

In this case there is no personal continuity. Another flesh and blood person is created that has the same memories, desires, and personality as the original.

noMorph: 11,000,000,000 Yen
brainScan: 9,000,000,000 Yen
brainSlice: 10,000,000,000 Yen

Biotechnology

| Item | Kaiso | Price |
|---------------------|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Organic Implant | 2-6 | Lung: 3,000,000 Yen Heart: 4,000,000 Yen Eye: 3,500,000 Yen Liver: 2,600,000 Yen |
| Samegawa | 3-6 | 3,500,000 Yen |
| Bioport | 4-6 | 6,000,000 Yen |
| Cosmetic Correction | 0-6 | Eye Colour Change: 290,000 Yen Skin Modification: 400,500 Yen Hair Adjustment: 470,000 Yen Nail Adjustment: 340,000 Yen Light Facial Modification: 400,000 Yen Heavy Facial Modification: 950,000 Yen Body Modification: 1,300,000 Yen |
| Genetic Tests | 2-6 | 800,000 to 1,000,000 Yen |
| Artificial Blood | 1-6 | 800,000 Yen (litre) |
| NeoPet | 1-6 | Rodent: 73,000 Yen Fish: 65,000 Yen Cat: 100,000 Yen Dog: 120,000 Yen Snake: 100,000 Yen Monkey: 500,000 Yen Bird: 300,000 Yen Hybrid: 850,000 Yen |
| Mind Upload | 6 | noMorph: 11,000,000,000 Yen brainScan: 9,000,000,000 Yen brainSlice: 10,000,000,000 Yen |
| Rent-a-flu* | 0-6 | (black market): 4000 Yen |

Rent-a-flu* (Kaiso: 0 - 6):

Don't feel like working? Fed up with stress? Rent-a-flu* was made for you! By immediately calling 3642-1003, an appointment will be made to deliver to you, for a small fee, a capsule that will give you all the symptoms of a disease without you feeling the inconveniences. Thus you can get your long awaited days off to escape all of the constraints that your daily life imposes.

Effectiveness guaranteed!

- Flyer posted in many metro station and other places frequented by the Shin-Edo salarymen.

Price (Black Market): 4000 Yen

Nanotechnologies

Nanoinks (Kaiso: 0 - 6):

These nanorobots can write any message or symbol on your skin, composing a tattoo you have previously selected in your pod. If you get bored of the tattoo, changing it is very simple; it is just a download into your Pod.

Price: 30,000 Yen

Nanodiagnostics (Kaiso: 1 - 6):

Becoming more and more popular, this nanodiagnostic system is composed of nanoinks that react to stimuli from the wearer's body. Usually placed on the wrist or torso, these nanoinks display the details of a series of bodily functions: heartbeat, blood toxicity, blood pressure, white blood cell count and more. This data is slowly posted on the bearer's skin, usually as a scrolling mini-text. This display can be easily checked directly by a doctor or the

user when they are feeling unwell, and a Pod can be configured to transmit these details directly to a health insurance company, doctor or emergency medical service in case of alarm.

Price: 55,000 Yen

nIris (Kaiso: 1 – 6):

Are you fed up with being hassled every ten seconds by holographic spam when you take a walk in Shin-Edo? nIris drops are what you need. Suspended nanoparticles, present in these simple eye drops, slightly change your irises and make you unrecognisable to the advertising databases. The effect lasts for an hour and the drops are perfectly safe.

There is also a permanent model: two robotic contact lenses that can be placed directly on the eye. If the police are looking for you, they can make your eyes unreadable to a retinal scanner. More advanced models can give you a different identity, one you have previously recorded on your Pod. Of course, a retinal imprint is usually associated with a photo, so be careful.

Needless to say, this equipment is highly illegal. While using the drops might only get you cited with a caution, you will be arrested for using the lenses.

Price (Black Market): 110,000 YenYen (a 10 use flacon)

Lenses (Black Market): 420,000 YenYen

Skin Nanorobot (Kaiso: 0 – 6):

This type of nanocreature only has a cosmetic purpose, similar to Nanoink. It is generally a circular shape about two centimetres in diameter, which slides under the skin (producing a simple tranquilizer to make the operation painless). Once in place, its form responds to body temperature shifting to make subcutaneous symbols (such as stars, circles, or dragons, according to a pre-programmed shape memory) like branding or scarification. Some of these accessories are equipped with LEDs that can generate florescence and other light effects through the skin.

Price: 25,500 Yen

Nanosensors (Kaiso: 0 – 6):

Among the new biomaterials available on the market, the use of carbon nanosensors is on the rise. Used in textile and clothing design as well as in building decorations, they were designed to react to the presence of predetermined chemical elements. A perfect example of the use of this product is the renowned gloves used by law enforcement, which change colour in contact with traces of gunpowder or blood.

Their use does not stop there. You can also watch wall paintings shifting their colours according to the humidity in the air or the time of day, security suits that darken when they find radiation, light bulbs that change colour or hair that changes colour according to your diet.

Gloves: 220,000 Yen

Ink: 300,000 Yen

Overcoat: 450,000 Yen

Suit: 600,000 Yen

The Netbones© System (Kaiso: 2 – 6):

This system was previously only available to the intelligence services. However, its discreet nature has recently made it more and more popular. The system uses the human body to form a connection between different technological devices. It effectively produces vibrations carried through bone tissue that can be understood by wireless technology. This means that instead of using a laser network, it is possible to transmit data from a Pod to a Gantai using the bones of the user like a cable network. While it may be slower than a photonic network, this type of biological network is reliable, almost invisible to technological detection and extremely secure.

Nothing could be easier, with this kind of device, than trade confidential data with another individual thus equipped through a simple handshake or shoulder tap. The system can even be powered by the thermal energy generated by the human body, making it immune to the electrical blackouts and other electromagnetic disruptions common since the Kuro Incident.

With the speed of a cable network, the Netbones© system is based on a set of nanochips grafted into several of the user's bones which record, transform, transmit and receive data (encrypted in vibrations). A whole new set of devices compatible to this network have been released before the Kuro Incident, and they are now selling like hot cakes across Japan. While they are currently quite expensive, they are very popular with a whole generation of people wanting complete computing autonomy and who are intrigued by the devices' possibilities.

Among the many accessories, using the Netbones© network are hybrid Pods that can connect to an optical port to redirect the data towards a Netbones©-connected Gantai, or even Pods that do not connect to the photonic network. There are also nanocreatures that react solely when information is transmitted by touch (commands transmitted by the bones in a hand), such as nanorobots, Cell Chips, internal earphones and the now infamous Hakkotsu Rifle.

Nanotechnology

| <i>Item</i> | <i>Kaiso</i> | <i>Price</i> |
|----------------------------|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Nanoinks | 0 – 6 | 30,000 Yen |
| Nanodiagnostics | 1 – 6 | 55,000 Yen |
| NIris | 1 – 6 | (black market): 110,000 Yen (10 uses) Lenses (black market): 420,000 Yen |
| Skin Nanorobot | 0 – 6 | 25,500 Yen |
| Nanosensors | 0 – 6 | Gloves: 220,000 Yen Ink: 300,000 Yen Overcoat: 450,000 Yen Suit: 600,000 Yen |
| The Netbones© System | 2-6 | 2,500,000 Yen |
| Netbones© Nanoheadphones | 2 – 6 | 900,000 Yen |
| Netbones© spy Nanoscorpion | 2 – 6 | 3,000,000 Yen |
| Oxygenating Nanorobots | 3 – 6 | 1,800,000 Yen |
| Metabolomic Visor | 3 – 6 | 2,000,000 Yen |
| Pain Killer Cell Chip | 3 – 6 | 1,650,000 Yen |
| NanoVengeance | 1 – 6 | (black market): 850,000 Yen |
| Memory Chip Interface | 4 – 6 | 4,000,000 Yen |
| Micro Gantai | 2 – 6 | 1,100,000 Yen |
| Care Creams | 1 – 6 | variable |
| Control Chips | 1 – 6 | 550,000 Yen |

The latter is part of the latest generation of Gauss pistols operated by Netbones©. Without a trigger, it only shoots with a sound stimulus from its user, from whom it recognises the internal vibrations. It can be a simple word or shout, but it is usually a more subtle trigger: a sharp crack of the jaw or a specific finger movement (not necessarily of the hand holding the gun).

Price: 2,500,000 Yen

Netbones© Nanoheadphones (Kaiso: 2 – 6):

These are nanocreatures the size of a pinhead that are placed directly in your ears. The tiny robots then slither through your ear canal and sit a little in front of the eardrum. When in place, they fix themselves to the temporal bone and get to work. They operate as a sort of ‘internal headphone,’ sophisticated speakers transmitting sound from a pod or a phone call directly to the inside of your skull. These nanocreatures are the entry level in the range of Netbones©-based biological networks.

Price: 900,000 Yen

Netbones© Spy Nanoscorpion (Kaiso: 2 – 6):

With the form of a three-centimetre-long artificial insect, equipped with a jointed shell and multiple legs with nanosuckers, this artificial scorpion is designed to enter buildings to spy on their occupants. With a vibration analysis system, it can record all ambient sounds and enhance distant or muffled words exchanged behind a glass (on which it has no problem gluing itself) or a wall, transforming the sounds in articulate speech. When it returns to the hand of its owner, it can clearly transmit every recorded word through the Netbones© network,

Price: 3,000,000 Yen

Oxygenating Nanorobots (Kaiso: 3 – 6):

These microscopic robots are charged with regulating blood pressure, facilitating the carrying of oxygen to the heart and controlling vascular pressure. Initially designed to aid people suffering from lung and heart problems, they have become almost mandatory to many sportsmen and military personnel. In fact, with the help of these robots, it is possible to run a marathon with relative ease.

You must be very strict with your diet when you have this sort of nanocreature in your system. They are designed to remain in the body for at least five years in the arteries, so you need to eat a daily portion of soya bars specially designed to 'clean' the nanorobots and maintain their functions. Otherwise, there is the long-term risk of brain embolisms.

Bonus: +1 Reflexes
Price: 1,800,000 Yen

Metabolomic Visor (Kaiso: 3 – 6):

One of the most advanced Gantai, the Metabolomic Visor is a full scanning device, usually used by law enforcement. Large and unobtrusive, it has all the usual options (viewing, augmented reality, telephone, mike, Pod connection, etc.), but has some additional and specific improvements.

Among them is a spatial scanning system. With a simple 3D laser scanner, it can photograph and thoroughly reconstruct a crime scene in three dimensions in order to study it later in detail, and maybe even gather more clues with chemical analyses.

Another feature is the lenticular sheets that can activate night, thermal or electromagnetic vision as needed. They also overlay a 'heads up display' for using the internet, posting pages on the screen and offering a virtual keyboard under your fingertips (no need to scribble in a notebook with a pencil, or search through notes to find out what was last written).

Finally it can also function as a controller for several different types of nanocreatures that include the following:

Crickets: Small drones, used by pathologists to make an in-depth analysis of a corpse at a crime scene. Data retrieved by the nanorobots during their operation on the victim are retransmitted in real time to the visor (time of death, probable cause, blood analysis, etc.).

Kumo: Five centimetre long robots with very thin insect-like legs. They are equipped with nanocameras allowing the wearer of the visor to 'see through their eyes.' They also have an embedded retinal scanner, allowing you to check suspect IDs at range.

Dragonfly Drone: see Weaponry, page 125

Price: 2,000,000 Yen

Pain Killer Cell Chip (Kaiso: 3 – 6):

Sometimes called a 'morphine pump,' this small piece of biotech manages artificial cells, designed to create a great amount of painkillers when demanded by the body's nervous system. Far

from miraculous, each cell works by mitosis, doubling itself in order to create a larger dose of morphine in the blood. It usually produces temporary relief, enough to ease a deep cut, a burn or a broken bone for around thirty minutes.

Those with the chip are advised to have regular nanocell injections (with a simple automatic injection delivered at the chemist's) to get the best out of the system, which will renew cells destroyed by too frequent mitoses.

Bonus: Removes the effect (penalty) of a wound for 30 m
Price: 1,650,000 Yen

NanoVengeance (Kaiso: 1 – 6):

Is your ex twisting the emotional knife, your boss bullying you or is someone just giving you grief? Less risky than murder or a beating, and also more discreet, NanoVengeance allows you to 'infect' your victim with the mental disease of your choice: depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and many more!

NanoVengeance is a simple liquid made of retroviruses that partially recode the victim's DNA. In order to do this they must be ingested by the victim (either through pills, injection, or in their food) to begin working. The effect remains temporary if the retrovirus is not administered regularly. After one use per week for three months, the effects usually become permanent (or earlier if the victim actually has the nascent condition).

NanoVengeance, a dish also served hot! Warning: NanoVengeance is completely illegal and obviously hazardous to your health.

Price (Black Market): 850,000 Yen

Memory Chip Interface (Kaiso: 4 – 6):

Presented as a 'living memory digitalisation procedure,' this ultra-advanced nanochip is placed in the memory centres of the brain and connected to the senses (such as the optic nerve for instance). It works as a camera, able to record everything the user lives and experiences. With only enough storage for a full day, it must transmit its data to a Universal Memory-equipped computer through a photonic connection (using a little implant placed behind the ear) at the end of each day.

All these 'days of your life' create, little by little, a complete visual and auditory memory, complete or partial (depending on download quality and quantity) built like a regular movie. It can then be downloaded into an android or a Replicant clone. People also use it to peel out images, zoom in, analyse them or just keep them as 'backups' for their own memory.

You want to be sure that you're not mistaking the people you should talk to? You want a precise memory of a code dialled by someone in the background? Just search your downloads and pick out what you need!

Price: 4,000,000 Yen

Micro Gantai (Kaiso: 2 – 6):

This small Gantai is just a set of contact lenses that can be placed directly over each eye. Thicker than sight correction lenses, these Micro Gantai offer the same possibilities as the more obvious standard visor (superimposed information, access to augmented reality, etc.) but are much more discreet. However, compared to a standard Gantai they have reduced definition and many users experience difficulties viewing videos, which are often disrupted by the flexible and basic nature of the lenses.

Price: 1,100,000 Yen

Care Creams (Kaiso: 1 – 6):

Body care and beauty products are now extremely efficient. Whether it is anti-aging creams or pills that make cellulite disappear, there are many improvements that allow the population to appear younger and eat what they like without worrying about the consequences. A sweet drink now has only the taste and not the effects, and some injections can quickly rid you of your excess fat.

Among the new products in the market, and coming directly from nanotech research, are make-up that never runs, or changes according to the timer of day and that disappears almost by itself just by spraying a bit of water on your face.

Price: Variable depending on the effects

Control Chips (Kaiso: 1 – 6):

These are nanochips injected under the skin and equipped with biometric sensors. They are programmed to trigger a response in the body or release a chemical as soon as a particular symptom or state is detected. Some are used to control animals, releasing pleasure hormones when they have obeyed a particular master. Some overworked salarymen use them to automatically release a dose of stimulant as soon as it detects the user is starting to fall asleep. The uses, both fair and foul are practically endless.

Price: 550,000 Yen

Prosthetics

Light Exoskeleton (Kaiso: 3 – 6):

Far from a heavy exoskeleton (reserved for the military) the light exoskeleton allows you, depending on the model, to carry heavy loads without hurting your back. Very useful for removal people, nurses or carers taking charge of old sumotori champions, these kinds of simple exoskeletons allow you to carry a load 25% heavier than usual without fatigue. However, their top speed is at most a brisk walk.

There are models for people with muscular dystrophy, caused by age or sickness. Thanks to an implant in the lower skull, these systems allow them to move normally and have a much greater autonomy.

Bonus: +1 Strength, -1 Reflexes

Price: 1,200,000 Yen

Biomechanical Prosthetic Limb (Kaiso: 3 – 6):

Contrary to popular belief, a biomechanical prosthesis does not allow you to lift cars. However, it can help the user attain their full individual potential without effort.

To be able to lift heavy loads, what is important is not so much the prosthetic limb, but the structure to which it is attached. If your skeleton cannot bear the weight of the load and, most of all, the pressure it creates on you, it will break somewhere (like, for instance, the connection between the prosthetic limb and your body).

With an extremely solid skeleton and prosthetics created for the purpose, you can effectively become a superman. However, owning such a device requires intense and extremely dangerous surgery. So it is not within the reach of the average civilian.

In truth, few people choose to replace a limb with a biomechanical prosthesis. With the possible exception of the military, most people who need this sort of prosthesis are the unfortunate victims of accidents (often traffic) who have had a part of their body amputated. Naturals cannot change their bodies the way that the Genocracy does, so when they are damaged, biomechanical prosthetics are still the more affordable means of replacing the amputated limb.

Made of nanomuscular fibres and nanochips covered in artificial fleshy tissue, these prosthetics are directly connected to the brain in order to render them as functional and accurate as real hands, arms or legs. They are usually configured to generate the same strength, thrust and pressure per cm² as a normal limb and are powered by the thermal energy generated by the body.

Prosthetics

Item

Light Exoskeleton

Kaiso

3 – 6

Price

1,200,000 Yen

Bonus: +1 Strength, -1 Reflexes

Biomechanical Prosthetic Limb

3 – 6

Leg: 2,000,000 Yen
Arm: 1,600,000 Yen

Bonus: 6 Protection in that area

A biomechanical prosthesis is by its very nature a lot more resistant than an ordinary limb and also lacks the nerves capable of provoking severe pains in case of impact or a blow. So a bullet might pass through a prosthesis, and the only risk is that the prosthesis is damaged rather than the owner suffering from any pain or shock.

with success depending on the conviction of the participants and of the accuracy of the ritual rather than its potency. However, since the Kuro Incident, it seems obvious that some people have clairvoyant gifts, are able to see the invisible and to intuitively guess at the means to defeat such evil spirits. However, even if an exorcist has some kind of link with the yokai, they are mainly skilled in using and creating the tools to protect themselves and the rituals required to perform exorcisms on possessed people.

OCCULTECH

“Come in, don’t be afraid... Yes, I know my little shop is hard to find, and Asakusa quarter is an easy place in which to get lost. But still, most of my customers find me by chance, when there is something that they really need. Here you’ll find everything, sacred items from all religions, charms, flames from the Blue Dragon, treasures from Takara-Bune, talismans against the Shiko-Me sickness... No, we do not take credit cards.”

For most of the inhabitants of Japan, who pay no heed to the rumours of ‘abnormal things’ walking the streets, Occultech is just the fruit of the imagination of some mystical weirdoes. Completely outside the traditional rituals, Shinto prayers and conventional exorcisms that most Japanese will be familiar with, Occultech takes the old skills and merges them with technological creations and the discoveries of a few geniuses in robotics and the Beyond. Actually, Occultech covers every obscure magical and spiritual artefact that you might find off the beaten path, whether it is a Gantai capable of seeing a spectre or a simple cigarette lighter without fuel that attracts the Hito-dama, the souls of the dead.

In *Kuro*, the notion of ‘magical powers’ is not truly something real or proven. If priests are often called to perform purification rites, these are not always effective and no one seems to have infallible gifts that will defeat evil spirits. Using a Shinto ritual to expel a yurei is often a bluff or a risk like a hand of poker,

Occult technology products are much more than simple gadgets. They are hybrid objects borrowing from ancient beliefs and adapted to the style and technology of 2046. The proof of their usefulness is their price and rarity, a modicum of investment always being required for those wanting to own one. Found in

The Rarity of Occultech

In addition to the information on their function and way to use them, each Occultech item has a Rarity Rate. It shows how commonly found the object is and how easy it is to procure one. The higher this rate (or RR), the harder the artefact in question is to obtain. The Gamemaster should take this into account when a character wishes to find the desired object.

- 1: Very common
- 2: Found in a shop
- 3: Found in a speciality shop
- 4: Very rare
- 5: Almost impossible to find
- 6: Unique

dark back street shops or under the cloak of a strange travelling vendor wearing a white wax mask, these magical charms can themselves be the whole reason for a scenario, whether that is obtaining one, using one, or stopping one from being used.

You do not need to be a priest or exorcist to use them, because they have intrinsic magical faculties. Some suggest that their very nature catches the attention of the spirit world, and that they are best carried only when needed. In order to help you design your own Occultech items, here are some examples you can use in your scenarios or perhaps place in a Genocrat's private collection:

Samurai Exoskeleton (RR: 6):

A perfect example of what Occultech can do, this artefact is a subtle mix of a 2030s combat exoskeleton and a suit of old (1856) samurai armour. The two seem to mix almost seamlessly, the lacquered iron scales covering the servomotors, the silk cords embellishing the artificial back muscles, the helmet, the neck protector and the grimacing mask give a timeless look to this sophisticated armour. Besides its toughness and the standard physical improvements this kind of equipment offers its bearer, this exoskeleton is gifted with mystical abilities connected to the different parts of the old warrior armour. It is said it can manifest spectral weapons, such as a phantom yumi, a bow able to shoot fire arrows through any obstacle, or a katana that can slice through steel.

Unfortunately, this exoskeleton is very complex to control and it is never obvious how to obtain the desired effects.

Bonus: Strength +2, Reflexes +2, Protection 10

| | | | | |
|----------|--------------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Weapons* | Katana Damage: 5D6 | REA + 2 | | |
| | Yumi Damage: | 4D6+1 | | |
| | S | M | L | E |
| | 2-30 | 31-60 | 61-100 | 101-250 |

*Cancel any Phoenix power, also effective against invulnerability.
Price: 6,000,000 Yen

Ronin Katana (RR: 6): This almost 70cm long sword, which once belonged to an Edo-era ronin, has little in common with the original model. Disassembled and improved, only the blade remains almost intact. The handle (or tsuka) is now equipped with nanofilaments that enter the palm of its wielder as soon as it is gripped. These can produce beta-blockers that regulate excess adrenalin, stress, blood pressure, and release nanoparticles that can slow bleeding. That is, as long as the katana is being held.

It is also able to channel the wielder's blood to the end of the blade, to give it power over those creatures of Yomi vulnerable to the blood of the living.

Bonus: Cancels the penalties (except death!) of all wounds, REA +2, ACT +1
Effect: Cancels all Phoenix powers, effective against invulnerability
Damage: 4D6+3
Price: 5,000,000 Yen

Gohei Stroboscope (RR: 4):

Particularly fashionable among certain computer specialists with an occult bend, the Gohei Stroboscope is a sphere bristling with laser projectors and optic sensors, allowing it to receive and project images. Inscribed with arcane mystical phrases that grant it power, this accessory can be connected to any pod carrying the adequate programming to receive protection charms.

With a simple click or word, the Stroboscope can thus project into thin air (or on a wall) hundreds of incantations and purification formulae (different ones or infinitely repeated ones) in order to generate a protection barrier against spirits or vengeful creatures. While an ordinary human can pass through this image and sound wall as if it was a simple advertising hologram, a tainted creature will suffer the full effect of the charm, like a protective ofuda.

Effect: Any creature trying to go through the barrier formed by the stroboscope must make a Willpower check against a TN of 20.

Price: 250 000 Yen

Aka-Shita Incense (RR: 4):

At first sight an Aka-Shita incense stick looks like a simple perfumed stick of regular shape and size. The only disturbing detail is that it apparently releases no odour, even when lit.

The Aka-Shita is an oracle, able to answer yes or no to any question asked for the two minutes that the stick remains lit.

When lit, the thin wooden stick just releases a particularly intense smoke cloud, which creates curious grey swirls in the air. These coalesce into a strange face after a few minutes, which resembles a kind of hybrid dog-human head with a long red tongue.

Price: 70,000 Yen

Jubokko Bonsai (RR: 5):

This little misshapen, blackish bush, no higher than twenty centimetres, grown in deep, dark earth, releases a particularly unpleasant mouldy odour. It is so unattractive, it is said that it makes all other nearby vegetables die and that only expert hands can trim this bonsai for it to reveal its true power.

In fact this tree is able to steal and prolong life, almost like a vampire. Coveted by many, the Jubokko must be fed every morning with four drops of your own blood by piercing the tip of a finger with a needle.

The living blood feeds the desiccated roots of this undead tree, which will lead to it producing leaves on the thin, gnarled branches, as black as its bark. It is said that each leaf on the Jubokko offers an extra life, and that in case of violent demise, one of the leaves drops to give you the right to live anew. Some even talk about people who have mysteriously escaped from monstrous pileups, a fire, a murder or even an incurable disease.

However, you must never let the last Jubokko leaf never fall, if you want to protect your soul from an irremediable taint and an eternity spent in the mists of Yomi.

Price: 2,000,000 Yen

Kameosa (RR: 5):

In popular folklore the Kameosa is a living sake bottle that likes jokes and to play pranks. In 2046, it became something else, a silver container filled with a strange silver chemical mixture that vaguely tastes of sake. It actually is a sort of artificial hormone made with a curious mix of traditional and biotechnological procedures ('prayer and chrome vats'). In any case, it allows people who consume it to see and do extraordinary things. It is a kind of super-concentrated adrenaline, making a person ten times as strong and so fast that they can see the enemy blows pass by as if in slow motion.

However, the Kameosa's side effects tend to limit its regular use. Namely, loss of consciousness, shaking, hallucinations, curious signs appearing on the eyes and a monumental hangover.

Bonus: +1 Strength, +1 Reflexes, +1 Willpower (for 3D6 minutes)

Price: 500,000 Yen

Nurikabe Grenade (RR: 4):

There are innumerable variants of this type of grenade. All work under the same principle: when the pin is removed and their laser detonator activated (depending on the model) the spell that they contain is immediately triggered. It can be a hoarse voice

chanting a purification ritual, burning ofuda dispersed by the explosion or a spell immediately manifesting as if programmed and carefully enclosed in the grenade itself.

The Nurikabe Grenade uses the same principle. It is originally a standard magnetic grenade, with an oblong shape and smooth surface covered in many micro-perforated holes. Modified from its original use, it now contains a Nurikabe, a living wall that can appear at the place the grenade was thrown to. It is almost invisible to the naked eye, but it resembles a thick water wall when someone tries to go through it. At three meters high and two wide, it is immovable and completely impossible to pass through. Whenever a person attempting to pass through the Nurikabe thinks that he is coming out of the other side, he will actually find himself back at the starting having failed to cross it. Many Nurikabe, when activated next to each other, can temporarily create a horrible maze of invisible water, completely disorienting and allowing a pursuer to gain precious time when chased.

Its reputation as a 'living' wall comes from the fact that going through it seems to take an excessively long time and penetrating heartbeats can be heard in its freezing innards. Some claim that exorcists use this liquid spirit as a portal to easily enter into the Beyond.

Price: 45,000 Yen

Jikininki Teeth (RR: 4):

Traditionally sold in little leather purses, these teeth torn from an undead Jikininki ghouls' jaw (and, according to the experts, particularly hard to obtain) are very useful when you need to protect yourself from the appetite of this kind of creature.

By carrying them on yourself, like a talisman, the presence of these teeth is generally enough to repel this sort of creature. Planting them on the ground around a specific place or a tomb, protects the place from the attack of a flesh-eater for several years. Finally, some individuals do not hesitate to fashion small knives (or bullets containing teeth splinters) to cause heavy damage on the dead flesh of zombies and Jikininki. However, there is a caveat, in that it is extremely dangerous to own an odd number of Jikininki teeth. In fact, all those that have had the misfortune to not pay attention to this superstition eventually find themselves irresistibly drawn to human flesh...

Effect: Used as weapons, Jikininki teeth are effective against all creatures from Yomi with the exception of Yurei, which they just repel. They add a +1D6 bonus to weapon damage and cancel any Phoenix or Natural Armour powers.

Price: 200,000 Yen

Hannya Haramitsu (RR: 4):

This traditional Noh mask is made in the shape of the face of a grimacing oni with long, protruding fangs, a long, black mane and glowing red skin. Actually, the mask hides a clever Gantai device connected to different sensors placed on the skull. By triggering the programme in the visor hidden behind the mask's artificial eyes, you can glimpse an extended chromatic spectrum, mixing thermal blots, enhanced silhouettes and, principally spectral shapes. The Hannya Haramitsu is designed to allow the user to view the unseen, such as invisible shapes in a room or the finger marks of a spectre on a wall.

Unfortunately, it is impossible to walk around normally with this artefact over your eyes because of the superimposition of multiple colours. However, it remains an effective way to watch the misty shapes that sometimes haunt certain corners of Shin-Edo. These shapes are very easy to recognize. They are always white and incredibly clear, highlighted amid the coloured blots created by the light sources of the real world.

Price: 250,000 Yen

Zen Chime (RR: 3):

Very common in all small spiritual shops, and one of their most popular products, this traditional Feng Shui chime is made of 6 bits of metal suspended by delicate strings. Curiously it does not always chime when placed in full wind. Many people even claim that it will chime when there was not the least air movement, such as the inside of a house.

Actually this chime appears only to make a sound at the approach of the kamikaze, the gale blamed for being the source of the climate change, the storms and typhoons that appeared since the Kuro Incident. Many believe this chiming is the sign that invisible beings are about to invade the real world.

Price: 11,000 Yen

Salt Vials (RR: 3):

Among the items often found in occult shops and carried by exorcists, salt vials are commonplace. They are simply small glass bottles filled with coarse sea salt, often blessed by a simple Shinto ritual. They are usually broken on an evil spirit to drive it away or over oneself during a 'trip' to the yokai. Indeed, some mediums sometimes choose to contact the spirits by partially immersing themselves in water to create a direct link to the beyond. Breaking a vial allows the trip to end by instantly severing the contact between the physical and the immaterial worlds.

| S | M | L | E | Damage |
|-----|-------|-------|-------|-----------------|
| STR | STRx2 | STRx3 | STRx4 | 2D6 on a spirit |

Any creature trying to go through a barrier made of salt must make a Willpower Check with a 16 TN. As a weapon they cancel any Phoenix power, and are effective against Invulnerability.

Price: 30,000 Yen (per unit)

Kiri-Bi lighter (RR: 5):

This chrome lighter, very similar to a simple gasoline zippo, is engraved with tiny kanji, completely worn out by the passing of time. Most of the time, even if you fill the lighter with an entire gas bottle, the lighter will not produce the least spark. Not even a tiny one.

However, as soon as an Oni is less than ten metres away, it can generate a 'Kiri-Bi' flame, a pure fire. This Shinto fire can repel an Oni by acting directly on the black water it is made of, wounding it if it even slightly comes into contact with this supernatural flame (by lighting a torch, for example). Some exorcists use the Kiri-Bi lighter mainly to reveal the presence of an Oni in a possessed person or a machine. A simple click of flint and the liquid face of the demon will appear through the one of its prey, terrified by the purifying heat of the Kiri-Bi.

Effect: Any Oni attempting to enter the lighter's area of effect must make a Willpower Check with a 24 TN.

Damage 2D6+2 in case of contact. Cancels Terror.

Area of effect: 1 metre radius.

Price: 1,450,000 Yen

Magatama (RR: 5):

Originally, Magatama were sacred ornaments dating from Japan's pre-history, resembling an amber, glass, stone or jade fang. Still worn today in necklaces by Shinto priestesses, they reputedly have magical properties. One Magatama is even considered to be a Japanese National Treasure.

In 2046, Magatama have become popular as jewellery, often in a necklace or a simple bracelet. Worn as earrings, piercings, sculpted in metal, in photo-reactive alloy, in plastic or placed directly in the skin they have become a common article of fashion for the Japanese youth. Even if many believe that the wearing of them brings luck, and that the spirits of their ancestors might reside in them, this 'new generation' of Magatama have little to do with the originals, nor do they have their power. In fact, they are rather mediocre replicas with little connection with their original meaning.

True Magatama are traded at exorbitant prices on the occult markets and in small spiritual shops. They reputedly have a link with the beyond, the deceased and the kami. Numerous exorcists use them as protective talismans, as they are capable of burning the skin of a possessed person or to prevent someone from being

manipulated by the powers of a vengeful spirit. Some are also embedded into different technological items in order to give them an effect over the yokai. Thus a sword with a Magatama in its hilt would cut the unseen and an exoskeleton with many amulets inside specific compartments would be able to face a Tengu or even disappear into the shadows.

Effect: Any creature attempting to approach a Magatama must make a Willpower Check versus a 24 TN.

Area of effect: 2 metre radius.

Bonus: +2D6 damage to the weapon to which it is embedded when used against the creatures of Yomi. Cancels any Phoenix power, effective against Invulnerability.

Price: 2,000,000 Yen

Soul Kakemono (RR: 4):

This scroll supported by a thin rod is unfolded and hung from top to bottom in a wall, most often inside a tokonoma: a typical Japanese decorative alcove where generally art objects, calligraphies or flowers are displayed. Completely black, weighted by a cylindrical wooden rod in red sandalwood, this kakemono is completely featureless with the exception of its jet-black colour.

It is supposed to attract the hoto-dama: the luminous souls wandering the world seeking rest. Sometimes, these spirits come and disappear in the black of the kakemono, leaving strange images, their memories, on it, like a silent movie.

Price: 91,000 Yen

Ouija Pod (RR: 4):

This oval shaped portable computer is connected by laser to a set of ten optical ports the size of a die which are supposed to be placed around the room where one is to use its 'medium software' to contact the dead. These ports, called 'spectrographic ports,' are designed to analyse the ectoplasmic signals and frequencies in their surroundings. The pod generates through its software a holographic Ouija board made of the letters of the alphabet and the words "Yes" and "No." It works like an ordinary Ouija board; where people wishing to communicate with departed souls must place their hands on the small holographic board that 'moves' to compose the answer of the queried soul. Note that this kind of Pod is sometimes prone to violent electric surges, turning the holographic projection into images of violence and hatred.

Price: 1,280,000 Yen

Brown Clay (RR: 5):

Some traders offer this supposedly magical clay for sale. It is often used to create 'haniwa' or funereal statuettes and because of its mystical properties, the clay would grant certain magical

gifts to any sculptures made of it. Thus an animal figurine could come alive; an earthen object would have the same properties as its model...

No one really knows where this miraculous earth comes from; some mention a faraway place in the Japanese mountains. Others believe that this mud comes from pieces of Doro-ta-bo, a creature of clay.

Price: 800,000 Yen (per kilo)

Universal Emaki (RR: 5):

This illustrated scroll, a kind of horizontal engraving invented in the Heian era, is particularly old. Closed inside a long, decorated box tied with a cord, the scroll is strangely devoid of any illustration when unrolled. To see an image on it, you must whisper to it the name of a person or item before unrolling it from right to left. The paper will then be filled with an illustration together with text, showing the mentioned item or an important scene concerning the named individual. Past, present or future, this illustration always shows an important event that often needs to be deciphered and analysed to be fully understood. The Emaki only shows one illustration on one subject at a time.

Price: 999,000 Yen

Enchanted Chopsticks (RR: 5):

These thin golden chopsticks with several kanji engraved along their length have a curious property. If you ever use them to eat the leftovers of another person's meal, you can feel their last thoughts when they were partaking of that food. While still uncommon, these enchanted chopsticks have become the cornerstone of some seers, who claim to whomever listens that they can see your future in your leftovers.

Price: 750,000 Yen

Bloody Kimono (RR: 4):

This kimono is part of a large number of items that can now be obtained from the black market, one of many artefacts tainted by blood. Whether weapons (tantos, swords...), items retrieved from corpses (iron bars, bullets...), even residues found in places after suicides (hanged man's rope, tiling tainted after a fatal fall, fibres from a carpet...), several items connected with death have value for those who believe in their protective properties. Numerous Nipponese occultists claim that these items, each marked with the blood of an innocent victim, can be used as a means of repelling or wounding evil spirits, whose perverted souls are very sensitive to the blood of purified souls. Not any old knife with brown stains will have this effect though. Bullets retrieved from the corpse of a yakuza, for instance, will be of

little use if his soul was not pure and is still filled with hatred. The surest way to find the essence of a pure spirit's death is by investigating accidents in the home or on the road, or by tracking down the innocent victims of murder.

The effect of these objects seems to be truly variable. One might allow the wielder to readily see Yomi, whereas another might allow the wielder to wound a Yomi or provide protection against protection from possession by an Oni. It is said that this occult recycling of the blood of the deceased goes even further than you think. One rumour in Roppongi quarter mentions the hands of a slaughter-man, retrieved after his death and directly grafted into an android replica. This android (so the story goes) escaped the control of its creators and roams the streets of the quarter. They say it is dressed in a long black cloak, its artificial skin filled with rust stains and its body surrounded by will o'wisps. Armed with two black katana, it is said to be able to absorb souls of those it slays with these terrible blades.

Effect for a defensive item: Protection from possession or the item offers 10 Protection against a supernatural attack.

Effect for an offensive item: +1D6 to damage. Cancels Invulnerability, Natural Armour, Mimic or Phoenix.

Price: 450,000 Yen

Futokoro Teppō (RR: 6):

This ancient bronze pistol with a brown wooden butt supposedly once belonged to a ninja clan, and is a rare antique. Particularly well preserved, its short silvery barrel is engraved with strange oblique lines, doubtlessly traced by its original owner.

Even if it was capable of working and shooting bullets, its use has somewhat changed since its creation. The inside of its curved butt is now filled with many copper strings and laser nanosensors like those found on the inside of Jellyfishes.

Now the Futokoro Teppō is used to literally project a thought to another person, such as a simple idea, image or induced reaction. All that it takes is for you to concentrate intensely on the message that you intend to transmit, the face of the person you intend to send it to, and then press the trigger of the gun while it points at him. Whatever the distance, wherever they are, the recipient will get that thought as a thundering flash. Some say that these thoughts can be sufficiently charged with enough hatred to kill...

Price: 6,000,000 Yen

Kyusu Oracle (RR: 4):

This beautiful cast iron teapot has the peculiarity of being able to provoke visions. For this you need to mix into the water, something that connects it to the person about which you seek a vision. So, if you want to know the fate of a family member, a bit of fabric and some hairs should be enough. The brew obtained after a few minutes of steeping should be slowly drunk by the user so that the hallucinations are not too intense.

Visions produced by the Kyusu Oracle are always vague and fragmented, like a movie edited the wrong way that often focuses on scenes without any real relevance to the desired vision. However, these bits of the future can sometimes be really useful, especially for anyone looking for a missing person or a particularly well-hidden secret.

Price: 600,000 Yen

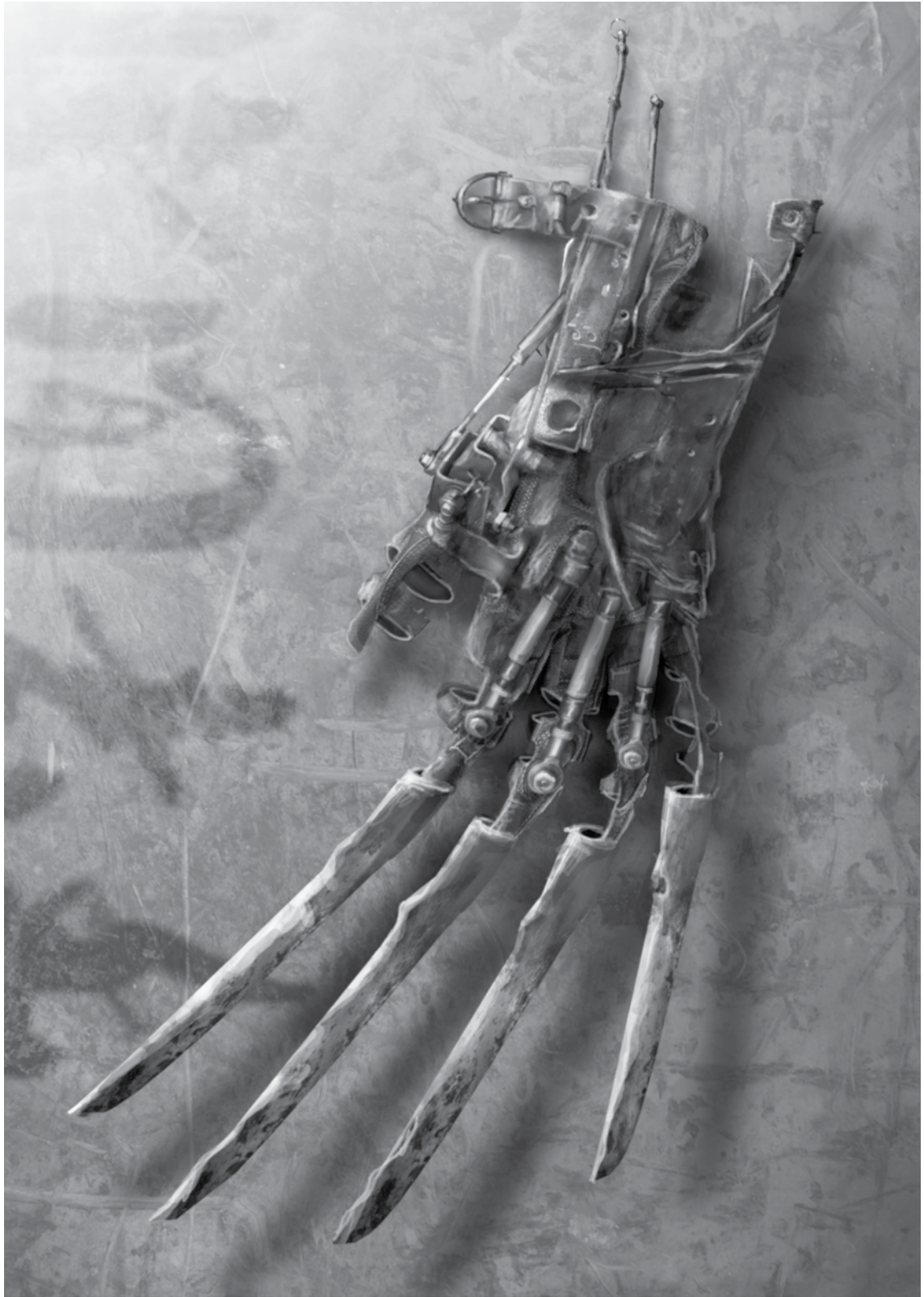
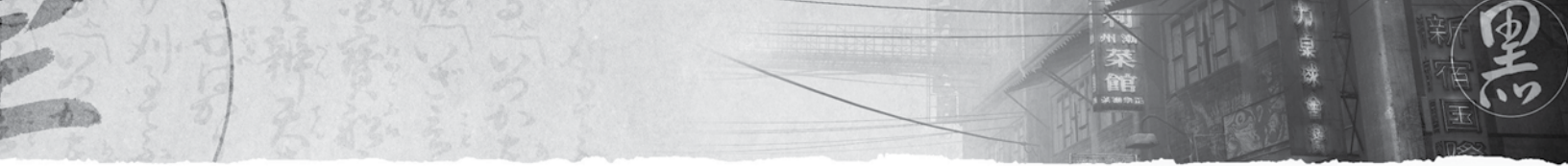
Te-Ashi-Naga Taiko (RR: 6):

This typical Japanese drum, used namely in kabuki and numerous ceremonies, is covered in prints showing the exploits of a Tokugawa-era shogun. Hidden in its design is a musical score, for those who want to take advantage of its magical attributes. It actually only has the one power, and a mistaken note or a mistake in reading the score will only produce a cacophonous sound. At least that is what some occultists say to reassure themselves. Others claim to have heard that the musicians who failed to play the score correctly are instantly desiccated and their dried out remains carefully put away in sealed containers.

Anyone managing to decipher and play the score will make the Te-Ashi-Naga appear. This is a humanoid creature more than two metres high, with lean muscles and a grey, dry skin. It is actually made up of two creatures, one on top of the other, one with long arms and the other with long legs, their flesh fused in a sickening mixture. Most of the time it is almost impossible to notice that detail, the long dislocated body being covered in a dirty blouse and the mouth of the Te-Ashi-Naga being hidden behind a surgical mask. The eyes remain, white, fixed, never blinking.

The Te-Ashi-Naga is reputed for its ability to control flesh and to perform the most impossible of transplants and surgeries. Grafting a brain into a new skull, making a tumour disappear or appear, considerably improving the abilities of an unborn child, mutating a clone, grafting a second heart and so on. Naturally this creature has attracted the covetous attention of the Genocracy and even some more 'occult-minded' laboratories. Today no one knows exactly who owns the Taiko, but some say there are those ready to kill for it.

Price: Unknown



色にな出でそ思ひ死ぬとも

SHINAGAKI

153

Shuko (RR: 4):

Far from being antique weapons quietly aging in a display case, these long combat claws are crude imitations built of recycled scrap metal. Much loved by biker gangs, the latter use car and bike parts and other pieces of alloy retrieved from scrap yards and other metal recycling units to create their own. Sometimes, by chance, the metal pieces used are covered in bloodstains. This is often the case with vehicle parts, accidents being more and more frequent on the expressways since the Kuro Incident. The link with the blood of the deceased gives these claws much stronger power over the creatures of Yomi-No-Kuni than ordinary shuko, as such creatures are very sensitive to the blood of the dead.

This has led to the rise of a market in the raw materials to create such items, which is often made up of small-time dealers and delinquents that ignore all of the mystical rumours that surround more 'tainted' shuko.

Damage: 1D6+2 (people) 2D6+2 (spirits) REA +1,
Cancels Phoenix.
Price: 180,000 Yen

Katashiro (RR: 3):

Katashiro are very common paper dolls created by the art of origami. Each doll is reputedly unique and made to resemble a specific person. Many occultists are origami experts and can make wonders from a simple portrait. With a few folds, a simple white shape will appear that nevertheless has certain aspects of the person that the katashiro is being modelled on.

Like the infamous voodoo doll, a katashiro can be used to harm an enemy, often by praying for specific ills before burying it in a safe place. The only way to get rid of this curse, which usually causes anxiety attacks, choking, dizziness and hallucinations, is to find the buried doll in order to purify it and destroy it by fire.

Some say that it is always very risky to meddle in this sort of evil curse, especially for an amateur occultist. An out of place gesture, a mispronounced phrase, a doll buried too early, and Aonyobo, the ghoulish woman of the shrines, with black teeth and no eyebrows, will come for your soul as a punishment. They say that only one thousand paper cranes will perhaps calm her wrath.

Price: 14,000 Yen

The Magic Key (RR: 6):

This unique object is rumoured to belong to the Takara-Bune, the treasure boat of the 7 divinities of luck (often depicted in cards given to children at New Year). Resembling a crude, heavy, old rusty medieval key, this key might open the lock to a fascinating treasure hidden in the heart of Shin-Edo.

Actually, it allows access, through an old lift, to the 4th floor of an old hotel at the very heart of Asakusa quarter. A long, dusty corridor seems to lead to one sole room, inaccessible by any other means: room number 4. What lies inside the room, is only known to those few who have entered it. Regardless of what it contains, the key is highly sought after by those who seek a place to hide.

Price: Unknown

Gakido Cricket (RR: 5):

This small lacquered box, beautifully carved, has several locks, each no more than the size of a stamp. Glued to the lid of the box is a small LED display (like a watch from the 1980s) connected to several optical wires that emit a weak greenish light. It is said that inside the box is a Cricket from Gakido, an insect from the barren plains of Yomi-No-Kuni. The box must never be opened, although whoever was curious enough to do so would find the box empty. The cricket will escape in the wind before it could possibly be noticed.

The Gakido Cricket is sensitive to the presence of Oni or creatures from Yomi and can also perceive doorways leading to the invisible world. Its little metallic screeches are decrypted by the LED display as simple words posted in large letters. "Danger," "Right," "Left," "Stop," "Empty," "Yes" and "No" are among the expressions commonly used by the Cricket, whose instructions leading to the infernal highways are often hard to decipher.

Price: 3,500,000 Yen

Baku Jellyfish (RR: 6):

This Jellyfish is quite similar to the standard models, except that it is connected by an old cable connection (obsolete since the creation of the wireless photonic network) to an ancient varnished cherry wood box. The latter, decorated with a floral motif, appears to date from the 18th Century. Without any hinges, locks or opening devices, the box only has a metal slot on one side, the size of a 500 Yen coin.

This Jellyfish is designed to be placed on your head as you sleep in order to record and decrypt your dreams. Actually only nightmares interest it, because inside the box is a Baku, a volatile spirit that feeds on nightmares. Besides the possibility of getting rid of recurrent nightmares or a curse that turns your nights into a living hell, the Baku Jellyfish can also serve as a divination machine. Indeed, when the Baku is particularly hungry, sometimes the box produces (through the curious slot) a little metal coin with enigmatic words and symbols engraved on both of its sides. These symbols are always a clue or a sign about a supernatural event, or an obscure crime or its resolution.

While this coin can be very useful in helping to solve an investigation into the unexplained, it is also an effective means for the Baku to make sure the user will have plenty of nightmares. As a Baku never leads anyone towards a happy destiny, what horrors the user finds will surely plague his dreams for weeks. The last owner, a private detective who is known to have had the Baku Jellyfish in his possession for several years was reputedly an experienced investigator into the occult and would certainly be able to tell you a thing or two if he had not been found at the end of a rope shortly after the Kuro Incident.

Price: 2,600,000 Yen

Precog Visor (RR: 6):

This Gantai is significantly less discreet than the standard models, as it resembles thick transparent welding glasses. It is connected by optic beams to a curious black leather belt, with several pockets closed by thick laces. Inside these pockets are nanosensors embedded in an impressive amount of clockwork gears and cogs from old clocks and alarm clocks.

Using this device is particularly complex and often very stressful. It allows you to see your actions over the next 15 seconds, using a mixture of probability theory and the domino effect to predict the cascade of events that might follow a particular action. So, if you engage the device as you perform a particular action, you will see (as if in a black and white film) exactly what will happen during the next 15 seconds, allowing you to react accordingly.

Unfortunately, the use of this incredible power is not without its consequences. In exchange from those 15 seconds in the future, you lose 15 seconds of your past, meaning 15 seconds worth of memories and knowledge stored in your memory are lost forever.

Price: 5,000,000 Yen

Plasma 646 Deluxe (Shibatsu model with J programming) (RR: 5):

This old television set from a small company that went bankrupt almost 35 years ago was the first flat plasma screen television affordable to the general public due to a ridiculously low price that no competitor could beat. Sold at the beginning of the 2000s, the Shibatsu brand had to face several complaints because the television sets all malfunctioned, one after the other. There were so many sets returned that the company had to recall the model. The small company never recovered from the bad image. Its next model was a complete failure, and so the company closed their doors.

The remaining sets were left forgotten in an abandoned warehouse. The warehouse and its contents went through several owners before being destroyed some years later. However, some Plasma 646 Deluxe models remain. Some people still have theirs; others acquired one before the inventory was destroyed. Interestingly, since the Kuro Incident, these television sets all seem to work. Images cross the screen, often very dark, but you can discern shadows, even faces. Several occult groups have become interested in the sets, as well as the proprietor of the Black Flag in Akihabara. This old Chinese man has obtained several sets and tampered with them all, adding some interesting new tweaks.

Now if the name of a dead person is keyed on the remote on a moonless night, it is said the deceased appear onscreen and can deliver a very brief message, right before the set fries. With these rumours spreading, the Plasma 646 now reaches extraordinary prices. Do you have the guts to get in front of your television set and type in the remote the name of someone close to you, someone who disappeared before their time? How much would you pay for the opportunity to talk to them one last time?

Price: 1,800,000 Yen

The Enishi 4.0 (RR: 6):

These strange machines can be found anywhere in the streets of Shin-Edo, and particularly in Shibuya because of their popularity among high-school girls. These small computer ports work on a simple principle: for 500 Yen you place your hand on the sensor on top of the Enishi. After a few seconds, some phrases and animations, supposedly having to do with the future of the user, appear on the holographic screen above the whole set. These are vague enough to appear to come true with surprising regularity. Thus you can often see groups of schoolgirls around this kind of device, daring each other to find out who will become famous or who will find their Prince Charming.

According to some, an old Enishi 4 model (modern models are now on version 5.1) can still be found in an out-of-the-way place in Akihabara. If you can get it to work again, it will precisely foretell unpleasant events (accidents or others) that might happen in the near future. Hideki Uryu, a young up and coming Yakuza in the area, is looking for this machine. With his very superstitious nature, he is offering a significant reward to whoever brings it to him.

Price: 4,000,000 Yen

CONTACTS

Character can have contacts in many different places that can help them in their investigations. These contacts might offer information to help the characters solve the mysteries of the adventure, or even be the source of new adventures and sub-plots themselves. Upon creation, a character has as many Contacts as the number of Gimikku that he has in each Contacts specialisation (meaning that a character with level 6 Organised crime will have one contact in that area). To help you develop these contacts we offer a selection of readymade contacts for you to use. You might pick from this list or create new variants of your own or some might even give you ideas for characters you want to play. The Gamemaster might like to make use of them as additional non-player characters to populate her adventures.

Kurushima Tsuneo

Tosatsumin (47 years old)

I smell funny? I suppose I might, I don't even notice it anymore, and I try like hell to rid my clothes of this grilled meat odour. I can't afford those deodorant clothes that absorb ambient smells, so I prefer to wear a lot of perfume. I've been working for twenty years as a 'Tosatsumin,' in the Miito Hojo slaughterhouse in southern Shin-Edo. I'm in charge of controlling the embryo basins and preparing the beef for delivery to the restaurants in the city. My job has changed a lot since I first came to the company; I went from simple 'knacker' to 'breeding chain controller.' Here, everything is automated; the beasts are cloned, then developed inside biologic vats, then prepared for consumption. We were always told that these artificial cattle, being endlessly duplicated, are not really aware of their existence before being sliced up and sent to the ovens. But I know that to be wrong. Some stare at us with imploring eyes, or scream even if they have no vocal cords.

But I hear their tortured cries when the mechanical knives chop them to pieces or their flesh burns. For so long I thought it was just my imagination or the booze I swallow by the gallon to help forget my burakumin, my pariah status. Like all those who handle death, I am shunned by all, but my peers.

Things are getting worse, and something is here, with us, in slaughterhouse. In six months, two of my co-workers killed themselves in the workplace. One lay down on a hot plate; the other injected himself with growth toxins meant for bovines. His body blew up like an egg under a grill. The screams of the cattle come more often; the blind eyes are more oppressive behind the transparent walls of the vats. Weird noises echo ceaselessly in the cold walkways of the slaughterhouse. The stress is numbing, but with the help of the contacts I have in many different companies in the southern industrial area I hope to find out what is going on.

Wakizaki Hiroshi

Male Escort (22 years old)

I am a prostitute, although I prefer to be called an 'escort.' I've been working for about two years in Shinjuku ni-chome, the capital's gay quarter. I confess I have no special preference for the gender of my partners, what's important is the amount of Yen paid up front. Truth be told, I'm increasingly sought out by unmarried women or those wanting to spice up their sex life a bit. The era where ladies stayed quietly at home like faithful wives is over now. Their place in society has changed; their sexual freedoms too, and it's normal that they should enjoy life as well. Unlike men they are rarely happy with cold, stereotyped, sterile androids. They need tenderness, warmth and true human love to really feel good.

I was born in Yokohama to a modest trading family and I tried plenty of small jobs before using my body to pay my many debts. I love money, luxury, fashion, being part of the 'in crowd' and spending money without worrying about the cost. My big mouth got me plenty of trouble on the Shinjuku sidewalks and my cheeks still carry the painful souvenir of a Yakuza on Androspleen, a chemical drug which is very fashionable in the Bunkyo district. But they say the scars look good on me, giving me a beautiful roguish face. I avoid the gang leaders to whom I owe certain services, but I'm relatively well-liked by the natural and even the synthetic prostitutes in the neighbourhood. Not to mention some highly placed persons, with whom I entertain a regular relationship...

John Hamilton

Lost soul (36 years old)

Damn Panasiatics! Frankly, if only I had imagined I would be stuck in Tokyo for six months, I would have chosen another country to disappear into. I'm what you'd call a gaijin, a foreigner, a true born and bred American from Helena, Montana. I may even have some Sioux blood in my veins. Unfortunately, a burglary gone south made me, shall we say 'unwelcome'? If that wasn't enough, I know have Mr. Blackman's thugs after my ass. In hindsight, trying to rob one of the richest casino owners in Las Vegas wasn't a good idea. My buddies buried in the desert can testify to that.

I figured Japan would make a good place to disappear into, but I never thought it would be permanent. Now I'm just like everybody else, a prisoner in this damned country. But I'm a stranger in a strange land, and I know better than to use my embassy to get out of this mess: Blackman's arm is long and he doesn't have much of a sense of humour.


So I spend my time in the Roppongi complexes, playing my last green bills and drinking moonshine whisky until sunup. You may take me for a desperate drunkard, who can't string two understandable Japanese words together, but I've learned much about the night life and I have plenty of contacts among the American expatriates in 'Shin-Edo.' That's what we have to call this city now, right?

Tsugaru Nozomi

Shizenjini Lolita (24 years old)

I was born in Chiba city, on the northeast of Shin-Edo, in the prefecture bearing the same name. My parents are labourers on a rice platform, at the end of the Boso peninsula. They work in





a huge hydroponic factory divided in many stages, each bearing an artificial rice field busy with technicians and collector robots. My parents were always absent, leaving me for days, with only a simple robot nanny for company in our small home rented from the corporation. I know now that they didn't do it on purpose, they needed to work long hours just to pay the rent. But I didn't understand it at the time and I hated my status as a 'natural,' a normal person. I wanted to become well-known, rich, an actress or a new Genocratic aristocrat, one of those people you never, ever meet. So I've done everything I can to be noticed, skipping from one fashion to the next, singing clumsily in bars, and submitting to the fashion dictates of the 'Cozplay-zoku' crowd in order to wander through Harajuku quarter. I kept hoping I'd get photographed by journalists, noticed by an agent, anything that might stop me being anonymous. That was until the Kuro Incident...

One night, while I was crossing Ueno Park towards the Bentendo temple, I saw a cherry tree speak to a homeless person! It wasn't quite a tree, more like a spirit with bark for skin and a body made of roots. The encounter only lasted a few seconds, and I'm convinced the homeless person doesn't remember much of this nocturnal conversation, but it radically changed me. I understood that spirits were real, and that our modern society, so lacking in morals and remorse, was slowly destroying them. So I joined the Shinzenjini community, a movement dedicated to stopping the damage done by technology and the harm caused by progress. I watch at a distance the whispering of the kami in the Shin-Edo parks. Just observing has taught me much on the subject and met plenty of contacts among the mystics in Asakusa quarter.

Sanada Ryobe

Police Officer (37 years old)

I've always hated this job. Always. Unlike many of my co-workers, who discharge their duties with discipline and honour, for me the job was nothing, but a way to make a living. Very soon that living was not enough for me. So sometimes a few pieces of choice evidence; like drugs, counterfeit goods, artworks and tech gadgets 'mysteriously' never reached the precinct. I used my uniform to make a few useful connections: Russian smugglers, pimps, dirty magistrates, they all helped to enhance my lifestyle. But the money didn't solve anything. I was still an unmarried, frustrated cop, often too impulsive and not too gentle with the female of the species. In fact, it was some trouble with an Ikebukuro stripper that got me the attention of Internal Affairs. Even the little that they uncovered was enough to get me a month's suspension and get reattached to a tiny koban (precinct) in this shitty Kamata

quarter. You know, the part of the Ota ward where those two planes crashed because of the electronic blackout during the Kuro Incident.

This place is little, but a new Ground Zero, a disaster area in constant reconstruction, made particularly slow by the lack of funds because of the International Blockade. There's no more life in the streets, deserted by the decent inhabitants who have been replaced by looters and lowlife scum. A night watchman of ruined blocks, that's what I've become. And on some night patrols, I admit I have seen the weirdest things. There was this sort of punk whose body was covered in boils who literally ate the liver out the mate he was squatting with. A dozen Shockgun bursts wouldn't put him down; I had to run him over with my squad car.

Fortunately, I still have contacts among cops in other precincts, because the idea of remaining in this hell hole of a dump makes me want to puke.

Kuze Jun

Bainin (42 years old)

If I tell you my true name is Noh Jin Hyun and that I'm originally Korean, you probably won't believe me. I had to pay a hefty price to make my old life disappear, modify my face, eliminate my accent and change my eyes to escape retinal identification. Now I have the eyes of a fisherman who had a rather untimely end in a side alley near the docks. Obviously I didn't do all that just to fit in; I did it to start a new life in Japan. I had to leave behind my past in North Korea, of which only nightmares and some ashes remain.

Now I've specialised in the resale of 'rare,' meaning 'sometimes illegal,' materials. Some people call it smuggling, I think of it as a community service, albeit an expensive one. In these troubled times many things are scarce, for all the recovery and recycling the Japanese are so fond of. Booze, machine parts, drugs, photovoltaic components, fractal suits, guns, the choice is yours. On the other hand, I only work with people I absolutely trust, those who can remain completely discrete. There are still ways to trace my origin, and I don't want to be seen as a traitor.

Ritual items? Funny you should ask, because more and more people come to me looking for lucky charms and Shinto gifts. It's getting to the point where shrines are increasingly being seen by our profession as potential vaults rather than holy places. Personally, I refuse to loot holy places or traffic in Buddhist and Shinto relics. It's just a step too far for me, especially when you hear the rumours about 'things' roaming the downtown quarters.

Kudo Yoshisa

Overclocker (20 years old)

It's been close to five years since I last left Akihabara quarter. Doubtlessly because... how do I say this... I'm not too comfortable among other people. I hate crowds, all those people massing on the Ginza or Shibuya sidewalks disgust me.

The only thing I really like in this city is the sound of the rain on my study windows and the transparent plastic umbrellas that pass by outside. If I could, I would never go out. Unfortunately you have to make a living. So I work on the assembly line in a small microphotonics shop some metres from my home. The boss is nice; he doesn't know much about maths, but deals very well with the customers. As for me, I stay at the back of the shop, disassembling the latest Opticum computers or solving the problems in plasma matrices.

But my speciality is robotic overclocking. I love assembling and disassembling androids, adding plugs or new psychological templates or modifying existing ones. People can't imagine how much these robots are constrained by their designers to perform simple, uninteresting tasks. With a few turns of a spanner, a little pirate programming and some extra optic fibres, you can change a Hatarakiari 0.500, working on a monorail construction site, into an almost completely autonomous individual.

Obviously, that kind of manipulation is expressly forbidden by law and I risk a lot by releasing the potential in these machines designed for little more than domestic work. So it doesn't come cheap. For a large fee, I can change a Gynoid into something more than an articulate inflatable doll and build a few additional features into her exoskeleton that make her more 'functional.' The money? I save it for my 'great project'-- creating the perfect woman.

Ozeki Suzuko

Game Designer (33 years old)

My co-workers say I'm a little crazy. It comes from the strange ideas I have and the way I dress in vintage clothes. I hate these soulless designer dresses and self-cleaning suits. Nothing is as good as old, traditional textiles, and a retro hairstyle. I love red velvet and yellow handbags! I've worked for a year now in a graphic design studio in Akihabara, namely on the virtual environment game Fantasy Saga. I was a true fan of the setting even before working on it. I followed all its different versions and development since 2031. Fifteen years ago! Wow, I'm getting old!



One day I'd like to get hold of a bioport, that latest generation gadget reserved solely to the military. In this business you have to use the latest tech just to remain competitive, and a bioport has an unparalleled speed compared to a Jellyfish or a Squid.

I know a thing or two about it. I was noticed by the studio's headquarters when I was just a simple hacker trying to spam as many machines as I could with illegal advertising. I was the kind of girl who amuses herself by transforming the messages in the reactive advertisements on the walls to praise the merits of pleasure pills or hacking the augmented reality.

Today my job is much more comfortable and I love to enrich this virtual world used by more than 200,000 regular players. If I still use my computer know-how to help some friends, I try to keep my activities legal. I'm a dedicated player of Fantasy Saga too. I think I have more virtual friends than in the real world, the Kuro Incident not having made Shin-Edo inhabitants any nicer.

I thought the bomb would finish our business when a whole part of the Fantasy Saga universe was completely deleted from our servers together with all the users in it. Some co-workers say the people online at that moment were found frozen in place, their Jellyfish still connected to their computer. But I'm sure they are just trying to scare me.

Kono Motonobu

Kansatsui (58 years old)

Some muscular pain? A bullet needing extraction? A little ocular implant to escape the police? Some healthy blood or urine to pass a test or two? Cheap nanobots? I can offer you a whole range of surgeries and medicine for your medical worries. No, I no longer have my Coroner's Licence. Yes, Coroner. Oh, just a silly story of trafficking corpses, you know how officious the authorities can be...

All right, I don't deny I that may have absconded with some useful organs here and there, just to pay for my regular Hakuchumu fix, but I never sold whole corpses. How do you remove three cadavers from the morgue without being noticed? I'm a doctor, not a magician!

I try to stay financially healthy by performing a few surgeries in this tiny studio in Roppongi. The equipment is modest, but a professional of my calibre doesn't need a sophisticated operating theatre. I have an android assistant that an Overclocker has modified to my specifications. It still tends to confuse the scalpel

with the cardiac monitor, but it is built like that porn star Yoriko Yuzuki! What a rack!

Pavel Sergueievitch Tabyshev

Social Worker (41 years old)

Yes, I'm a gaijin in this closed country. I do social work, mainly with those who are excluded in this very hierarchical society. In this country it is shameful to be poor, even more so to be homeless. I came from Russia by way of the Kuril Islands, four years before the Kuro Incident. I was a meteorologist, but I left everything to take care of the thousands of individuals that form the 'lower society,' those who die daily on the streets of this indifferent city. The Kuro Incident has not reinforced the community; on the contrary, it has thrown thousands more people onto the streets. They literally disappear from society to allow their wives and children to keep their possessions, as in Japanese law, an absent person's property cannot be seized by the state. It explains some of the increase in disappearances in this fragile community.

These 'makegumi,' or 'losers,' can only rely on themselves. With the association I created 'Esupowa-ru' we try our best to bring what solace we can to these people with our meagre resources. I often prowl the streets in my old Hovercraft Nissan van, in the Kabuki-cho streets, looking to help whoever I can. I've made a lot of contacts. I've given sandwiches and blankets to pretty much every homeless person and thug in the area. If I put in a good word, I may manage to get one of the people that live in this closed and ignored world to talk to you, and tell you what they've seen.

Mizuno Hiro

Exorcist (33 years old)

Do not be surprised by the way my eyes stare past you and the way I talk to empty air. I often forget you cannot see the world as I can. Since childhood I've always seen the universe around me in its entirety, both parts forming a whole: the visible world and the invisible world. A complex and fabulous symbiotic fusion, one that my parents taught me to understand and appreciate like any true Shinto spirit. I should tell you that my family is somewhat unique. My father was exorcised in the 1960s by priests from the Taikyujii shrine. He said he was possessed by a fox spirit, a Kitsune, and had committed many misdeeds in his city. My mother was an Itako: a blind healer from Aomori prefecture.

I inherited my mother's damaged retinas, but I also got the gift of seeing the truth of reality. When I was offered the chance to correct this flaw with new implanted eyes, I refused. I feared I would lose my visions, my ability to see the invisible and the narrow door to the afterlife. Glasses filled with thick lenses and scanners are enough for me to read and move around, and I can remove them to use my sight to pierce through the prosaic world. It doesn't always work, but all my senses can perceive the sound and the odour of the deceased.

After hesitating for a long time, I finally chose to use my gifts to serve the needy instead of becoming a priest or a simple healer in a Shibuya shop. Some people have struggled against beings that they do not understand, developing fearful diseases resulting from the contact with these invisible forces. After the Kuro Incident it only got worse. Both worlds have merged together beyond my expectations and the invisible world is becoming real. What I imagined to be a blessing is beginning to go wrong, evil spirits having followed the Divine Wind through. They seek to enter our world en masse, to pollute our spirit and seize our bodies. I try my best to stop the worst of their outrages, possessing souls and corrupting the world. Our universe is a whole, the afterlife where our ancestors are is a place of serenity and the evil beings from Yomi must not destroy the bright age that is coming.

I am rarely found at home in my small Asakusa studio. I regularly travel to other people's homes to put an end to the actions of these forces that most people cannot even see or choose to ignore. My coat pockets are filled with salt, fireflies and Ofuda (papers inscribed with protective formulae) and I have a vast knowledge of the creatures from beyond and many Shinto rituals. Unfortunately, I see too much and I tend to get a bit lost. I regularly confuse the real and the unreal, and start talking incoherently. It doesn't help when you're trying to convince people that what is happening is real.

Fujita Kazuma

Yakuza (37 years old)

I always wanted to be someone important, a true samurai, respected and feared. Life has never kind to me; in fact I had it rough. My father was a filthy alcoholic who beat my mother to death one drunken night. Then there was the system. Whether in school, where I never fitted in with the other girls, or the 're-education' centre I escaped from several times, or the foster homes where I never felt loved, I always felt my place was somewhere else. I knew I was destined for something different.

I killed my first victim in the re-education centre. I must have been 14 and I broke his neck under a metal cabinet. No-one ever knew I did it. I planned the elimination of this 17 year old asshole who had tried to rape me quite meticulously. It's like I had done it before, as if I instinctively knew how to clean my prints, clear my tracks, remove any evidence, hit where it hurt the most. But on the very evening of that murder, I had a vision, as if I was seeing through the eyes of my victim, and felt a violent pain in my back. There, a design appeared on my skin, like a tattoo. In the design, staring out from behind the strange mixture of colours and patterns, you could see what looked like the face of the boy I had killed.

I kept this secret for a long time, until I came across the Yakuza. In hindsight, it seems quite logical. The underworld offered me all I could wish for and my 'talents' were of great interest to them. It was Al Capone himself who said that you can get more of what you want with a kind word and a gun than with just a kind word.

I quickly climbed the steps of the Sumiyochi-Gumi syndicate. Having become a cold and determined assassin, my reputation was enough to scare the most hardened mobsters. The more I killed, the more I murdered people under the orders of my masters, the bigger the tattoo in my back got. It became a history of blood and suffering drawn on my body, a mix of horrified faces and places in the hereafter. Sometimes I got the impression that all my victims slumbered inside me. The colour of my eyes changed, I sometimes shouted insults at myself, my hand even tried to cut my throat. Nightmares assaulted me, preventing me from sleeping and making me careless. My hair even turned white as snow.

I ended up taking an early retirement, so that I would not soil my hands with any more blood. Now I'm in charge of several gambling halls in Shinjuku in a more administrative capacity. But the dead keep haunting me, reminding me of the sins I cannot manage to atone for. I have plenty of contacts in the Japanese underworld, but also a frighteningly high number of enemies. If you need a favour, it will be in exchange for another. I need help to understand who I am and to defeat the tortured souls that haunt me.

Aoki Sanjiro

Bosozoku Gang Member (16 years old)

Shut up with your preaching! You didn't come to me just to tell me to go back to school and to drive slower, right? Me and my gang, that's why you're here and you know it. I'm one of the

Shin-Edo bikers, the ones able to turn simple bikes into machines able to fly a metre and a half above the ground with tweaked MagnetoDynamique engines. We get noticed. Our machines are the most beautiful and the noisiest. My gang are the Bulldog Sharks, and usually we roam the north, on the Joban road. But we also like to poach other gangs' turf and face them off with speed and chains. We go where we want, we do what we want.

Sure, I'm well known to the law enforcement agencies, especially after a couple of guys 'fell' from the bay bridge. Since I am a minor and pretty smart, I just got a slap on the wrist. I'll do it again if I have the chance.

Anyway, if you need information on the gangs, on the small dope deals in the capital or if your wheels need repairing, you know who to talk to. I never charge my friends, but they better keep quiet if they don't want to be tied to my speeder and dragged behind it at a hundred kilometres/hour.

Tokuko Sakura

Sailor (26 years old)

I'm one of the rare women working as a labourer on the Kaijin platforms. Actually I pilot one of the tankers charged with transporting the fish from the water farms towards the Tsukiji market. This kind of ship is huge and crewed almost exclusively by robots. Even if the crossing is relatively quick, you also have to watch the fish that need to remain alive. So I have to pay more attention to my precious cargo than the navigation, which is satellite controlled. Unfortunately, after the Kuro Incident, things have got a lot more complicated. The sea satellite network is sometimes unavailable, and there's often a lot of magnetic interference, doubtlessly caused by the foreign ships blockading the country.

Then there are the pirates. It may be an exaggeration, but it's one that you hear a lot more than you used to. Some sailors talk of boats getting savagely attacked. Now that food is getting a little scarcer things are getting more desperate. If the blockade doesn't finish quickly, we may find people have to continuously fight for food. Kaijin and our boats will become a veritable gold mine for the worst kind of the black market.

Meanwhile, I try my best to do my job, often in difficult and harsh conditions. I managed to be accepted by the sea labourers, especially after having broken the fingers of a dock worker that mistook me for a pleasure android. You shouldn't let my small size fool you the way he did.

Despite the fact my salary no longer matches the fact that I constantly struggle against Pacific hurricanes, I love this job and I know all the ropes. Who knows, if one day you'd like to know more about the sea workers, about Tsukiji, the industries in the bay, or you want to go to Kaijin, you can maybe call on me. I can even give you diving lessons if you're not too intimidated by a sea devoid of all life...

Hozokawa Ryu

Aerospace Clerk (23 years old)

I was originally meant to travel in space. Before the labs chose another kind of human being altogether, I was one of those enhanced to work on satellites and stations in zero gravity. I have parents, a family, but they were never members of the Genocracy. They just had an 'optimal genetic potential' out of the remaining couple able to have children. The money offered by the labs for my mother to be a surrogate was too good to be passed over by any 'natural' employees like my parents. They accepted and I waited for nearly ten years before I met them personally. Since birth I joined the 'JAXA' (the Japanese Aerospace Exploration Agency) experimentation centres where I was trained and conditioned to work in orbit. I only saw my parents on the holidays, twice a year at most.

But the voyage into space I was born for never happened. In March 2044, a few months before my first mission after years of training, I lost one of my legs under a Shin-Edo subway line. I wanted to play hero, so I tried to rescue a damsel in distress being hassled by two thugs at the Hanzomon line. Despite my abilities I couldn't avoid falling onto the rails. Those same abilities weren't good enough for me to climb back on the platform in time, like the thug that had fallen with me. He died, and my right leg was mangled because of a faulty laser tracking system failing to stop the train.

Even after all the training and investment they had put in me, JAXA did not want to repair my leg. Even if they had, it would still not have been good enough to let me do any extra-orbital missions. I'm now in one of the many offices of the agency, doing all the boring paperwork while I watch others set off to travel into space on solar sails.

Obviously, my parents lost their regular rent, which did nothing to improve our relationship. Handicapped and crushed, I'm not really good company. But buy me a few glasses of sake and I can give you plenty of information on JAXA, the orbital programmes, the Tycho Children and even some individuals in the Genocracy.



GAMEMASTER SECTION

色にな出でそ思ひ死ぬとも

ELECTRIC TOWN

Gonshiro immediately spins around, quickly recovering the spilled fingers from the ground before running towards the distant Akihabara Street. After picking up the finely worked box, I start following my partner, turning immediately towards the impassive stranger.

"I'm not going with you," he says, showing me a curved blade engraved with symbols hanging from his belt which I hadn't noticed before.

"Right, you'd better not. What's your name?"

"My name is Kaname," he says with a delightful smile, his eye glinting in the rain falling from the leaves.

"We will meet again, Kaname."

"I know, Nao."

Gonshiro and I quickly reach our patrol vehicle, our lungs on fire with the effort, telling the two beat cops that stayed with the body to call the morgue. Without any more explanation we get inside the vehicle. I deactivate the autopilot and make the hybrid engine roar as I put my foot down on the accelerator.

As we snake through the streets in the neighbourhood, narrowly missing the garbage disposal androids we pass, a heavy silence fills the vehicle. Focused, Gonshiro no longer pays any attention to his cold soba, instead he intently checks to see if his service weapon is in working order.

"Can I ask you a favour, Gonshiro?"

"Of course," he replies without taking his eyes from the gun.

"You still have the charm I showed you just now?"

"Yes."

After some fumbling he removes the omamori from an inner pocket in his coat.

"Open it."

Without hesitation Gonshiro unknots the ropes in the little silk satchel, embroidered with a lucky ornament.

"You know the charm inside no longer has any effect if you read it now?"

"It's not a charm."

When he turns the cloth satchel over his hand, two ancient bullets fall directly into his palm. Scratched and ruined, they appear to be covered in dry blood, as if they had already been used.

"These are pistol bullets. Do you know what that means?"

"No, but I know what to use them with."

The Matsunaga Fumiaki building is in a pedestrian street in Askusabashi. A monumental holographic advert of a media Idol fills the façade with an orange light, while little 3D bears turn summersaults in the air, singing before disappearing. Prudently, we advance to the entrance hall, and find the door unlocked.

After a few steps up the stairs inside, Goshiro's gloves start to glow again with a crimson halo. Blood traces on the floor immediately confirm the nanotransmitters' analysis. Taking the service stairs, we manage to stealthily reach the second floor corridor where the apartment number registered to the retinal print is. The synthetic carpet is spotted with damp and dark patches, while the lock is covered in scratches. Backing up a little I insert the two used bullets in the revolver Kaname gave me and place it into the back of my belt. For protection, Gonshiro activates his flexible polymer vest that hardens immediately, ready for the smallest attack.

At the entrance of apartment 23, where the door is ajar, a crushed eyeball bathed in sticky liquid watches us from across the blue linoleum. In the dusk we can hear a metallic clatter, sickening noises fused with synthetic sounds come from the small central living room. Sitting on two ergonomic seats covered in hideous plush dolls, two labourer androids fit pieces of skin and flesh over their metal carcasses, removing it with care from two heavy rubbish bags. They place the new skin from their desiccated victims their bodies very precisely over their mechanic limbs. They appear to choose the best pieces and exchange information in an unknown language. Their bodies are little more than tangles of luminescent cables connected to a light steel frame, their hands resemble cutting weapons, designed to slice and solder anti-seismic building infrastructures.

Gonshiro does not have the time to shoot any kind of warning shot, as a shape jumps out of the bathroom and slams me violently against the corridor wall. It immediately attracts the attention of its two accomplices. In answer, Gonshiro starts shooting the two androids covered in human flesh, shattering several glass ornaments around the room over the furniture. His Shockgun bursts become deafening, throwing the artificial creatures against the apartment walls. But they still get up, twitching like puppets.

The android that has me, which oddly wears a trench coat, holds me by the neck some thirty centimetres above ground. Luckily its clawed fingers do not cut into my throat thanks to my defensive suit. But I'm choking, and my pistol is on the ground. I desperately try to free myself by squeezing its arm. Its glass eyes seem to contemplate me, analyse me. Does it recognise me or is it choosing which piece to carve out? Gonshiro shouts in my direction, thrown backwards by a devastating punch from one of his opponents. I watch his body fall through the wreckage of the wall.

Sparks flicker in front of my eyes. I'm about to lose consciousness. Trying to get my breath back, I stare fixedly the android, focusing on the arm that keeps me in place and the one about to cut me to pieces. I feel my shoulder pulsing, my muscles tensing and my

hand stiffening. Focusing the anger and desperation that grips me, I bend my opponent's forearm and tear it away off its metal skeleton. Then I smash it violently on the android's skull as soon as my feet touch ground. Luminescent plasma splashes from its inexpressive face covered in tatters of skin, and its body totters back into the bathroom, spasming violently until it slumps into the shower. I get up, fists clenched, my eyes immediately fixed on the other two machines. They lean over Gonshiro who is paralysed by pain. Without hesitation I seize the antique revolver from my belt and fire. The first bullet seems to leave a spectral trail as it crosses the air. It hits the body of one of the androids, instantly paralysing it. The android's face strangely contorts in agony and a mist escapes from its mouth and fades into the darkness of the apartment. It leaves behind a violent odour of putrid flesh. The other android doesn't stand and wait to be shot; instead it throws itself at the broken window and leaps out without hesitation.

I do the same.

The shock of landing is brutal and painful. I feel the bones in my legs crack on impact, as the joints on my skinsuit are not enough to cushion the fall. Lying on the ground, my mouth filling with blood, surrounded by frightened passers-by, I watch the creature get away under the rain. Some helpful bystanders come to help, not realising they block my line of sight. In frustration I shout at them, cursing my legs and I shoot.

The last bullet in the revolver passes through the humans as if they weren't there, leaving no trace of its passage. It then shatters the skull of the killer android, whose mouth instantly exhales an acrid and fetid mist before it falls heavily on the sidewalk.

While they are astonished they haven't been hurt by my shot, the passers-by keep away from me. No one is willing to get close to this bleeding and gun-wielding madwoman that has just thrown herself out of a window. They doubtlessly prefer to wait for the help that will have been automatically called by the tech in our suits.

Gonshiro's voice comes over my earpiece, confirming he is still alive, and watching me from the window above.

"Nao! Nao! Are you all right?"

Compulsively clenching the revolver with a pentacle-carved handle, I close my eyes, forgetting my pain with a smile.

"Yes, Gonshiro," I laugh, relieved, but still a little hysterical. "I think everything is all right, at last."

OF FLESH AND SHADOW

In their adventures, the characters will not only face threats from the cold, dehumanised society of Japan under an International Blockade. There are many groups trying to make use of the Kuro Incident and benefit from the chaos, many of whom work in the shadows. If that was not enough, they might also discover that creatures from the beyond exist. Worse, these creatures are determined to settle old scores with the very humanity that is trapped with them by the International Blockade.

created several religious or mystical movements. With already more than 170,000 little sects and 1700 religious movements, Japan has seen new cults, often tiny ones, appear out of the woodwork or change into something different. Each guru or leader insists that they hold the truth about the recent events, and some can be quite persuasive. Many believers, who have been shaken by recent events and do not see any answers coming from the traditional sources, have paid an attentive ear to these rants.

OF FLESH

Cults and Secret Societies in the New Japan

“Nowadays you can’t take a step without meeting some hothead foretelling the end of the world in a few days, or a few hours for the most pessimistic. The worst is that those mystic ravings are mixed up with politics. All kinds of fundamentalists join up with jingoistic thugs and, together, rant about the corruption and the decay of morality, which, according to them is responsible for the current situation in our country.”

-Yamada Naruhiko to a co-worker in the Yamanote Evolve

The Kuro Incident has deeply changed the relationship the Japanese have with politics, with mysticism and with the supernatural. The increase in reports of weird events, and other mysterious oddities has fed a growing number of rumours and urban legends. The Incident also consequently changed or

Kurojiro

The Kurojiro is an alliance between a Shinto priest, defrocked because of many drinking excesses, and a computer technician. Both are convinced that scientific research on networks has led to the opening of a connection with Yomi, the realm of the dead. Upon making contact and after storing enough power, demons can escape and incarnate. Convinced that only computer programmes charged with beneficial energy can counter the creatures connecting through the network, the group went on the warpath against many sites in the NeoWeb. They launched viruses as well as kotodama (power words) to places in the web they believed to be evil. Recruiting among the otaku, gullible computer technicians and impressionable priests, Kurojiro (which can be translated as the Citadel of Darkness) is trying to extend its struggle to other media, convinced that demons are infiltrating everywhere. Recently the movement has opened a cybercafé dedicated to this war, where you can take part in the crusade in your spare time. There you can also purchase kotodama programmes to protect your computer or your Pod from demonic intrusions.

Hanguri Konpaku

Hanguri Konpaku is a cult of some fifty people with headquarters in the Shin-Edo suburbs. Led by the charismatic Lord Konsui, a fifty-year old former talk-show star, the members of the cult have been persuaded that they can talk to the dead since the Kuro Incident. Each has had a near death experience, and since listening to the endless speeches by Lord Konsui, all believe that they have come back with a paranormal power, enabling them to converse with the deceased. In the leader's private demesne each one receives, by appointment, people wanting to contact a specific dead person. Family members, celebrities, the client's choice. Truth be told, Lord Konsui and his mediums have never been able to prove their pretensions. However, they seem to be, disturbingly, quite accurate in revealing the secrets of those they allegedly invoke.

Ge-Mu Movement

The Ge-Mu movement is made up of a whole team of network gamers. These people were, for the most part, geeks and network immersive game aficionados. They were connected during the Kuro Incident, exploring a latest generation virtual world, some using forbidden Squids for the most immersive sensation. Apparently, something happened during the game. Most of them came out... different. Almost dumb, their pupils hugely dilated, all seemed to know each other intimately, their hair prematurely whitened, they all banded together in this group. Their main agenda is to try any method to go back to that "game" universe. But it seems to have fried with the blackout following the Kuro Incident. In fact, electric overloads seem to have burned out many computer servers. Questing for a virtual world that may now have vanished, the Ge-Mu Movement has recently focused its research on the Shinto signs present in the game. Indeed, the game setting, called Matsuri II, included a lot of Shinto symbols. Lately a priest was hired to help them in their quest. They are also looking for the first Matsuri, a completely unknown game whose very existence is questionable.

Shinzenjini

Initially a simple peaceful nature movement, seeking to free man from artificial food and the evils of the modern world, Shinzenjini has become much more radical in less than a year. Essentially based on Shinto beliefs, this religious movement accuses modern technology and society of having expelled

the kami to the beyond. These spirits felt persecuted and forgotten, and decided to leave the material world. They chose not to intervene in the 1945 bombings because they no longer recognised the Japanese people and their expansionist agenda.

Now with several thousand members, recognisable through their old style clothing and their many lucky charms, the Shinzenjini now attack government policies, demanding the end of birth control and assisted procreation. The Genocracy are regularly portrayed as the ultimate taint by the cult's guru, called Dagona, and the authorities have noticed a rise in the many acts of vandalism committed by Shinzenjini members. The change from peaceful demonstrating group to religious fundamentalist community is about to be finalised with the destruction of an android design factory in the Minato Special Ward.

Double Leaf Society

"Bunjiro was right! Everybody thought he was mad, but he was right! They're everywhere! They use the spirits of the dead to control the living! They are back, and after leading us to war one hundred years ago, they now want to annihilate the country! The government has already been deceived. The only way of protecting oneself is to worship the Kami. Only they can save us from this secret society."

-Wakiya Ennosuke, Advisor to Prime Minister Takahashi, 21st January, 2046 (three days before his suicide)

The Double Leaf Society was originally a militaristic secret society from the 1920s. It had the goal of purging the military of its more moderate elements and to acquire a seat on the government. Ultra-nationalistic, its members, convinced of Nipponese superiority, supported the invasion of the Pacific in 1941, as a prelude to the Hakko Ichiu, "in eight directions, only one sky" agenda. The aftermath of the conflict was hard on the group, which became tiny and went to ground, awaiting better days, limited to financing various nationalistic magazines.

When Japan was protected from the Panasiatic Federation bombs by the Kuro Incident, this secret society awoke from its lethargy. Its leaders, senile generals from another age, were approached by a mysterious young man at their biannual meeting. No-one knows what the visitor, a corporal in the Japanese army named Monzaemon Hirobumi, said to the generals, but that very evening the leaders of the Double Leaf Society stepped down in favour of the young man. Hirobumi then endeavoured to renew the movement. A recruitment phase in the military, the police and the law enforcement community in general, was organised. The secret society renewed the activities it once pursued. It soon

acquired a Shinto temple that it made its new headquarters and the priests were sworn into the service of the organisation.

Descending from a prestigious samurai lineage, including a notable 16th Century hero, Monzaemon Hirobumi seems to use all of his contacts and networks, including mysterious and occult rituals to assure his domination his society and further its agenda. The priority target of his action is the government. The secret society has currently managed to ingratiate itself with many government members through blackmail and/or corruption. When some targets hesitate to accept or refuse their offers, the Shinto priests take over and, with powerful rituals, annihilate the will of even the most stubborn holdout. Hirubomi is a partisan of a strong and proud Japan, who will not be dictated to by a foreign embargo. He plans to break the International Blockade by any means necessary, even if it means plunging the country into the chaos of a world war. After all, the Monzaemon Family has already served its country several times over the past centuries and many of its members gave their lives for their country. After all, does the old samurai proverb not say, "One falls down seven times, so you might rise up on the eighth"?

The Knodel Brothers

"Recently, dozens of children have disappeared. We've seen an enormous increase in these disappearances in a very small time frame. A particular sign is that all of them were born the day of the Kuro Incident. Since then, constant surveillance was organised around the concerned infants, but without success. Every time, a hooded figure is sighted just before another baby disappears. These bastards are uncatchable!"

-Hasekura Kumiko, Shin-Edo police lieutenant

The Knödel brothers are two Austrian catholic priests who came to a seminar on Shinto through a cultural and ecumenical exchange program. They are stuck by the International Blockade following the Kuro Incident. After wandering aimlessly and having spent their entire meagre budget on accommodation, the brothers started to walk the streets. After meeting a man calling himself Akumu who claimed to be a seer, and having spent a night debating with him, they started having the same recurring nightmare every night. In this frighteningly realistic bad dream they saw children being abused and executed in an abject esoteric ritual. The visions never left them, so much that they both became persuaded that it was a message from God and that they must protect the babies. A particular sign was that all the stolen babies were born on the day of the Kuro Incident. The two brothers set themselves the task of gathering them together and hiding them to avoid the terrible fate that they had foreseen.

They hide them anywhere while waiting for... something. Even if they are only in possession of fragments of information, Karl and Alfred Knödel are absolutely convinced of the divine nature of their mission.

Currently they share the duties: Karl gathers information from the registers trying to find children born in the Kuro Incident day and Alfred prepares their kidnapping. Hidden in their voluminous hooded robes, the brothers commit their felony and take the children to a small shrine outside Shin-Edo, in open country, at the far end of an abandoned road. Here the children are taken, fed and lodged in simple trailers. The brothers try not to think about how this affair will end. Their dreams are unclear on the subject.

Grey Kaeru

This individual is as much a mystery to law enforcement as he is to the press and public. He became known after neutralising some crooks and denouncing several plots and other political and financial malfeasances. With secure access to the net, Grey Kaeru speaks to the public by hacking into private channels, often during prime time, and announcing his future actions. In the field, this man seems capable of abnormal physical feats and to have herculean strength. He subdues his targets and then calls the police, leaving beside them the files containing the proof of their crimes.

In fact, Kaeru is just a computer genius with an upgraded exoskeleton making him able to make impressively high and long leaps. His true name is Daitaru Yoshi and he fights crime his own way without being at all aware of the dangers. He is especially unaware of all of the enemies that he made in his crazy adventures. He is also whimsical and happily mixes serious clues with traces of extra-terrestrial visits or mental powers. Clumsy, but enthusiastic, he will not fail to unintentionally put a spanner in the wheels of any serious investigators.

Kudo Otsune

A 30-year old IT professional, Otsune lives as a recluse in a little house at the end of an isolated alley in Ueno. A tetraplegic, Otsune can only express herself with her eyes and through a rodent shaped little android. The latter decrypts her intentions broadcast through the Jellyfish permanently on the young woman's skull and vocally emits the phrases enounced through this medium. Otsune's services are requested by many, as she is

a very talented programmer and photonic networks expert. It is said that she can get inside nearly any intranet network and even break the international net blockade on Japan. She has gathered a small group of little rat-androids, which she sends out on various missions, serving as her hands and eyes in the real world.

Kudo Otsune stays in her armchair because her body is irreparably destroyed by a still unknown disease of genetic origin. She caught the disease at the end of her teens and seems to be the only person suffering from it in the whole world. The young lady spends much of her time trying to find data on her disease. For that purpose, she has forged many contacts with geneticists, doctors and researchers, but also with some Genocrats. Hacking the databases of genetics labs and trading industrial secrets for information on her mysterious ailment, Otsune sends her ratbots everywhere there are networks she can get access to. These ratbots usually sneak into buildings using the drainage systems. They are almost undetectable and can bypass most security systems.

Zenzaburo

“Yes, Inspector, he arrived through the thirteenth floor window after climbing up the façade, avoiding our heavy fire with a few leaps, like some kind of demon! Then he smashed through the plexi-armour window as easily as it was a rice paper wall! We hardly had time to turn around and he was in the lift, shooting at us!”

“You mean to say he went from the building’s façade to the lift in a fraction of a second! That’s impossible!”

“I swear, Inspector! I swear it’s the truth!”

-Security agent Niwa Izumo testifying before the Shin-Edo police about the Saisuno Company robbery

Zenzaburo is a strange group of men that, at first sight, seem identical, and those who have encountered them often believe they are just one individual. However, they are not clones and actually do not even look alike. However, they all act the same way and dress the same while on a mission. Wearing black suits that turn them almost translucent, they act like super-trained ninja, capable of amazing feats. In fact, they are a shock troop company belonging to a rich Genocrat, Yoshida Kunimichi. This billionaire has tripled his men’s physical potential by injecting them with nanoboosters designed by his private engineers. However, these nanoboosters exact a tremendous pressure on the body, damning the users to a very short life, just a little over six months after they have been first administered.

So, Kunimichi is forced to regularly refresh the roster of men on his brigade. He never addresses them by other than the name Zenzaburo. The men know the difference through intonation and

learn to know to whom the boss speaks to. Yoshisada Kunimichi sends them to steal secrets from his rivals, kidnap the families of people over whom he wishes to have influence and many other sorts of disreputable missions. Once they even attempted to access a Double Leaf Society site. However, part of the team had to face an unknown threat that decimated the ranks of the squad. They were forced to retreat without getting hold of what they sought. It was Zenzaburo’s first failure.

Abura-Akago

Also known as the ‘Ruby Ribbons,’ this special unit of the Japanese government is recognisable by the red stripe with the symbol of a flaming skull that adorns the sleeve of its members. An elite commando unit, they are equipped with the latest technological marvels, including massive exoskeletons similar to war robots. The Abura-Akago intervenes in special missions as directed by certain sectors of the government.

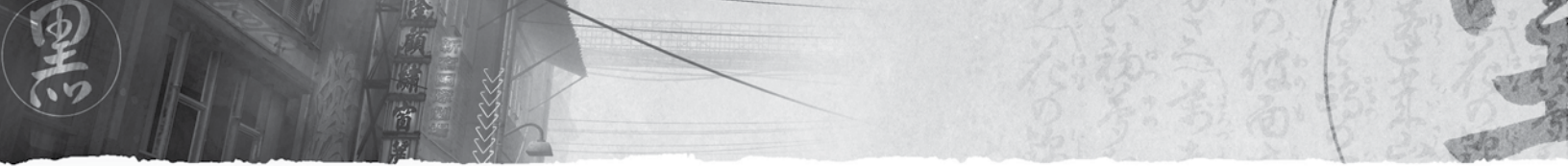
Having undergone many revisions these last few years, especially because of the relationship some of its officers entertained with the Soka Gakkai cult, mentioned only by in passing by the media, Abura-Akago is known for its independence, its hatred of the New Komeito party and its reputation as an incorruptible elite corps. This unit is regarded as the unwavering armed fist of the Emperor, the current prime minister and their partisans. They intervene more and more often to foil the plans of the New Komeito or to extricate and ‘reprogram’ the children of Genocrats that are implicated in cults.

Fushi Gumi

This yakuza fringe group operates, allegedly, completely outside of the main syndicates. It exclusively deals in organ trafficking and tech smuggling, usually dealing with certain Russian smugglers who are always active despite the International Blockade.

The Fushi Gumi is notable because, despite the small size of the group, its members have a reputation as immortal killers. Those who have crossed their path tell of individuals still standing after being on the receiving end of several bursts of automatic rifle fire and then reappearing days later without a scratch.

In truth, the leader of this peculiar clan, Uraku, hides in the depths of his private building many vats whose purpose is to enhance and ‘repair’ his henchmen. This state of the art



technology is augmented, its heavy doors carved with forbidden motifs, the control desks marked with strange symbols and the vials of unknown blood injected profusely into the veins of his killers with superhuman stamina. Some say Uraku is an oni and that he uses the darkest of magics to allow his men, old samurai, to cross the centuries without aging or dying.

OF SHADOW

Magagoto and wave spirits

Seers, mediums, itako and exorcists have divined correctly: the kami have again risen up to protect the Japanese isles and it is they that annihilated the Panasiatic missile. For five years now, without the least explanation, supernatural phenomena have been happening here and there in the Nipponese cities, like the breeze before the storm. But nobody has understood why. With the Kuro Incident, the storm has become a hurricane of spirits. They have risen as one, bringing with them all the malefic creatures from Hell or waking up those already found in Japanese soil.

Today, without being aware of it, the characters have not only the International Blockade, the cults, the inhumane tech and the crazies to deal with. They must also dam the implacable invasion from the realm of the dead and the bloodthirsty creatures from Yomi-No-Kuni if they are to survive.

Yurei

Under this generic term, also associated with the invisible world, are grouped ghosts, spectres and wandering souls. As defined by Shinto, a soul tainted by death, suffering extremely destructive thoughts (hatred, jealousy...) or having died violently by murder or suicide, might return to haunt the living. Only purification rituals will allow this vengeful soul to be appeased, but, unfortunately, it is not always enough if the spirit of the deceased is motivated by deceit, lies and deception.

There are several kinds of spectres according to their shape or origin, like the onryo (avenging ghosts), the ubume (children) and the funayurei (the drowned). But they all have rather similar powers and traits. Often whitish, their bodies are

weirdly deformed, their gait excessively stiff and their faces are almost impossible to perceive. They are sometimes preceded or accompanied with opalescent lights, bloodcurdling will o'wisps, called hidotama.

Yurei, often with a feminine form, are far from being simple classical ghosts, screaming or acting like carnival monsters. They are particularly intelligent and know how to torment the living, making use of stealth and deceit to make their victims give in to the horror and fright. Their appearances are rare, but brutal, generally in places where they're least expected: upside down, in a reflection, during a jerky movement, in a family photo. In 2046 Shin-Edo, with augmented reality being ubiquitous, you can never be sure of what is going to appear before your eyes. And you might not believe that a weird hologram is actually an evil spirit coming to torment you.

Meanwhile, not everybody is able to see such an evil spirit, or at least to be aware of what they are seeing. Some spectres prefer to possess their victims or people close to them, so that they can influence and manipulate them. The intervention of an exorcist then becomes indispensable. They use Shinto purification rituals to extract the spirit and purify it or send it back to its purgatory with the help of protective formulae written in rice paper.

Yurei

The following characteristics are those of a 'classic' spectre, a damned soul transmitting its suffering to the living through terror and torment.

Characteristics

| | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| DEX 3 | STR 3 | STA 5 | REF 2 |
| INT 3 | PER 3 | CHA 5 | WIL 5 |

Secondary Characteristics

| | | | |
|---------|-------|--------|-------|
| HITS 75 | SW 25 | DT -25 | |
| DEF 16 | ACT 1 | MOV 3 | REA 5 |

Skills

Combat Skills

| |
|-----------------|
| Hand-to-Hand 10 |
| Grappling 14 |

Powers

Kanashibari* 4, Insubstantial, Organic Possession 5, Mechanical Possession 5, Horror 4, Aura (cold), Invulnerability (Intangible)**





Some people who cross the outskirts of Kamata by night talk of bands of homeless coming out of the ruins and the sewers to attack vehicles. Their bodies shaking, their eyes white, they do not hesitate to break the windows and try to extract the passengers inside, biting them savagely as if they want to eat them alive.

In reality these homeless are all possessed by the spirits of the victims of a serial killer who lived in the building that the homeless now squat in. Buried in the building's basement, their corpses are still under the ruins of the building, itself destroyed in the double plane crash. As for the original killer, he disappeared in the accident.

* Kanashibari: The Yurei targets a person and must touch him to use this power. The victim makes an Opposition Check against the Kanashibari's power. The Margin of Failure is the number of Hit Points lost by the victim. Kanashibari is felt as a paralysis; similar to that one might feel while waking up, or as a pressure on the chest. This oppressive, crushing feeling means that the ghost is approaching, and then touching you.

** Being Intangible, spectres fear no physical attack. Use their physical attributes only when an opponent has a technique allowing him to affect their spiritual essence, like an exorcism or some other occult items.

Tsuchigumo

For centuries the Tsuchigumo, earth spiders, have slumbered deep under the Japanese soil and the foundations of temples. In a deep spiritual hibernation after the disappearance of the spirits, they bided their time to face the samurai of the modern era. The Kuro Incident was felt like a spring fire, a new life cycle offering new combat. Returned once again to the world of the living, they have one and only goal – survival.

A Tsuchigumo looks more like a sea spider, with a massive, whitish shell and a body with six long hooked legs. Unlike its sea 'cousin,' it can attain a size of several metres and lives deep underground, inside caves, subway tunnels, building foundations

In Akasaka quarter, the CRA (Credit Rating Agency) is a modest credit establishment with offices on the first floor of a multi-storey office block. For a few weeks now, the nearly thirty black-suited employees that usually receive customers, are instead constantly leaving and returning to the building, using the company vans in a weirdly repetitive fashion. CRA itself is allegedly closed for 'renovations,' an expansion of the basement that has been in the works for quite some time.

In truth all of the CRA staff members are possessed by a Tsuchigumo discovered by workmen digging in the basement. Everyone in the building is now controlled by the land spider, while its small army of CRA staff has been placed in charge of feeding it as well as seeking out other hosts across Shin-Edo.

and the basements of building complexes. Incapable of coming out during the day without being noticed and by fear of the sunlight, this creature prefers to possess human beings with its eggs to make them obey without hesitation. To do this, a land spider uses long organic tubes that stretch out of its abdomen. They inject eggs into any human being coming into range. The latter is almost immediately possessed by the Tsuchigumo egg. After a few hallucinations and nightmares, the egg hatches into a larva that immediately takes control of the host, devouring a part of his brain and taking its place.

When it is grown, the larva hatches out of the host's head, but by that time they are long dead, merely animated by the spider's control of their nervous system. Humans controlled by a larva have just one goal, to find other humans for 'mother.' Some are injected with more eggs, others become food for the ravenous beast.

Tsuchigumo

Characteristics

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

Secondary Characteristics

| | | | |
|---------|-------|--------|-------|
| HITS 60 | SW 20 | DT -20 | |
| DEF 30 | ACT 3 | MOV 6 | REA 6 |

General Skills

Athletics 12
Climbing 18
Running 18

Powers

Horror 6, Natural Armour 5, Natural Weapon (Hooks 3D6), Organic Possession 6, Vulnerability (Sunlight)

Kappa

Massive aquatic creatures, the Kappa have a humanoid shape, scaly skin and a heavy greyish turtle shell. Their heads have a heavy cutting beak, small black eyes and stringy long hair. The top of their skull has a small hollow filled with blackish water, containing all their vitality. Powerful and fierce, Kappa enjoy devouring children's internal organs, extracted with infinite care. They are particularly gifted at kidnapping people walking near watercourses. Sometimes entire groups climb out of the ocean to hide in the sewer pipes of Shin-Edo

Just like Yurei, Kappa and other 'monsters' coming from Yomi-No-Kuni are not simple brainless monstrosities, unable to go unnoticed and wanting to devour human flesh at any cost. Some mystics suggest that these monsters were once human, but a prolonged stay in Hell has covered their souls with its own taint, deforming and transforming them. This is why Kappa can talk, watch, act and learn from their mistakes, not hesitating to set up traps, track their prey, treat their wounds or be unfailingly polite while their claws penetrate deeply within your entrails.

Kappa

Characteristics

| | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| DEX 3 | STR 4 | STA 4 | REF 3 |
| INT 3 | PER 3 | CHA 1 | WIL 4 |

Secondary Characteristics

| | | | |
|--------|-------|------------|-------|
| HIT 60 | SW 20 | DT -20 | |
| DEF 24 | ACT 2 | MOV 3 / | REA 6 |
| | | 6 in water | |



Skills

Combat skills:

Hand-to-Hand 10
Grappling 12
Academic skills
Natural Sciences 1
Oceanography 12

General skills:

Athletics 8
Dodge 12
Swimming 18
Communication 6
Fast Talk 8
Deception 6
Sneaking 10
Survival 4
Aquatic 16

Powers

Horror 3, Natural Armour 2, Natural Weapon (Claws 1D6), Phoenix, Vulnerability*

*If the stagnant water in the hollow in the Kappa's skull is spilt out, all its Characteristics immediately drop to 1, until such time as it is able to return to its watery home and refill the hollow.

Nopperabo

Unlike many other creatures from Yomi, capable of possessing humans and using them, a Nopperabo is no more than the embryo of a dark soul, a being too weak to take possession of the mind of a conscious individual. The advent of clone technology in Shin-Edo's many biotech labs was a veritable revelation to the Nopperabo, who found in the developing clones the ideal hosts for their fragile forms. Imperfect bodies without any real awareness, these clones became privileged targets, and some clones have thus mysteriously awakened in their vats, their faces melting away under this parasite's nefarious effect.

Escaping the labs, the possessed clones try to hide, concealing their non-existent faces so as not to attract attention. Attracted to sound like moths to flame, they continually try to complete a body that has not yet completely developed by stealing the organs that they need from other living beings. But their faces stay desperately empty, without any eyes, mouth, nose or any other distinctive trait. Despite everything, they ceaselessly try to complete that emptiness by all means necessary, even magically stealing the faces of innocent people to use as their own. This never holds for long on the Nopperabos' blank features, soon

Nikkeri Pharma is a Shibuya biotech lab that two clones have disappeared from. Several organic implants whose manufacture was in progress in their physiologic vats are also missing. Determined to find the guilty parties of this costly robbery, the company manager, Mr Osaki, made use of the services of a private investigator specialising in organ traffic and ritual murders. He was found a few days later, lying on his futon mattress, his face weirdly 'erased', his hand still clenched around the hilt of an old katana covered in dry blood.

melting into drops of blood. The Nopperabo are aware of this and most of the time, these stolen faces end up on the walls of Nopperabo hideouts, where the creatures delectably and enviously contemplate the horrified visages that they have taken.

Nopperabo

Characteristics

| | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| DEX 2 | STR 2 | STA 3 | REF 2 |
| INT 3 | PER 4 | CHA 1 | WIL 3 |

Secondary Characteristics

| | | | |
|--------|-------|--------|-------|
| HIT 45 | SW 15 | DT -15 | |
| DEF 16 | ACT 1 | MOV 2 | REA 4 |

Skills

Combat Skills:

Hand-to-Hand 12
Firearms 8

General Skills

Athletics 6
Dodge 8
Communication 8
Empathy 12
Deception 10
Sneaking 14

Investigation 6
Shadowing 8
Spiritual 6
Legends 8
Shinto 8

Powers

Drain (2D6)*, Horror 4, Phoenix.

* This specific form of mutilation is the stealing of parts of a target's face by the Nopperabo.

Oni

It is said these beings were once ancient gods, kami corrupted by their own dark emotions. They might have been the first to inhabit Yomi, in the dark winding paths called Jigoku. Sometimes seen as demons or ogres, they each have a massive body with red, black or bluish skin. Their ugly heads have prominent fangs and an imposing mane of long, blackish hair. Their nails are long and black, their attire often fragments of ancient warrior clothing. Traditionally, they wield a kanabo (an iron spiked bar) in combat, even when they can very well use modern weaponry.

Despite their impressive height, over two metres, and a physique worthy of a titan Sumotori, they are solely made up of dark water. This makes their bodies more fragile, but also harder to put down. In the physical world, an oni moves with extreme difficulty, preferring to cross the air in thunder and rain, two elements they are familiar with. Always hungry for flesh, an oni is often obsessed with certain humans, watching them, spying them in the water so that they can assume their form or some of their habits.

In effect, these demons practice the kamigakari, possession, so they can use a human capable of fulfilling their drives, generally by having the human swallow their liquid substance or inserting themselves through the nose or the eyes. Since the Kuro Incident it has become increasingly difficult for them to possess humans and some have found in machines a new choice of host.

Oni

Characteristics

| | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| DEX 5 | STR 8 | STA 7 | REF 4 |
| INT 3 | PER 3 | CHA 2 | WIL 5 |

Secondary Characteristics

HIT 95 SW 32 DT -32
DEF 24 ACT 2 MOV 1 / REA 6
5 in water

Skills

Combat Skills:

Hand-to-Hand 8
Grappling 8
Heavy Weapons 1
Firearms 3
Melee 10
Kanabo 16

General Skills

Athletics 6
Dodge 8
Communication 3
Intimidation 8
Investigation 2
Shadowing 6
Spiritual 4
Legends 10
Shinto 10

Contacts 1

Apocalyptic Cults 4

Powers

Horror 5, Mechanical Possession 4, Mimic, Natural Armour, Organic Possession 2, Phoenix

In February 3, at the Setsubun festival, people throw soya beans through the door shouting, "Oni was soto, Fuku wa uchi" - "Demons (oni) out, luck in"

The Japanese have many expressions that reference oni:

- Oni ni kanabo (oni with an iron bar) = invincible
- Do the laundry when the oni are away = when the cat's away, the mice will play
- To turn your heart like that of an oni = to show no mercy
- Putting a tear in the eye of an oni = to make stones cry





Tengu

It would be too simple to call these Yomi creatures ‘monsters,’ some having been already present on Japanese soil even before the Kuro Incident. Capable of completely taking human form or transforming themselves into imposing ravens, Tengu are the essence of blind, resolute justice. Many have forgotten their true nature, having settled into a normal human life as labourers, office workers or Overclockers in Shin-Edo. But if a simple wrong word, a rude attitude or the news of criminal activities reach their ears, their feathers of darkness grow back, their irises become that of birds of prey and their skin falls away as if it was a nothing more than a paper disguise.

Tengu usually hide their wings under a cloak, along with their cutting claws and their jet beaks to maintain a dark humanoid silhouette. Then they will take from you what you hold dear, torture you, and carry you through the air to a place where you will never be found.

Do not think Tengu are simple justice-driven vigilantes. They are the physical embodiment of resentment and vengefulness. They have no more qualms or hesitation in destroying a family for some trivial slight as they do when they strike down evildoers. The latter will have their punishment in time, because in the eyes of the raven-men, no human action is more severe than another. Those who escape the Tengu’s claws still keep deep scars in their souls.

Tengu

Characteristics

| | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| DEX 6 | STR 3 | STA 4 | REF 5 |
| INT 3 | PER 5 | CHA 4 | WIL 5 |

Secondary Characteristics

| | | | |
|--------|-------|-------------------------|-------|
| HIT 65 | SW 22 | DT -22 | |
| DEF 32 | ACT 3 | MOV 6 / 12 in flight | REA 7 |

Skills

Combat Skills:

| |
|----------------|
| Hand-to-Hand 8 |
| Claws 8 |
| Melee 8 |
| Swords 16 |

General Skills:

Athletics 8
Dodge 10
Flying 18
Communication 8
Intimidation 9
Investigation 2
Interrogation 5
Shadowing 3
Spiritual 4
Legends 5 (mastery)
Shinto (Mastery)

Note: A Tengu can have more skills related to its job if it is living as a simple mortal.

Powers

Change Shape (Human, Raven), Horror 3, Natural Weapon (Claws 2D6), Phoenix

SUPERNATURAL POWERS

All these creatures from more or less forgotten legends are notable, among other things, for their powers. All have supernatural capabilities that very few mortals are able to face.

Some powers have their own levels (noted X below) and are treated as Characteristics. The number (X) corresponds to both the number of dice rolled and the bonus added for a Power check.

Example: The Gamemaster makes a Horror Check for the ghost crossing paths with the characters. Her creature has a level of 6 in its Horror power so the GM rolls 6D6+6.

Aura (Type)

This creature emanates an intense and disturbing sensation. The range of this power is a circle whose radius equals five times the creature's Charisma level in metres. Below are some example types of aura.

Cold: Nearing zero degrees Celsius. Enough to freeze water, fog glass and making little clouds appear when you breathe.

Heat: An ambient temperature of nearly 70° c, making it possible to boil a small quantity of water (a bathtub full, at most).

Stench: A frightening odour fills the room. No ventilation system is capable of dissipating it. The characters must make a Stamina Check vs. a Target Number of 12 or be nauseated.

Breakdowns: Tech items, electronics, electrical systems are disrupted until they stop working.

Parasites: Inexplicably, insects mass in the affected area. Flies, cockroaches and other vermin swarm in the wake of the creature.

Drain X

The creature can steal vital energy from the victim with a simple touch. Normally it must succeed an attack against its prey. It then transfers Hit Points equal to X from the victim to itself, never going beyond its maximum Hit Points.

Horror X

A sinister, dismal aura emanates from the creature. Every person facing the monster must succeed a Willpower Check opposing the power level. In case of failure, the frightened victim suffers a penalty on all actions equal to the Margin of Failure for as long as he is in the presence of the horrifying creature.

Insubstantial

Yurei and also some other creatures have the power to become insubstantial at will. When they use this ability, they lose any consistency; they can pass through solid objects and are no longer affected by the material elements of the physical world. Only certain exorcism techniques or occulttech weapons can still affect them.

Invulnerable

The creature cannot be damaged by physical attacks. Only certain mystical techniques, magic items or occulttech weapons can affect it. Thus invulnerable creatures aren't immune to all forms of attack.

Mechanical Possession X

The creature can merge with mechanical or electronic devices. For that it must succeed at a Willpower Check against a Target Number of 12. If successful, it takes possession of the device. The creature can now control all functions of the device.

The possession lasts until the creature decides to leave the device shell.

Mimic

The creature is able to alter its physical traits to look like another creature or person. A successful Opposed Check between the viewer's Perception and the creature's Charisma reveals the deception.

Natural Armour X

The creature has a particularly resistant body, bony plaques, a thick skin or even a powerful muscular frame. Whatever the reason, this natural armour protects it efficiently. Subtract the shown figure (X) from all damage it suffers.

Natural Weapon (Damage)

The creature has claws, fangs, spits acid or has some other ability that can cause damage to its opponents. Using this weapon is governed by the creature's Hand-to-Hand-skill. The Margin of Success is added to the declared damage.

Organic Possession X

The creature can merge with the body of a human being or an animal. For that it must succeed at an Opposed Check between its Possession power and the target's Willpower. If successful, it

takes possession of its chosen physical shell. The creature now can use all Body characteristics of the victim, keeping its own mental Characteristics. It can also access all of the Skills and abilities of its prey. A possession lasts until the next sunrise, at which time the creature must make another attempt if it wants to maintain the possession. Of course, it can release the victim before that. If the prey is successful, he expels or repels the creature, which cannot attempt to possess that person for a whole year.

Phoenix

Creatures with this power cannot be definitively slain by normal weapons. If their mortal shell is destroyed, they regrow another in within 4 days. Only an occult weapon or an exorcism can end this creature's days among the living.

Shape Change

The creature is able to take another form, often animal or human. It will take a full turn to adopt the new appearance.

Vulnerability (Type)

The creature is particularly vulnerable to the listed element or attack. In case of the former, it must flee from the source of the weakness or suffer 1D6 Damage Points per turn that it is in contact with the element (no protection is subtracted from this damage). In the latter case, for every successful attack, the damage is doubled.



WHISPERS

"Fire doesn't cleanse. It blackens!"

Dahlia Gillespie, Silent Hill

GAMEMASTERING KURO

The Typical Kuro Character


Like most role-playing games, the rules in **Kuro** are, of course, designed to give your players as much freedom as possible to choose and create characters. This is so that each player can get as much out of the game as any other, whether he chooses to play an Overclocker in an Akihabara back room or a student coming from Kyushu and discovering the capital for the first time or a private detective disillusioned with having to investigate more cases of haunted houses than fickle women. Nevertheless, even though it is not at all mandatory for them to do so, in general typical **Kuro** heroes share a few points in common. Naturally, as the Gamemaster you are free not to take that into account, but these notes will help you to explain to your players who these characters are and how they fit into the world of **Kuro**.

Far from the tropes of a great number of other games, characters in **Kuro** are not usually rebels in search of adventure and revenge. On the contrary, they are relatively normal people, not Genocrats, but also not hoodlums. They are, apparently, perfectly integrated in society, caught up in a daily routine that

is both oppressive and reassuring, with several responsibilities, often towards their families and their employers. In general, when confronted with a problem, their first reflex will be to run away and call the police. Their second instinct will be to fight. Not to change the world or to save it from the return of a dark god at the cost of their sanity, but instead so that they can get back the comfort of their daily lives. In short, even if many of the player characters take some pride in not being 'salary-men,' the typical **Kuro** hero is, whether he wants it or not, one of the innumerable cogs in the great machine that is Shin-Edo.

Nevertheless, for one reason or another, the typical **Kuro** heroes will feel as if they do not really fit in. Alienated, somehow outsiders, they do not wholly belong in this ultramodern capital. They might ever suffer from one if its many ailments: loneliness, an inability to communicate or find intimacy, forced unemployment, anonymity, disassociation by constant immersion in the myriad artificial paradises that the city offers (drugs, sex androids, Squids...), chronic depression, even simple ennui. Unlike many of their contemporaries, they do not seek the meaning of life among the many extremist political and religious groups and cults. More often they are determined not to give up and keep moving ahead, without really knowing where that will lead them. They rightly hope that they will not become one of the many anonymous beings that they see every day in the subway, and that, maybe, they have a destiny. Sometimes they cannot wait for this destiny to come to them, and so will decide to take a risk, and let the chips fall where they may!

However, even if they usually ignore it, something irrevocably marks the player characters, distinguishing them from the crowd. In fact, all of them have an extremely rare genetic mutation. It takes the form of a specific marker that might possibly be detected by very thorough medical tests. Its origin is unknown,



but several organisations have made lists of the 'Potentials' who bear this marker. Its secrets are something that interests a lot of people.

Thus the characters' daily lives are going to be shaken like a wrecking ball, both by the changes affecting Japan, and by the factions interested in the 'Potentials' (such as Jiro in the scenario 'Origami'). The discovery of their very nature and the supernatural events that seemingly multiply around them are going to tear their world apart, because as strange as it may seem, supernatural events are increasing exponentially all over Japan, and the player characters are soon going to be at the epicentre.

The Kuro Campaign

Kuro was designed to be played primarily as a campaign game rather than as a series of one-shot scenarios. Indeed, the characters do not start out belonging to any government agency charging them with an investigation. No secret society needs them to find an ancestral artefact or to understand a prophecy. No family or clan wants them as soldiers in any shadow war (although these are all good frameworks for a one-shot scenario). They only belong to an informal group that has no reason to exist other than the characters met under trying circumstances. In **Kuro**, the characters are not so much seeking adventure as reacting to the adventure that comes to them. And to be honest, it does not come with the best of intentions...

The main drives in a **Kuro** campaign are thus the characters' reactions towards the different events to which they will be exposed and which will shake their daily lives. Depending on the direction that you intend to give your campaign, you can stress one drive more than the others, but the official scenarios will focus in the following drives:

1- Japan is no longer the same

For the last six months the archipelago has been in an unprecedented and, to say the least, worrying situation. Unfortunately for the inhabitants, everything seems to point to it being only the beginning.

Internationally, the country is isolated, both by the blockade and the multiple typhoons that ceaselessly strike its shores. Until now the foreign powers behind the embargo have surprised by Japan's resilience, but their leaders are becoming impatient, primarily because of the changing opinion of their own public. This impatience is exacerbated in some cases because the leaders in question are facing re-election. Thus it is very probable that

tensions will rise up a notch or two as these foreign powers want the situation with both the blockade and the Japan's intransigence resolved. Moreover, it is whispered that secret negotiations are being held with the diplomats of several countries each trying to claw the most selfish deal they can from the situation. Foreign Special Forces operatives may even have already conducted covert ops on Japanese soil.

Domestically, the Japanese population is paying the price for the International Blockade. The many advances in food and power self-sufficiency have minimised the effects, but scarcities are more and more common, as well as power failures. Many people are becoming excluded in a society that is taking its time leaving the 'cult of the salary-man'. The climate becomes more and more tense and all kinds of extremist groups (political, religious, criminal) are recruiting by the thousands. No one knows how long the public peace or even the population will last. At its head, the coalition government escalates the dirty tricks and internecine conflict, as both camps conclude that the temporary compromise made on the evening of May 4th has dragged for too long.

2 - The Hunt for Potentials

Besides the problems hitting the world around them, the characters will quickly find out that they have become targets for many unscrupulous creatures wanting either to find out what they are or to take them out just because they are Potentials. At first, the players might think that their characters are the victims of illegal medical experiments, and, truth be told, they are probably right. But it is also true that, in the world of **Kuro**, some factions are asking questions about the Potentials and others know, or believe that they know, what they are and want to gather them, kill them or even worship them. No doubt, sooner or later, some of them will come knocking on the characters' doors.

But this hunt is also what might drive the characters to find out exactly what the blood marker that unites them means. They may become aware that all those sharing it seem they have extraordinary destinies within their respective areas, even though some of the Potentials are the most inhuman criminals.

3 - The Supernatural Invasion

Finally, the last of the great changes in the characters' daily lives is the appearance of the supernatural. At first relatively diffuse in May of 2046, its presence is increasing and strange manifestations are multiplying, namely around Potentials. The great majority of the population have a lot of trouble accepting it, but in the months following the Kuro Incident, the idea that the Japanese are no longer the only ones trapped on the archipelago

is gradually becoming accepted. Some do not hesitate to claim that the Blockade actually has no other purpose than to stop this 'thing' from spreading throughout the world, or to give it enough time to wipe out the entire Japanese population. Some believe that annihilation has already occurred with the Kuro Incident. They say it is not the spirit world that came to Japan, but Japan that was cast into the realm of the spirit.

As the number of supernatural phenomena increases, so too do the rumours about the supernatural and the number of ranting mystics. Most of these are painfully wrong. Some are simply mistaken; others enjoy spreading fear throughout the population. Some are just looking for attention or taking advantage of the gullible. The characters will probably be confronted with these false manifestations as often as with the real ones.


Unfortunately, the horror is not lurking in old haunted mansions, waiting patiently for the characters to set foot in them. In *Kuro*, the supernatural does not fear to roll up its sleeves and directly invade the characters' lives, namely through any piece of state-of-the-art technology (Gantai, Pod, flexible monitor, video, etc.). Maybe, one day, in a shady alley, they will even come across a discreet Kappa that befriended its human neighbours or an Oni running a karaoke club...

Involving the Characters

The assumption that they are playing relatively ordinary heroes and that the players possess a great deal of freedom can seem to complicate things for the Gamemaster. In fact, at first it can seem difficult to involve all of the characters and to get them work together.

However, it is not. At first, the characters will be involved against their will, doubtlessly innocent victims of things beyond their control and knowledge, but all that changes quickly. The forces around the player characters, in terms of factions and Non-Player Characters (friendly or not) will often try to get them together. This can be as a consequence of their previous adventures (as journalists, police officers, curious civilians, etc.) or because of their nature as Potentials. But what will always drive them towards the adventure is that they themselves will try and find out more about all of the strange events and why their names keep appearing on lists that seem to have no purpose. It is very likely that they will try to find other people whose names appear on the lists. Having the same enemies, later understanding that they are allies, and then looking for the same answers about their identity, they will have no trouble in working together when push comes to shove.





Moreover, certain elements in the *Kuro* setting will help them to remain in contact, and even give them a push if need be to begin a scenario. From the ending of the first scenario 'Origami,' Jiro's red hologram will naturally seek to contact the characters and to guide them using any media at its disposal. But Jiro's red hologram will not be the only person or faction with an interest in the player characters, and they may even be contacted by different entities altogether.

For example, a lawyer, hired by some Potentials believing themselves the subject of medical experiments without their knowledge, may look for all of them to defend their interests and thus discover what binds them together. An old doctor or a psychology professor has also noticed that all those bearing this marker very often become famous or revered individuals, either that or the most heinous criminals. Some even develop strange abilities. The possibilities are many and will change as the characters come to understand more about the universe around them.

Stand alone adventures

Despite being oriented for campaign play, the *Kuro* setting is rich enough to easily allow you to run standalone scenarios, possibly with pregenerated characters and focusing on one of the aspects of the game. For example, as a 'one off' adventure, you could choose to adapt one of the many Asian sci-fi or horror novels, cartoons or movies where the protagonists usually do not survive...

Quick scenario creation

First we offer some techniques to easily create your own scenarios. You can easily complement them by looking through the chapters in this book for inspiration:

- **Introduce key moments in the game's history:** Many events in the *Kuro* setting are only partially explained, generally because no one really knows what happened. However, those are situations particularly suited for a one-shot adventure. What really happened in the shin dangan ressha (high-speed train) between Niigata and (what used to be called) Tokyo that derailed it the day of the Kuro Incident? How about the planes that crashed at Kamata? Was it only due to the magnetic storm?

- **Play a scenario focusing on the technological aspect:** In a world where androids exist, where some can pass for human, where artificial intelligences are common, technological scenarios are easy to set up and particularly effective. Moreover, *Kuro's* geopolitical context can easily lead to excellent 'techno-thriller' type plots. If you are hunting for ideas, the short story in this book, for instance, can be an excellent one-shot or introductory scenario. Also, plots concerning robots are abundant in literature and movies, as well as Japanese anime, which is often filled with synthetic beings asking too many metaphysical questions.

- **Play a horror story:** Nothing is better suited for a one night scenario than a horror story. A horrible death, a curse, a killer targeting the player characters, and you are ready. Inspirations abound and there are plenty of Asian or Western horror movies available that you might adapt. A cursed videotape that kills all who watch it? A hotel built over an ancient graveyard or some other haunted place? A child who sees dead people? An abandoned ship that seems to have miraculously slipped through the International Blockade? Ghostly silhouettes appearing on the Internet? The vehicle of an idol that suddenly seems self-aware and attacks all who try to seduce or harm him? Alternatively, pick one of the creatures from the monster section and describe the trail it leaves, inviting the player characters to follow it.

- **Play a disaster scenario:** Earthquakes and typhoons are much more frequent now than before the Kuro Incident. Their repercussions, depending on the place where those events happen, are plentiful and from a gaming point of view such extreme situations are ripe with opportunities and challenges. They allow for great one shot sessions around a sole event easily involving all of the players and their characters.

- **Play in Japanese history:** This country is almost always straddling reassuring tradition and the latest modernity. It has many historical and cultural specificities than can lead to first-rate drama: Ainu, descendants of samurai clans, splendid Kyoto palaces reminiscent of ancient Heian, traces of World War Two, the trauma of the bomb, matsuri, the importance of social contacts and old obligations, Sumo or K1 tournaments...

In general, the more that you mix up all these elements, the nearer you are to the original feel of *Kuro*. Once you are comfortable with it, you will not have any trouble not just creating your own stories, but also adapting any story to 2046 Japan. What if Romeo and Juliet was the story of a Genocrat's daughter and a natural? What if the Whitechapel murderer was a Shinjuku android? What if...?

Adventure Seeds

In case, despite the above advice, you are short on ideas for an upcoming game, here are five synopses that should allow you to quickly create a starting point. It is up to you to develop them into fully fledged scenarios. However, if you start introducing the characters and role-playing through a typical day, you may find a few ideas spring to mind from seeing how the characters interact. The players themselves will even suggest plotlines, sometimes without being aware of it.

School Girls

The player characters are a group of young school girls with different out-of-school activities. They have all received messages from the same schoolmate. This would not be a problem if said schoolmate had not killed herself four days before. She was also not the type to keep making appointments to meet up in the city. The girl in question is not the only suicide though, and three more of her fellow students have recently taken their lives. After some investigation, the player characters find out that the four girls pooled some money to purchase an android with the image of their favourite idol. A bit over romantic, one of the girls got something of a crush on the machine. The robot, itself overclocked to synthesise various aphrodisiac pheromones, calmly explained that he had no feelings for her and was just programmed to please her. She could not handle the rejection, which precipitated her suicide. Paradoxically, the android developed a kind of remorse that it did not know it could feel. He tried to learn more about the young lady that it had led to her death by making appointments with her friends. Unfortunately, the changes in its programming seemed to provoke at the very least, strange reactions in the young girls, and the first three it met have also killed themselves. So it keeps making appointments and then hides and listens. Sometimes it will go so far as to follow the girls in the street, but it never approaches them or shows itself. However, the android finds that each of the deaths has provoked the same strange feelings, and it seeks to promote more so it might properly investigate and understand these new emotions.

Love Hotel

The players are the aides, bodyguards and driver of an illustrious member of the New Komeito party who has stopped at a 'love hotel' to have a good time with a young lady likely to be twenty or thirty years younger than him. But the party is taking a bit too long and a press conference is booked for the end of the afternoon. After many attempts to approach and call him, they enter the room, only to find both the corpse of the politician and

the skin of his partner, apparently skinned alive. The characters only have a few hours to find out what happened and to cover up the scandal. The first conclusions are that the girl was in fact an android who got rid of her skin as she only wore it to pass for human. Her employer is a terrible mercenary and terrorist called Matsushigi. After ten minutes in the room, the media surprises the characters, who are all probably still standing there over the corpse.

In fact, the killer is a member of an assassin clan, paid by the New Komeito party itself. They wish to play the victim and cast increased suspicion on the Liberal Democrat Party as the culprits behind the murder. The skin on the floor is synthetic, but it is just an accessory that the human murderer used to lead the investigators on a false track (and to give her time to leave the hotel).

Kuma

The characters are contacted by a friend that works at the Shin-Edo zoo. He is worried because two deaths have occurred in the place recently and he feels that he is constantly being followed. In fact, when he meets up with the characters, strange individuals, who look more like farmers than serial killers, attack him. But these are not ordinary country-folk; they are Ainu, an almost extinct ethnic minority that normally only lives in Hokkaido, Japan's most Northern island. Far from being murderers, they have come to Shin-Edo to dispel the evil of a malefic spirit that they were tracking down. Returning from Sapporo, the characters' friend brought with him a bear cub found by the local authorities (as he should, it being a professional trip). However, the cub has been specifically bred for sacrifice to the Mother Goddess when it was old enough by an Ainu tribe who still practice the ancient worship of the Bear. It was seen as a theft by the enraged sylvan spirits, which have used the animal to kill. The Ainu have travelled to Shin-Edo to prevent the fury of the spirit being unleashed on the capital.

Mortal Concert

During a concert of the band Shimbara 2k42, the lead singer Ken 'Kurisuto' Shigura dies suddenly, officially from an overdose. As self-absorbed as only a pop star can be, he had recorded his performance as a Squid programme, although this was immediately confiscated and locked up as evidence. While no one knows how, the recording ended up on the black market and all those who relive the experience using their own Squids die soon after. On the other hand, nothing happens to those watching the programme in video format (on screen or Jellyfish). The characters can learn this from a friend who has an interest in urban legends. He was at a very drunken party where

several of the other partygoers used the Squid and is one of the few who can remember what happened.

The deaths are actually due to the onryo (vengeful spirit) of a samurai who died four centuries ago. He swore he would kill all those who would sully in public the name of his master, Jinno Sazaemon of the clan Hosokawa. Shigura did just that in a song he sang in public for the first time during the concert. Thus the ghost killed him. Logically, since then, all those who relive the concert commit the same insults and attract the curse onto them.

Theseus' Boat

The characters are police officers charged with the investigation of a ritual murder in Roppongi. The victim's left eye was ripped off. Somewhere else in the city, a similar murder occurs, but this time it is the right eye that is missing. All leads point to a small time organ trafficking ring trying to make it big by removing organs straight from the source. As they clear their trail, the corpse of the doctor of the first victim is found murdered in an Asakusa alley.

However, in both cases, the victim's next of kin received a huge sum of money whose origin is impossible to track. It is thus possible that they are accessories to the murder. Nothing could be further from the truth: the person having removed the organs was not trying to get new organs, but to retrieve old ones. He just never asked the opinion of the victims or their families, and feels that he should recompense them.

The culprit is the lieutenant of an influential Genocrat whose unscrupulous and apparently underpaid doctor decided to sell his old organs on the sly. Unfortunately for his other patients, the organ's owner is having something of a metaphysical crisis and is losing all capacity for rational judgement. After having replaced, little by little, almost all of his body, he no longer knows who he is. He questions if he is still himself, since he no longer inhabits his original body. If he were no longer himself, perhaps reclaiming some of his previous organs would make him more 'himself,' unless of course, that would just make him his own twin. In his doubt, he ordered one of his bodyguards to punish the surgeon and to recover all of his old 'parts.'

Group Campaign Concepts

Another very effective means of giving a particular depth to a scenario or a campaign is to greatly restrict the available career options for players to choose from during character creation. This means that they form a specific type of group, around which the Gamemaster can tailor particular adventures. It is also a means of

exploring certain specific aspects of the **Kuro** setting, especially if you want to run your own campaign or if your players do not warm to the idea of playing ordinary heroes.

We provide the following as examples:


Law Enforcement and Public Service

This kind of group allows the player characters easy access to places like crime scenes and the files that they might need to investigate **Kuro** events. The main drawback though, is that it is difficult to move the campaign beyond following mission after mission. An additional source of additional drama and plot in such a campaign can be in detailing the day-to-day life in the institution that the characters work in and their relationship to the outside world.

Cops or Private Detectives can add a film noir ambiance, like *Electric Town* (the story included in this book). Law enforcement work has been seriously disrupted since the Kuro Incident. Between the distress of those forced into criminality out of desperation, crazed robots, supernatural manifestations and the increase of unsolvable cases, no one knows what to do any more. They only know that their job has become even more dangerous and that sooner or later they will come across something against which they will have no defence.

Emergency Services (paramedics, fire-fighters, etc.) are just as much on the front lines as the police. Working nights and dealing closely with human misery, members of the emergency services hear all sorts of rumours and see the most unbelievable things. They are not only at the forefront of these events, but they usually have to pick up the pieces. For the last six months, the rumours have been becoming more believable and a growing number of paramedics and fire fighters never get to finish the nightshift in one piece.

Elite Units might protect the Japanese government which has been prey to several evils since the beginning of the blockade. Such a unit might be able to respond with extreme force, making it a good choice for an action oriented group. Whether in a



group fighting black ops missions mounted by foreign powers, uncontrollable robots, terrorist or (like the Mononoke Company) the supernatural phenomena that disrupt the public peace, the player characters are part of a secret and well-armed strike force charged with first solving problems in a definitive way and then erasing all traces of it. But life in the unit is much less corrupt than it may appear as the elite unit is supposed to be discreet, its first objective being to protect the population.

Politicians

These may be a little harder to involve in a specific point, as parties of this type are normally attached to a specific 'territory' (whether a Ward, a quarter, a number of voters or the mid-term survival of their country) that they try to manage and improve as best they can. Such a campaign will generally involve diplomacy with numerous different factions and will more often than not bring trouble to the characters than the characters being brought to trouble. On the other hand, it will allow the players to rejoice in their successes by watching their 'territory' thrive.

Locally Elected Representatives/Notables are in charge of a quarter in the capital and are thus confronted with all of the issues that can happen there, whether reacting to the consequences of an earthquake, a prolonged power failure, or to reassure the population about the rumours concerning an old abandoned house. It will be up to them to see to disturbances on a local level.

New Komeito or Liberal Democrat Party partisans are part of the 'two headed' coalition government formed after the May 4th election. The characters come from one of the two parties and manage some of its operations, which means sometimes having to play dirty tricks on the sly. In effect, both factions are at loggerheads and neither can stand the façade of collaboration any more. They both seek to advance their pawns, manage their popularity and crush the other with as many plots, blackmail attempts and low blows as it takes. Anything goes as long as the public remains oblivious. Each camp is aware that when the time comes to strike, one must strike first and in such a way the other cannot get up and strike back. When such a group faces a supernatural threat, it will be mainly be as a wrench in another plan in a complicated scheme.

High-flying Diplomats still have a place even with the effect of the International Blockade. There are many secret negotiations between Japanese representatives (who might be the player characters) and the leaders of the international community that continue to take place. However, they might also negotiate with potential allies that might be convinced to turn coat and plead the

cause of the Archipelago. At these summits important financial as well as technological and diplomatic issues are debated. What if certain foreign powers were more interested in what is trapped together with the Japanese inside the International Blockade than the alleged anti-missile shield?

Mystics

Unlike the latter and just like law enforcement, these parties will tend to seek out trouble rather than waiting for trouble to come to them. They are thus very easy to involve in adventures. They are, nevertheless, clearly oriented towards the supernatural and horror type scenarios. So they are better adapted to campaigns dealing with the secrets and occult plots whose details will be revealed little by little.

Specialised Journalists might work for a Media Content Agency (the modern equivalent of a press agency, or a newspaper that has long abandoned all paper support) that employs them, most of all, for fake stories about fanciful, pseudo-esoteric news. All that has changed is that with the multiplication of supernatural manifestations, the former blasé freelancers have become true investigative reporters. They are now part of one of the premier teams in their agency, which never misses sending them anywhere where there is a whiff of brimstone.

Exorcists or Cults of all kinds from religious to para-religious cults have kept growing for months now. There are some that set themselves the duty of sending their members into the vengeful embrace of an onryo by promising them some artificial paradise or other. Others, like the Celestial Flame, are, on the other hand, themselves exorcists trying to banish Oni and ghosts mixing prayers and ancestral relics with state-of-the-art tech.

Otaku, Schoolchildren or Students are often among those who find themselves facing horror. Some teenagers and young adults have weird hobbies. Many teenagers play with the occult 'for fun' unaware of what they might catch the attention of. The more obsessive among them do it with complete abandon and are ready to run all kinds of risks to get a bit of glory by becoming the specialist among their friends, even the antisocial ones. The characters could have chosen many other hobbies, but they have set their sights on the weird and its many manifestations, mixing up western occultism, Japanese mysticism, science-fiction TV shows and UFO hunts. Unfortunately, in their next outing they might face something a lot more real than that.



LIVING IN 2046 JAPAN

All the above elements will certainly help you to create the basis of the scenarios of your campaign, and to better frame character creation. Nevertheless there is still something for you to do: running the sessions themselves and highlighting the specific ambiance of *Kuro*.

The setting of *Kuro* is made up of one part horror and another part science fiction, showing a future Japanese society divided by its many contradictions and international pressures. *Kuro* isn't really a 'cyberpunk' game in the traditional sense, or a 'hard sci-fi' setting. Instead, its culture and style rests on five main building blocks:

1 - A society divided and structured by technology

2046 Japan is and remains the place of a very marked contrast between tradition and modernity. One still sees passers-by wearing kimonos in the Akihabara Electric Town shops and no one bats an eye or even notices it. Modern and old (quite a vague notion that can encompass the ninth century as well as the 2010s or 2040s) work well together and allows the coexistence of all generations. Thus, for instance, if the younger generation has lost the religious fibre while still, nevertheless, under the weight of tradition, performing several rites in an almost secular way, now we can see a spiritual and religious renewal felt since the Kuro Incident. This renewal is not really demonstrative or theological, it is just based on a more pragmatic relationship with the divine and a means for many to gather around the national symbols of a country ostracised from the international community.

Few really want to change the system and most want to at least feel that they belong. The population feels more than ever the need to get together and leave their own loneliness behind. While the population is already divided by technology into economical and genetic castes because of the advent of the Genocracy, it also sees the gap widen between men and women and, in a more general way, between all the branches and layers that compose society.

2 - A growing difficulty of telling men and machine apart

Without anybody quite being aware of it, even those who are a part of it, a new social stratum has formed among the Japanese population: androids. A new working class made up of both

mechanical beasts of burden and sex slaves, it reflects what humanity has made in its own image in order to feel superior. Paradoxically, artificial intelligences and the most advanced synthetic beings dream of becoming human and ask themselves the metaphysical questions that most of their creators never did. Yet the human elite prefers to deny the idea of a possible awakening of synthetic consciousness. Fear is growing and the elite are more and more rejecting the machine. With the advent of nanotech and biotech, the Genocracy no longer dream of just being enhanced physically by technology. Instead they seek to become both immortal and genetically perfect, a state somewhere between the 'next stage of evolution' and the divine ascension sought by their ancestors.

3 - The trauma of the incident

The Kuro Incident was lived as a real trauma. Many of the companies and factions that allowed their employees to have a feeling of belonging collapsed when the country was suddenly cut off from all the world's financial markets. Aided by the two-headed government, many domestic companies, namely banks, have tried to relaunch the economy by assuming the place and the traditions of the old 'zaibatsu' firms, but have become totally inefficient in this de-globalised Japan. Initially, the damage to the economy was absorbed to a certain extent by the wealthy that had been accumulating their money in Japan for many years. However, another solution needs to be found quickly, for if not, scarcities will become much more frequent and more intense.

There is still a trade war being waged, but it is essentially between large companies and family firms. Even the latter do not hesitate to use aggressive tactics or to ally with the Yakuza to get ahead of their rivals.

In parallel with the economic disaster represented by the International Blockade, the importance of which the population at large is not fully aware yet, the international condemnation has provoked an immense knee-jerk reaction: the rise of nationalism. In a way, the international opinion, by opposing Japan as a whole has become a common adversary and allowed the formation of a national identity. Indeed, partially disaffected and torn in their collective culture, many Japanese have let themselves be seduced by extremist groups, whether political, religious or criminal. More than anything, it gives them the impression of belonging to a group, of being part of an ideal and thus a reason for being.

4 - A permanent political instability

This rise of extremisms had a price: the critical weakening of the public peace. Even though the spokespersons for both the New Komeito and the Liberal Democrat Party quickly called

for calm and took a spectacular measure to avoid particularly serious confrontations between their partisans, it will take very little to fire the powder keg that the country has become. Moreover, assassination and bombing attempts have become much more frequent. But officially, no-one knows if it was one or the other party that is to blame, or one of the extremist groups, the international forces or a criminal organisation, and this lack of knowledge just fans the flames.

5 - An increase in strange phenomena

Finally, and particularly, the Kuro Incident is, for many people, the reason for the increase in strange phenomena and a good part of the population is beginning to become hysterical. The rumours are certainly more numerous than the true mysteries and many people of questionable morality are very happy to use those rumours for their own purposes, but incidents of the inexplicable or supernatural phenomena are becoming more numerous every day.


Others believe that the Japanese population was actually wiped out six months ago, and that they now exist in a form of afterlife, doubtlessly preferring this excuse than to face reality. Whatever they believe about the supernatural, most people bend over backwards to hold on to whatever makes them feel safer, as the world becomes more and more frightening.

HORROR, JAPANESE STYLE

As was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Japanese horror is the other key to a **Kuro** session. The Japan of 2046 is certainly a paradise for the technologically obsessed and is the heir to such tradition, but it is also and most of all a prison for a population locked together with their own demons. Literally.

Rendering this atmosphere is both a priority and one of the main challenges facing a Gamemaster, especially if she wishes to use this book independently from the rest of the series.

For decades, horror has already become a very well known genre for most cinema lovers and roleplayers. However it attracted renewed interest in the mid-1990s with the growing influence of Asian cinema and the wave of ghost movies that followed the



success of Hideo Nakata's Ring. Even if many were but pale rip-offs of the former, a veritable sub-genre was born, known as J-Horror, with its own conventions and mechanisms, managing to even seduce Hollywood and reach the video game industry. The fundamental basic ingredients are certainly the same as in a Western production, but the very specific way in which they are used is enough to create a very unique atmosphere. So it is only appropriate we offer some advice on using such ingredients well in a *Kuro* session.

Founding principles

In an almost imperceptible way, virtually all Asian horror stories that are not simple adaptations of their Western counterparts are based on a certain number of almost immutable rules and principles. Applying some of them will mean having to get rid of some old gaming attitudes and can present a challenge, but keeping them in mind is the best means of designing scenarios with the right tone.

Firstly, the Japanese are more used to living with the spirit world than westerners. Many ordinary people, from all levels of society, believe in an invisible world that they live alongside. This world is full of spirits, both good and bad who reside in nature. However, as in Japan everything has its place and humanity was not meant to interact with this world. When they do, it is often unnatural and extremely dangerous.

The world is run by many immutable laws, which are generally well known to folk wisdom and those who represent tradition, such as the elderly and country folk. These laws have usually been forgotten by those living in the modern world, and those who deny their roots, such as young people and city folk. They are implacable and, just like fate, fighting them is a waste of time. Science allows some to be explained, but with the possible exception of Occultech, science itself seems to have paradoxically become obsolete in many areas.

That having been said, even the most erudite old sages or the most talented itako (traditional blind shaman women) cannot know all of these rules and understand them completely. Man is just one of the many creatures living on this planet and, despite appearances, he will never be able to totally master it or pierce all of its secrets. There will always be mysteries that he will not be able to solve and predators measuring up to him. Nature is not made to be conquered and will not hesitate to defend itself if need be.

Because as solid as man's glass towers and guns may seem, modern society will not protect him at all from the spirit world. On the contrary. With its illusion of power, and the supernatural's ability to manifest itself through some technological items, man is even more fragile and vulnerable.

However, despite this obvious fragility, what the protagonists generally have in common is an unexpected resolve and a tireless perseverance when facing a defeat that will seem inevitable. In Japanese horror stories, just like the sagas of their samurai ancestors, although in a much more domestic environment, the character's victory or defeat take a second place to the dignity and nobility to be found in failure, especially when facing his own destruction.

This is even more important because, as we explained in the description of the typical *Kuro* hero, the unknown never slumbers patiently for centuries waiting to be discovered. Unlike Western horror tales, it is rare for the protagonists to slowly enter, little by little, an increasingly strange and secret world. By contrast, the supernatural directly invades their lives, generally with a bang, and it's up to them to find a solution, if there even is one.

Getting back to the cursed video example, the story of Ring does not follow the investigations of some sleuth who progressively finds out that suspicious deaths are connected to a strange video. Instead you follow the desperate search of a mother whose son has watched the video and has less than 7 days to live. That is, of course, unless she finds a way to lift the curse. For a Gamemaster, this is not necessarily hard to set up, but some intellectual gymnastics may be necessary.

The hardest part in designing scenarios (or for a roleplayer in general) is that you should not seek to rationalise everything, and it is better to focus on what the players are feeling than on the complexity of the plot. In fact, they must adjust to the fact they will not always have all of the answers and that some things are simply incomprehensible. Fear, after all, often comes from the unknown. Explaining everything might spoil the fun, not only by giving the characters too much to figure out, but also, and especially, because in this type of session the set-up is not the most important element. If you manage to frighten your players and maintain the ambiance in an average scenario, it will probably be much more appreciated than a very good plot and a thick mystery run without any suspense or tension.

Ghosts in the City

Another notable element of Japanese horror (one that is particularly satisfying around the gaming table) is that characters are neither flat nor obvious stereotypes. Nor should they serve only to demonstrate how dangerous a monster is by dying in the first few minutes. They should be identifiable, complex and sympathetic; as it is through their eyes that we experience the scenario. They will evolve as a reflection of the players' fears. Granted, they are vulnerable, even fragile, but they are never expendable.

Unlike the convention of Western movies that focus on teenagers having defied a taboo or committed a moral fault (and will probably die as a consequence) the characters are adult, generally responsible and usually what happens is absolutely not their fault. They were just in the wrong place at the wrong time and no, it is not fair, but that is what happened. Their experiences could have happened to anyone, so it is how they react to these experiences, not how they solve them that is important. It is not whether they discover the origin of the evil (which can, nevertheless, be an important step), but how (and if) they can escape it or face it, that matters.

The characters' attachment to the world around them is also an important source of inspiration in designing scenarios. By means of their different protagonists, these stories should evoke many themes relating to the society in which they live (extended family ties, loneliness, pollution, loss of roots, social inequalities, etc.) and doing this is what makes a *Kuro* character unique and important. A plot concerning a ghost can be seen as clichéd, but if that ghost has a back-story, and the scenario uses that back-story, it will be a lot more interesting for your players. The same if their way of seeing the world is contradicted by events: how would they react to a wraith from beyond the International Blockade, or the ghost of a robot or an Artificial Intelligence?

If their European cousins tend to haunt the moors or old deserted houses apart from civilisation, Japanese monsters can never be dissociated from technology in all its forms. It is both a vector, propagating a curse, and a means to reach one's victims. Monsters might come out of photos, flexible monitors or the net. Some might possess an innocent looking nanorobot that passes from owner to owner. A ghost might target anyone who receives a cursed e-mail or text message.

More rarely, when it is clearly obsolete, tech can sometimes be used by the characters to defend themselves against the weirdest of creatures. Some urban legends speak of an old photo camera able to imprison vengeful spirits or an old revolver whose bullets

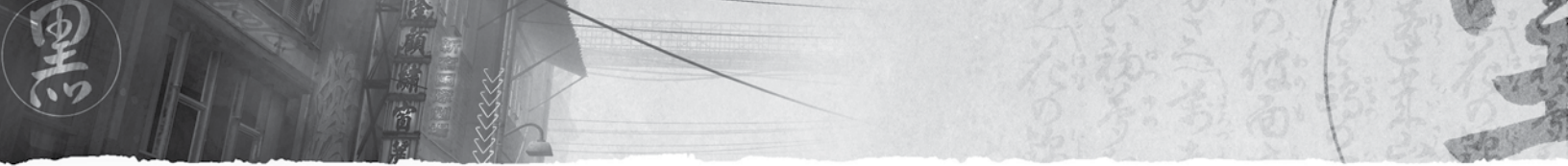
can only wound what is not human. For the Gamemaster, this crossover between horror and technology (or even science-fiction) is both a good means of ceaselessly surprising your players and a ready source of ideas for numberless adventures.

Not being afraid of anything does not mean never being afraid

If there is one thing to remember about Japanese horror, it would be that it is based on fear by anticipation and not confrontation. The fear comes from waiting for an event to happen, rather than when it actually happens, which when it does, can be swift and deadly. Every gesture and every choice becomes critical. You are not terrified of the monster inside the cabinet, but instead terrified because you have to open the cabinet door, which might contain a monster. Paradoxically, in this case it is not the unknown that scares you, but what you know is going to happen, and that there may be nothing that you can do to stop it.

For a Gamemaster, this translates into using a very minimalistic style towards what they might commonly associate with fear and the openly fantastic (such as gory descriptions, monsters... etc.). Instead, the smallest actions and choices should be loaded with meaning and possibility, raising tension and doubt for the player and making him continuously hesitate when deciding to make the simplest of actions or shrink from them, as he constantly asks himself if he is not making a terrible mistake. The more that he changes his mind about unimportant actions, the more effect you are having. In the beginning you can play on the fear of the unknown or use surprise to put him on edge, but the most effective way to disorient him is to ceaselessly play on the potential consequences of the player's actions.

For example, a character discovers that a killer roams his neighbourhood. However, he also becomes aware that not only is he the sole witness, but the killer knows it. He also thinks that he has seen the killer near his house, casing the joint. Doubtlessly he will double-lock himself up and call for help, but what will his reaction be when he sees a shadow sneaking into the edge of his eyesight, or if the corridor towards the door is dark and he saw traces of footprints inside his apartment? Has the player's decision to shut the door to prevent the killer getting in, instead risked him being locked in with the killer? Or will leaving the door unlocked as an escape route, run the risk of letting the killer get inside? As the Gamemaster, you can easily engineer that whatever they decide; it will be the wrong choice.



This technique can be used to continuously ‘weaken’ the player and the character little by little so that he is much more reactive to the really scary scenes when they happen and all because he has spent the two preceding hours frightening himself silly all by himself. Another trick to achieve this in relative ease, often used in cinema and video games, is to blur all the character’s references and his feelings of control by disrupting what he takes for granted. That is one reason why it is so important to have characters solidly integrated in their daily lives. It can be elements of the game (a known person suddenly has a different name, things stop working with no apparent reason, some old friends seem to be irreparably angry with you and refuse to explain why, it’s impossible to prove your identity...) or things outside the game (you noticeably change the way the rules work, but never explain it; you ask for die rolls that are apparently useless but will make you smile evilly; you do not roll the dice in moments when you should, what you tell a player about what his character perceives does not seem to match the reality of the session...).

Finally, since you probably have several players, you can use one player to confuse the others. Thus if two characters know that they are in the same scene, but you tell them each slightly different things, they will automatically be concerned. Another effect that always works in the horror movies, is to only describe to one of the players something important, such as another character being at the mercy of a menacing ghost that he has not noticed. If the threatened character cannot be warned easily, then the other character might have to watch the scene slowly unfold, unable to stop it. You can also use perception to twist the characters’ understanding of both themselves and what is going on. If only one character can see the ghost, is he going mad, or the only one that sees the truth?

In a nutshell, what is essential to maintain this very specific atmosphere around a gaming table is to constantly ramp up suspense, particularly in everything that seems harmless or can be taken for granted. This can be achieved in several ways: by constantly raising the stakes on the characters’ actions, in giving them the feeling that they are in danger, by hugely reducing the time that they have for what they are doing, by adding a new, unknown element, by playing on the feeling of powerlessness or secrecy and by leaving some clues unanswered.

Sadako and Pals (Japanese ghost stories)

The main, and often sole, antagonist in many stories and what is now an iconic figure in Asian horror, is the ghost or Yurei (or Onryo for avenging ghosts). They are usually a dead woman or girl that comes back to exercise her rage by the means of an implacable curse that offers no chance to escape to her victims. This has its origin in the Shinto tradition that when one dies, not in peace, but with excessive emotion (especially when that emotion is vengeance or resentment) you cannot enter the world of the dead. They become ghosts, constrained to remain in our world, driven only by their thirst for revenge. Far from being condemned to haunt a particular place, they can do anything necessary to reach their corrupt goals and fulfil their appetites. Depending on how the curse is spread, they can cause an enormous amount of collateral damage and, once the revenge is accomplished, will probably continue to cause harm. The cycle often just begins again. The two main traits of a ghost are thus its history and its curse.

The history includes its name (in general it will just be a personal name), its life, the way it died, and how all of its resentment accumulated. Unlike the resentment of the cruel European ghosts, who were punished for their crimes, this is the resentment of a victim rebelling against their executioner. This fact makes her at least a little sympathetic, even endearing, creating in the players a kind of compassion for the creature hunting them.

The most important part about the curse is understanding how it propagates. In this, anything goes -- physical contact, modern mass media, food, malodorous liquids... the only limit is your imagination.

So each ghost you create should be both personal and unique, a fully-fledged character. All the old customary techniques to reinforce the importance of a Non-Player Character apply: give them a detailed description, specific mannerisms or expressions (in the limited range of colours ghostly ectoplasm can have) and a detailed past as a victim, not a predator.

The ghost can even seem quite conventional in appearance. According to the genre conventions, you can sometimes see it before the final confrontation. However, only a part of the body might be seen, or a poor quality rendering preventing you from perceiving the more horrifying details. When it is finally revealed, the monster is misshapen, tainted and filthy. In dull tones, it appears normally in black and white to show that it is no longer a part of this world. It can be blurred or appear woolly. Its face is ravaged by pain and everything about it arouses disgust. Insects,



like centipedes, or any creatures that are considered strange or repulsive, might even accompany it.

Very often, ghosts are associated with the element of water (and the Shinto concept of taint). The appearance of the spirit should provoke revulsion directly proportional to the fear built waiting for its arrival. It must be brutal, violent, and show the players that the former young victim towards which they might feel compassion is no more than a wild creature, a predator about to kill them. Even its hair, a symbol of beauty, becomes a means to hide its face or even a weapon to reach its goal.

These are, naturally, just the conventions of a genre, and we bet it will quickly bore your players if you simply give them a different Sadako (the ghost from Ring) clone every week. So never hesitate to depart from it and not abuse this iconic figure. *Dark Water*, also by Hideo Nakata, and Kurosawa Kiyoshi's *Kairo* for example, are both very good examples of original and disturbing 'monsters' that can make their mark as much as the ghosts. There are a diverse selection of adversaries among the other supernatural creatures, robots and even the Shin-Edo population.

Nevertheless, you may find a gap between the stubborn habits of roleplayers used to western ghost stories, and the style and tropes of eastern spirits. To make your *Kuro* spirits suit the themes of Japanese horror, you may need to cast aside some of your usual expectations. In *Kuro*, a confrontation with the creature is not at all mandatory, and it is not a climax. It is not the character's mission to eradicate the menace or play 'spirit world police' by killing the wraith in a spectacular combat scene. They should mainly seek to save themselves and those close to them from the curse. The ghost, just like the world of the dead, naturally coexists with that of the living and once it has become harmless to the heroes there is no point on attacking it or trying to provoke a fight with such a force of nature.

A direct confrontation, far from being the high point of the scenario, usually means an unhappy ending. The goal of such a story is not to vanquish an elusive evil, but to survive it.

Creating Fear

Horror and fear are a vital part of *Kuro*; so a few notes on building tension are in order. A good way to do this is to create the right atmosphere where you are playing the game. You need not find a haunted house run your game in, but you can dim the lights a little or play music (we list some albums you might find helpful on page 204). For an experienced Gamemaster this

is neither new nor surprising. However there are also plenty of other storytelling techniques that you can use which easily adapt to this kind of sessions.


The Different Stages

The typical structure of a Japanese horror plot is, in general, the following:

- A very short exposition stage where the different characters are very briefly presented, along with possibly the general setting or place where the plot takes place;
- A first, quick and brutal shock making it abundantly clear the gravity and possible stakes of the situation that they are in and the problem that the characters face. The tension steps up a gear and the characters must focus their attention;
- A slow build of scenes that offer clues, or develop the characters and their relationships, where tension rises little by little and where the characters may, possibly, find out the origins of the monster;
- A much faster climax, where the characters either learn how to survive the monster, defeat it, or are forced into a frantic chase trying to escape it;
- A resolution that shows that the characters are either safe and 'out of the woods,' that the creature may return someday as it is not quite finished or an ending where the monster appears suddenly and slaughters the characters.

At the exposition it is not important to create a heavy environment. On the contrary, it would harm the impact of the next stage. The players need to begin the game feeling that their world is safe and normal. It is thus best not to start play in the dark, and use gentler music for background, possibly something that evokes the environment of the place the scene takes place (like bland chart music for a scene in a mall). Your task here is to allow characters to meet and get to know each other with the players at ease.

Thus, when the first shock comes, they will be more sensitive to it. For it to be as effective as possible you might ask the players to leave the room and have them return one by one (if the situation allows) after you have dimmed the light, lit some candles and put more tense music in the background. The players should realise the session has really started, and that there is an important crisis that will likely put their characters in great danger. Thus they will pay particular attention to this scene, which might offer vital clues for the rest of the session. This radical change



of atmosphere should help to disorient them, making them lose their usual bearings (unless, of course, you do it every week).

Without turning on the lights, at least allow them to light a few more candles during the development stage so they get their breath back. You might still play tense music, but a lot less so. Music unsuited to the situation, for instance an extremely soft piano piece, or some static crackling (easy to get on a computer or the television) can also be used to good effect. Now the goal is to help them, without pushing them, into a state where they will frighten themselves, all the while slowly raising the tension. You might also play your background music in a loop, so the players forget about it, then slowly and almost imperceptibly raise the volume. Some other sound accessories, like an alarm clock (a mechanical one if possible, or, even better, an old pendulum) or a metronome can also be very effective. In this stage, do not replace any candles that go out.

On the other hand, the climax should be much faster and stronger. The music should be comparable to the action and very fast; it should make players leave the comfort zone of the last few hours spent frightening themselves silly and give them some much less theoretical reasons to be afraid. This is the best time for a shock, such as making the mechanical alarm clock that was stressing them for so long go off, discreetly calling one of them on his mobile phone, or turning the television on to a channel where there is only static.

Managing the lighting can be harder, because it really depends on the scene that you are playing, but at this stage it is better to add more light than to remove it. It is then important that the light you are adding now be different than the previous light (probably candles). So, a very powerful torchlight you can move according to your descriptions, a television set or a computer monitor set to show only static (paying careful attention so that it does not detract the attention of your players) can work perfectly, especially if they are even remotely connected to your plot.

Finally, the resolution will totally depend on the climax's results. A confrontation with the spectre should use the same tricks as the climax, but a happier ending will be closer to the softer parts of your exposition phase, indicating a return to normal life.

Silence Can Kill

In a scenario with a ghost or a supernatural monster, it can be very effective to add a unique and recognisable sound that punctuates the spirit's appearance or reflects what is going on in the session. For example, you might have a specific theme for each character, or for recurring and/or supernatural elements, like a

tiny crackling announcing a weird manifestation or introducing an element that indicates danger. After a while your players will develop an almost Pavlovian reflex to the sound and you will be able to play on it. This might be for no other reason other than to stress them out or, on the contrary, to surprise them even further by not using it. Once more, this all contributes to the atmosphere and helps make characters lose their bearings.

Nevertheless pay special care to the soundtrack of your monster. If it is sometimes portrayed as a victim, it must become the most strange and disturbing thing when it is identified as a predator. So if you give it a soundtrack, make it a very characteristic noise, jerky, organic or even industrial. The sound signals its approach or that it is on the point of killing (ideally, a different sound for each of these situations). Once again the players will learn to be on their guard and to react to that stimulus. As for our experience, in a session with music and sound throughout, the most disturbing thing is to showcase the ghost with silence. This is both difficult to perceive and really destabilising for most players. They will often fill that silence with a panicked reaction, trying to get their characters to safety.

Final Advice

In the preceding pages we have shown you what you need to successfully run sessions that are really anchored in the genre of Asian horror. However, it is necessary to take some precautions. In effect, you are not about to direct a movie, but are preparing a roleplaying game session or campaign even, and your players do have not the same expectations of a cinema viewer. It is unlikely that they will enjoy scenarios all built from the same mould, so it is wise to juggle all of these conventions around to better surprise them. After all no good movie uses them all without a little adaptation.

Moreover, your players have probably not experienced Japanese education and culture and many of the subtleties of the genre will not work as well on them as if they had. So you should not hesitate to mix up Far Eastern and Western recipes. You are all meant to enjoy the game and get something from it. All the advice we offer is designed to help you and not offer another set of rules to straightjacket your campaign with.

So be ready to shift around, mix up and switch between classic scenarios and official scenarios more entrenched in the evolution of the setting in order to avoid falling into the 'ghost of the week' trap. The *Kuro* setting is rich enough that you should not feel limited. Take all the elements you like best to make the horror of *Kuro* your own, and personal, because that is where the fear lies.

SCENARIO: ORIGAMI

“Will then the human race evolve to give birth to something different?”

-Kaneda - AKIRA

FOREWORD

The following adventure is designed to begin a new campaign set in the world of **Kuro**. It can be played as either a stand-alone adventure, or the opening of a longer campaign. In the next supplement ‘Makkura,’ we continue this story with several more adventures that draw the characters deeper into a world of spirits and terrifying horror.

In this first **Kuro** scenario it is not necessary for the characters to know each other. It is even recommended that they have little to do with each other, as the events depicted in the scenario will take care of bringing them together. After meeting, the characters may become a sort of informal group, motivated by personal research and connected by a simple common thread and thus ready for the next adventures. Nevertheless, by the end of the scenario it is more than likely that they will go their separate ways until the next story, forcing them to work together in a supernatural adventure that concerns them (unless you want to develop them into a specific group, like the military, law enforcement or other specific agency, which is not at all incompatible with this story).

Whatever you choose, you need a starting point and this first scenario should help to forge a foundation for your ‘adventuring party.’ It will give them a shared experience as well as freeing a supernatural spirit that they risk coming across in the future.

The characters should all live in Shin-Edo, having different jobs and positions. Like most of their fellow citizens, they share the same gloomy environment that every inhabitant tries to live with, hiding their serious anxieties under a mask of serenity. The International Blockade has been present for six months and some of the player characters may have become aware, due to recent experiences and activities, that their world is about to slide into blood and horror. For others, Shin-Edo is simply a cold society, orchestrated like a music score, the International Blockade no more than a concert of false notes in an already monotonous score.

UNIT 731

Background for the Gamemaster

During the Second Sino-Japanese War and the World War Two, Unit 731 was a biological research section of the Japanese Imperial Army. Specialising in human experimentation, it was responsible for numerous war crimes and experiments inflicted on prisoners under its care. Under the guise of a simple epidemic prevention lab, Unit 731 operated several facilities on Chinese soil and had the secondary agenda of reinforcing the Japanese propaganda.

More than 10,000 individuals of Chinese, Mongolian, Russian or Manchurian ancestry suffered the horrific experiments of this Unit, which promoted the superiority of the Japanese race the same way that the Nazis did for the Aryan race. The doctors in



this research section did not hesitate to perform vivisections on non-anesthetised people, to reverse their organs, to graft their limbs the wrong way around, to inoculate them with bacteria and disease, to test flamethrowers and grenades on them, to remove their brains... etc, all in the name of racial science.

At the end of World War Two, a few of the Unit 731 physicians were given immunity by the United States in return for their research (which could never have been conducted anywhere else) on human test subjects. While some members of the Unit

were condemned by Russian courts, the pardoned doctors and officers returned to Japan and became important members of certain medical and pharmaceutical centres, even the Ministry of Health.

Such was the case of Doctor Kido Masao, one of the members of Unit 731's Division 2, which specialised in biological weapons research. After some years in a Kyoto hospital, being more than sixty years old, he joined a private Tokyo lab that was very interested in his experiments. Cold and manipulative, he took advantage of his new status to continue some of his old experiments. Working within the letter of the law and with little supervision, he experimented in biotech and chromosome manipulation. His life changed the day he discovered an unknown marker in the blood of some of his patients, when using the lab to perform some simple blood analyses. Quickly obsessed by this genetic mutation, for the rest of his career he tried unsuccessfully to find its cause. In 2007, at the age of 93 and feeling his end approaching, he transmitted his research to his son Jiro shortly before dying. Jiro immediately took up the baton, continuing the research in secret. Passing off his father's twisted genius as his own work, he quickly gained status among the ranks of the Tokyo medical community as a cutting edge researcher.

Assisted by numerous contacts among the crime syndicates and his particularly sharp mind, he became one of the first scientists in the world to theorise the principles of digitising the mind. Kido Jiro's influence among the all-new Genocracy became increasingly important in the 2030s as his research sat on the vanguard of rise of the private labs that managed to dethrone the massive Zaibatsu. At the same time as his meteoric ascension, he continued to his father's research on the unknown marker. He named all those he found with the marker as 'Potentials' and did not hesitate to join several military programmes in order to carry out blood tests on a massive (and illegal) scale.

In 2046, at the age of 61, a little after the Kuro Incident, he suffered a car accident when one of the expressway radars failed. He was urgently carried to his own private clinic (Kido Biological) where the physicians discovered the unknown genetic marker in his own blood. He was placed in a cryogenic coma, and his blood was replaced with an artificial blood-like fluid capable of slowing down his vital functions to gain time while his body was replicated, the original having been severely damaged in the accident. Desperately pressed for time, the doctors tried to perform a direct digitalisation of his mind to place it in a designer clone. However, an electromagnetic shortage violently interrupted the process. The panicked scientists sadly verified Jiro's brain death and the complete absence of any data in the memory servers. But none of them noticed the slight crackling interference for a few seconds in the voice of the artificial intelligence responsible for lab security.

PRELUDE

The Gamemaster should use the prelude of the scenario to introduce the world of *Kuro* and daily life in Shin-Edo to each of the characters. One might work in a computer company, maintaining the optic network, programming virtual imaging, repairing androids and having to deal with the strangely recurrent power failures. Another might be a businessman nearing ruin, trying his best to prevent his company from going bankrupt or from being purchased by a bank, or even discovering his debts are actually in the hands of the underworld. Other characters might work in the Tsukiji market, or as a salesperson in a Shibuya biotech shop, maybe a police officer in the inner city working on a case involving strangely dismembered bodies...

Use the character's history and the player's imagination to let them wander around the city for a while, undergo retinal scans, benefit from augmented reality, take a robot-driven cab, ride in the Yamanote subway through one of the Roppongi complexes, order a meal in a sushi restaurant, check their health status with the domestic sensors in their studio. There is nothing like it, together with a freezing rainy storm, to immerse them in the specific atmosphere of the Japanese capital. Let them feel everything is normal, but with a brooding sense that something strange may be just around the corner.

In fact, even if nothing seems to really connect the characters, they should have two small points in common:

- For some weeks now, they have been suffering from mild hallucinations. Nothing really bad or capable of driving them insane, more like feelings akin to a waking dream. They are visions that an experienced physician would certainly interpret as stress symptoms connected to the International Blockade. The visions are strange and unsettling, they might for a moment perceive cherry blossom petals falling inside a building, a grimacing and terrifying form scratching from the inside of a mirror, a samurai on horseback appearing out of the corner of their eye, insects gathering together and forming the kanji for 'Oni,' a geisha in a porcelain mask standing perfectly still on a subway line or a piece of music in their Pod shouting incantations in ancient Japanese. No medical exam will reveal anything wrong with them.

- They all get a summons from a local bank, the Sumimoto Bank. Most will receive it on their home plasma screen or in their Pod's mail inbox. The reason for the meeting is different for each of them: one character has an account and should meet with his account manager following a serious electronic security

problem; another has had his money transferred without his knowledge to this new bank from his old bank; yet another owes a lot of money, another is involved in a credit card fraud which he knows nothing about. All the reasons for going are urgent though and must be done in person to sort out all these different administrative hassles.

Thus all characters will be at the Sumimoto Bank on November 18th 2046 around 10:30 AM to meet the financial advisor in charge of their file, Mr. Hiroshi.

SUMIMOTO BANK

In the Shinjuku quarter, this modest financial establishment (when compared to the more important banks in Shin-Edo) occupies the top floors in the ten floor building that is Koshu Tower. With a panoramic restaurant on the roof, the ground floor seems to belong to a private clinic, Kido Biological. In any case, this floor is totally inaccessible, since when the characters arrive they have no choice, but to take the lifts from the tiny, tight hall on the ground floor.

These lifts lead directly to the Sumimoto Bank, whose main room is a typical example of the new banking centres. Having only one android hostess in charge of welcoming clients behind a metal counter, the Bank's main room is filled with a dozen computerised desks, without the least human presence. These are programmed to answer the clients' queries, even to carry out ultra-secured financial exchanges. In 2046 the Japanese use less and less cash. There are numerous banking cards, which can be used for private purchases allowing 'virtual money' to circulate. Through your Pod you can carry out purchases and transactions, but because of the danger of hacking, the complexity of some transactions and the recent disruptions of the optical network, some people still prefer to use these direct banking ports to access their accounts in a more secure and reliable way.

Arriving at this spotlessly clean hall, the characters will find no more than a dozen clients making their transactions. With a fixed smile and perfect manners, the artificial hostess will indicate each character use the same waiting room at the back of the banking hall, before informing each of them with a polite smile that, "Mr. Hiroshi will meet you as soon as he is finished with his preceding meeting."



Meeting Mr. Hiroshi

One after the other, the characters will arrive at the little white waiting room decorated with pink ergonomic armchairs and a giant screen praising Sumitomo's merits. The small fans embedded on the ceiling manage to cool off a particularly painful wait in the persistent heat of this tiny, cramped room.

After twenty minutes, the financial advisor, looking embarrassed, will appear. He is a balding older man, dressed in an impeccable, unwrinkable suit and green glasses. He will explain to the characters that a computer error took place. In fact, he never sent any summons and knows absolutely nothing about the accounts of some characters. He would also never have asked them to arrive at the same time for a meeting as the bank takes the privacy of its customers seriously. He actually knows absolutely nothing about the characters. Embarrassed and looking fixedly at his shoes he will nevertheless propose to find those responsible for the error. He will offer them tea and will ceaselessly blame the electric disruptions for messing with the bank's server.

Robbery

After tea, Mr Hiroshi invites the characters to his office so that they can find the cause of this unfortunate error. As they do, the lights go out in the room and explosions reverberate in the bank hall. Pieces of ceiling fall on the floor, revealing the ventilation shafts and gaping holes into the upper floors. Some ten individuals in black suits and equipped with flexible exoskeletons will crash down on the synthetic floor of the banking establishment, firmly carrying in their hands energy weapons and mini-guns. Two members of this heavily armed commando unit, their faces hidden under opaque helmets filled with sensors, land directly in Mr. Hiroshi's office, right beside the characters.

The sweating and definitely unlucky financial adviser will just have the time to shout "SECURITY LOCKDOWN!" and activate a retinal scan before taking a Shockgun discharge from a commando that will send him through the office glass window, to a fall ten floors down onto the roof of a taxi-bot. Immediately, thick reinforced metal shutters will block all exits and tiny red lights automatically come on so that the bank is not in total darkness. Both the characters and the criminals are now prisoners in a building locked down by the security system.

The Silence of the Tomb

Screams, tears, panic. This is a good part of the scenario to immerse the characters in the hysteria of the other customers, who like themselves are now hostages. You might also play on their own fears by adding some hallucinations to the red lit oppressive darkness.

Far from panicking, those responsible for the robbery gather the hostages together in the hall, having some fifteen hostages climb down from the upper floors (including the kitchen staff working in the panoramic restaurant in the uppermost floor). The two heavily armed men with the characters will make them do the same.

Clearly Japanese, the robbers will seem to be a little stressed, especially when looking at a Pod one of them will show the others. The authorities will arrive soon as planned. So there is no time to lose.

The commando robbers are rather trigger happy. Any quick movement with the intention of escaping, or failure to obey instructions or any kind of attempt to call using a Pod will result in a Shockgun burst or even a bullet in the head. One or two innocent hostages might try any of the above and be executed in this fashion as an 'example' for the others and the characters.

After a few words in a corner of the room, the ten robbers become increasingly more anxious and nervous. They force the hostages to move to the ground floor through the service stairs, where they will be grouped in a corner. Outside the building dull noises can be heard. Strangely, these robbers do not seem interested in the bank's funds, in fact they are trying to penetrate the famous Kido Biological private clinic.

IN THE DARKNESS

The characters will have time to agonise for a few long minutes about what to do in a corner of this small grey entrance hall. In the half-light, they can just make out the silhouettes of the members of the commando unit solely lit by reddish halos. They are equipped with state of the art equipment and will deploy the contents of a thick metal case on the floor. It contains a two-part high tech drill surrounded by green capsules visibly containing a corrosive acid. In just five minutes, a hole the size of a man is made in the thick structure of the floor, revealing at first many cables and then a long metal corridor under it.

The 4 surviving commandoes:

Shuncho: Clearly the leader. In his thirties, tanned, rough-hewn face with a small scar in his left cheek.

Tobei: Large, barrel-chested, bald, full lips and a lousy personality. He carries the heaviest weapons.

Yujiro: Terse, calculating, he has a carefully trimmed beard. His right eye is replaced with a white optical implant. His face is covered in dry blood, but it is not his.

Hiroyo: Very nervous, big round eyes, shaved hair and a dragon claw tattoo at the back of the neck. He was wounded in the left leg while escaping and will be looking for painkillers in the clinic.

The two surviving hostages:

Metsube Kokan: Stocky, long brown hair, a little goatee and a white shirt. He's a simple clerk in the bank. Rather crooked, he will not hesitate in betraying the characters if there is a chance that the commandoes will spare him. He will happily leave everybody behind if it means that he survives.

Aochi Mineko: Beautiful, thin and fragile and dressed in a red dress, she is in a state of shock. She had come to the bank simply to make a banking transaction for her parents.

While a member of the squad goes down through the opening to scout ahead, the hall door (still barricaded with a particularly thick metal shutter) explodes with a monstrous detonation. Pieces of the structure will mow down two of the robbers and three hostages who are lacerated by the burning pieces of metal.

Through the smoke a little daylight streams in, along with the noise of a massive machine trying to force entry. The machine is a colossal exoskeleton incrustated with cannons. This metal beast (a Solid class combat waldo) will be accompanied by elite commandoes with red armbands, clearly part of the Japanese army. However, rather than trying to avoid involving the hostages in a bloodbath, they will blindly shoot anything that moves. The hostage takers will do the same, even using a magnetic rocket launcher to disable the canons in the exoskeleton.

Things will move fast, really fast, and you should drown the player characters in a tidal wave of actions and words. Smoke, explosions, blood, screams, bodies falling like flies indiscriminately. Neither of the two sides will be concerned with the hostages. The men in the red armbands even seem to want to eliminate every witness to this 'false' robbery. The characters will not be able to get out without getting directly in the sights of the

assailants. The commandos take cover on the stairs, blocking the exit back up to the bank. The player characters will only have one way of getting out, the gaping hole in the building floor.

Dropping through the hole, they will land (perhaps violently) in a sort of long metal walkway leading to a reinforced, but open door. Other people pile down the hole, making it sensible to run. As soon as they have run through the metal door, amid the chaos of screams and explosions, the door shuts behind them. They will end their run with four members of the commando unit and two surviving hostages. If the players try to get hold of some weapons, they will have to do it discreetly, the hostage takers will quickly threaten then as soon as they reach the room. Silence will reign anew in the dark and an imposing corridor is now facing them.

Kido Biological

The characters soon learn that the commando unit is in complete disarray. Clearly the men in the red armbands were not supposed to fire on them, but were supposed to cover their

escape. There will probably be a raging argument between some members of the team. Some will doubtlessly remove their damaged helmets, as if they can no longer bear to wear them or wish that the whole affair was over.

By listening to their conversations, the characters can learn several things:

- These robber commandos are actually government soldiers
- They are looking for certain files in the database of this private lab
- The men in the red armbands, who were supposed to help the escape and not shoot everybody, are also part of the government military

Soon the characters discover that the soldiers are wary of 'something' in the lab and will make use of the hostages (particularly the player characters) to enter rooms first or to open doors. It is even almost certain that they will make use of the player characters' computer skills to unlock a hatch or to retrieve the data that they need from the central computer, their computer expert having perished in the assault.

In any case, the atmosphere will be oppressive, the small group wandering through the cold, silent corridors, hearing in the distance what might be the attempts from the men in armbands to try to get into the lab and eliminate them.

Their fear gradually growing as they advance through the lab they will discover five or six lab employees lying on the floor in clinched positions. Dressed in long white coats, they died violently, some still holding advanced gas masks that they clearly did not have the time to put on. Their eyes are glassy; their complexions are grey and drool flows from their mouths as if they were rabid animals. Some even seem to have fought over a limited number of masks (which the characters and the NPCs accompanying them might do as well if you have really played on their paranoia). Was a virus released in the lab?

Inside the Lab

This private laboratory is more like a bank vault than a simple medical establishment and the security measures triggered by the noisy burglary have not helped matters. Built below ground level, made up of three levels of very thick bioconcrete, the lab and its facilities are protected by a high-tech defence system controlled by an advanced Artificial Intelligence. To conserve power and to allow the lab technicians to go about their work unimpeded, the AI system is not really active at the time the characters arrive

on the first level. It will not be triggered until the commandoes have found the files that they are looking for, in the control room desk.

The first level is made up of long metal corridors, various doctors' offices, waiting rooms, examination rooms and other tiny laboratories for blood and laser imaging exams. In their wanderings, the characters might see clusters of miniature cameras embedded in the ceiling monitoring their every step and gesture (like the eye clusters in a spider), as well as metal cubes scattered through the level.

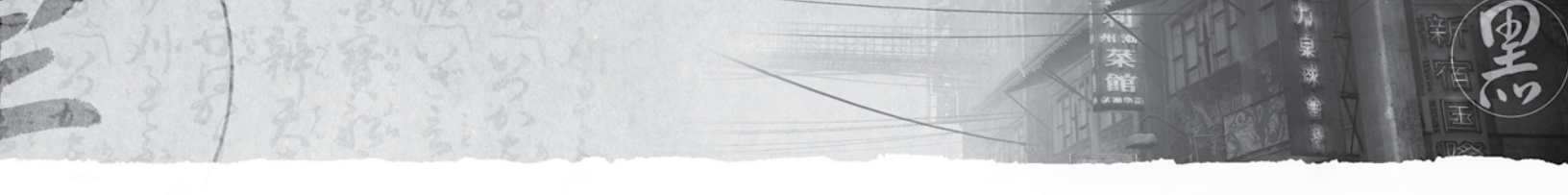
The cubes, each around a metre and a half square, are an odd mix between a piece of 'compression art' by César and the cube ('lament configuration') from the movie *Hellraiser*. At first glance they appear to be no more than works of contemporary art, common in office blocks. No cable, weapon or optic fibre can be seen on their surfaces. However, these are indeed machines, 'Origami' defence robots, folded and waiting for a signal from the AI to attack. In their completed form, they look like almost

Running through corridors

We haven't provided a map of the laboratory, as the exact routes the players might take aren't that important. Instead of offering choices of turning left or right, the Gamemaster should describe the long corridors and rooms they player character pass as they run through the complex.

Most of the complex is made up of research laboratories in separate rooms. A few small offices with low level computer access can also be found dotted around, as well as a few small break rooms. The whole place is very functional and plain, with many rooms dedicated to the same purpose. So the Gamemaster won't need to describe each room in too much detail once the players have the idea. At any rate they will probably be running too fast to spend too much time looking around!

The commandoes have a good idea where they are going, and there are some signs on the walls to help them navigate. So it will be rare for the player characters to be choosing the direction anyway. So the Gamemaster should focus on the building atmosphere instead. She might call for perception rolls to see if the player characters notice the robots coming to attack them, but also to notice anything that might put them on edge. Anything that builds the mood or enhances the tension and paranoia of the player characters is good!



two metre tall metal skeletons made of aluminium foil, with jointed legs, a sole eye like a Cyclops (a motion detector) and arms carrying deadly needle pistols.

This level also leads up to the building's ground floor, through one exit now blocked by a reinforced door. Just to stress your players out a bit, do not hesitate to add a trace of heat at the centre of this hatch, so as to make them understand that the men in red armbands have started to cut through the entrance. Soon they will invade the premises and 'finish the job'.

At the end of this first level there is a strangely empty, but imposing circular room, equipped with a simple desk and several flexible screens embedded in the walls. It is the building's control centre and is where the files the commandoes are looking for should be.

Having lost their computer expert, one or several more of the player characters will be made use of to break the server security (Target Number 16). Even if they have no computer skill, the threat of violence should be enough to get them to have a go. After several stressful minutes, a pistol at the temple and several dull thuds coming from the upper floor, the characters manage to open the sensitive file area. They will find a list simply called Potentials that contains some 15 names, including theirs. This can only intrigue them immensely. (If they cannot break the security, the Gamemaster might tell them that they type their name in desperation and hence access the list, but nothing else on the computer).

However, accessing the list will trigger the security systems. So, while the commandoes anxiously download the list, clearly the object of the whole operation, the computer will stop working, the cameras will turn themselves on, the doors will shut and the defence robots will activate.

"Oh, God, we've woken it!" one of the commandoes will whisper in the darkness.

THE MEAL OF THE SPIDER

The group are now in the middle of a very stressful situation, to say the least. They are trapped in a locked, underground medical facility. Besides an overexcited commando unit and killers trying to enter the building, the characters must now deal with an AI trying to eliminate them, not only by the eight Origami security bots, but also by any means at its disposal. A hatch might suddenly close on a body as it passes through, a pipe might open and dispense a swarm of nanodrones, doors will close suddenly separating and isolating the intruders or forcing them to enter unknown, and potentially deadlier territory... The lab's 'consciousness' will appear completely deadly and enraged, and, especially, totally untouchable, no computer system seeming to be able to reach to him.

The situation quickly dissolves into every man for himself. In their desperation to escape, the commandoes end up taking the lead. This means they will risk being the first to be cut in half, to die asphyxiated in a vat, to fall heavily down an elevator shaft or to be cut to pieces by surgical drones. Do not hesitate, in this blind flight, to showcase the actions of the other hostages, Mineko becomes a real burden while Kokan will not hesitate to threaten the player characters with a weapon taken from a soldier, so he might go first through a hatch (or the other way around, who knows).

Amid the chaos the player characters will need to do more than just run. Frantic chases will be interspersed with moments of stealth or the need to stand perfectly still not blinking an eye if they are to escape the robots. Paradoxically, the characters should come to realise that the building seems to want to help them, but only them. Doors open just in time, allowing them access to the stairs to levels 2 and 3, objects will move to distract the Origami, etc.

Once they reach level 2, perhaps suspicious as to why they are being brought there, the player characters will see a hologram of a red dragon passing through walls. It is showing them which way to go. This is a manifestation of Kido Jiro, the original head of the lab, trapped inside the computer system.

The Flight of the Dragon

The red dragon hologram is the manifestation of Kido Jiro, whose mind was partially digitised after his car accident. He has no idea why he has found himself at the very heart of his clinic's computer system, disoriented and suffering from partial amnesia. Unfortunately, he has not replaced the existing AI and is stuck in his own system. He is unable to completely leave this extremely secure intranet, risking annihilation as a virus if he manifests too brusquely or tries to take control.

Obsessed by the list of Potentials, without completely knowing why, and wishing to escape, he has found a particularly risky solution to leave by taking advantage of the AI's flaws. Using his own messaging account from when he was alive, he found different messages sent by an 'unofficial' government group who was very interested in the secret file on 'Potentials' and wished to acquire it by any means. Making use of their growing interest, he led them to believe that the files would be destroyed by the government on November 19th and it was urgent to get hold of them quickly, if possible by disguising it as a robbery to deceive the Special Forces. Using simple messages, Jiro managed to subtly influence a secret fringe government group to intervene in November 18th. At the same time, he used the nearby bank and its small faulty network to summon some people selected at random from the Potentials list.

Motivated by the desire to survive and escape, his plan was carefully calculated. Taking advantage of the alert in the lab to occupy the AI's attention with the defence and rendering it less vigilant towards him, he would contact the Potentials coming as hostages and try to escape with them. All this, even if it was excessively uncertain (a 66% chance according to him) could have happened without a hitch if another government fringe group had not intervened to disrupt both Jiro's and the commandoes' plans. The men in red armbands (the Red Ribbon), or at least some members of the group, are also military, but are trying to annihilate the commandoes, the infamous files and the lab. Suddenly, Jiro, as along with the characters, is in a very tight spot. Now Jiro has no other choice, but to convince the characters to take him with them, since his destruction appears inevitable as soon as the armband soldiers enter the premises (by erasing the AI, Jiro and any compromising files, eliminating all evidence).

Obviously Jiro is responsible for the death of the laboratory staff, whom he eliminated by manipulating chemical emanations into the air conditioning with the help of nanorobots. Fortunately, there is no longer any risk of asphyxiation, but attempting to convince the player characters of that is another matter.

If the characters continue to follow the dragon's luminescent form, Jiro will address them directly (if they do not follow he will keep passing them until they do). He will introduce himself simply as Jiro, preferring to hide his former nature as human, and will explain that he is a prisoner of the lab's AI. He may explain that both enemy groups are part of the current government and some are attempting to destroy the files while others want to retrieve it for unknown purposes. It was his father (without any more explanations, the player characters may still think that it is a computer design program and not a human) that discovered a blood marker in some people. The marker was found in the characters after being in the Keio University hospital in Shinjuku ward using tests made without their knowledge. People often go there for screenings or minor accidents, and some of the player characters will remember having been there, while weirdly, others may not.

Jiro does not know what this blood malformation will cause besides hallucinations, but will propose to help the characters. He has a copy of the list and will only ask one thing in return from the characters, that they help him escape and release him in the Shin-Edo optic network. He will also show them the only door leading outside the building, an old emergency door on the third level leading to an abandoned subway station.

To retrieve Jiro all it takes is to download him into a Pod or any other data key, just like any other computer programme.

Vats of Rust

To reach the emergency door the player characters must continue their escape through levels 2 and 3, while the red armbands finally and violently enter the first level. With Jiro to lead them, the journey is more direct, but they might encounter several obstacles on the way. The Gamemaster should tailor these encounters to the abilities of the group. If the group are armed and skilled in weaponry, they might fight a running battle with the red armband commandoes. A sneakier group might use stealth to make their way out. A more occult or scientific group might discover more details on the lab's work by investigating what they find on the way.

- Level 2 has the biggest medical rooms, scanners, laser imaging and other operation theatres equipped with surgical bubbles. A larger, less stifling area than the preceding one, but where, unfortunately, it is harder for one to hide and sneak without attracting attention. Some rare chrome vats have bodies in the process of growth inside, as well as frozen individuals, often badly messed up (this is the case with Jiro's corpse, kept by his staff for unknown reasons).

• The third and lowest level is a lot gloomier, because, besides an insufficient lighting, it is filled with scattered experimental tanks and vats. It includes the vestiges of Unit 731's research, jars and support images. Imagine damaged grids, walls somewhat dirtier than in the levels above and bodies monstrously transformed inside the vats. A sort of 'secret level,' where the clinic seemed to study or carry out less wholesome experiments.

Jiro's memory has been damaged by his transfer, and while he remembers he is a scientist and many of his skills, the experiments he carried out here are a mystery to him too. However, he is not only unperturbed by what they find, but morbidly curious about the experiments. This might give the player characters a clue that he is not as innocent as he may appear.

At the end of this maze and after as many encounters that the Gamemaster chooses to throw at them (nothing like a simple threat in the dark, without any real presence or endless combat, to make a gaming table stress out), the characters will arrive at a door, exiting on an abandoned subway station from where they will easily be able to climb back up. In the group has a security expert among them the Gamemaster might rule the door is locked to ramp up the tension as the red armbands approach.

Once outside, they will still need to take some precautions in order to assure their survival for a few months more.

The weird presence of Jiro will possibly amplify the player's hallucinations or attract some supernatural phenomena, wayward spirits or sniggering shades sliding along the walls before quickly disappearing. The characters may reach the conclusion that the cause of those visions is the notorious blood marker. They may suspect why are the victims of simply hallucinations. This is a far more comforting thought than the idea that what they are seeing is real...

RESOLUTION AND INSURANCE

If they followed Jiro's advice and have been prudent, they will find themselves in a Shin-Edo street near the Koshu Tower with Jiro and his files in some Pod or other form of storage. Unfortunately, unless they get completely off the grid, going home like nothing had happened will make them easy targets for both government factions, one wanting the list, the other wanting to destroy it.

The only real way to assure survival is to get the media into play. It has been on the scene almost as soon as the first explosion was heard and is massed in front of the building. By acting as hostages and not mentioning the files, they will become short-lived celebrities for a few days, right in the limelight, and may reveal the dirt on the military sponsored by the New Komeito to enhance its position and destabilize the Liberal Democrat Party. The result will be a real political imbroglio, which when mixed up with the trouble from the International Blockade will make the characters untouchable until political heads have rolled and this affair is quickly forgotten.

Research on the other persons on the list will doubtlessly be time consuming and will hardly reveal any notable information. They are all simple ordinary individuals, with maybe one or two deceased by natural causes. A visit to the Keio hospital (where the famous blood screening took place) may turn into a possible side plot. To scare the characters a bit, they may discover that a wing in this institute is occupied by a nanotech research lab... maybe they were lab rats for government experiments? Or is all this a lie?

Even if there is no truth to the matter, the Gamemaster could play with their hallucinations, making them continually question whether these visions are the product of science or the supernatural.

To facilitate their choices for the ending of the scenario, do not hesitate to have Jiro offer some advice to avoid having the characters end this first story dissolved in acid in some love-hotel bathtub. Worst case scenario, some government spooks will just contact them and threaten them to shut up, and nothing else.

In any case, Jiro will be a man of his word and will give the characters all the retrieved files before being freed in any home computer. The strange red dragon will appear for an instant to

go through all street screens and holograms before vanishing, spreading in the Shin-Edo network.

The characters will have in their power the longer list of 28 Potentials as well as different notes on Unit 731 experiments, including a thick enigmatic dossier concerning Ghost Weapons: alleged sleeping soldiers directly connected to the spirit realm.

Who knows what they will do with it?

NPCS

Commando

| | | | |
|--------|-------|--------|-------|
| DEX 2 | STR 2 | STA 2 | REF 2 |
| INT 2 | PER 2 | CHA 2 | WIL 3 |
| HIT 35 | SW 12 | DT -12 | |
| DEF 12 | ACT 1 | MOV 2 | REA 4 |

Skills

Combat skills

| | |
|----------------|----------------------------|
| Hand-to-Hand 3 | Brawling 4 |
| Firearms 4 | Assault Rifles 5 (Mastery) |
| Melee 3 | Dagger 4 |

Academic Skills

Physical Sciences 3

General Skills

| | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Athletics 3 | Dodge 4 | Running 4 |
| Deception 2 | Sneaking 3 | |
| Drive 2 | Cars 4 | |
| Investigation 2 | Interrogation 4 | Searching 3 |
| Popular Culture 2 | Politics 4 | |
| Survival 3 | Urban 5 | |

Technical Skills

| | |
|--------------|---------------|
| Electrical 2 | Electronics 4 |
| Explosives 3 | Demolitions 5 |

Contacts 2

| | | |
|-------------------|------------|------------|
| Law Enforcement 2 | Military 5 | Politics 3 |
|-------------------|------------|------------|

Equipment:

Assault rifle:

| S | M | L | E | Damage | Clip | Auto |
|------|-------|--------|---------|--------|------|------|
| 2-20 | 21-50 | 51-100 | 101-250 | 3D6+4 | 30 | 3/10 |

Knife: Damage 1D6+1 REA +1

Armour: Combat Skinsuit, Strike version - Protection 8

Origami Robot

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

HIT 65 SW 22 DT -22
DEF 22 ACT 2 MOV 3 REA 5

Skills

Combat Skills

Hand-to-Hand 4
 Brawling 5
Firearms 4
 Magnetic Guns 6

General Skills

Athletics 4
 Dodge 5
 Running 6
Deception 2
 Sneaking 4
Investigation 2
 Shadowing 5

Needle-Throwing Magnetic Cannon:

| S | M | L | E | Damage | Clip | Auto |
|------|-------|--------|---------|--------|------|------|
| 1-20 | 21-50 | 51-100 | 101-250 | 3D6 | N/A | no |

The Remaining Hostages:

Metsube Kokan

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

HIT 35 SW 12 DT -12
DEF 14 ACT 2 MOV 2 REA 4

Skills

Combat Skills

Hand-to-Hand 4

General Skills

Athletics 3
 Dodge 4
 Sports 4
Communication 3
 Acting 4
 Empathy 4
 Persuasion 5
Deception 5
Social Sciences 3
 Accounting 4
 Bureaucracy 5

Aochi Mineko:

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

HIT 15 SW 5 DT -5
DEF 14 ACT 1 MOV 2 REA 2

Skills

General Skills

Athletics 4
 Running 7
Humanities 3
 Arts 4
 Foreign Languages 5
Popular Culture 4
Celebrity 8
High Society 8
Media 6

Contacts 1

Academic 2
Banking & Business 3
Politics 3

INSPIRATIONS

Music selection

Atrium Carceri, Brian Eno, Coil, Eden House, Flint Glass, Hint, In Slaughter Natives, Klute, Kurokotage (Call to the Deep), Massive Attack, Nine Inch Nails, SPK, Sophia, Bohren, Unveiled, Yat-Kha.

Original Soundtracks

Akira, Aliens, Animatrix, Avalon, Blade, Blade Runner (Highly recommended!!), Blair Witch 2 by Carter Bruwell, The Crow, Dark City, eXistenZ, Fight Club, The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo (Trent Reznor soundtrack), Ghost in the Shell, Hellraiser, I-Robot, The Island, Heat, Hitman (Blood Money), Outland, Reign of fire, Ring 1 and 2 (US remakes), Silent Hill, Strange Days, 28 Days Later.

Movies / TV

Angel, Audition, Avalon, Battlestar Galactica, Blade Runner, Constantine, Crying Freeman, Cure, Dark Angel, Cassern, The City in the Sky (La città nel cielo), Dark Water, eXistenZ, Gattaca, The Host, Immortal (Ad Vitam), I-Robot, The Island, Ju On (1, 2 and US remake 'The Grudge' 1+2), Kairo, Kwaidan, The Matrix, Minority Report, Ring (0, 1, 2 and 2 US remakes), Seven, Strange Days, Suicide Club, Tetsuo (1, 2), They Live!, The Thing, Tokyo The Last Megalopolis, Total Recall, Ugetsu, Videodrome, 28 Days Later

Anime

Akira, Appleseed, Boogiepop Phantom, Cyber City, Ghost in the Shell (1, 2, and Stand Alone Complex), Jin Roh, Key The Metal Idol, Monster City, Paranoia Agent, Parasite Dolls, Perfect Blue, Serial Experiments Lain, Speed Grapher, Tokyo Babylon, Wicked City, X de Clamp

Novels and other

Paul McAuley: Players, Fairyland
Greg Bear: Blood Music
Jeremy Rifkin: The Biotech Century
Romain Slocombe: Un été japonais
Mo Hayder: Tokyo

Manga and Comics

Akira, Appleseed, Bleach, Carmen Mc Callum, Gunnm, Hellblazer, Kyoko Karasuma, Mermaid Forest, Mushishi, Sandman, Silent Möbius, Sin City, Shadowslayer, Xoco, 3x3 Eyes

INDEX

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|----------------------------------------|-----|
| Abura-Akago | 169 | Emergency Care | 111 |
| Academic skills | 94 | Energy Technology | 100 |
| A Country of Rites | 16 | Engineering Skills | 100 |
| Action Checks | 67 | Environmental Technology | 27 |
| Adventure Seeds | 183 | Equipment, Biotech and Nanotech | 72 |
| Age | 71 | ER miracles | 112 |
| Akasaka (Minato Special Ward) | 36 | Evolution | 113 |
| Akihabara (Chiyoda Special Ward) | 37 | Exorcists | 66 |
| Akihabara Shop | 129 | Exoskeletons, skinsuits and waldos | 27 |
| Anime | 204 | Explosives | 99 |
| An Overview of Shin-Edo | 30 | Falling | 108 |
| Aoki Sanjiro1 | 61 | Final Advice | 192 |
| Archaic missile weapons | 115 | Firearms | 117 |
| Architecture and the Virtual City | 31 | Flexible Polymers and Biomaterials | 25 |
| Asakusa (Taito Special Ward) | 39 | Food and drink | 60 |
| Asphyxiation | 108 | Fujita Kazuma | 161 |
| Athletics | 96 | Fushi Gumi | 169 |
| Attacking | 104 | Gaining new skills and Specialisations | 113 |
| Augmented Reality and Holograms | 21 | Gamemastering Kuro | 179 |
| Aura (Type) | 177 | Game time | 103 |
| Automatic fire | 107 | Gauss Weapons | 120 |
| A World of Plots | 17 | Ge-Mu Movement | 167 |
| A World of Silence | 16 | General Skills | 96 |
| Background for the Gamemaster | 193 | Ghosts in the City | 189 |
| Basic Ranged Combat Target Numbers | 106 | Gimikku | 92 |
| Beliefs and customs | 61 | Ginza (Chuo Special Ward) | 43 |
| Biomechanical prosthetics | 27 | Grappling | 105 |
| Biomechanics | 100 | Grey Kaeru | 168 |
| Bioports | 24 | Group Campaign Concepts | 184 |
| Biotechnology | 23 | Hacking a swarm | 138 |
| Burns | 109 | Hand-to-Hand | 93 |
| Calculating Secondary Characteristics | 71 | Hanguri Konpaku | 167 |
| Chiyoda (Chiyoda special ward) | 41 | Harajuku (Shibuya Special Ward) | 44 |
| Combat | 103 | Hardware and Accessories | 130 |
| Combat Phases | 103 | Healing and treatment | 111 |
| Combat Skills | 75 | Heavy Weapons | 125 |
| Combat Skills | 93 | Horror, Japanese Style | 187 |
| Commando | 202 | Horror X | 177 |
| Communication | 96 | Housing | 27 |
| Concept | 70 | Hozokawa Ryu | 162 |
| Contacts | 101 | Humanities | 94 |
| Creating a character | 70 | Improvements | 113 |
| Creating Fear | 191 | Infrastructure | 30 |
| Creation points | 71 | Initiative | 103 |
| Cults and Secret Societies | 166 | Inside the Lab | 198 |
| Currency | 63 | Insubstantial | 177 |
| Dealing Damage | 108 | In the Darkness | 196 |
| Deception | 96 | Investigation | 96 |
| Directed Energy Weapons | 120 | Involving the Characters | 181 |
| Diseases | 110 | Invulnerable | 177 |
| Dodging and Parrying an Attack | 105 | Japanese names | 62 |
| Double Leaf Society | 167 | John Hamilton | 157 |
| Drain X | 177 | Kabuki-Cho (Shinjuku Special Ward) | 54 |
| Drive | 96 | Kaijin (Kaijin Special Ward) | 45 |
| Drowning | 109 | Kamata (Ota Special Ward) | 56 |
| Drugs and Toxins | 109 | Kappa | 172 |
| Ecology and Energy | 27 | Kido Biological | 197 |
| Electrical | 98 | Kono Motonobu | 160 |
| | | Kudo Otsune | 168 |
| | | Kudo Yoshisa | 159 |
| | | Kuma | 183 |
| | | Kurojiro | 166 |
| | | Kurushima Tsuneo | 156 |
| | | Kuze Jun | 158 |

| | | | |
|----------------------------------------------|-----|---------------------------------------------|-----|
| Laser and Optic Network | 21 | Rolling Dice | 67 |
| Last details | 73 | Roppongi (Minato Special Ward) | 48 |
| Law Enforcement and Public Service | 184 | Sadako and Pals | 190 |
| Living in 2046 Japan | 186 | Sanada Ryobe | 158 |
| Love Hotel | 183 | School Girls | 183 |
| Magagoto and wave spirits | 170 | Secondary Characteristics | 74 |
| Magnetic Weapons (Nanomagnets) | 21 | Security | 32 |
| Manga and Comics | 204 | Serious Wounds | 108 |
| Manners | 62 | Shado | 129 |
| Margins of Success and Failure | 69 | Shape Change | 178 |
| Mechanical Possession X | 177 | Shibuya Laboratory | 139 |
| Mechanics | 99 | Shibuya (Shibuya Special Ward) | 50 |
| Medicine | 99 | Shinjuku Armoury | 114 |
| Melee Combat | 104 | Shinjuku (Shinjuku Special Ward) | 51 |
| Melee Combat Modifiers | 106 | Shinto | 64 |
| Melee Weapons | 115 | Shinzenjini | 167 |
| Microphotonics | 20 | Silence Can Kill | 192 |
| Mimic | 178 | Simple Checks | 68 |
| Mind Characteristics | 74 | Skill Areas and Specialisation Descriptions | 93 |
| Mizuno Hiro | 160 | Skill areas and Specialisations | 92 |
| Mystics | 185 | Social Rank (Kaiso) | 72 |
| Nanochips, nanosensors & molecular resonance | 25 | Social Sciences | 95 |
| NanoSwarms | 138 | Space | 28 |
| Nanotechnologies | 142 | Spiritual | 98 |
| Natural Armour X | 178 | Sports, games and leisure | 34 |
| Natural Healing | 111 | Squids and Jellyfishes | 22 |
| Natural Sciences | 95 | Stand alone adventures | 182 |
| Natural Weapon (Damage) | 178 | Strangling | 108 |
| Non-lethal Damage | 106 | Sumimoto Bank | 195 |
| Non-lethal Weapons | 122 | Supernatural Powers | 177 |
| Nopperabo | 173 | Surveillance Systems | 101 |
| Number of Actions per Turn | 103 | Survival | 98 |
| Occultech | 147 | Swarms | 139 |
| Odaiba (Minato Special Ward) | 46 | Table manners | 61 |
| Oni | 174 | Target Numbers | 68 |
| Opposed Checks | 68 | Technical Skills | 98 |
| Optional Rule - Botches | 67 | Technology and Society | 19 |
| Oracles, lucky charms and objects of worship | 66 | Tengu | 176 |
| Organic Possession X | 178 | The Genocracy | 20 |
| Organ Implants | 23 | The Kuro Campaign | 180 |
| Origami Robot | 203 | The Typical Kuro Character | 179 |
| Ozeki Suzuko | 159 | The Whisper of the Kamikaze | 16 |
| Pathogens | 109 | The World of Kuro | 13 |
| Pavel Sergueievitch Tabyshev | 160 | Throwing Weapons | 115 |
| Phoenix | 178 | Tokuko Sakura | 162 |
| Physical Characteristics | 74 | Transport | 134 |
| Physical Sciences | 95 | Tsuchigumo | 171 |
| Pilot | 97 | Tsugaru Nozomi | 157 |
| Point Blank Range | 107 | Tsukiji (Chuo Special Ward) | 53 |
| Politicians | 185 | Ueno (Taito Special Ward) | 58 |
| Popular Culture | 97 | Unarmed Attacks | 116 |
| Popular quarters of Shin-Edo | 34 | Unit 731 | 193 |
| Power | 33 | Unskilled Checks | 69 |
| Prosthetics | 146 | Vulnerability (Type) | 178 |
| Protection | 126 | Wakizaki Hiroshi | 156 |
| Quick scenario creation | 182 | Watercraft | 98 |
| Ranged Combat | 106 | Women and family | 20 |
| Ranged Weapons Table | 116 | Wounds | 108 |
| Range modifiers | 107 | Yurei | 170 |
| Replication and Eugenics | 24 | Zenzaburo | 169 |
| Resolution and Insurance | 201 | | |
| Retinal Scans and intelligent kettles | 22 | | |
| Robbery | 196 | | |
| Robotics | 26 | | |