



Legend of the Five Rings™

The Way of the Shadowlands



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Legend of the Five Rings™



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Introduction

"Coming Home"

*"You can never become enlightened until you see beyond the light."
—Yogo Junzo*

Ichiro Koturi looked out over the rolling hills, his face blank with shock. The once-verdant valleys of the Badger Clan were barren now. The grass was dead and brown. The sturdy castles were nothing more than charred heaps of rubble. Only the skeleton of Shiro Ichiro remained. The castle's great stone walls were cracked. The top floors were completely burned. A handful of Crab soldiers picked through the rubble, searching for any sign of the cause of this catastrophe.

Koturi was a thin weed of a man, grown noticeably gaunt in the last few weeks. His elaborately embroidered silken robes depicted badgers and kami at play, a subtle jest toward the father who had ostracized him for following the path of the Fortunes. He could still hear him cursing his weakness from the beyond...

He stared at the ruins in mute disbelief. Despite the stories he had heard, he refused to believe rumor until he saw for himself. Now that he was here, he still could not believe that his clan was no more. Three months ago, a contingent of Kaiu ambassadors had arrived in

Domogu province to discover the Badger Clan completely destroyed. The few Ichiro scattered across the rest of the Empire were being notified as quickly as the Crab scouts could find them. Koturi, who had been studying among the Agasha, arrived first.

"How many?" Koturi asked, his voice a shadowed whisper.

"Hard to tell," grumbled Kaiu Aritomo, his Crab guide. "There was much blood, but not many bodies. Magistrate Osuki thinks that the bodies were stolen, but for what purpose I cannot imagine."

"And where is the magistrate?" Koturi asked.

"Out scouting the northern borders," Aritomo replied. "He should be back in a day or two."

"What about my father?" Koturi asked. "What happened to Lord Chuga?"

Aritomo hesitated for a moment. "We found him nailed to a post, legs torn from his body. He was still alive, barely. I have never seen a man alive in so much pain."

"Is he alive now?" Koturi asked.

Aritomo frowned, then shook his head slowly. "If it were me, I'd expect the same. For what it is worth, he told me where to find you before we finished him."

The young shugenja shook his head slowly, digesting the news. "How could they let this happen?"

"Maybe if your clan knew how to build a castle, it would not have happened," Aritomo replied, gesturing at the horizon. "You have no supply lines, no clear roads. No routes to send word or aid to your own troops."

"Supposedly, that was the point," Koturi replied. "Our great ancestor Domogu once said that it was better to delay the enemy so that Rokugan might live than to band together and survive."

"Hm," Aritomo grunted. "Well, my great ancestor Kaiu once said 'Never plan to lose.'"

"Perhaps Domogu was a poor Kaiu," Koturi replied sharply, "but I would prefer if you did not mock the tradition of my people."



The Kaiu chuckled. "Tradition?" He gestured at the ruins. "Fine tradition, Badger. Look at the success it brought your clan."

Koturi's lips pressed into a firm line. He eyed the Crab dangerously. Kaiu Aritomo's hand rested nonchalantly on the hilt of his katana, and he smiled. The Badger shugenja sighed and looked away. The Crab had been irritable throughout their journey; it was clear he did not like Koturi much. Koturi sighed and let it go, relaxing his shoulders. No sense throwing away his life in a senseless duel. Crabs were rude; it was their nature. It was more important to find out if anyone had survived...

"Koturi!" cried a voice from the ruins of Kyuden Ichiro. "Koturi, you are here!"

Koturi looked up, his face suddenly brightening. A young girl in robes of emerald and gold emerged from the broken castle. Her long hair flew wildly as she broke into a run. Koturi simply watched for a moment, surprised to see her and stunned by her beauty.

"You know Magistrate Osuki's pet Dragon?" Aritomo asked.

"She is an old friend," Koturi replied, scrambling out of his saddle. Kaiu Aritomo shrugged and trotted past them to rejoin his kinsmen.

"Momuko!" Koturi exclaimed. "What are you doing here?"

Her smile faltered. "When I heard that Kaiu-sama was planning an expedition to Domogu province, I followed. I thought it only reasonable to visit my future home. I never expected to see this. Your father..."

"I heard," Koturi replied.

"He passed leadership of the clan to you," she said. "I was there..."

Koturi nodded again, finding no joy in the news. To hear that his father had accepted him on his deathbed made this journey no easier. He wanted to reach out and embrace Momuko, to bring comfort to her and to himself. She looked into his eyes, then glanced quickly away.

"Momuko?" Koturi said, confused by her sudden reticence. "What is the matter?"

"We found your older brother," she said simply. "We found Hideo. He is alive..."

"What?" Koturi asked, surprised. "He survived? Why did father not choose him instead?"

"You should come with me," Momuko replied, taking Koturi's hand. "You should see for yourself."



"I... cannot... remember... ANYTHING!" the brawny samurai shouted, ramming his shoulder into the heavy iron bars. The two Crab guards glanced up mildly as he charged the cell door again. Small clouds of dust sifted from the bars, but the door held. Satisfied, the guards returned to their dice. The exhausted prisoner ceased his

onslaught, slumping against the bars. The prison was silent, save for the drip of water and clatter of the dice.

"Why does no one listen to me?" the man wailed, struggling against the chains that bound his arms. His breath came rapidly, and he cast about his surroundings like a confined animal. The skin around his chains was raw and red. His clothing was stained with blood from his struggles.

"Hideo!" Ichiro Koturi exclaimed, bursting into the underground prison.

The imprisoned Badger looked startled. "Koturi!"

"I'm sorry, Ichiro-sama," one Crab said, stepping into Koturi's path. "We cannot allow you to pass."

"Why have you imprisoned my brother?" Koturi replied sharply.

"They did not," Momuko replied, appearing at Koturi's side and studying the cell thoughtfully. "They found him here, bound and caged as he is now."

"What?" Koturi spat in disbelief. "Hideo, who did this to you?"

"Koturi!" Hideo cried out again. "I do not remember anything! They said father is dead. They would not let me see him! Koturi, release me!" Hideo ramméd the bars with his shoulder again.

"This is unacceptable," Koturi said flatly.

"I do not like it, either," Momuko said with a slight shake of her head. "Magistrate Kaiu Osuki ordered that he be left there until *tsukai-sagasu* could be summoned. I tried to reason with him, but he was adamant!"

"*Tsukai-sagasu*?" Koturi laughed sharply. "What are you talking about? Why have they summoned Witch Hunters?"

"Look at his eyes," the second Crab replied from his seat. "If he carries no Taint, I'm a Kakita."

Koturi looked at his brother again. The skin around his eyes was charred and blackened. He shivered uncontrollably, though the prison was warm. The cell stank like an animal's den.

"Do we know anything of what has happened to him?" Koturi asked, his voice sad and distant.

"Hideo does not remember anything," Momuko answered. "The Crab do not think he is responsible for what happened to your family, but until they can be certain..."

"I did not murder my father!" Hideo screamed. "Koturi, help me! I can sense it! I can smell it. We must fight it together, brother!"

"Fight what?" Koturi asked, moving closer.

"Ichiro-san, I do not recommend that," the Crab said.

"He is my brother," Koturi said, pushing past the guard and moving closer to the cage. "I will take my chances."

The sudden sound of snapping metal echoed through the room. Hideo's right arm tore free of its bindings, scattering chain links everywhere. A thick hand shot through the bars and seized Koturi by his silken robes, lifting the smaller man several inches. "Why



aren't you DEAD, Koturi?" Hideo hissed, pressing his face close to the bars and glaring into his brother's eyes. His breath stank like rotten meat. "The rest of them are all DEAD. Why aren't you DEAD? WHERE WERE YOU, KOTURI?" he screamed.

"They never listen," the Crab guard sneered, hefting his tetsubo.

"No," Momuko said quickly. "Let me handle this."

The guard looked at her for a moment, then nodded. The young Dragon had proven herself on the Carpenter Wall already. The Crab in Magistrate Osuki's unit respected her. The guards stepped aside and she moved toward the cell.

"Hideo," Momuko said softly. "Put him down. Hideo, can you hear me?"

Hideo continued to throttle his brother.

"Hideo, you loved me once. I am the one whom your father would have you marry. I am Agasha Momuko."

The huge Badger blinked slowly and looked down at Momuko, eyes slowly clearing in recognition. "Momuko-chan," he said, his voice soft. "Momuko-chan, I did not realize you were here. My head hurts so much lately."

"Hideo, your brother wants to help you. You have to put him down. You're hurting him."

"Hurting..." Hideo looked numbly at his brother, choking feebly in the stronger man's grip. He quickly dropped Koturi down and staggered backward, rubbing his burnt eyes with his free hand. "I am sorry," he gasped. "It is so... difficult to think... so difficult." Hideo slumped against the wall and slid into a fetal position.

"Hideo," Koturi said, straightening his robes. "You said you can sense 'it' What is it?"

Hideo looked up at his brother, a sudden grin twisting his features. "You do not know?" he asked. "Surely you know..."

"No," Koturi replied, looking nervously at Momuko. "I do not know. What is it, and why did it kill our clan?"

"Passion," Hideo mumbled. "It is a thing of passion... It is a creature born of flesh denied... and now it takes flesh to make itself whole... Surely you know..." Hideo crawled to his knees, pulling himself toward the bars with one arm. His voice echoed with a strange metallic timbre.

Koturi swallowed hard, unnerved by Hideo's strange behavior. "Hideo, you are delirious. How would I know anything about what happened here? I have been in Dragon lands."

Hideo blinked and cocked his head slightly. "I just thought that perhaps you would know... perhaps you saw it on your way in..."

Koturi shifted uncomfortably. "Is it nearby?"

"It is here," Hideo replied. "It has come to kill everyone again."

A shrill scream echoed from the courtyard. Koturi exchanged fearful glances with Momuko. One of the Crabs cursed and headed for the stairs.

"You two, remain here and watch the prisoner!" the other commanded, seizing his weapon and following his comrade.

A heavy rumble sounded from above, followed by another. Wet snaps and shrill screams echoed. Koturi was reminded of his visit to an eta butcher's house as a child.

"Fortunes," Koturi swore, glancing up as dust trickled from the ceiling. "What is going on?"

"Death awaits," Hideo cried, seizing the bars with one hand and dragging himself to his feet. "Hurry to meet your destiny, or you may miss it" With a single mighty heave, Hideo tore the bar from its moorings. He ducked through the opening, shoving the bar at Koturi as he ran for the stairs. In moments, Hideo had disappeared into the sunlight above.

"Hideo!" Momuko cried, and followed him.

Koturi remained where he was for a few moments more, paralyzed in fear and indecision.



Koturi had not expected to see something so terrible. The creature that waited in the courtyard was nearly indescribable. Three times the height of the tallest Crab, it seemed melded together from mangled corpses. Koturi could see the bodies of the prison guards fused into its right leg. Kaiu Aritomo was part of its left shoulder. A demonic face rose from what passed for its torso. Jagged white teeth gleamed in its slack jaws, and a single wicked horn rose from its brow. The few remaining Crab had begun their retreat. The beast quickly outdistanced them with loping strides, knocking aside walls and obstacles with its stolen limbs. When it reached each of the samurai, it brought one foot down, hard. It left no corpses in its wake, absorbing their flesh into its own body.

Countless arrows pierced its flesh, to no effect. Even the jade the Crabs carried did not seem to hurt the monster. Koturi looked around quickly for Momuko and Hideo. He found the Dragon nearby, searching the pouch of scrolls at her hip. Hideo had taken an ono that lay discarded in the courtyard. Wielding it wildly in one hand, he charged the beast.

"No more!" Hideo shouted. "No more!"

The oni looked down curiously as Hideo hacked at its leg. Bits of Crab flesh and blood flew as the Badger flailed about like a crazed woodsman. The oni reached down with one arm, an unholy composite of dead men and women. Countless stolen hands, arms, and legs grasped at Ichiro Hideo. The oni plucked the samurai from the ground like a child, studying him curiously.



"By the Fortunes, no!" Momuko shouted. She held one scroll in the air and released a beam of pure green from her left hand. The energy tore into the oni's stomach, burning a visible hole through its body. A dull roar rose from somewhere deep within the creature. It staggered backwards in pain, toppling the remains of Kyuden Ichiro's outer wall.

"Release him!" Momuko shouted, releasing another spell. The oni moved with remarkable speed, placing Hideo in the path of the magic. The Badger screamed as the purity burned into his Taint, and a deep chuckle rose from the depths of the oni.

Momuko froze, prepared to cast the spell again. The creature stared down impassively, prepared to block her magics with her betrothed.

"Do it, Momuko," Koturi hissed at her side. "It is the only way. He is already doomed!"

"No," the oni chuckled in a deep, surprisingly human voice. "Not done yet!"

Dropping Hideo's limp body to the ground, it turned and loped away. Within moments, it disappeared beyond the rolling hills. Momuko ran quickly to Hideo's side, Koturi only a step behind.

"He is alive," Momuko said in relief, rolling Hideo onto his back.

The Tainted Badger groaned in pain, and smiled. "That was not so bad, Koturi," he laughed at his brother. "Next time, the three of us will finish him together! Won't we?"

"Of course we will," Koturi replied, putting on a brave face.

"What did it mean," Momuko asked, looking up at Koturi. "What did it mean by 'not done yet?' Who was it talking to?"

Ichiro Koturi said nothing, for he already knew the answer.

Welcome to the twelfth book in the *Way of the Clans* series. *Way of the Shadowlands* is designed to help a Game Master bring more depth to Rokugan's eternal enemy – the Shadowlands – by exploring the Taint from the inside out.

How to Use This Book

As you may know, this is not the first Legend of the Five Rings supplement to deal with the Shadowlands. *The Book of the Shadowlands: The Writings of Kuni Mokuna* and *Bearers of Jade: The Second Book of the Shadowlands* are two previously published supplements dealing with similar subject matter.

So where does *Way of the Shadowlands* fit in?

Both previous books were presented as guidebooks to the Shadowlands, seen through the perspective of Rokugani characters – the noted scholar Kuni Mokuna and the obscure ronin Seikansha, respectively. Though both supplements contain some information useful to players, they are meant primarily to be tools for the GM. These books treat the Shadowlands exclusively as an external force.

Way of the Shadowlands is quite different. The information in this book is split between GM and player information. The skills, schools, advantages, spells, and powers in this book present new methods of fighting the Shadowlands as well as powers offered by the Shadowlands to tempt vulnerable characters. This book will present ideas for dealing with player characters who have contracted the Taint – what happens when they are corrupted, how to redeem them, and, possibly, how to cure them. The information within can be used to create powerful villains or tragic, doomed heroes.

The first chapter contains tales and correspondence from those who know corruption the best – those have been taken into Fu Leng's darkness and those who fight against them on a daily basis.

The second chapter contains history of the Shadowlands itself and on treatment of the Taint in Rokugan. The information presented here has never been presented before, and sheds a new light on Rokugan's thousand-year war against evil.

The third chapter contains rules for creating characters whose lives are touched by the Taint, from the grim Damned berserkers of the Crab to the fiendish dark riders of the Moto. This chapter also provides greatly expanded rules for dealing with Tainted characters and NPC's, and a wide variety of Shadowlands Powers which can be granted to those who meddle with darkness.

The fourth chapter presents some of the most significant Tainted and Lost individuals in Rokugan, including statistics for using them in your own campaign. Many of these characters are well-known personalities from the *Legend of the Five Rings* CCG. A few of these characters have never been seen before.

The fifth chapter lists six character templates. These are ready-to-play starting characters whose lives have all been changed by the Taint. Just photocopy their character sheets and you're ready to use them in your own game.

Last, the Appendix contains a wide array of information on the Shadowlands that simply didn't fit anywhere else. Details on name-bound oni, new creatures of the Shadowlands, rules for ogre bushi, and tips for getting into the mind of a Tainted character all appear in this section.

Much of the information and fiction in this book is presented from the perspective of those who have fallen to the Taint, or from the natural inhabitants of the Shadowlands. In the *Books of the Shadowlands*, the Shadowlands were the enemy. In much of *Way of the Shadowlands*, Rokugan is the enemy.

Throughout this book, players and GM's alike should keep in mind that the Shadowlands are a full of evil beyond imagining.

The Taint is not something to be toyed with.

Most who wander into the darkness never return.

If you're ready to begin your journey, read on.

Chapter One

The Eternal Shadowlands



Dire Warnings

The Final Letter of Agasha Yasuo

(found tucked between the stones of the Carpenter Wall)

I have been pulling little pieces off of my face all night.

It is peculiar and horrifying, yet so very intriguing.

Here I hold what was once my nose. Now it is gone, and I shall never have another. Yet as I look upon the rotting bit of flesh I hardly feel nostalgic. What did this scrap of meat ever do for me? Am I so different now that it is gone? Perhaps one might say rather that I have become more distinct. I am stronger for the fact that I do not need a nose. I wonder how far the decay will spread; when it is done will I be less complete, or purer? Like boiled water, does the Taint slowly distill me to my simplest essence? When all is said and done, will a truer self remain? I toss my nose to the rats. They make better use of it than I, and seem satisfied with the gift.

How strange my life has become.

Those that knew me one year ago would hardly recognize me now, and the degradation of my body is not fully to blame. Once I lived among the high mountains of the Dragon. I was a shy, timid little man who could not help himself. I relied upon others to do my thinking, certain that any course of action I chose of my own volition

would be the wrong one. I was ignored, abused, and passed over more times that I can remember. At all times I hoped for something greater, but I took no initiative. Surely a purpose would find me in time. It was only by pure luck that someone noticed my talent with the kami, and I entered training as a shugenja.

I began my studies with zeal. Surely once I wielded the power of magic my path would be clear. My life would have worth. Others would look to me for guidance. The *kami* would provide the friendship I lacked in the human world. I would be important.

Or so I thought.

Things were no different as a shugenja, save now the kami ignored me as well. They obeyed me readily enough when I spoke the sutras, but the effects were often unimpressive. Those that had eagerly inducted me into the Agasha school began to turn their attentions elsewhere. Once they believed that my potential was limitless. Now they were convinced that they had been mistaken.

I was convinced as well. My spirit broken, I prepared to settle into a life of mediocrity.

Then I began to hear the voices.

It was entirely by accident at first. While communing with the spirits of the mountain, as was my morning routine, I found something strange. A spirit appeared that was different from the rest. It was quick, dark, and clever, much more energetic than the dour spirits of Earth. It seemed excited that I could sense it, and so very happy to meet me.

It was the first time anyone had been happy to meet me.

This spirit was not like the other kami, absorbed in their own strange worlds and alien routines of thought. This one spoke to me as a friend – a friend who shared my dreams, motivations, and desires. A friend who offered to teach me magic greater than that of the Agasha, if I was only willing to learn.

The Agasha had forsaken me. I saw no reason to spurn my new friend.



The spells were so simple, yet amazing. It seemed I had a natural talent, and the spirit was impressed. It offered to teach me more, in return for a favor.

It was such a small price, and the guilt was fleeting in the face of the reward. I was forced to flee my home and family, but that was not such a great price, either. Besides, the spirit has led me to a new home. It is a strange place in many ways, but with each day that passes I feel more strongly that I belong here.

I have no regrets.

This was once my ear...

From an address given by Kuni Utagu

(at the most recent gempukku of the Kuni tsukai-sagasu)

The most frightening thing about the Shadowlands is uncertainty. Do not believe the tales they tell you, that the Shadowlands is a realm of pure destruction, seeking nothing but your death. This is not true. The Shadowlands is not a realm of destruction. It is a realm of raw *evil*. There is a subtle difference.

I have been to the Shadowlands on more than one occasion, and would readily agree that many of its inhabitants are violent, murderous things. Yet on some occasions I have felt my life not to be in danger, and those were by far the most frightening expeditions.

Let me share with you a few of my experiences.

Once, I journeyed into the Shadowlands, walking west and south for seven days. I had never ventured so far, so deep. In the dead of night, I saw a great structure on the horizon, mightier than any I had seen in the dark lands. With great terror in my heart, I approached what seemed to be a great Shadowlands fortress. It was the Carpenter Wall. Somehow, I had arrived at Razor's Dawn Castle. Not only was this north of the point where I had departed the wall, but there was no way I could have arrived there so quickly, even if I had followed the Wall itself.

I do not know why or how this happened.

On another occasion I journeyed into the Shadowlands with a squad of twelve armed Crab bushi. During our patrol we encountered only a small group of goblins, and dispatched them with relative ease. One scout had some trouble with a blood leech, so we quickly returned whence we came so that we could find proper medical treatment. The soldiers posted on the Carpenter did not recognize us, and ordered us to hold our ground. We waited for four days with the mighty siege weapons of the Wall trained upon us. The poor Hiruma died of his wound. Finally, a highly esteemed *taisa* in command of a watch tower further down the wall sent message that he knew of my reputation, and I was to be permitted to establish my authenticity. When we had departed, that *taisa* had been a mere *gunso*.

Though we had only been in the Shadowlands for a handful of days, seven years had passed.

More recently, a group of worthy Crabs and myself ventured into the dark lands on the trail of a sinister hag. She had posed as a nun and stolen several children, fleeing into the darkness with them. We did not expect to find the children alive, but we hoped to make the demon pay for her crime. To our surprise, we found the children frightened but unharmed, and the bog hag was nowhere to be found. None would speak of what had happened during the time they had been held in the cave. Each displayed mild signs of the Taint, primarily a hunger for raw meat. The patrol leader felt that we should kill the Tainted children and continue hunting the hag. As the ranking expert on the Shadowlands in the party, the decision was ultimately mine.

Though I am sworn to destroy the Shadowlands, I could not bring myself to murder children. The unfortunates were placed in an asylum for the Tainted, and live there to this day. I wonder what will become of them, and if I made the right decision in sparing their lives.

These are only a few examples of the strange things I have seen. The only thing that has kept me alive is that I am always prepared for the unexpected. I tell you this: the Shadowlands can never be predicted. It can never be fully defined. When you are certain that you know the extent of its power, rest assured that the rules will suddenly change. The entire land is alive. It is intelligent, cunning, malicious, and extremely patient. It plays games with those who willingly enter its domain, and the stakes of these games are often unknown even when the game is done.

I have seen men, lost in the Shadowlands with no jade, escape with no trace of the Taint even after several weeks. I have Crab samurai who thought themselves knowledgeable in protecting themselves reduced to gibbering beasts. There is only one way to deal with the Shadowlands with any degree of certainty and that is not to deal with it at all.

I do not have that luxury. My clan is sworn to stand against the darkness. As a Witch Hunter, I have dedicated my life to eradicating the Taint. Though I have destroyed countless Shadowlands abominations I would say without a moment of hesitation that I have lost as many battles as I have won. The creatures of darkness are masters of escape, and sometimes the Shadowlands wants you to win. The unknowable motivations of black *Jigoku* make it impossible to predict, and nearly impossible to fight.

However, I promise you this:

I will *never* stop fighting.

If your level of dedication is not equal to mine, then find yourself a safe place to hide and stay there.



From the Letters of Suzume Seiko, Sparrow Clan Storyteller

They may say that our clan has a talent for spinning interesting tales of fiction, but we have nothing on the Clan of the Crab.

To hear the Crab tell it, the Shadowlands are a place of evil personified. In the most extreme tales of the Hida, hundreds die on the wall every day. The armies of darkness are limitless, all-powerful, beyond understanding and beyond redemption. Nonsense. Were the Shadowlands truly so terrible, I ask, you, would any of us be here today? I think not. Certainly the Shadowlands must present some danger. Many Crabs have the scars to prove it. However, I think that the threat is far less than they would have us believe.

Take these wild tales of *maho-tsukai*, for example. Am I to believe that a humble peasant could dare command the power of magic? Am I to accept that any spirit, whether *kami* or *kansen*, could bow to the will of one so low-born? It flies in the face of the Celestial Order, and I will not accept it. Perhaps there may be an occasional ronin shugenja with a flair for the dramatic and a lust for violence, but a peasant? I laugh at the very suggestion.

Have you ever seen a Kuni Witch Hunter? They are surly, unkempt, detestable individuals. The one I chanced to encounter was rude in the extreme, with breath that stank like a brewery. If I were

cursed with a countenance such as his, surely I would take to accusing others of witchery in order to scrape together a bit of value for my name. And why are there so few Witch Hunters? Is it because their training is so difficult? Because their enemies are so dangerous?

Rather, I think it is because there is nothing for them to fight.

Oh, and let not a conversation about the Shadowlands pass by without some mention of the notorious Taint. The Crab say that evil creeps into a man's bones, turns him inside out, twists his body and soul into the worst reflection of himself. Not only do I not believe this, but I find it offensive! Evil as a physical force? What simpleton could believe such a thing? The tales of Fu Leng and his minions are meant as parable, nothing more. Good and evil are choices, not tangible elements. Evil does not rot the flesh and make the gums bleed. Evil is a path, a path easily avoided by men wise enough to see beyond tales made to frighten children.

But I suppose tales of the Shadowlands are necessary. The Crab must maintain their position somehow, and no one exaggerates like a Hida. The occasional goblin staggers over the wall and the Crabs declare a Twenty Goblin Winter, recruiting ronin left and right to swell the ranks of their armies and promote the glory of the Hida name. The Cranes have their art. The Lions have their battles. The Dragon have their philosophy, and the Phoenix have their magic. Let the Crabs have their myths, if it helps them feel important.

I, for one, enjoy the tales.

Of course, I do not believe them.

I encourage you to do the same.

(Shortly after this letter was written, Suzume Seiko's flayed skin was found floating on the shore of Three Sides River. The rest of her remains were never found.)

From the hand of Moto Kichisaburo, Nikutai of the White Guard

My lord, I present to you my failure.

I will not attempt to conceal my weakness behind false nobility. I am a coward. I have faced many warriors in battle and stood triumphant. It matters not. I am a traitor.

I have heard tales of the Dark Moto, ancestors who brought shame to our family by falling to the power of the Shadowlands. Always I have held an incredible anger toward these creatures. Their failure caused the Shinjo to exile us to the borderlands. Their failure causes Rokugan to spit our name with contempt. I swore there would come a time that I would ride into the darkness and clear the Moto name forever. I realize that I am not the first Moto to make such an oath, but my honor would not allow anything less.

One month ago, the General of the White Guard organized a great raid into the Tainted lands. The scouts of the Crab had reported





an encampment of Dark Moto two days' ride past the Carpenter, and had petitioned our family for assistance. Joy filled my soul when I heard the news. Finally I would reap the vengeance I desired.

We were well prepared. Our numbers were great, and all of us were experienced in the art of war. We were lucky to have a wise leader, who had organized a large contingent of Hiruma to accompany us. None know the Shadowlands better than the Crab, and it would be foolish to enter the darkness without a few at our side. I rode with my comrade in arms and friend of my youth, Moto Kinuye. Together, we had faced many great challenges and prospered. Together we could not fail.

Kinuye looked upon my excitement with quiet disapproval. Though she was a mighty warrior, she had always disdained violence except as a last resort. I respected her opinion greatly, as no warrior I have ever fought beside shone with more skill and prowess than she.

On the trail to the Shadowlands we fell to arguing with one another. She considered my zeal at the prospect of cutting down my fallen kinsmen unseemly. Though she intended to do her duty as well as any other, she reprimanded me for my joy in the battle ahead. Our words grew heated. She called me a bloodthirsty barbarian. I called her a coward. We spoke no more, and moved to opposite ends of the camp.

I felt terrible, but words once spoken cannot be called back. We were on a mission. There was no time for petty emotion. I would apologize to her when we returned home. With another day's ride, the Carpenter Wall was in sight.

That evening, the voices began. I heard them in my dreams, beckoning, calling to me. I had been warned to expect this. The Dark Moto knew their kin, and sought their corruption whenever possible. I clung to my finger of jade and tried to push the nightmares away.

Immediately, the voices were gone. They were replaced with a wonderful dream. I dreamed of a world where the Moto were not hated and despised. I dreamed of a world where our family was not a forgotten rabble on the edge of Unicorn territory, but a mighty army thundering across the steppes. I dreamed of a world where the song of battle filled my heart. Countless enemies stood against me but none could face my might. I was invincible. I was a part of something greater. I was a True Moto at last.

When I awoke, I heard a strange calling. I rose from my pallet and left my tent to explore the night. I crept quietly through the sleeping encampment, taking great care not to be noticed. Soon I found myself at the edge of the camp. The harsh wind of the plains tore savagely at my nightclothes, and I realized abruptly the oddity of my situation. A quartet of riders waited patiently at the edge of the camp. They seemed to be expecting me.



"Kichisaburo-san," one said, his voice cool and pleasant like a winter stream. "Come, my brother. It is time to ride."

It did not strike me as odd that this stranger knew my name. I do not know why. It was then that I noticed that the fourth steed had no rider. The animal seemed unwell, somehow. My mind was still hazy from sleep, and in the darkness it was difficult to see clearly.

"This is no time for indecision, Kichisaburo-san," the lead rider pressed. "We must away before the sun rises. Take your steed. There will be a great battle tomorrow! Do you not wish to strike down the weaklings who dare call themselves Moto?"

I noticed that I no longer clutched the finger of jade in my hand. When had I lost it? Where? I glanced about the earth around me, terrified that I could have done something so foolish.

"What do you search for, Kichisaburo?" the rider asked. "We need nothing, save each other. We are the True Moto. Now and forever."

I noticed the slumped bodies in the bushes nearby, slaughtered corpses of the Crab who had been on watch.

"No," I said, shaking my head in numb terror. "I cannot."

"Is that so?" the rider asked, slowly drawing a long blade from his saddle. "The choice is yours, I suppose. There are always others."

I should have died. I did not. In an instant a great black steed burst from the bushes, colliding with the dark rider. I recognized her in an instant – Kinuye. She lashed out at the strangers with her nage-yari, raising her voice in alarm. The Hiruma burst from their tents, readying their weapons in moments. My Moto brethren were prepared scant seconds later. The camp was alive and blazed with signal fires, reflected soon after by those on the Carpenter Wall.

Help would not arrive in time. Already I could see Kinuye sagging in her saddle. The silhouette of the dark rider lifted his nodachi high, prepared to finish her. I had no weapon, but I shouted Kinuye's name and ran to her aid. A second dark rider crossed my path, leveling a swift kick to my jaw that left me in the dust. When I rose again, Hiruma and Moto were all about me. As I wiped the blood from my chin, I saw the four shadowy steeds galloping into the night.

This time, all four horses bore riders.

Over the next few days, we fought many skirmishes against the Dark Moto. I saw Kinuye many times. She rides among the Tainted now, her face full of the same zeal and bloodlust I felt in my dream. She sacrificed her life, her honor, and her soul for me.

She took my place in Jigoku.

My lord, if any justice is in your heart, I beg you to forbid me seppuku. Send me to the Shadowlands. Give me one more chance to bring Moto Kinuye's soul to peace. I will take her back from the demons that dare call themselves the True Moto.

We will die together.

From the Traveling Scrolls of Miya Yumi, former herald to Ootosan Uchi

The following tale was given to me by a man who saved my life. It was given to me because I wished to hear it told, and the man who experienced it considers me a friend. He asked me to offer no embellishments nor alter any of the details, but to let him be judged as his actions deem fit. I ask only that you do not judge him too harshly, but put yourself in his place and ask what you might have done. I have only known him a short time, but he is a man of honor. He stood by my side at a time when few others dared to.

He is no different from any of us.

He deserves to be remembered.

When you have seen your home and family destroyed by the Shadowlands, you too will know why I chase death with blind fury.

Everyone hears tales of the Shadowlands. When I was a little child, I loved to hear stories of restless ghosts, wicked bakemono, and of course ogres. In the tales, ogres are clumsy brutes. They travel alone, for no other purpose than to destroy all that stands in their path. They are powerful beasts with no intelligence. The tales are wrong.

When the ogres came, they came in a pack. There were ten of them, each larger than three horses. I saw one tear a farmer's house apart with his bare hands to get at the man inside. I... do not wish to describe what happened to that man, but his torment lasted longer than any man deserves. The ogres spoke among themselves, not as beasts grunt and growl to one another, but as men. They spoke our own language. They split the spoils of my village among themselves as human bandits would.

The intelligence of the ogres did not shock me, nor did their numbers. What chilled my soul was the fact that *human bushi fought at their side*. A mob of ronin, samurai without masters, pillaged the farms and homes of my people at the side of the ogres. I hid among the reeds as they destroyed my home and murdered my family. They took my father's sword, which I had carelessly left behind that morning. I did not move or cry out as they took my daughter and devoured her. There was nothing I could do. If I had attacked, I would have died. I convinced myself as I cowered in the mud that my life somehow served a purpose, though I betrayed everything I loved.

Fear is an ugly thing. I know it well, though I always manage to convince myself it is something else. Sometimes it is practicality. Sometimes it is caution. Later, I always recognize my fear for what it is. I know that I am a coward, and I know that I am damned. Perhaps one day I will avenge myself upon the ogres, but what difference would that make?

Would that make me brave?



Life is lonely for a ronin. A warrior without purpose is a blade with no scabbard. Powerful, but dangerous. A thing with no proper place. I wandered for weeks on my own, starving, penniless, half mad. One day, drawn by the scent of roasting venison, I stumbled into a valley deep in the mountains. A group of ronin had made camp to prepare their evening meal. When they saw that I was one of them, they invited me to share their food. I could not remember when I had eaten last, and accepted their offer eagerly.

I told them that I had been a samurai, but nothing more. The ronin seemed sympathetic, and offered me a place among them. As the leader spoke of the great wealth and fame I would find at their side, I realized that his face was familiar.

That was when I noticed the great cave at the edge of the valley, and the bones that lay scattered about its mouth. That was when the ronin leader told me of his strange adventure in the lands of the Unicorn, and the wonderful creatures he had met there.

I had wandered into the camp of the beasts who had murdered my village. They did not recognize me. How could they have?

They wanted me to join them.

I agreed.

I convince myself that I needed to learn more about them. I convinced myself that I could weaken them from within. In truth, I was afraid they would kill me. That night, I crept from the camp, stole a horse, and rode for my life. I never looked back.

Though I swore I would gain vengeance, I fled when I was given my chance. Weeks later, I returned to the camp, resolved to destroy the ogres or to join my family in the next life. The camp had been long abandoned.

I had lost my chance for redemption. I have no reason to expect the Fortunes will give me another. What else is left for me but death?

A report given by Yoshi, Tortoise Clan sailor

Prepare yourself, Kemmei-sama. This must be as difficult to read as it is to write.

The Silent Bell is no more.

It was early last winter. My kobune, *The Silent Bell*, sailed the coastline north of Moshi Province. We had finished our dealings with the Shiba. With koku heavy in our pockets, the crew and I decided to explore. Perhaps we might catch a glimpse of one of those rumored barbarian settlements. Perhaps, should we happen to find one, we might trade some goods in order to steal a few barbarian secrets. Why, if such an unlikely event were to occur, would we not be praised for our incentive? Perhaps we might return with a ship full of strange *gaijin* spices and a few of those odd heavy "long-swords" that you favor so much, my lord.

Stranger things have happened, and the Tortoise are a lucky clan.

Though I saw it with my own eyes, Kemmei-sama, I do not know if I can believe what happened next. We were making good time. Suitengu's favor was with us and the crew was in high spirits. Though our breath was thick with winter's fog, it was a day where it seemed nothing could go wrong. Pleased with our progress, I had opened a cask of rare Friendly Traveler sake and distributed the precious drink to warm the crew.

Now, I have long been a drinking man. I am familiar with the evils of indulgence and the false visions it can perpetrate upon the mind. I had perhaps drunk more than my fair share. Still, sake can scarcely explain how the other survivors came to share my vision.

It started with a rattle, the sound of metal against wood. I thought perhaps it was Hajime, who often rattles his *parangu* against the rails when he is on watch. The sound mixed badly with the morning's drink, so I rose to order him to stop. To my surprise, Hajime was sleeping soundly against the mast. Denbe was on guard, and he held no weapon at all. He looked at me nervously as I approached.

"Do you hear it?" he asked.

The sound grew louder, more rapid. We both realized that the noise did not come from the within the ship, but behind it. Quickly, we ran to the stern and looked out at the waters. Denbe screamed. I made no noise. I was too afraid.

Our wake was topped with countless skulls, floating on the surface of the water and rattling against one another with the sound of metal on wood. Green witch-fire gleamed through their open mouths. Every empty eye socket was focused on my ship. They seemed to go on forever.

The crew woke quickly, roused by Denbe's screaming. In moments, terror reigned as the men realized their situation. Some joined Denbe in a chorus of terror. Some fell to their knees, praying to every Fortune they could remember. One man was overcome with fear and leapt overboard. The skulls parted when he struck the water, then swarmed on his position. A white froth exploded from the water, stained quickly pink and accompanied by the sound of rent flesh.

One sailor screamed that we had betrayed the Son of Heaven, and the Emperor had sent the skulls to punish us. He began heaving bales of Shiba silk into the sea. Another man buried his *kama* in the repentant sailor's neck. Chaos erupted as the crew turned upon one another. I was astonished at how quickly the men became beasts. All of our fears, angers, and hatred welled up in the face of the skull tide. I lost my own dagger in the chest of a young sailor, after he blamed me for our catastrophe and attempted to push me overboard. His corpse fed the phantoms instead. I do not remember his name, though I make a point of learning the names of all my crew.



All seemed lost. If the skulls did not destroy us, we would destroy each other. I made my peace with my ancestors and prayed they would be merciful on a man who tried to be honorable, but was often weak. As I opened my eyes, they filled with the light of flame. I thought surely I was witnessing the light of the Celestial Heavens.

No. It was indeed flame, white fire consuming the skull tide. I looked up to see Toritaka Mai, the ship's shugenja, inscribing the kanji of the Fortunes on the ship's mast.

"The power of the ward will not hold when the ship moves," Mai said sharply. "Make for land and abandon ship before they devour us all!"

Swiftly, I gave orders to my crew. We turned for the shore with great haste. The wicked spell the tide had cast upon us seemed to have been broken by Mai's magic. Once we reached the beach, we ran for the safety of land, abandoning *The Silent Bell* on the cursed seas. Those that could not run were left behind. Once we were safe in a nearby village, we gave our heartfelt thanks to gentle Mai, who alone saved us even as we turned against each other. Mai claimed that it was nothing, and that she had reacted the same way the first time she had seen a skull tide. Surprised that she was familiar with such a thing, I asked her why she had not warned us of it before. She replied that she had not expected to see one here, so far from the Shadowlands.

The next day we returned to the shore to find only split timbers where *The Silent Bell* had been moored. Only scraps of gnawed silk remained of our priceless cargo. Of the crewmen that were left behind, nothing remained at all.

How could something so evil wander so far from the Shadowlands?

If such a thing could happen so far north, is anywhere safe?

From the writings of Bunzo, Honorable Brother of the Shinmaki Sect

The child was found wandering the wilderness at the edge of the village in a most pitiful state. She wore only rags and had apparently survived by catching and devouring animals. The magistrate who discovered her thought her a *bakemono* at first, so fiercely did she attack him when we discovered her hiding place. Somehow, he managed to apprehend the sad creature without harm. She was confined in an animal cage borrowed from the town market.

It was I who first determined that she bore the touch of He Who Must Not Be Named. I know not how a small child became corrupted so many miles away from the Carpenter Wall. It seemed as if she had been reduced to a feral beast by the Taint. Her eyes were blood red. Her nails were long and blackened. Pronounced ridges were evident along her spine, jaws, knees, and elbows. It seemed as if her bones were slowly outgrowing her flesh.

The child was clearly cursed by evil. Even yet, the magistrate could not bring himself to end her life. He was surprised when I mentioned the possibility, seeming startled to hear such words from a follower of Shinsei. I replied that Shinsei would not be so cruel as to leave the girl's soul trapped within a corrupted husk. The only way we could save her was to kill her.

Alas, the magistrate was young and inexperienced. He spurned my advice, turning instead to his clan for guidance. I found that fact upsetting. When the Brotherhood is in danger, do we not seek the protection of samurai – those who spend their lives preparing for war? One would think that when a samurai needs wisdom, he would have the presence of mind to turn to one of us. Such was not the case.

A few days later a representative of the clan arrived, a young shugenja fresh from *gempukku*. He was apparently of high standing, with close ties to the daimyo. He carried himself with his nose in the air and paid only the most perfunctory respects at the Temple of Ebisu where I dwell. He immediately ordered the girl to be remanded into his custody, and planned to release her from the cage.

In my youth, before I joined the path of Shinmaki, I spent a summer upon the Carpenter Wall. It was an experience I do not wish to repeat, but it gave me a certain insight into how to deal with the Shadowlands. I told the shugenja I believed he was being foolish. He responded with a condescending smirk.

"You call yourself a monk," he said. "Yet you would deny your mercy to this little girl?"

"Your mercy is wasted," I replied simply. "That creature ceased to be a little girl some time ago. If you had any compassion, you would kill her."

The shugenja would not listen. The last I saw her, he was leading her into the magistrate's home. A chill passed through me as the child turned and leveled a final, triumphant smile at me. I rapidly gathered anyone in the village that would heed my warnings. Though some thought my actions bizarre, there were many among the villagers who trusted my judgment. We fled the village that very hour.

Within a week, we began to hear the reports. The village burned to the ground the night we left. The shugenja had apparently gone mad. Succumbing to the power of *maho*, he laid waste to the village and surrounding farms in a single evening before destroying himself as well. Only a handful of the town's inhabitants had survived, including the young magistrate. Even though it has been months since the incident, he is so shaken he is unable to speak in complete sentences.

I have heard that they are sending *tsukai-sagasu*, and possibly an Inquisitor as well. When they arrive, I will be waiting. I will help them bring that little demon the mercy she deserves.

Chapter Two

Unredeemed



A Thousand Years of Peace

Poets and historians alike often refer to the last ten centuries as "A Thousand Years of Peace." Anyone with a passing familiarity with the history of the Emerald Empire realizes that the last ten centuries have been anything but peaceful. Clan has fought against clan, Otosan Uchi has been attacked by foreign forces, Iuchiban rose and was defeated twice, and countless other wars have come and gone.

The reason for this is not due to any mistake or omission by the histories. The Ikoma and Asako acknowledge Rokugan's many "lesser wars," but these have nothing whatsoever to do with the Thousand Years of Peace. Civil wars, foreign attacks, even the madness of Iuchiban are considered to be of little consequence when compared to the Empire's one true Enemy.

Fu Leng.

From a certain perspective, Fu Leng is the reason that Rokugan exists. The Kami were gathering followers long before he emerged from the Shadowlands, but it was the first brutal war against He Who Must Not Be Named that taught the Clans to band together. During that first great war, the Kami set their followers on the paths they follow to this day. The Lion first rode forth as the mighty Fist of the Emperor. The Crab learned the art of defense. The Phoenix

became the masters of elemental magic, and the Scorpion were first ordained as the custodians of secrets. Without Fu Leng, the Empire would quite possibly not exist.

Many families in the Empire, foremost among them the Ikoma, Asako, and Shosuro, have labored tirelessly to make certain that the events of the War Against Fu Leng would never be forgotten. The war was an uncertain time for the Emerald Empire. The young Clans faced the threat of annihilation from a power greater than the Kami. Only through wisdom, cooperation, and determination could the Empire survive, and even then the victory was narrow. "A Thousand Years of Peace" is meant to illustrate this. The Crab-Crane War, the Battle of Sleeping River, the Battle of White Stag, the countless feuds between the Lion and Crane, all are as nothing compared to the evil of Fu Leng. The Hantei Emperors saw it as crucial that the Empire never be allowed to forget the events surrounding the rise of the Shadowlands.

Why?

Because Fu Leng lives, and every war and tragedy that has taken place since the Black Scrolls were sealed is as nothing compared to his power.

Cold War

For ten centuries the Shadowlands has existed outside of Rokugan's borders, the single greatest threat to the Emerald Empire. Except for a few significant border disputes, the Shadowlands has been mostly silent. Though its inhabitants are unquestionably evil, most are wise enough to stay on their side of the Carpenter Wall.

Why is this? If the creatures of the Shadowlands are so powerful, why haven't they attacked Rokugan before now? If the Shadowlands is not powerful enough to mount an attack, why haven't the Great Clans allied together and wiped Fu Leng's minions off the face of the Empire?



Though the Crab would like nothing better than to do just that, matters of practicality prevent such a campaign. Initial forays into the Shadowlands after the defeat of Fu Leng proved disastrous. The Black Finger River formed an impassable barrier of corruption. Those who crossed its boundaries became immediately mad, succumbing to the Taint and destroying themselves rather than traveling onward. Encampments along the Black Finger were too expensive to maintain, as they required an enormous amount of jade and pure water. Eventually, the Crab were forced to retreat to the edge of the Tainted lands. Luckily, the borders of Fu Leng's Realm have not expanded in the intervening time, with the sole exception of the Maw's invasion in 716.

In recent generations, the Crab have often sought aid in dealing with the Shadowlands threat. Some ambitious Crab daimyo have planned great expeditions into the Shadowlands, intending to use the same process used to clean the Kuni Wastes to wipe away all trace of the Taint. Unfortunately, the Hantei Emperors have deemed all such proposed expeditions an impractical drain on the Empire's resources. Many of these decisions have been influenced greatly by Crane and Otomo courtiers attempting to prevent the Crab Clan from growing in power.

From the Shadowlands' perspective, it pays to have patience. Without Fu Leng as a physical presence, the intelligence behind the Shadowlands is unfocused, undirected. Few oni or shugenja possess the power or charisma to unite the diverse inhabitants of the Shadowlands. The destruction of Iuchiban and the Maw were proof of this. Without Fu Leng, the Shadowlands cannot win a prolonged war against the Empire.

Instead, the Shadowlands keeps a careful balance. The terrible intelligence that drives the dark lands knows that it must be careful to present a continual threat in order to ward off curiosity, while not appearing so strong that the other clans put aside their political games and band with the Crab to wipe them out. Thus far it has been successful. Most of the Shadowlands remain a mystery even to the Crab. The secrets that lie beyond Black Finger River are known only to the Dark Lord himself and a few brave nezumi.

The Shadowlands can afford to wait. Its slow, corruptive nature has slowly insinuated itself into the heart of the Empire. The longer it waits, the more willing minions it has at its disposal. With each passing day, the power of the Shadowlands increases, slowly weakening the bonds that hold Fu Leng in check. One day, those bonds will be broken.

That day is swiftly coming closer.

The Shadowlands Beyond the Wall

The Carpenter Wall serves as the physical border of the Shadowlands, but the Dark Lord cares little for geography. Outbreaks of *maho* or the Shadowlands Taint occur from time to time outside the Shadowlands itself. The land can be corrupted just as mortals can, and small areas of the Taint exist in the territory of every clan. Each of the Clans has had its own unique experiences with the Shadowlands, and has formed its own opinions about how to deal with the Taint.

The Crab Clan

An entire book could be dedicated to the Crab's struggle against the Shadowlands. (Indeed, one has been: it's called *Way of the Crab*.) The Crab Clan exists to defend the Empire against the Shadowlands, and they take their duty extremely seriously.

More Crab samurai contract the Taint each year than all other clans combined. Roughly half of these samurai retire to monasteries or communes monitored by Kuni Witch Hunters. The rest join the Damned, an elite fighting force of Tainted bushi explained in further detail later in this chapter.

In recent times, it seems as if the Crab have turned their backs upon their duty and allied with the Shadowlands. Nothing could be further from the truth. Lord Kisada sees the dark armies as a useful tool, nothing more. He is careful never to use more Tainted troops than he needs, and never places a unit of Shadowlands forces where his own Crab samurai cannot swiftly dispose of it if the need arises. The Great Bear realizes the danger of the game he plays, but believes that the Empire will suffer greatly without the swift ascension of a strong Emperor.

Those Crabs who expressed qualms over Kisada's dark alliance were given one opportunity to choose their duty to the Crab or their duty to the Empire. Those few who chose the Empire were placed in guard positions on the most dangerous sections of the Carpenter Wall. Kisada intends to make an example of those who would defy



him, while properly assigning those that value the Crab's true duty to the places where they are needed most.

The Crane Clan

The Crane would be much happier if the Shadowlands did not exist. Indeed, many Cranes behave in such a manner. No Crane would ever deny the existence of Fu Leng, of course, for to do so would diminish the exploits of many noble Crane ancestors. Instead, the Crane choose to ignore the problem. The Crab dedicate their lives to fighting the Shadowlands. They supposedly do their job quite well. The Crane do their part by staying out of their way.

The Crane prefer not to deal with the Shadowlands Taint, if at all possible. Any mention of the subject causes the average Crane to grow quite nervous. When dealing with the Taint becomes necessary, they do so swiftly but compassionately. If a Crane becomes corrupted through no fault of his own, he is invited to live out his days in a remote temple. A Tainted samurai can expect to be well cared for, but generally forgotten.

Those who knowingly embrace the Taint receive no mercy. Even the peaceful Asahina are relentless in pursuing Cranes afflicted with the Taint. Those who perpetrate *maho* or deal with creatures of darkness are executed as quickly as possible.

The Dragon Clan

The Dragon Clan's stance on the Shadowlands is typically peculiar. Though the mysterious *ise zumi* rarely venture from the mountains, the majority of those that do travel out on their own inevitably visit the Carpenter Wall.

Even the *ise zumi* are not quite sure why this happens. Those that are questioned usually reply, "This is important. I needed to see this," or something similar. The Togashi seem to have a boundless curiosity for the lands beyond the Wall. This open curiosity makes the Kuni Witch Hunters nervous, and wandering *ise zumi* can expect to be watched closely. Luckily, the incidence of Tainted *ise zumi* seems quite small. They seem to be, exactly as they say, just curious.

The Agasha also have a curiosity for the Shadowlands as great as, but more focused than, that of the Togashi. For centuries, Agasha chemists have traded secrets with the Kuni in search of a cure for the Shadowlands Taint. Their results thus far have been unimpressive, leading the Kuni to hold the Agasha in mild disdain. Nevertheless, the Agasha continue their experiments, certain that one day they will make a great breakthrough.

The Dragon have no set policy regarding the treatment of Tainted within their clan. They deal with such individuals on a case-by-case basis, or leave such details up to the Asako Inquisitors.



The Lion Clan

The Lion Clan have a rather muddled opinion of the Shadowlands. While Fu Leng's minions are the greatest threat to their beloved Empire, there is no glory to be gained fighting the Tainted. Contagion, corruption, and death are far more likely prospects. The Lion do not fear death, but the slow rot the Taint brings is a distasteful notion to most of them.

The Lion have little knowledge or experience with the Shadowlands, and are thus often uncertain how to deal with the Taint. Their pride often forbids them from asking the Crab or Phoenix for help, sometimes leading to unnecessary tragedy. The birth of Ikoma Ryoza, the Tainted bushi son of a *maho-tsukai*, is an example of such an event. In Crab lands, Ryoza would have been killed at birth. To the Lion, he is a respected son of a favored family. The Witch Hunters have been forbidden from investigating the young Lion in any way. The Kuni remain bitter over this open snub of their power, and some are curious about what else may be going on within the Lion Clan without their knowledge.

The Phoenix Clan

The Phoenix are the furthest removed from the Shadowlands physically, but it is never far from their minds. The dark power of



the Taint is always a temptation to *shugenja*, and *maho* is a seductive trap for many. The Asako Inquisitors were created specifically to root out incidents of *maho*, and though they patrol the entire Empire, nowhere do they find and convict more *tsukai* than within their own clan.

The newest Master of Earth, Isawa Tadaka, is greatly fascinated with the power of the Taint. He has compared corruption's power to that of Void, "everything and nothing at once, untamable and unconquerable." Master of the Void Isawa Ujina has no response on the matter, and in fact has not been seen in some time.

With the rise of Shadowlands activity in the south, Tadaka has called the Elemental Masters together for the sake of secret, experimental rituals. The Asako have always been mildly suspicious of Tadaka's "curiosity," and the Council's recent seclusion is the most suspicious act yet. The Inquisitors mutter darkly about this turn of events, and wonder what this bodes for the future.

The Scorpion Clan

Much like the Crane, the Scorpion prefer leaving the Shadowlands in the hands of professionals – the Crab. Unfortunately, this is not always possible. The deep mountains of the Scorpion provinces have often been used as hideouts for renegade *maho-tsukai* or Tainted creatures far from home. The Tainted who

escape the Carpenter seemed drawn to the Scorpion territories. Perhaps the presence of the Black Scrolls draws them?

In more recent times, many dishonored Scorpion *shugenja* have followed Yogo Junzo's example and begun experimenting with *maho*. As Scorpion, they are already damned in the eyes of the Empire. What else have they to lose?

The Unicorn Clan

Upon their return from the desert the Unicorn faced a few difficulties adjusting to life in Rokugan. Some of the strange magics they had learned beyond the Empire relied upon blood-letting, or blood as a focus for power. As a result, the Unicorns were uncertain why the rest of the Empire condemned *maho*. After a few tragic accidents, the Unicorn quickly realized the dangers of *maho* and tightened strictures against it. Many ancient Unicorn rituals involving blood-letting and scarification were outlawed.

Even yet, the old barbarian magic lingers in some *luchi* libraries. The rituals are not practiced often, but occasionally a young Unicorn stumbles across them. The barbarian rituals are not evil in and of themselves, but can quickly lead to *maho*. When blood is spilt by magic, *kansen* are sure to be appear sooner or later. A Unicorn who begins using barbarian blood magic may hear voices in his dreams, tempting him toward corruption.



The Imperial Families

The Imperial Families do not see it as their duty to deal with the Taint. That is the purpose of Hida's vow to the Emperor so long ago. When problems with the Taint arise, the Imperial Families summon Crab experts to deal with it.

The Minor Clans

Of all the Minor Clans, the Falcon are the most knowledgeable in dealing with the Shadowlands. The world of the *gaki* often crosses over with the dark world of *Jigoku*, so the Falcon Ghost Hunters frequently train among the Crab to be better equipped to deal with every situation. Before their downfall, the Hare Clan possessed a wealth of knowledge in tracking and combating *maho-tsukai*. The Kuni Witch Hunters consider the destruction of the Hare libraries a monumental loss. In the meantime, Fox daimyo Ryosei has attempted to take the place of the lost Hare in this area. She is currently gathering all the information available regarding *maho* for the archives at Kyuden Kitsune.

The Brotherhood of Shinsei

The peaceful monks of Shinsei hold little mercy in their hearts for the beasts of Fu Leng. Most monks (especially *sohei* orders) believe that their vows against violence and killing do not apply to those that bear the Taint. Just as Shinsei appeared to help the Kami defeat Fu Leng, the Brotherhood often sees it as their duty to help combat corruption in any way possible.

The Questioner sect of the Brotherhood takes a more subtle approach. These monks see it as their duty not to destroy the Shadowlands, but to redeem it. These tireless brothers attempt to bring the Tainted onto the road of enlightenment, and hope to eventually help them to remove the corruption in their body and spirit. Their efforts are often unsuccessful, but this does not sway them from the difficult path they have chosen.

Ronin

The wave-men are all too easy a target for corruption. The deserted caves and by-roads where these cast-out samurai learn to survive are often the same places the Shadowlands Taint makes its entry into the Empire. Wave-men are easily seduced by power, and many have a great need to belong. Ronin shugenja are especially vulnerable, as *kansen* offer them a power greater than their own meager magics.



While the rest of Rokugan has grown and changed, Fu Leng's Realm has remained strangely constant. Fu Leng maintains his eternal goal – subjugation of Ningen-do, the realm of mortals. Those who follow the teachings of Fu Leng's immortal siblings, the Kami, are seen as the greatest threat. Thus, all who dwell in Rokugan must be either converted or destroyed. Samurai, monks, or shugenja, all who follow in the footsteps of the Kami are the Shadowlands' primary targets.

Those who are infected with the Taint are transformed body and soul by the power of corruption. The Tainted are often ostracized, as their hideous appearance and unseemly behavior cause other Rokugani to keep their distance. Fu Leng knows his enemy well and this ostracism is indeed the purpose of the Taint. Once a victim has no one else to turn to, Fu Leng begins to seem a welcome alternative. Those who succumb to the temptation become Lost, damned souls seething with corruption. The Lost no longer control their own destiny, but serve Fu Leng as willing minions.

Once a victim becomes Lost, some of the more pronounced mental symptoms of Taint (hallucinations, paranoia, uncontrollable laughter) may fade. Madness may drive a person to corruption, but madmen make poor minions. The Lost often act erratically and violently, but this is not insanity – this is merely the dark will of the Shadowlands itself.

Victims of the Taint discover that the Shadowlands offers extraordinary powers, but at a terrible price. Those who embrace the powers offered by darkness invite more Taint into themselves, and are more easily corrupted. Only those who resist temptation have a chance at redemption. Those who choose this path will find a difficult road ahead, for there is no known cure for the Taint. A victim of the Shadowlands will struggle with inner demons for the rest of his life.

Those who encounter Fu Leng's power usually aren't fully prepared for the depth of evil they face. Even the Crab occasionally



underestimate their enemy. The mind of corruption is ancient, clever, and unpredictable, and even the bravest samurai may have difficulty escaping unscathed. Certain scrolls in the libraries of the Phoenix indeed point to Fu Leng as a primary example of the Shadowlands' power, not the true source of it. According to the Kami, Fu Leng was not entirely evil before he fell into the Festering Pit. The creature that emerged, however was so powerful, so corrupted, more completely evil, that the other Kami hardly recognized what he had become.

If a Kami can be Lost, is anyone truly safe?

Marked For Corruption

Enemies of the Shadowlands have noticed distinct patterns of those that become Lost and those that do not. It seems that the Shadowlands has a preference for a certain brand of servant, and often singles out targets for assimilation. The following are a few of the more common types of persons the Shadowlands seeks.

The Young

When presented with a choice between a young minion and an old minion, the Shadowlands will almost always choose the younger. The young have a certain sense of immortality, and thus place lesser consequences upon their actions. If given a taste of power, the young are more likely to take advantage of it. Such individuals are quite adept at convincing themselves that they will have time to undo the damage later on. The Shadowlands encourages this, offering gradually more and more power, all the while assuring its prospective minion that there will be ample time for redemption later.

The Curious

Those who express curiosity regarding the Shadowlands are at a higher risk than anyone else. *Kansen* – invisible spirits of corruption – wander far from the Shadowlands and can sense those with a drive to learn about the power of darkness. Many of

these spirits are relatively powerless, but can arrange certain coincidences (a locked door left open, a scroll left out in plain view) to encourage curiosity about the Shadowlands.

The primary concern when dealing with such students is insuring that they are seduced quickly and completely. If a curious individual pauses to consider the true depth of evil he faces, he may step back from the abyss and rob the Shadowlands of a valuable servant. When dealing with the curious, the Shadowlands goal is to give out as much power and as little information as possible, keeping its victim thirsty for more while woefully ignorant of what is truly happening.

Maho cults are one of the Shadowlands' most powerful tools for corrupting the curious. These groups are quite adept at maintaining the balance between power and ignorance by convincing their members to distrust the outside world. When the curious place their trust only in the cult, it is far more difficult for outsiders to save them.

Some cults, such as the Bloodspeakers, have managed to rationalize their actions to the point that they no longer believe that they serve the Shadowlands. When such cultists become Lost, they endeavor to maintain the facade even though they now realize whom they truly serve. The reason is simple – unsuspecting victims are far easier to seduce.



The Moto Black Guard

The mon of the Moto Black Guard is a hideous caricature of the mon utilized by the Unicorn Moto. The colors of the mon have been inverted and the kabuki mask's trademark frown has been replaced with a sinister grin. The mon was not created as a parody of the Moto mon, as many believe. The two were developed independently, at the same time. The Tainted Moto believe that this signifies the brotherhood that they share with their "confused brethren." The Unicorn Moto would rather not think about what the coincidence symbolizes.

The Powerful

Those with a great degree of wealth or political power make fantastic servants, as the Shadowlands can draw upon their influence to corrupt others. Unfortunately, the touch of corruption can be difficult to conceal. Many powerful men have been struck down when their Taint became obvious. The Shadowlands has learned over the years that it is more advantageous to place a minion *near* a position of power than directly in the seat of authority. A Tainted advisor can go unnoticed for many years while exerting his influence over a daimyo's actions.

Another popular tactic is to corrupt a powerful man's family. For example, by infecting a daimyo's friend or loved one with the Taint,



it is likely that the daimyo will be more tolerant toward the Taint in general. Out of his need to conceal his own dark secret, he may overlook more dangerous minions of darkness. On the other hand, the daimyo may simply have his loved one exiled or executed, causing a great deal of emotional pain for everyone involved. This serves the Shadowlands' purpose nearly as well.

The Downtrodden

Those with nowhere else to go can always find a home in the Shadowlands. Are you a ronin? A cast-out Scorpion? A downtrodden eta? Does the rest of Rokugan spit in your face, tell you that you are worthless? You will find your worth appreciated in the Empire of Fu Leng. The powers of darkness always approach such individuals in a submissive manner, promising great power and respect. Whether or not the Shadowlands intends to keep its promises seems a matter of random chance more than anything else.

The Bold

Like the Great Clans, the Shadowlands appreciates those who have no fear. The greatest enemies make the greatest allies, and those who show great prowess in destroying the servants of darkness are often marked for corruption by the Dark Lord. The Shadowlands loves nothing more than to turn an enemy into an asset. It did so once with Moto Tsume. It hopes to do so again with Hida Kisada.

The Ambitious

In the rigidly tiered social system of Rokugan, there are many who feel their talents go to waste. Much like the downtrodden, the Shadowlands offers a chance for advancement where there is none in Rokugan. Such individuals as Yogo Junzo, who possess a lust for power but are ignored by their clan, make perfect targets.

Shugenja

Without exception, the most favored prey of the Shadowlands is shugenja. The Dark Lord has a special hatred for those that serve the kami and Fortunes, and loves nothing more than to steal away the holy men of Rokugan for his own purposes. Fu Leng's dark magics require much of the same talents and expertise as traditional magic, and *maho-tsukai* make potent servants. Every shugenja that enters the Shadowlands does so at the risk of his own soul, for the Shadowlands has an insatiable hunger for new recruits.

Marked For Death

While the above groups seem somewhat broad, not everyone makes a good pawn for the Shadowlands. Certain personality types have proven more difficult to corrupt than they are worth. Though the Shadowlands will sink its Taint into anyone that it can, it does not always place the same amount of effort into seducing potential victims. The following are a few examples of individuals who are poor targets for corruption. The Shadowlands will usually not exert itself in seducing these individuals; it is far more profitable to simply destroy them.

The Foolish

Fools unwise enough to stay well enough away from corruption are happily accepted, but the Shadowlands treats them as cannon fodder. Those who become Lost but have no useful skills become the infamous Shadowlands Madmen, roving mobs of Tainted lunatics that attack anything and anyone they stumble across. The simple tactics Shadowlands Madmen employ usually lead to their destruction at the hands of more capable forces, but this still serves the Shadowlands goals – the destruction of innocents and the concealment of its true intelligence and power.





The Beautiful

Though the destruction of beauty amuses the Dark Lord, destruction without purpose is a waste of power. Individuals who draw their influence from their appearance (geisha, courtiers, actors) are generally avoided as minions. The physical symptoms of the Taint render them nearly useless except as Shadowlands Madmen. Occasionally, certain Shadowlands Powers can balance out the drawbacks and forge such individuals into nearly invisible minions, but such cases are the exception rather than the rule.

The Pure

Samurai with high levels of Honor make poor minions. Their strong sense of duty often gives them the will to resist the Taint, to ignore the beckoning of Shadowlands Powers, and to use the Dark Lord's power to strike down other Shadowlands creatures. Though the corruption of an honorable samurai is always a proud accomplishment, it is often more trouble than it's worth. It is far more efficient to corrupt a noble samurai's less noble superiors. Then the noble samurai must either follow his lord into corruption or abandon his beloved code of Bushido.

The Well-Informed

Those who are amply educated in the danger of the Taint are difficult to corrupt. They know how to protect themselves with jade, crystal, and the like, and are far too wise to practice *maho*. If Tainted by factors outside their control, they resist the urge to use their powers. Drawing them into the Lost could take years, if it happens at all. To make matters worse, well-informed individuals (such as the Kuni Witch Hunters) often educate others of the dangers of the Taint, making Fu Leng's job all the more difficult. Though the rare Lost Witch Hunter is a valuable prize, it is far easier just to destroy them.

The Shadowlands Throughout History

Akodo Godaigo

Historical records of the events surrounding Matsu Hitomi's death are sketchy and fragmented at best, but it is known that Godaigo trapped Hitomi in the City of Remembrance at the behest of the Dragon Clan, and that she died there. Afterward, Godaigo became ronin and vanished. His vendetta against Hitomi and his odd behavior after the fact have made him the object of derision and ridicule among the Lion.

What the historical accounts do not recount was the influence of Akodo Godaigo's lieutenant, Kitsu Uragiri. Uragiri was tempted by voices from the darkness, encouraging him to lead his master to ruin. In turn, Uragiri steered his master toward the path of corruption. He convinced Godaigo that his cause was noble, that Hitomi was a criminal and a traitor, and that whatever methods they employed in pursuing her would be forgiven in the end.

Uragiri used dark magic to track Hitomi and to curse her with illness. In the end, it was Uragiri's *maho* that brought about the end of the heroic Matsu's life. When Godaigo faced Hitomi and realized what Uragiri had done, it was too late to undo the damage. Most of the city had been destroyed by Uragiri's *maho* plague. Godaigo himself had become Tainted, and retreated into seclusion as a ronin rather than live with his disgrace. Godaigo hoped to find Kitsu Uragiri and bring him to justice, but had no such luck.

Both Godaigo and Uragiri vanished into the Shadowlands. The *sodan-senzo* of the Kitsu have had some luck contacting





Godaigo's tormented spirit since. Though Godaigo's spirit does not answer questions about his life, the Kitsu confirm that Godaigo was Tainted, but never Lost. Kitsu Uragiri's spirit does not inhabit the halls of Yomi. He still lives deep in the Shadowlands. Fu Leng has transformed Uragiri into a rampaging beast as punishment for his failure in corrupting Godaigo's soul. The monster Uragiri has taken a new name – Uragirimono. Uragirimono stalks the Shadowlands still, waiting for the day that Godaigo will be born again.

Next time, Uragirimono will make certain that Akodo Godaigo is Lost.

Kuni Nakanu

Ironically, both Fu Leng and the Crab Clan consider Kuni Nakanu a great failure. Nakanu was the first shugenja (not counting the madmen that served Fu Leng and were put to death at the end of the War) to study the effect of the Taint upon the dead. His experiments would lay the groundwork for other unwitting *maho-tsukai* for generations to come. Sadly, Nakanu's own incompetence was his downfall. Before he could either realize his mistakes or become fully Lost, he was slain by his own zombies. Most of his research was destroyed by horrified Crab bushi. Only a few slim volumes were rescued by his apprentices, apprentices whose souls had already been consumed by Fu Leng.

The Dark Lord considers Nakanu a lost opportunity beyond imagining. If Nakanu had not lost control of his creations, if he had not progressed so far so quickly, if his death had not been so prominent and dramatic, *maho* might have gained a slim measure of acceptance in the young Emerald Empire. Instead, Nakanu became a grisly and highly visible example of what happens to those who meddle with darkness. The Crab Clan made certain that shugenja of every clan learned of the fate of Nakanu. It was a serious setback for the forces of evil, already greatly weakened by the imprisonment of Fu Leng.

The death of Nakanu forced Fu Leng to find other avenues to make *maho* seem inviting, particularly among the Crab Clan – the Shadowlands' primary enemy. Though no mortals realize it, the

generations Fu Leng lost while finding new methods to present *maho* to the Empire gave the Crab the time they needed to firmly entrench along the borders of the Shadowlands.

Dreams and Follies

Written in the year 1025, the book *Dreams and Follies* is remembered as a charming but mediocre book of Shadowlands stories. The book is of little use as a historical reference. In fact, the tales within are so bizarre and unbelievable that they seem to be meant as fairy tales. As a collection of entertaining stories, the book has become fairly popular. The stories in *Dreams and Follies* cover a variety of topics, though they deal mostly with extraordinarily incompetent visitors to the Shadowlands and the comical things that happen there.

Other stories include a tales of humorous and silly denizens of the Shadowlands, such as comical bakemono, ineptly maniacal Moto horsemen, and other tales so excessively grisly and overpowering that they come off as humorous rather than frightening. It also includes references that, while they may have basis in fact, many scholars of the Shadowlands find apocryphal, such as evil *baku* (though a few are corrupted, most *baku* are harmless dream spirits) and the controversial tale of the Crab Thunder's corruption (which the Crab adamantly refuse to give any merit despite any evidence presented).

At first, the book seems rather simple and harmless. However, it has made the jobs of those who fight the Shadowlands more difficult in a number of ways. Shadowlands experts consider the book wildly inaccurate, and therefore extremely dangerous. Although light and humorous, the tone of the book implies "everybody knows this is the way things really are," and thus those who read it tend to consider themselves familiar with the Shadowlands. It is popular in the courts, and has been a special favorite of the last three Hantei Emperors. Slowly, the book has evolved into a subtle work of pro-Shadowlands propaganda as those who read and become familiar with it are fed a fountain of misinformation.

It would not surprise the Kuni one iota to discover that the anonymous authors of *Dreams and Follies* were in actuality a coven of bog hags. In disguise as humans, the clever abominations



Oni No...

The Rokugani names of Oni translate in a peculiar, but intentional manner. Oni no Akuma, for example, translates as "Akuma of the Oni," rather than "the Oni of Akuma." This was a tradition begun by the oni, as they feel themselves to be the superior partner in their bargain with human hosts.

Kyoso no Oni is one notable exception. Because of the unique relationship between oni and summoner in this case, the oni is the submissive member of the partnership.



carefully crafted the volume to be the perfect weapon against their enemies. By causing the struggles of the Crab to appear less serious than they truly are, the Shadowlands can rob its enemy of their strength before the battle even begins.

Kyoso no Oni

There are six creatures known as "Oni Lords" – Kyoso, Akuma, Shikibu, Tsuburu, the Maw, and the First Oni. These are more than just the most powerful lieutenants of Fu Leng. Each stands as a tale of the Shadowlands' victory over the forces of honor and purity. The origins of the Maw and the First Oni are shrouded in mystery. The tales of Hiruma Shikibu, Kuni Tsuburu, and Isawa Akuma are documented elsewhere. The tale has not yet been told, though, of the creature that would become Kyoso no Oni.

Agasha Kyoso was a powerful young shugenja, destined for great things. During a chance meeting, she met and fell in love with Asahina Anzai, the Asahina family daimyo. On impulse, Anzai arranged to be wed with Kyoso. Stark reality destroyed their perfect romance when Kakita Ryo, a rival suitor of Anzai, exercised her political connections to publicly humiliate Kyoso. Kyoso was banished to the outer reaches of the Dragon provinces. Her Asahina suitor was forced to choose between maintaining political relations with the Kakita or following his heart.

He chose Kakita Ryo. Heartbroken and near mad, Kyoso began having nightmares. She was encouraged by voices in her dreams to take vengeance upon Ryo and Anzai. Kyoso was reluctant at first, but the solitude and loneliness of her banishment weakened her resolve. Eventually, she not only gave an oni her name, but bonded with it physically. To the oni's surprise, it was Agasha Kyoso's stronger will that dominated the amalgam creature. Even more surprisingly, though Kyoso was dominant, Kyoso no Oni remained a creature of pure evil. Agasha

Kyoso had become a willing servant of darkness, and Kyoso no Oni was born.

The new Oni Lord went on a rampage through the provinces of the Crane, slaying Ryo, Anzai, and a dozen others before fleeing into the Shadowlands where she remains to this day. Kyoso is by far the most unpredictable of the Oni Lords. She considers herself a patron of love, and sometimes offers her protection to wronged lovers in the guise of a minor Fortune. Those who would seek her aid should consider the offer carefully, for blood, death, and violence always follow in her wake.

Hida Isoshi

His name is hidden by history, though his story is passed down through the heirs of the Hida. If his tale were ever known publicly, it could bring great shame and disgrace upon the Clan of the Crab, and sow distrust and anger among the families that stand upon the Wall.

Hida Isoshi was a general of the Crab armies, second only to Crab Champion Hida Banuken. He fought against the forces of the Maw, though he was not present at the historic Battle of the Cresting Wave. On his deathbed, twenty years after the war, his terrible secret was revealed. When the old Crab breathed his last, his corpse burst open and all manner of dark creatures scampered into the shadows. No one knew that the general

had been Tainted, or even if the creature that died was indeed the general at all. The Kuni Witch Hunters who had worked at Isoshi's side were horrified that they could let such a thing pass beneath their gaze without noticing.

Investigators were called to look into the matter discreetly. They soon learned that during Isoshi's term of service during the war against the Maw, he never lost a battle. His record was exemplary. However, every area where the Crab met a crushing defeat during the War was also an area where Isoshi had formerly commanded



The Maw

So great was the power of the Maw that the Kuni believe it was, in fact, an oni lord, the fifth such being ever known to exist in Rokugan's history. The Maw shrewdly concealed its name, thus protecting the summoner of the beast and protecting the Maw itself from strikes against its namer. If this is the case, then the death of the Maw's physical body did not destroy it, but merely sent its spirit back to Jigoku to await a chance to return. Recent sightings in the Shadowlands of oni resembling the Maw have sent ripples of fear through the Crab. The beast may be returning.

Much has been said about who could have summoned the Maw. Surely any shugenja linked to such a creature would have power beyond all reckoning. Some dwell upon the magic used to hold back the Maw's hordes while the Crab built the Wall and wonder... how did one so young as Kuni Osaku gain such incredible power?



troops – including Hiruma Castle. The investigators reported that there was a very real possibility that Isoshi may have sabotaged defenses or reported troop movements to the Maw's forces, leading to the loss of the Hiruma ancestral lands. Had Isoshi not been dispatched to the Lion to procure reinforcements during the Battle of the Cresting Wave, Kuni Osaku's efforts might also have been sabotaged. The Kaiu Wall itself might never have been built. Hida Banuken concurred that he had trusted Isoshi implicitly, and had never suspected anything.

Except for a fluke of command, the Emerald Empire came a hair's breadth from annihilation. Since that time, the Crab have been careful about whom they place in positions of power. Officers and advisors are thoroughly interviewed by Kuni Witch Hunters to insure their loyalty. Even this is not a guarantee that a catastrophe such as Hida Isoshi will not happen again. Some *tsukai-sagasu* look at the leaders of the Crab Clan and wonder whether another such a tragedy is in the making.

White Stag

Though the Shadowlands did not participate in the Battle of White Stag, the Dark Lord was monitoring the events carefully. The Shadowlands had never seen anything quite like these *gaijin*. They were a powerful unknown variable. If they had maintained their grip on Otsan Uchi, the Shadowlands were prepared to dispatch a force to destroy them from within. Though Fu Leng was still bound in Jigoku and his minions were weakened, he would not stand by and watch others succeed where he had failed.

Soon enough, the foreigners simplified the problem with their resounding defeat. The *gaijin* evacuated Otsan Uchi and fled to the seas once more. Though they were no longer a threat, the Dark Lord's curiosity was piqued. As ill fortune would have it, two of the fleeing *gaijin* ships happened through a Sea of Shadow, and vanished without a trace. The other *gaijin* attributed their loss to the Mantis kobune that hounded their retreat.

The Shadowlands soon discovered that these *gaijin* could be corrupted as easily as anyone else. A few of the crew did not survive their journey to the Shadowlands, but the undead captains replaced them with bloodthirsty sea trolls. The twin *gaijin* galleons and their shambling crew patrol the dark waters of the Seas of Shadow to this day. None have seen them and lived to tell the tale. The *Eternal* and the *Revenant* are the flagships of the Shadowlands navy, kept in reserve by the will of the Dark Lord. When Fu Leng rises from his prison, the so-called Devil Galleons will lead the ghost ships of the Shadowlands against their enemies and take Otsan Uchi once more.

The War Against Fu Leng

Although its society has largely been shaped by the events and conflict that have occurred internally, Rokugan has been heavily influenced by the forces that surround it. Unquestionably, the most significant external force shaping Rokugan's development over the past millennium has been the corrupting influence of the Shadowlands.

What few in Rokugan realize is that the war against the Dark Lord is a war fought on two fronts: physical and spiritual. Samurai are warriors, and are taught to seek out their enemy and destroy him. Against a foe as malevolent and eternal as the Shadowlands, this simply is not possible. And when the samurai of the Empire focus on attempting to destroy the physical threat of the Shadowlands, they overlook the spiritual threat that all too often rises up within their own lands.

Battles with the Shadowlands

The unending conflict between the Empire and the forces of the Dark Lord is usually confined to limited skirmishes between the Crab and the Shadowlands. However, Fu Leng's minions are as cunning and devious as they are twisted and evil, and occasionally they mount campaigns of surprising tactics and unsuspected strategy that can lead to enormous battles between their hordes and the armies of Rokugan.

The Five Nights of Shame

Shugenja throughout the Empire know the tale of the Snake Clan and the price that always follows consorting with the forces of the Shadowlands. What began as an academic study of *maho* resulted in the seduction of the Chuda family into the darkest magical practices. Eventually, this foul sorcery summoned a *shuten*



doji, a manipulative spirit of pure Taint from the Shadowlands. The spirit used its vast powers to strengthen the abilities of the Chuda shugenja, giving them extraordinary powers of deception while feeding from their souls in return. When the Phoenix magistrates came to investigate, the powerful rituals of the Chuda quickly broke their resolve and possessed them.

Heeding wild rumors that the spirit aiding the Snake Clan could possess any who heard its voice, the Phoenix launched a massive attack on the minor clan's holdings. The shuten *doji*, a cowardly creature, fled before their attack. The withdrawal of its power left the Chuda shugenja weak and vulnerable before the Phoenix.

In five nights' time, the Snake Clan was no more. But the corruption had been spread. An entire clan had been destroyed. The ruler of the Shadowlands vows that it will not be the last.

The Anvil of Despair

The blood of the First Oni was an ichor of the foulest type. A distilled essence of Taint and *maho*, this mixture fell to the ground upon the oni's death and seeped deep into the earth, where it eventually coagulated into a mineral the likes of which has never been seen before or since. Somehow, this mineral concentrated within the Twilight Mountains, where it lay hidden for centuries awaiting discovery by the chosen of Fu Leng.

During the days of the Boar Clan, the Dragon shugenja Agasha Ryuden came to the Twilight Mountains in search of the "blood ore." Whispered the secrets of the dark metal by deceitful *shuten doji*, Ryuden wished to employ it in an alchemical experiment designed to gain power over the Shadowlands. The very process of refining the blood ore corrupted Ryuden, however, and the creation of a great anvil from the metal created waves of blackest magic that affected the entire Boar Clan. The foul energy heightened every dark, base emotion within them and they fell upon each other like animals within a few short days of the anvil's creation.

The final outcome of the creation of the Anvil of Despair is unknown, as is the fate of Agasha Ryuden. During the finale, a party of Imperial magistrates arrived to serve the daimyo of the Boar Clan with notice that the Emperor was calling for his *seppuku*. The magistrates' outrage over what they found deep within the Twilight Mountains further awakened the dark powers of the Anvil,

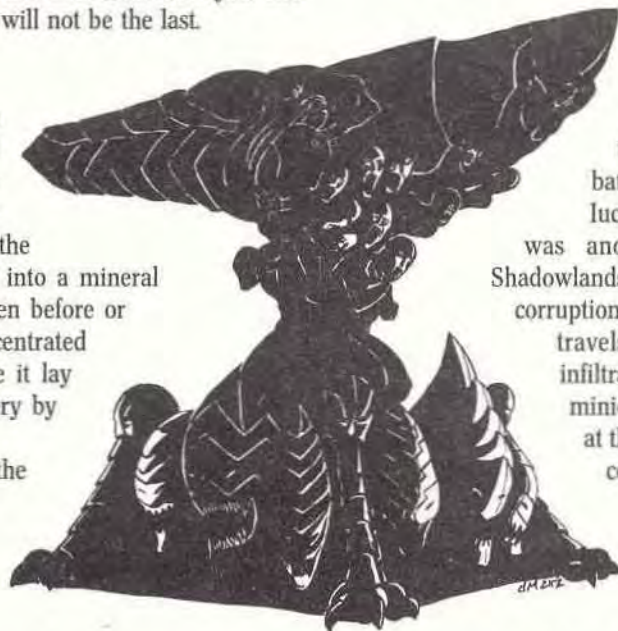
transforming them into a living spirit of vengeance known as the *Shakoki Dogu*.

The Iuchiban Battles

Of the weapons at Fu Leng's disposal, his most devastating has been a once-honorable man exposed to the darkest of foul magic. His seduction by *maho* was a great victory for the Dark Lord, for even though the sorcerer did not believe himself to be an agent of the Shadowlands, his actions and goals dictated otherwise.

The first of the Iuchiban battles, the Battle of the Lost Graves, took place within Otsan Uchi itself. The desecration of the Empire's greatest heroes and warriors was a delight for the Dark Lord, and even though his emissary was thought slain in the battle, the psychological victory was overwhelming. It inspired a change in the tradition of burial in Rokugan, a testament to the staggering effect of the battle.

Iuchiban's survival as a disembodied spirit was another, more subtle victory for the Shadowlands. The formation of his cult and the corruption of the innocent that he fostered in his travels laid the foundation for many infiltrations and seductions by Fu Leng and his minions. When Iuchiban was finally defeated at the Battle of Sleeping River, it was of little consequence. The Blood Speaker had accomplished so much corruption and spread the Taint to so many that the morale of Rokugan was damaged for decades to follow.



Battle of the Cresting Wave

Never has the Shadowlands spawned so cunning an entity as the Maw. This diabolic oni was responsible for the single greatest offensive mounted by the Shadowlands since the time of the Day of Thunder. Gathering his forces, it called out for the Dark Lord's favor and launched a massive assault against the southernmost holdings of the Crab.

The Crab were caught completely off-guard. They were accustomed to attacks, naturally, but this force of oni was unlike anything in living memory. The Crab set up a defense at Hiruma Castle, a bastion that had held against the Shadowlands for over six centuries. The devious strategy of the Maw had anticipated this, however. Before launching its offensive, it had sought out the Dark Oracle of Earth and gained the secrets of dark earth magic. With this knowledge it circumvented the



walls of Hiruma Castle, severely damaging the fortification from within while decimating the troops stationed there.

The fall of Hiruma Castle was a great victory for the Shadowlands, and earned the Maw the blessing of Fu Leng. Growing increasingly angrier and more violent by the power it was receiving from the Dark Lord, the Maw drove its shrieking hordes north to overrun the lands of the Kuni family. The shugenja had fled their holdings upon the fall of Hiruma Castle, and while the Maw was pleased to desecrate their land, it regretted that it could not crush the threat of the Kuni once and for all.

Sensing imminent victory, the Maw continued its merciless march northward toward Kyuden Hida, the last true obstacle between the horde and the whole of Rokugan. Just before storming across the Saigo river, however, the horde was halted by a raging wall of water summoned forth from the river itself. The selfless sacrifice of Kuni Osaku created a magical barrier of such purity that even the magic of the Maw's most depraved *maho-tsukai* could not pierce it. They could only wait.

When it finally receded, they hurled themselves forward against the newly constructed Great Carpenter Wall with a reckless abandon previously unseen by any of the Crab defenders. But the engineering skills of the Kaiu, the spells of the Kuni, the prowess of the Hida and the homicidal rage of the Hiruma were too great for the Maw's forces. They could not penetrate the Wall. Stymied in front, and assaulted from the rear by suicidal legions of Hiruma, the Maw felt the Dark Lord's displeasure growing even as its own powers ebbed.

The Maw's forces were decimated, and the massive oni itself fell before the might of Hida Banuken, the daimyo of the Crab. Thus ended the greatest threat the Shadowlands have ever manifested.

Battle of Twilight's Honor

One of the largest battles with the Shadowlands in recent memory, the Battle of Twilight's Honor was a particularly costly battle fought a short few years ago when the Crab were inadequately defended against a major invasion force from deep inside the

Shadowlands. Led by an exquisitely cunning Oni no Akuma, the dark army assaulted the understaffed Crab battlement for several days before finally pushing the defenders back inside the castle adjoining the wall. There the assault continued. Details surrounding the conclusion of the battle are sketchy, but accounts seem to indicate that the Shadowlands forces had an ally or allies within the castle who failed them at some critical point. This stymied the dark army long enough for Crab reinforcements to arrive and push the Oni and its forces back into the Shadowlands.

Outbreaks of the Taint

Perhaps even more horrifying than the idea of the Shadowlands spilling forth into the Empire in an armed conflict are the periodic outbreaks of the Taint that have plagued Rokugan throughout its history. Goblins, ogres, oni, even *maho-tsukai* are foes that can be overcome with steel, prayer, and cunning. The Taint is immaterial, insubstantial. It cannot be confronted or attacked, only destroyed, and everything associated with it purified. Even in defeat, this is a victory for the Shadowlands, for innocent lives may be lost in the need for purity.

While rare, no more frequent than perhaps once a century, outbreaks of the Taint are

devastating. They signify that the evil of Fu Leng can strike anywhere at any time. The Taint reminds the Rokugani that they are mere humans fighting a war against one of the children of the Sun and Moon.

Wherever these outbreaks occur, they are dealt with immediately and harshly. The Phoenix and Crab usually lend assistance to whatever clan holds the lands affected, with Seppun shugenja conducting numerous inspections once the situation is contained and purified. Each such outbreak is painstakingly recorded by the Phoenix with no detail missed. These records are studied exhaustively by the finest shugenja in Rokugan in an effort to isolate what factors contributed to the outbreak. It is hoped that one day a recognizable pattern will be discovered that can be used to prevent these occurrences.

None has yet been found.



Badge of the Witch Hunters

The Jade seal carried by the Kuni Witch Hunters is a combination of the crossed claws of the Kuni family mon and the open eye of the Asako Inquisitors. The crossed claws represent the ever-present defense offered by the *tsukai-sagasu*. The open eye symbolizes the eternal vigilance of their allies, the Inquisitors. These seals are only carried by the Kuni, and are often enhanced by the Jade Eternal spell (see Appendix) so that they are more difficult to corrupt. Witch Hunters are quite unforgiving toward the rare fools that dare make counterfeit Witch Hunter badges.



Dragon Heart Plain

The site of the infamous Five Nights of Shame, the Dragon Heart Plain has borne the stigma associated with the incident for centuries. Although it is one of the most beautiful areas of the Empire, certain regions of the plain have a disquieting atmosphere. Animals avoid these spots, and over the centuries there have been numerous reports of individuals who make their homes in these areas becoming afflicted with the Taint for no apparent reason. The plain itself remains untainted, and many wonder if the land is responsible for the outbreaks or if another, more sinister force is at work. Kuni Witch Hunters and Asako Inquisitors convene here at least twice annually to investigate possible recurrences of the Taint, but thus far they have not found any.

Takaai Grove

This once-corrupt copse of trees was responsible for several mysterious outbreaks of the Taint throughout the Crane lands over several decades. The grove was the sight of a magical confrontation between an Isawa shugenja and a *maho-tsukai* known as Takaai (his family name has been purged from all records).

The Isawa shugenja was a powerful fire *tensai* who was hunting Takaai for the murder of his daughter. When the two clashed, the release of magical energy was truly staggering. The confrontation claimed the lives of both combatants, and Takaai was consumed in a fiery conflagration that destroyed his physical body utterly. Unfortunately, this distributed the very essence of his corruption, his blood, across a wide area of the grove itself.

The suffusion of corrupted blood allowed several *kansen* to inhabit the grove. Over the years these *kansen* would attach themselves to the *heimin* woodsmen who harvested the grove's trees and occasionally to the trees themselves. This led to outbreaks of Taint among the *heimin* of the area and, on rare occasions, the corruption of Asahina shugenja whose spell scrolls were made from the grove's trees.

Asako Inquisitors eventually discovered the truth of the matter and had the entire grove burned to the ground and thoroughly

purified. Even today the ground undergoes a ritual of purification at least once per week. The Taint seems to be gone, although the twisted, burned remnants of the trees still stand.

The Darkfever

Details of this magically spawned plague are still uncertain, as the manifestation took place only a short time before the assassination of Hantei XXXVIII, an event which made investigating the plague seem insignificant. What is known is that some unknown magical phenomenon was responsible for the poisoning (for lack of a better word) of the elements throughout one of the Isawa provinces of the Phoenix lands. This poisoning had no direct effect upon the environment itself, but caused those that drew upon the power of the elements to spread corruption and Taint by the very act of spellcasting.

Accounts of the Darkfever are sketchy at best, but reports seem to indicate that a force of magistrates from various clans successfully identified and ended the source of the Darkfever Plague, thus ending the plague itself.

It is unknown at this time if the Darkfever is in any way related to the so-called Wasting Disease that is currently taking a brutal toll among the inhabitants

of Rokugan, including the Emperor himself. (For more information on the Darkfever plague, see the adventure module *Midnight's Blood*.)

The Armies of the Shadowlands

Fu Leng is a distant patron for the army of the Shadowlands, making himself known only by lending power to his chosen pawns and granting insight to his most favored subjects. Under this indirect leadership, there is often a great deal of in-fighting among the various ranks of the Shadowlands in an attempt to garner as much personal power as possible.



The Shadowlands Horde

The newest symbol borne by the minions of darkness is the scowling oni mon emblazoned upon Yogo Junzo's battle standard. Junzo claims that the design of the mon came to him in a dream, a vision in which the diverse creatures of darkness were unified beneath a single leader. He calls this army the Shadowlands Horde. When the true leader of the Horde returns, Yogo Junzo intends to make certain that his armies are waiting.



Below Fu Leng in terms of raw power are the Dark Oracles. Fortunately, these reclusive entities take very little direct control of events within the Shadowlands, leaving those concerns for lesser beings. Below these creatures are the Oni Lords and, to a lesser extent, a very few favored warlords of Fu Leng such as Tsukuro and Moto Tsume.

The Oni Lords and their fellow generals are cognizant of their status as the *de facto* rulers of the Shadowlands. They hoard their power jealously and take a very hostile stance toward others who might jeopardize their rule. Accounts from the Battle of the Cresting Wave have the deadly Oni no Akuma spawn attacking the minions of the Maw, who obviously presented a threat to the existing oni lords with its bid for power.

Below this are the more powerful solitary creatures of the Shadowlands. Individual oni, ancient bog hags and pennaggolan, and even some ogre and goblin warlords fall into this category. These beings recognize the key to survival is to not overstep their boundaries. They typically carve out a small piece of territory for themselves and rarely attempt to expand it.

Beyond this are the rank and file of the Dark Lord. Goblins, undead, ogres, lesser oni, trolls, and various other creatures fill out this category. Survival and destruction are all that matter to these beings. They will readily accept strong creatures who attempt to dominate them, but will also turn upon the weak and devour them at a moment's notice. They are opportunistic, devious, and thoroughly self-centered.

"Fu Leng"

Throughout this book, many terms are used to describe the entity known as Fu Leng. The Dark One, He Who Must Not Be Named, The Fallen Kami, even the term "Shadowlands" itself are all used to refer to the sinister intelligence that drives the Taint.

In truth, none of these are Fu Leng's true name, not even "Fu Leng" itself, for to speak his name is to invite his attention. All of these are affectations created to protect common people from the Dark Lord, and even these appellations are not taken lightly. Only the Kami and Fu Leng's most devoted servants know the true name of Fu Leng. These individuals do not share their knowledge nor take it lightly, for Fu Leng does not appreciate being disturbed.

Jigoku and Non- Humans

The realm of Fu Leng is only one of many spiritual realms which overlap the mortal world. Though Jigoku is the name used to refer to the hellish realms where Fu Leng and his minions dwell, it has also grown to be used as a general term describing all of the spiritual realms, especially the realm of Yomi, home of the blessed *shiryo*.

There seems to be no disrespect intended in this apparent misnomer. Jigoku was the first spiritual realm of which the mortals became aware, and thus it is the name most laymen use for anything remotely spiritual. However, many scholars draw clear distinctions between Jigoku and the other realms and do not refer to one in place of the other out of fear of causing offense. Whether or not spirits care what term mortals use to refer to their realms is known only to the spirits.

Jigoku is concerned primarily with the corruption of Ningen-do (the physical world which Rokugan inhabits), as it is connected to every spiritual realm. Once the mortal servants of the Kami have been dealt with, Fu Leng will turn his attentions elsewhere. In the meantime, Jigoku occasionally attempts to corrupt inhabitants of the other realms.

Chikushudo – The World of Animals

This realm is home to the greater animal spirits, as well as the shape-shifting spirits known as *hengeyokai*. Though *hengeyokai* possess no special immunity to the Taint, the Shadowlands rarely corrupts them. The two realms are simply too removed from one another to be much of a concern to the Dark Lord.

Gaki-do – The World of the Hungry Dead

This realm lingers close to Jigoku, and is filled with vengeful, resentful spirits. The ghosts of Gaki-do fall into the abyss of Jigoku with startling regularity, and Tainted *gaki* are among the most fearsome of Fu Leng's minions.



Meido – The World of the Dead

This is a realm where unfulfilled spirits await reincarnation. Like Tengoku, the Celestial Heavens, this realm is unreachable by the Dark Lord. It is a domain of waiting, nothing more.

Sakkaku – The World of Mischief

This realm is the home to kappa, mujina, and other trickster spirits. Though the realm of Sakkaku is closely linked to Jigoku, most inhabitants seem immune to the Taint. However, at least one race of tricksters have indeed fallen to the Dark Lord (see Oni no Pekkles in the Appendix). The kappa claim that the Kappa King once tricked the Dark Lord and stole the secret of curing the Taint, but this story likely holds as much water as the kappa themselves. Inhabitants of Jigoku are violently disposed toward tricksters, and exterminate them whenever possible. The tricksters find the belligerence of Jigoku's demons as amusing as they find everything else.

Tengoku – The Celestial Heavens

The home of the Fortunes, the Sun, the Moon, and the Elemental Dragons is off limits to the Dark Lord. Though he would like nothing better than to corrupt all that live in Tengoku, Fu Leng must destroy the mortal world first.

Toshigoku – The World of Slaughter

This is a realm of endless battle, inhabited by samurai spirits who do not recognize that their battle is at an end. The deranged ghosts of Toshigoku make terrific servants of darkness, but the spiritual realms of Jigoku and Toshigoku are well removed from one another. The effort required to corrupt the spectral armies is more trouble than its worth, especially when they do quite a good job creating havoc and destruction without Fu Leng's influence.

Yomi – The World of the Blessed Ancestors

Tainted who are not yet lost have a chance of going on to Yomi if they fulfilled their purpose in life. Those who dwell in Yomi are protected from the Taint. It is rumored that the realms of Yomi and Jigoku are closely connected, but that Fu Leng has not yet invaded the realm for fear that generations of noble shiryō, including his Kami siblings, will unite and crush him. The *sodan-senzo* admit the frightening possibility that Fu Leng may one day alter his tactics and declare war upon the ancestors.

Yume-do – The World of Dreams

This realm is inhabited by the *baku*, benevolent dream spirits. Fu Leng's own dream spirits – the *shiyokai* – have made several forays

into the land of dreams, creating terrible nightmares and corrupting several baku. It is even said that there exists an oni that has taken the name of a baku, but this is unconfirmed. Whenever the Dark Lord's minions spread their wings over the World of Dreams, terrible nightmares and madness follow. Fortunately, a dreamer cannot contract the Taint through his dreams, so the Shadowlands' dealings in this realm are used primarily to torment those who have already been Tainted by other means.

Other Corruption in the Mortal Realm

While humans are the Dark Lord's primary target, they are not the only inhabitants of Ningen-do who can bear the Taint.

Wildlife

Most species of flora and fauna are not immune to the Taint, and Fu Leng has created a wide variety of corrupted wildlife as dangerous as any Shadowlands Madman. The Kuni family are extremely curious about such mutations, and attempt to collect such creatures for further study when possible. Through Tainted animals, the Kuni conduct experiments that would not be allowed upon Tainted humans, leading to potential future breakthroughs in curing and treating the Taint. Some among the Hiruma are disgusted by these experiments, considering them inhumane. The Kuni are sympathetic to the Hiruma family's opinions, and conduct their studies with as much mercy as is practical.

It should be noted that certain species of animals are immune to the Taint. Most carrion birds, rodents, and other scavengers seem resistant to its effects.

The Naga

The recently awakened Naga have been enemies of the Shadowlands for countless ages. They battled the Foul before their great sleep, and are more than prepared to battle them again. Naga students of Rokugani history have compared the so-called Day of Thunder to their own confrontations with the Shadowlands and



have noticed a disturbing pattern of periods of relative inactivity punctuated with terrible outbreaks of destruction, referred to by the Akasha as the Burning of the Land. The great astrologers of the Akasha see another Burning of the Land on the horizon, a primary reason why the Naga have awakened in great numbers at this time.

Between Naga immunity to the Taint and the group consciousness they share, the children of the Akasha make poor targets for corruption. Instead, the Shadowlands seek to destroy the Naga wherever they find them. The Naga return the favor, and will not suffer an inhabitant of the Shadowlands to live. Humans seem to be kindred spirits, enemies of the darkness, yet they are susceptible to corruption. This confuses the Naga, who are uncertain how to deal with former allies who become Tainted. Many Jakla have begun experimenting with using their own Taint-purification techniques on humans, with varying degrees of success. (See the section on the Unbroken, elsewhere in this chapter.)

Nezumi

The ratlings who once dwelled in the area that is now the Shadowlands are immune to the Taint from birth. Nezumi also seem to be born with a natural implacable hatred for all creatures who possess the Taint, though they know well enough to flee in the face of a superior enemy. The Nezumi have lived for a long time in the Shadowlands, and know a great deal about the Dark Lord's armies. The ratling tribes are hardy, clever, and more numerous than anyone truly realizes. Fu Leng considers the existence of these tribes a potential wild card in the war ahead. The threat they pose is undone by the disdain most humans hold for them. Fu Leng's more cunning subjects encourage human hatred for Nezumi whenever possible, committing terrible atrocities and framing the ratlings in hopes that the samurai will destroy their potential allies.

Other Mortal Races

Many mortal races once roamed the land of Rokugan, but with the rise of samurai their numbers have increased. Kenku, kitsu, ningyo, zokujin, and other creatures are not immune to the Taint. Most are wise enough to stay well away from strong areas of corruption. Fu Leng will certainly corrupt such creatures when he gets a chance, but he does not place much value on what he considers "defeated races."





Against the Darkness

The Shadowlands Taint is an epidemic. If left unchecked, it would quickly spread across the Empire. The samurai of the Crab Clan are the first line of defense, but they are hardly the only defense. Over the centuries, many individuals have taken up the battle against the Taint. A few of the more notable enemies of the Shadowlands follow.

Inquisitors and Witch Hunters

The Asako Inquisitors were founded late in the third century in response to the corruption of Isawa Akuma. For centuries they functioned as nothing more than the Phoenix Clan's internal police, rooting out those who practiced *maho* and punishing them. Though the Inquisitors took their duties seriously, the role of the Inquisitors was not seen as particularly important outside the Phoenix.

After the first appearance of Iuchiban during the Battle of Stolen Graves, the Empire reevaluated the threat posed by *maho*. As the Inquisitors were already experienced in dealing with *maho*, the Emperor gave their organization Emerald Magistrate status. After Iuchiban returned, their powers were expanded even more. The Inquisitors are now primarily legislators, experts on all legal matters regarding dark magics. They have also forged a special partnership with the Kuni Witch Hunters.

Established after the rise of Iuchiban, the Kuni family's *tsukai-sagasu* dedicate themselves to tracking and destroying any evil that slips past the Wall. While the Inquisitors primarily deal with *maho*, it is the Witch Hunters' duty to keep the Empire pure of all corruption. Witch Hunters have the absolute authority to execute *maho-tsukai* and monitor asylums of the Tainted. The Witch Hunters are the strong arm that Inquisitor mandates. The alliance between their two groups has endured despite clan and family politics. The Asako and the Kuni view themselves as above petty internal squabbles. Their battle is against evil itself.

Their efforts have been largely successful, though their often-violent tactics have earned them a questionable reputation. Witch

Hunters and Inquisitors are feared even by those they protect. Most Witch Hunters and Inquisitors could not care less. If fear keeps people on the path of righteousness, then their reputation serves a purpose. The Kuni and Asako know that whatever else may happen, they can always depend upon one another.

Inquisitors and Witch Hunters are exactly the sort of enemies Fu Leng despises most – brave, knowledgeable, and incorruptible. The Dark Lord has plotted for many years to find a way to drive a wedge between the two groups.

Emerald Magistrates

Incursions by the Shadowlands, including the practice of *maho* or worship of He Who Must Not Be Named, fall directly under the jurisdiction of Emerald Magistrates. This is an often overlooked part of the Emerald Charter, as the vast majority of magistrates never encounter any Taint. The purpose of the edict is intended to place punishment of the Tainted in the hands of the Emperor, thus preventing the potential catastrophe that could result if a powerful lord became Tainted, leaving his own magistrates and troops unable to deal with the matter without great legal and personal conflict.

Though most Emerald Magistrates do not often encounter the Taint, most at least know enough about the subject to recognize when they are out of their depth and call upon the more knowledgeable Inquisitors.

The Damned

A small but dedicated group, the Damned are an elite unit of berserkers that have one thing in common – they have all been infected by the Taint. Doomed to a life of corruption, these bushi have taken a path similar to the Akodo Deathseekers. They will purify themselves through death in combat.

The Damned were founded in 716, during the Battle of the Cresting Wave. Many Crabs (especially Kuni and Hiruma) were left corrupted by the Taint that flowed in the wake of the Shadowlands Horde. Crab daimyo Hida Banuken placed the majority of such troops together in a single unit as a temporary measure during the final days of the siege. It was this unit that finally confronted and destroyed the Maw. Five hundred out of the six hundred Tainted soldiers perished during the battle. Banuken honored their sacrifice and allowed the remainder of the unit to remain. They called themselves the Damned.

Kuni Bakin, then leader of the *tsukai-sagasu*, expressed concern over these Tainted troops. He believed that to embrace corruption for any reason was incredibly foolish. The Tainted should be exiled where they could neither harm themselves or others, not armed to the teeth. In battle, the Taint would be a constant temptation. Bakin pointed to the Battle of the Cresting Wave as an example. A good



deal of the fallen Tainted had been killed by their own maddened comrades.

Bakin stated unequivocally that the Damned *could not work*.

Banuken acknowledged Bakin's fears, and proposed a compromise. A handful of Witch Hunters were placed in command of the Damned, and given authority to deal with those whose Taint had grown uncontrollable. Bakin was not satisfied, but the tsukai-sagasu accepted the responsibility. The first action these Witch Hunters took was to implement a regimen of meditation and medication for the Damned in an attempt to fight their infection as much as possible. The Witch Hunters are a strong moderating presence on the often self-destructive mentality of the Damned, and have pulled many of these tragic berserkers back from the abyss.

Though the Damned and the Witch Hunters work closely with one another, their resentment for one another is unmistakable. Both groups fear the day that the other will turn against them, and wonder if that day will be soon.

Phantom Hunters

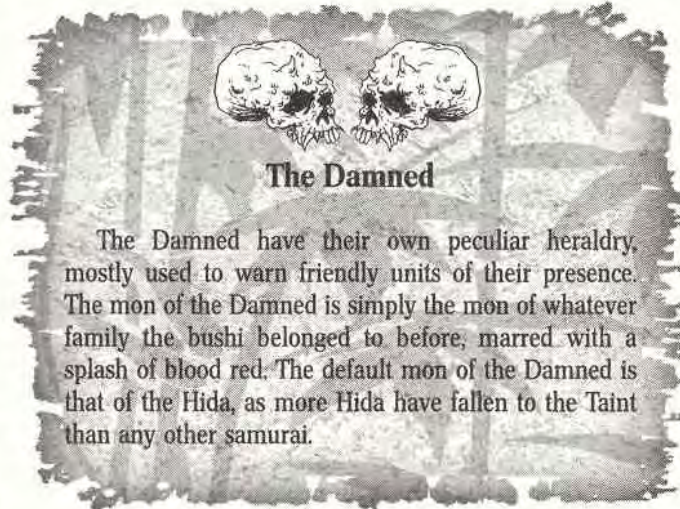
Four centuries ago, a *sodan-senzo* named Kitsu Iemasa married into the Falcon Clan. To the Lion Clan's surprise, Iemasa adopted the Toritaka name and moved to the haunted provinces of the Falcon. Over the next few years, he wrote *Gakiken*, the most thoroughly researched reference on ghosts and hauntings in history. The book gave birth to the romanticized image of the Falcon Phantom Hunter while also forging good relations between the Kitsu and Toritaka families. Soon after the completion of *Gakiken*, two Toritaka bushi were presented with a rare invitation to train among the Kitsu.

Since Iemasa's time, many Kitsu *sodan-senzo* and Falcon bushi have worked together as Phantom Hunters, searching out restless ghosts and helping them find peace. While the presence of ghosts rarely signifies the presence of the Taint, those *gaki* and *yokai* who become corrupted by the Shadowlands are dangerous indeed. The Phantom Hunters make a point of knowing the basics of dealing with Shadowlands Taint, at least enough to survive, escape, and contact those better suited to deal with the problem.

Nameless Ones

The Nameless Ones can hardly be considered a group, as they are rare in the extreme. The existence of Nameless Ones is believed to be linked to the power of Void, and its opposition to the powers of corruption. Some shugenja who embark upon the path of the Ishiken – masters of Void – are protected by its power. On rare occasions, the Void immediately steps in to arrest corruption within a Tainted Ishiken. The Ishiken's body and mind are twisted as the Taint is purged from the body. If the Ishiken survives, he is forever changed.

What results from this process is what the Phoenix call a Nameless One – something less than human, but somehow much more. The Nameless Ones are twisted, deformed versions of their former selves. Though they comprehend the world around them, they cannot speak, and often act with callous disregard for human life. The Nameless Ones are even more disassociated from reality than normal Ishiken, and tend to wander aimlessly with little recollection of their lives. What memories remain are sad, fragmented things. Nameless Ones will go through the motions of their former lives without truly remembering them. Some have been noted to dance across rooftops or spend hours writing without a brush or paper. Their sense of self has largely been



The Damned

The Damned have their own peculiar heraldry, mostly used to warn friendly units of their presence. The mon of the Damned is simply the mon of whatever family the bushi belonged to before, marred with a splash of blood red. The default mon of the Damned is that of the Hida, as more Hida have fallen to the Taint than any other samurai.

consumed by their transformation.

The only thing that is certain about the Nameless Ones is that they are potent enemies of the Shadowlands. They have an uncanny sense of the Taint, and their magic is devastating against Shadowlands creatures. When confronted by minions of Fu Leng, all of a Nameless One's quiet madness vanishes. They become brutal, hardened killing machines, possessing no mercy for the creatures of darkness.

Whenever such a creature is created, their identity is carefully erased from Phoenix records. Such creatures are referred to as "Nameless Ones." They seem to acknowledge and accept this name, as much as they seem to acknowledge anything. They dress in concealing garments so that their deformity is less noticeable, and are kept away from public view. Nameless Ones are objects of pity, but no one underestimates their power. They are normally



remanded into the custody of an Asako Inquisitor so that their mixed blessing does not go to waste.

Some among the Asako question the nature of the Nameless One transformation. If it were truly the Void that caused them to be so transformed, why would it cause them such pain? Void is a force of creation, the center of all elements. Why would it cause these creatures to forget who they are? More importantly, why does the Void pick and choose those whom it saves while other Ishiken become Lost? A select group of Inquisitors have theorized that it is not the Void, but a force close to it in power and method that creates the Nameless Ones. Research along such lines have been of limited value, as there are few Nameless Ones available for study.

The incidence of Ishiken who become Nameless is extraordinarily rare. The Phoenix admit that there have been only nine Nameless in the last eleven centuries. Oddly, there has been a recent outbreak of Nameless Ones among the Phoenix. At least eight Nameless Ones have been reported, nearly as many as have been found in Rokugan's entire history. Most were Ishiken dying of the Wasting Disease who recovered and underwent the change when it seemed they were about to die. Though the Phoenix have drawn no other connection between the Wasting Disease and the Taint, some say that this is evidence enough.

The Shadowlands is only dimly aware of the existence of Nameless Ones. These poor creatures are encountered so rarely that Fu Leng does not consider them a true threat.

The Unbroken

In recent times, the darkness has gained a new enemy. A small group of ronin calling themselves the Unbroken have been sighted in the lands of the Unicorn and Scorpion. Three small *maho* cults (including one Bloodspeaker cell), one wandering goblin mob, and one bandit horde led by an ogre have been destroyed by these mysterious ronin in the last six years. They seem schooled in the methods of the Tainted, and lash out at such creatures with unbridled vengeance.

Emerald Magistrates and Kuni Witch Hunters who have investigated the Unbroken have discovered little. The mysterious bushi cover their bodies with loose robes and thick bandages, concealing their identity. They attack swiftly and disappear with equal speed, leaving few tracks. The only clue to their identity that has been discovered is a single kanji on the fletching of their arrows – "Unbroken."

It has been theorized that the Unbroken are secret operatives of Toturi, training anonymously so that their lord's Dragon patrons will not grow suspicious. Some believe that they are fallen Scorpion.



Another leading story says that they are the gathered survivors of the Hare and Badger Clans, acting together to redeem the names of their fallen clans. As much as the Kuni desire to know who their secret allies are, Fu Leng's curiosity is even greater. The minions of darkness would love nothing more than to pull this annoying new thorn from their collective side before the Unbroken grow more powerful. Both the Witch Hunters and the Dark Lord would be surprised to know the truth.

Fifteen years ago, a band of thirty ronin wandered into the Shadowlands seeking to defeat some Shadowlands monster, gain the Crab's favor, and earn fealty. Unprotected and unaware of the dangers, the ronin were severely Tainted before they escaped. A few were lost and a good number were killed. The dozen that remained crept past the Crab sentries rather than reveal themselves. They fled into the Shinomen seeking a way to hide their shame.

They were discovered by a group of recently awakened Naga led by the Ashlim, a powerful Jakla. The ronin thought the creatures were more oni, and attacked. The skilled Naga warriors incapacitated the ronin without a single casualty. The Ashlim was intrigued. While the humans were Tainted, he could see that they were not truly evil. In escaping the Shadowlands, they had learned to rely upon one another. They acted selflessly on one another's behalf, and were not afraid to sacrifice themselves for one another though they were all doomed. They were as one.

In a strange way, these ronin reminded the Ashlim of the Akasha. He decided that he could not let them die.

He entered into an arrangement with the humans. If the ronin would assist him in his studies of the Taint, he would cure them of their corruption. The Ashlim promised that the road would be long and difficult, and not all of them would survive. He also promised that he would not abandon them any more than they would abandon one another. Seeing no other alternative, the ronin agreed.

The Ashlim's experiments have had mixed results. Some subjects showed remarkable progress; their Taint receded but did not vanish. Others worsened and had to be slain before they became Lost. After seven years, the Ashlim made a startling breakthrough. In an odd variant of the process used to immunize Naga from the Taint, he created a spell that slowed Shadowlands corruption. However, there was a drawback. Having no other outlet to grow and flourish, the Taint's corruption caused a dramatic shortening of the human life span. The first few subjects of the experiment died within a year. The Ashlim needed to find a way for the humans to destroy their Taint, not simply metabolize it. He refined the spell further, adding in some of the special radiant pearl magic used to create the Naga Slayers.

The final results were extraordinary. The ronin treated by the process did not become progressively more corrupted. In addition, they could reduce the Taint within their own bodies by turning their

chi against the Taint itself. This could be done through extensive meditation. Unfortunately, the ronin did not have time for this, as the process would kill them before the Taint could be fully removed. A more direct approach was to personalize the battle of positive and negative within their bodies through outward action.

They could cleanse themselves by destroying the minions of the Shadowlands.

The ronin were living on borrowed time. If they could not destroy enough Shadowlands Tainted creatures within their allotted time, their own Taint would kill them. If they could, however...

It was more of a chance than they had before. The Unbroken were born.

In the years since, the Ashlim's experiment has proven a success. A handful of the original ronin have completed the process and purged their bodies of the Taint. They are alive and well, still riding at the side of their comrades as they battle the darkness that consumes them all. The Ashlim is careful only to treat a few of the Unbroken at a time, lest none of them find the time to redeem themselves. Those who have been cleansed ride beside those currently under the effects of the spell and those waiting their turn. In recent years, they have added several other unfortunate Tainted to their Ranks and a handful of Naga warriors have joined their group as allies. The Unbroken mask themselves to remember that there is no difference between those who have conquered the darkness and those yet to be purified.

They stand or fall together.

Moto White Guard

For the Moto White Guard, the defeat of the Shadowlands is a personal matter. Since the corruption of Moto Tsume and most of the family over a century ago, hunger for vengeance is natural to most non-Tainted Moto. Though their family lands are far removed from the Shadowlands, all Moto are trained in the tactics of their dark enemies and are trained in dealing with the Taint. The Moto plan numerous expeditions into the Shadowlands, with varying degrees of success.

The Crab aren't quite certain what to think of the Moto. While they are certainly passionate, they make the mistake of underestimating the darkness with alarming regularity. A good deal of Moto who venture into the Shadowlands join their dark brothers rather than defeating them. Such tragedies happen so often that the Crab have occasionally forbidden their Unicorn cousins access to the Shadowlands.

Fu Leng is greatly amused by the White Guard's vendetta. He wishes there were more samurai like them. Pulling the strings of the obsessed is almost too easy.



Hiding The Taint

Those Tainted who openly profess their corruption can expect little sympathy. Victims of the Taint are viewed with the same distaste as murderers, plague victims, and the insane. No one wants to be near someone who is corrupted, for fear that his Taint will spread or that Fu Leng's insanity will overcome him. The most a corrupted soul can hope for is a calm, peaceful monastery populated with other doomed souls. There, he can expect to be monitored every waking moment by Witch Hunters and monks until such a time as they deem him too dangerous to live.

It is no wonder so many Tainted choose to hide their corruption. Granted, many who hide their corruption are willing pawns of evil, but many simply wish to live a normal life. Though the Kuni and Asako have many methods of rooting out hidden Tainted, the corrupted have found many efficient methods of concealing themselves.

Tea of Jade Petals is the most popular method of concealing the Taint. The tea is harvested from specially grown lotus blossoms sprinkled with mystic jade powder in a ritual known only to the monks of the Jade Lotus. The monks have a reputation for discretion, and guard closely the identities of those who purchase the tea. While under the effects of the Tea, one's Taint goes into complete remission. The Taint cannot be detected and spells which harm the Tainted have no special effect. Mental symptoms go into remission, while minor physical symptoms recede. While using Tea of Jade Petals, the Taint's infection does not increase. The tea is popular among those who contract Taint through no fault of their own, but it is spurned by *maho-tsukai* and minions of darkness. While using the Tea, powers and abilities granted by the Shadowlands Taint cannot be used, and *maho* cannot be cast. The Lost cannot abide the taste of Jade Petal Tea, and will vomit it up if forced to drink it.

Unknown to most, using this legendary tea does little to keep corruption a secret. The monks of the Jade Lotus secretly pass on the identities of all those who purchase and use the tea to the Kuni

Witch Hunters, who discreetly pass the information on to the Asako Inquisitors. The Inquisitors use their connections within the Emerald Magistrates to monitor users of the tea, but take care not to expose themselves unless the Tainted subject proves to be dangerous. The Inquisitors are content to let a few harmless Tainted courtiers escape their notice if their discretion leads to more dangerous prey. Through their secret association with the Monks of the Jade Lotus, the Asako have brought many dangerous Tainted to justice.

Corrupted jade is another method of protecting the Taint. Just as jade draws away the dark energies of the Shadowlands, so do slivers of corrupted jade draw away the powers of purity. Many cunning minions of Fu Leng have learned this and carry a bit of corrupted jade wherever they go. There are significant drawbacks to corrupted jade. It is hard to come by – the best place to get it is in the Shadowlands itself. It rots quickly when removed from the Shadowlands. In addition, corrupted jade does nothing to prevent the spread of the Taint, and in fact encourages it. Those who carry corrupted jade become Lost far more quickly than those who do not. It is most frequently used by those that do not care if they become Lost, or by creatures who are naturally Tainted such as bog hags and pennagolan.

A sliver of jade corrupted by the Taint is a potent protection against pure magics. For every such item carried, the TN to detect the bearer's Taint is raised by 10. Effects which would normally detect the wearer's Taint automatically require their user to make a Perception roll vs. TN 10, plus 5 for every additional piece of corrupted jade carried.

Magics which specifically harm Tainted targets are also absorbed harmlessly into the corrupt jade. For every corrupted jade sliver carried, the target can resist 20 Wounds of magic damage, at which time the sliver is immediately reduced to ash. Wounds inflicted by weapons are not negated, even if they are of magical origin.

A sliver of corrupted jade can survive up to five days out of a Tainted area, after which time it crumbles to dust. If multiple pieces are carried together, they feed off of one another's corruption. Only one piece crumbles at a time when carried within ten feet of another.

Any time an individual carrying corrupted jade accumulates additional points of Taint, he gains one more point than normal. If he is carrying more than three slivers, he gains two extra points each time he gains more Taint. Lost characters do not gain any extra Taint for carrying corrupted jade.

It is very important to note that natural obsidian has none of the above properties; only the "obsidian" created by the infusion of Taint into jade. This Tainted jade is distinguishable from normal obsidian by its soft, greasy texture.

The Crab Clan usually has a large amount of corrupted jade left over from Shadowlands patrols. Supplies vary, as the shugenja of the



Kuni carefully purify and destroy all Tainted materials during their regular patrols of the Wall. Many defenders of the Wall are not aware of the danger of corrupted jade, but when it comes to anything Tainted the Crab feel it best to err on the side of caution. The Crab certainly would not sell corrupted jade, no matter the price.

Certain adepts of maho know a few spells that can shroud the Taint. A certain sect of Bloodspeakers has devised a technique they refer to as "Bleeding the Elements," which allows them to cast a portion of their Taint permanently into the land around them. These dark magics can be very effective in hiding the Taint of their users, but excessive use of maho only brings more corruption and makes the problem harder to hide. (For more information on Bleeding the Elements, see the Cult of the Blood-Red Moon in *The Way of the Wolf*.)

For those who fully embrace their Taint, maho tricks and corrupted jade aren't necessary. Some corrupted learn that there is a certain knack to concealing their Taint. Using meditation methods similar to those used by the Kuni Witch Hunters to detect the Taint, many Tainted have discovered ways of making their Taint more difficult to sense. The Lost refer to this ability as "darkness unseen." Some have developed a degree of control so great that they can temporarily hide all trace of their Taint. Such Tainted are said to be "beside the darkness." (See Chapter Three for more information on these abilities.)



Individuals known to possess such abilities are immediately consigned to the top of the Asako family's list of dangerous Shadowlands criminals. The *tsukai-sagasu* and Inquisitors fear those with the talent to hide their corruption more than any other minion of Fu Leng. Those who possess such abilities never receive mercy.



In the depths of the Shadowlands, few creatures are more fearsome than an ogre. The Crab know them as lumbering brutes, great in strength but somewhat dim. Ogres never work together, and do not mix well with other Shadowlands troops. Their tactics are brutal, straightforward, and simple-minded. They seem to have no capability for complex language, and exist only to kill. Crab scholar Kuni Mokuna conducted extensive studies of ogre behavior and physiology during his lifetime, and came to the conclusion that they were nothing more than mindless killing machines.

This is not entirely true. Mokuna's studies involved ogres born and raised within the Shadowlands, and the test subjects died in captivity soon after being removed from their habitat. Mokuna never had a chance to study the strange changes that come over ogres when separated from the Shadowlands.

The blunt, stupid nature of ogres is such that few ever manage to slip past the Carpenter Wall. Few ever find any reason to do so. The few ogres that have wandered out into Rokugan, however, are very different creatures than those that wander Fu Leng's blasted lands. The further an ogre moves from the Festering Pit, the longer he removes himself from Fu Leng's attention, the more intelligent he becomes. Ogres that keep free from exposure to Taint for many months gain the capacity for language. They learn quickly and develop sharp, cunning minds. Instincts long buried begin to surface as ogres seek out other ogres to form social groups.

Some older ogres have an inkling as to why this happens. Some dimly remember a world that existed before the Shadowlands. This, in itself, would be revelation to the Kuni as this implies that an



ogre's life span is nearly unlimited, barring violence. The elder ogres tell a tale they call "The Bright Star."

The Tale of the Bright Star

Once, there was a brighter, more hopeful world. A world where we ogres ruled over our cousins, the bakemono and trolls. We ogres were strong and wise, and thus deserved to rule. The trolls were strong but not wise. The bakemono were neither. The kingdom of we ogres lasted for many years. The ruler of we ogres, Muhomono, was the most ancient of all. It seemed none could stand against our power. There was much glorious battle, blood, and death. We were happy.

We were wrong. Our ogre kingdom was undone by a race of treacherous rodent creatures, wielding stolen magic that unraveled the world. The bakemono and trolls surrendered to the rats, and we ogres were defeated despite our greater strength and courage. We ogres were enslaved, forced into labor by the wicked rats.

Then, one morning, the Bright Star fell from the sky.

In a single night, the Bright Star destroyed the empire of the rats and freed we ogres. For a long time, no one ruled the fallen empire

as we ogres and the rats fought one another. The stupid trolls and cowardly goblins sat by all the while, not joining either side. After some time, a great god rose from where the star had fallen and introduced himself. The god's name, in our language, was "Father."

Father looked upon all the creatures, and he judged them. The rats were deemed unworthy and were cast out of Father's presence. We ogres, because we were strong, tough, and fearless, were the first to be offered a place at Father's side. Muhomono, our mighty king, was asked to become Father's champion.

But Muhomono was too clever to become a slave again. Muhomono was curious. He asked Father where he had come from and why Father had destroyed the rats. Muhomono asked Father why he needed we ogres. Muhomono asked what we could do that Father could not.

Before Father could answer Muhomono, Gingwich – the toadish leader of the bakemono – offered to become Father's champion in Muhomono's stead. Gingwich promised never to ask too many questions, and to always obey.

Father was pleased.

Muhomono asked his questions again. From where had Father come? Why had he destroyed the rats? Why did he need we ogres?

Before Father could answer Muhomono, Morge – gluttonous king of the trolls – offered to become Father's champion in Muhomono's



stead. Morge promised that his strength would never fail Father, and that he would always obey.

Father was pleased.

Father gave the bakemono the gift of the Night. All the power and magic of darkness was theirs. Father gave the trolls the gift of the Sea. All that lived beneath the foul waters belonged to them. Father asked Muhomono a final time to become his champion, and receive the rest of his gifts.

Muhomono did not want gifts. Muhomono wanted answers to his questions.

Muhomono asked too many questions. Father was displeased.

We ogres would not bend our knee to Father, for Father had not answered Muhomono's questions. Muhomono told Father that he did not care if Father had saved them, and that we ogres would not serve Father as slaves. Muhomono wished to be accepted as an equal. Father told Muhomono that our questions would never be answered.

Without another word Father killed Muhomono and took our souls away.

are enlightened, the advice of those they perceive to be less enlightened falls upon deaf ears. Solitary monks who become Lost are a terrible danger to themselves and others. Rarely, an entire group of monks embarks upon a False Path, dragging the entire sect to ruin.

The Anshin sect is one such tragedy. They were one of the oldest sects of Shinseism, formed shortly after the Tao was publicly distributed. They believed above all else that enlightenment could be found by separation from the troubles of the physical world. They separated themselves from politics and in-fighting. They accepted the ideas of all other sects as equal. They believed that by approaching the world in a non-confrontational manner there would be no need for war. Like a fire with no fuel, the desire for conflict would devour itself and vanish.

During the tumultuous *gozoku* period, the Anshin monks faced their greatest challenge. When Hantei Kusada requested that members of the sect spy on the *gozoku* consortium, they were at a loss as to how they should react. To remain true to their philosophies, they should have refused the Hantei's order. Even yet, to refuse would be an act no less political, for they would be betraying the Emperor – head of the Shintao religion.

The leader of the Anshin, a monk named Bunrakuken, came to a sudden realization. One could not live in the world and yet remain apart from it. If the Anshin were forced to interfere or allow a greater crime to go unpunished, then they could not help but act. Bunrakuken agreed to assist the Hantei. Seven months later, four Anshin monks were apprehended while spying on the Crane Champion. All were tried and executed by the *gozoku*. Hantei Kusada did nothing to save them.

Bunrakuken was outraged. Though the rest of the Brotherhood rebelled against the *gozoku*, the Anshin felt disillusioned and betrayed. They had sacrificed their ideals for the greater good and had been punished. In trying to serve the Emperor, their philosophies had been violated. Their meddling served no good purpose – it only created more death and destruction. The Anshin retreated deep into the Seikitsu Mountains in order to reevaluate their position in the Celestial Order.

While searching for a new home, Bunrakuken and his followers came upon a deep cave. Within the cave was an ancient temple, so old that it could not have been crafted by Rokugani hands. The statue that stood before the entrance portrayed a snarling, vengeful god wielding a sickle-like blade in both hands. The shining image of the moon shone above him. He stood upon a small depiction of the earth, cracked and broken beneath his

False Paths

Enlightenment is a goal sought by many, but the path of wisdom is often disguised. Many traps lie in wait for the foolish. Those who embark upon a career as a monk are at particular risk, for when they open their spirit to the elements sometimes *kansen* are listening as well. A monk who attempts to grasp too much power too quickly may stumble onto a False Path.

The Brotherhood of Shinsei has dedicated itself to saving those who walk False Paths before it is too late. They are surprisingly tolerant of corrupted monks, and always attempts to redeem them rather than destroy them. Only when all avenues for peace have been exhausted do the monks of Shinsei dispatch *sohei* to deal with the matter in a more permanent fashion.

Those that have gone astray can be difficult to detect, and often refuse help. As they have convinced themselves that they



feet. Onnotangu. Lord Moon. Bunrakuken took one look at the statue and turned to his followers.

"This is the way," he said, an odd light shining in his eyes. "This is what we must become. If we are to preserve the purity of our ideals, we must prepare ourselves to destroy those that would take them from us."

One of the older monks replied with a note of mild protest, stating that Bunrakuken was losing sight of the Brotherhood's true purpose. Bunrakuken nodded, took up a sharp stone from the ground, and split open the elder's skull.

"Blood is the only truth," Bunrakuken said. "Destroy those who stand against you, and they stand against you no more. Who will follow me?"

Most of Bunrakuken's followers accepted his new philosophy. The rest were slain, their blood offered on the altar of the Moon God. In that moment, the Anshin monks were no more. The Cult of Onnotangu was born. The spirit within the caves seemed to awaken when presented with their offerings, and began to offer the monks strange and wondrous powers. Within a matter of months, the original members of the Cult of Onnotangu were entirely and wholly Lost. The voice of Lord Moon instructed Bunrakuken to send his followers into the Empire and find others who agreed with their philosophies. Over the centuries, the cult slowly grew. The temple of the Moon God became stained black with the blood of human sacrifice, innocent victims stolen in the night.

Today, the Cult of Onnotangu is larger than many would suspect. Its membership hovers in the hundreds, mostly small cells spread throughout Rokugan. It has survived more or less unnoticed, mostly due to the nature of the cult's activities, a perversion of their original philosophy. The monks do not take sides. They do not interfere. They do not act publicly. They commit no violence unless acted against. All those that stand against them are slain without mercy. All those who discover their secrets are destroyed. All who cause pain, torment, or

injustice for members of the cult are taken in the night and sacrificed to their sinister god.

The cultists believe that their work is good and noble. They do not recognize their Taint, and do not accept the basic flaws in their philosophy. All who disagree, or wonder the true reasoning behind what they do, are slain as heretics. There are no shades of

gray within the cult. Heresy is easy to see – the Moon God is often helpful in pointing it out, visiting the high priests with visions of those who must be destroyed.

The Cult of Onnotangu does not realize that it is not truly Lord Moon whom they worship. Onnotangu cares little for the mortal world, and even less for mortal followers. The temple was simply a remnant of older times, inhabited now by powerful kansen. These wicked spirits enjoy pretending to be the Moon God, whispering dangerous and misleading notions into the ears of the cultists. When Fu Leng returns, he will be greatly pleased to see that the spirits have corrupted an entire sect of those who

once followed his mortal enemy, Shinsei. No doubt he also sees the delicious irony in the fact that they did so disguised as Fu Leng's wrathful father.

The kansen have done their work very well. The higher echelon members of the Cult are zealots, and many are Lost. No amount of evidence would convince them that they walk a False Path. Any attempt would be seen as heresy, and punished in the only manner the Cult knows: sacrifice.



Game Effects of False Paths

Every time a player character learns a new kiho, the GM should secretly roll one die. If the result is a one, then the character is in danger of embarking on a False Path. *Kansen* whisper to the character in the night, offering more power. In times of stress, tell the character "You sense a new reserve of energy deep within you." At any time, make it known that the tempted character can feel free to draw upon this power if they like.

If the PC succumbs, he immediately learns a free Dark kiho or Minor Shadowlands Power (GM's choice). Thereafter, the temptation to use the power lingers over the character, offering power at a rather steep price.

If a character on a False Path ever spends time discussing religion or philosophy with another character, allow that character to make an Awareness/Shintao roll vs. TN 20. If this is successful, that character begins to suspect that the endangered character is on a False Path.



Shades of Evil

Most Rokugani have a distorted image of the Shadowlands. They perceive a single, unified force arrayed to move against the Empire and crush it beneath their heel as they revel in their corrupted madness. To the uneducated, there is little difference between a goblin and an ogre or a bog hag and a pennaggolan. They are all minions of the Dark Lord, waiting in the shadows to strike at the careless and the foolish.

This is not the case.

The sinister intelligence that governs the Shadowlands, the Lost Brother Fu Leng, is a distant, removed master. His influence over his minions arrives in the form of instinct, not orders. His generals are chosen through their might and cunning, not his whim. While the fact remains that the forces of the Shadowlands are an incredibly dangerous, very real threat to the safety of the Empire, they are also fractious and combative, whetting their appetite for blood upon one another while waiting for the opportunity to strike Rokugan.

Bog Hags

There is no denying that the bog hags are the Dark Lord's cruelest masters of deception. More so than any other entity within the Shadowlands, they enter the Empire easily owing to their unique and horrifying abilities. They can travel long distances through waterways, the one method of travel that the Crab cannot completely regulate. They are also able to steal the skins of the unwary that pass through their domains and reenter the Empire.

Bog hags are a solitary race. As they age, they become more likely to assemble in groups called covens in order to better defend their cumulative territory. Younger hags, however, are viciously territorial and will fight to the death over their hunting grounds.

Abilities

The power of the bog hags is truly terrifying. They are able to harvest the skins of those they kill and wear them as if they were clothing. This mystical process allows the hag to absorb the short-term memories of those they consume as well as the learned skills the individual has acquired. Many citizens of the Empire have been corrupted by the embrace of a hag impersonating a loved one.

The exact process by which the hags harvest a victim's skin is unknown. After killing the victim, the hag drags the body to the bottom of whatever body of water is currently serving as their lair. Some recovered bodies seem to suggest that the hag devours portions of the corpse, most notably the head, and then stores the body in the soft mud at the bottom of the river, lake, or stream.

If their own powers and physical prowess were not enough, bog hags frequently manifest other gifts of Fu Leng, up to and including the ability to use *maho*. These creatures are also rife with disease, and wounds from their talons or fangs often lead to infection or even death.

Bog Hags in Rokugan

Countless bog hags have made their way into Rokugan over the centuries. Lone scouts are easy prey for the hags, and their predations are one of the key reasons that the Hiruma rarely if ever deploy a single warrior into the Shadowlands. In scouting parties, anyone who leaves the view of the group for more than a few minutes could have been replaced and is scrutinized very carefully.

Despite the preventative means taken by the Crab, the hags still infiltrate Rokugan through the bodies of the foolish or through various waterways that lead north into the Empire. The Kuni witch-hunters realize this, and reports of strange behavior or disappearances near significant waterways are taken extremely seriously.

Dark Moto

The fallen warriors of the Unicorn Clan are among the most feared and reviled of Fu Leng's minions. They represent the horrible truth that many in the Empire would deny: anyone can succumb to the Dark Lord. The Dark Moto possess one thing that many of the Shadowlands' minions do not: the respect of the Crab. They do not overwhelm their enemies with sheer numbers or with unstoppable powers. They rely upon their considerable combat skills, something that garners both respect and fear from the guardians of the wall.

The most disturbing aspect of the Dark Moto is their terrible nobility. Although corrupted beyond hope of redemption, they still conduct themselves as samurai in some ways. Rigid discipline,



absolute obedience to their superiors, and finely honed attack kata mark these dark beings as sinister reflections of the samurai caste as a whole. For their part, the fallen Moto regard themselves as warriors in the service of a master, albeit a corrupted and evil one. They execute their duties with a vigor and zeal that an uncorrupted samurai might feel when carrying out orders given them by the Emperor himself.

The most feared of the Dark Moto are the Black Guard. This insidious institution serves as the elite vanguard of Fu Leng's armies, and only those who demonstrate the most unwavering devotion and utmost skill in battle are accepted. They are the fist of Moto Tsume, used to destroy any opponents who are too skilled for the rank and file of the Shadowlands to overcome.

Abilities

Perhaps to compensate for their relatively low numbers, the Dark Moto are blessed with a number of powerful gifts by their evil master. As corrupted humans, they have access to the physical strength that the Taint bestows upon the faithful. They also have a series of powerful Techniques that develop as they grow closer to their lord. Those who receive these gifts are organized into the Black Guard, a deadly mockery of the samurai schools of Rokugan. Their existence between life and true undeath gives them virtual immortality as well.

It is not uncommon for Dark Moto to manifest *maho-tsukai* abilities, although most who do so do not progress in the way of the Black Guard, instead developing their foul sorcery. The leaders of the Dark Moto, most notably Moto Tsume himself, are often beings of incredible power, harnessing the abilities of the *maho-bujin*, the warlords of the Shadowlands.

Dark Moto in Rokugan

The Dark Moto rarely venture outside of the Shadowlands except for an occasional sortie against the Crab Clan. They are content to remain within their master's domain for now, preying upon those foolish enough to cross their path. The true numbers of the Dark Moto remain unknown. Perhaps no more than three hundred when they fell before the Shadowlands, they now number in the thousands as they have added the Tainted to their ranks over the centuries.

Though rare in Rokugan, the Dark Moto do make their presence known. Many Moto of the Unicorn Clan have heard dark whispers in the night, promising great power to those who join their fallen brothers.

Goblins ("Bakemono")

Least among Fu Leng's servants, goblins are also the most numerous. Each year tens or even hundreds of thousands die in suicidal assaults upon the Great Carpenter Wall, yet their numbers never diminish. Philosophers among the Crab say that the goblins represent the evils of Fu Leng: countless and eternal.

While possessed of a very crude form of intelligence, goblins have virtually no culture to speak of. They do share some sort of rudimentary language, and a particularly cunning few are able to master the basics of Rokugani language (unlike the innumerable hordes who merely parrot what they hear from the Crab). The few rituals that the goblins do seem to possess vary dramatically according to the individual goblin, location, time of day, or even frame of mind. To imply that the goblins are impulsive would be an understatement of the greatest magnitude.

Despite their almost comical appearance and lack of physical prowess, goblins should never be underestimated. They are dangerously cunning, and recognize that they must choose targets of opportunity. To be a goblin is to exist in a world where everything is larger and more powerful. The goblins recognize this truth and take exquisite pleasure in inflicting pain and suffering on others as a means of escaping their own powerlessness.

Abilities

Unusually for a denizen of the Shadowlands, the average goblin has no arcane abilities whatsoever. They are the Taint incarnate, yet they possess none of the benefits that other Tainted creatures display. Exceptional individuals occasionally appear who may have a hint of the power that a greater minion of Fu Leng might possess, but these are few and far between. Perhaps one in a thousand might have the potential to learn a shamanistic form of *maho*, but even then their powers are weak compared to even the most mundane *maho-tsukai*. Most goblins lack these talents, and have only their innate resistance to injury and pain to aid them in their quest for survival.

Compared to other Shadowlands creatures, the goblins have but one true advantage: numbers. The goblin race comprises over fifty percent of the entire population of the Shadowlands, perhaps even as much as two-thirds. There are very few opponents that cannot be overwhelmed by wave after wave of ravenous goblins that give no thought whatsoever to their own safety, for the creatures seem to lack even the basest capacity for fear when gathered in large numbers. Regardless of how many perish, there will be more to take their place. And with the prodigious rate at which goblins breed, there is precious little chance that anything can pose a serious risk to their numbers.



Goblins in Rokugan

Because of their particular brand of animal cunning and their small size, it is not at all uncommon for goblins to make their way beyond the Great Wall into the lands of the Empire. Few survive for very long, however, as the vast majority lack the instinct to keep a low profile. Most do not survive long enough to exit the Crab lands, as they will attack peasants on the street to snatch food away from them. While most heimin would be terrified of such a thing, the lower classes of the Crab are of hardier stock and there are few among them who have not seen a goblin killed; some have performed the deed themselves.

The few goblins who are cunning enough to avoid detection find a wide variety of unwholesome activities awaiting their attention. Operating on instinct, goblins delight in attacking lone travelers or desecrating places of serenity such as temples or shrines. They are capable of the most depraved acts of vandalism and revel in the horror it evokes in humans. When hunted, they can survive for long periods in the wilderness, feeding off of the crops of farmers or what wild game they can catch.

Lesser Oni

The array of oni found within the Shadowlands is truly staggering. From those creatures that crawl forth from the Festering Pit to those summoned into existence by *maho-tsukai* and given reign to dwell within the Shadowlands, there is a nearly infinite variety of these creatures. Some possess enormous power while others are nearly powerless. With so large a number of these creatures, breeding and spawning are almost certain to occur. The offspring of these unholy unions often have only a fraction of their predecessors' might, and are left to their own devices after their birth if not devoured outright by their parents.

Lesser oni vary considerably in degrees of cunning and psychology. Some live and hunt in packs while others prefer a solitary existence and attack anything that invades their territory. The only unifying characteristics of these creatures are their cruelty and often their cowardice. These misbegotten spawn are left to fend for themselves from the moment of their birth. They take every opportunity to inflict pain and suffering on others, and will do anything to ensure their own survival. For the more animalistic among them, this may mean fleeing before a superior foe. More intelligent beings may actually attempt to bargain with their foes, even offering their loyalty and servitude in exchange for being allowed to live. Only a fool makes such a bargain, however, as the lesser oni are known for their penchant for treachery.

An interesting theory proposed by some members of the Kuni family suggests that some species of Shadowlands creatures such as the hanemuri or even the bog hags developed from the ranks of lesser oni. As these creatures survived and interbred, they stabilized genetically and eventually developed into a separate race entirely. There is, however, no evidence to support this theory at the present time.

Abilities

The powers of lesser oni are as varied as are the oni themselves. Some inherit variants of the abilities their progenitors possessed, while others manifest abilities unique unto them. The vast majority of these creatures possess exclusively physical supernatural abilities, as few have the presence of mind to employ *maho* or similar rituals. Claws, fangs, and thick carapaces are very common, as is the production of a foul stench or venom developed to dissuade predators. Less common are more elaborate physical traits such as wings or amphibious qualities.

It has been documented that entire packs of lesser oni have demonstrated an ability to disappear into shadows and move undetected for considerable distances. This has occurred even in packs with wildly different appearances and heritage. Some believe this may actually be a skill of some kind that these creatures are able to teach to one another and use to infiltrate the Empire.

Lesser Oni in Rokugan

Lesser oni are, by definition, rather rare in Rokugan. It is very uncommon for oni to exist inside the Empire long enough to spawn. There have been notable exceptions, of course, such as the outbreak some years ago of Lesser Oni no Chizaru in Ryoko Owari Toshi. Fortunately, the nest of these small creatures was ferreted out by the local magistrates and destroyed before it could cause any substantial damage.

The few lesser oni who make it past the Great Wall and into the Empire seem to share some sort of biological imperative to travel north. It is as if they wish to escape the Crab, who know best how to deal with the creatures. After any significant battle upon the wall, it is not uncommon to hear of these beasts causing trouble within the lands of the Unicorn or Phoenix.

Maho-Tsukai

Less commonly found within the Shadowlands, the blood sorcerers known as *maho-tsukai* frequently begin their descent into darkness as citizens of the Emerald Empire. Weak, foolish, frustrated, ambitious or simply angry, there are many in Rokugan who would trade their souls for a taste of true power. The Dark Lord is only too



happy to make such a bargain, conscripting the souls of the bargainer to Jigoku for all eternity.

Maho-tsukai are a widely varied lot, coming as they do from all castes of society. With a few exceptions, they are typically isolationist or antisocial, with very few close ties to others. Samurai who fall to the Dark Lord typically do so out of lust for power or raw, naked ambition that cannot be sated through other channels. Some small percentage succumb to corruption through simple academic curiosity, but the result is always the same. Shugenja are far more likely to become maho-tsukai simply because they have the ability to access the *kansen* who teach *maho*. Bushi can become corrupted in this manner, but not without the aid of a shugenja or spirit to help them master the dark arts.

The lower classes of Rokugan are equally susceptible to the Dark Lord's influence, although it is more difficult for peasants to master the dark arts. Those who practice folk magic, which involves the appealing to spirits for guidance and mercy as well as several types of herbalism, are the ones most capable of becoming maho-tsukai. Heimin who turn to Fu Leng usually do so for one of two reasons: desperation or frustration. Those who are unable to care for their families may turn to the Shadowlands for the power they need, while others are so bitter regarding their lot in life that they will sacrifice anything, even their soul, for the power to better their condition.

Abilities

The greatest ability of the *maho-tsukai* is, of course, that of casting powerful maho spells. This magic is by its very nature a foul, corrupting influence not only upon the caster but on those around him and the very elements themselves. Blood sorcerers usually begin their career after being taught a few simple spells by devious *kansen*. As the maho-tsukai increase in power, they become more and more corrupt and begin to manifest other Shadowlands-derived abilities.

Maho-tsukai who have not yet truly come into their own are nonetheless very dangerous because of the element of surprise. They frequently have a small enough degree of Taint that they are difficult to detect, and they can strike when least expected with a surprisingly powerful array of spells. As they increase in power, they are more easily detected but have a far more dangerous repertoire of spells.

Maho-Tsukai in Rokugan

The *maho-tsukai* are Fu Leng's most corruptive servants. They exist to weaken the social structure of Rokugan from within. As such, most blood sorcerers dwell within the Empire, practicing their foul arts in secret. Some choose to affiliate themselves with other

servants of Fu Leng, such as the Bloodspeakers or other such cults, but the majority keep their dark secrets to themselves.

Although the clans would very much like to believe otherwise, there is no region of the Empire that is immune to the touch of maho-tsukai. They hide in the shadows of all the great clans, seeking opportunities to seize more power for themselves and to corrupt others in the name of their dark lord. That the clans are so reluctant to acknowledge the possibility that blood sorcerers walk among them only makes the duty of the maho-tsukai that much easier to accomplish.

Pennaggolan

In a realm filled with horror, the pennaggolan are the unquestioned pinnacle of the macabre. These vampiric entities manifest as a detached human head resting atop a hideous mass of floating, disembodied organs. Though blackened and corrupt, these organs pulse with a hideous life of their own, hungering for the blood of their prey. Pennaggolan are inhuman monsters of the first order, feared by all who know of them. Those who witness the horror of these creatures' natural form are seldom able to forget the traumatic experience.

Pennaggolan are solitary hunters who rarely lay claim to a fixed territory. Though capable of disguising themselves as humans by containing their organs within a human husk, they prefer the freedom and speed of their natural forms. They can move with alarming speed and ensnare opponents with lengths of their own intestines, strangling them to death and then feeding on their blood at their leisure.

Abilities

As described above, the pennaggolan have impressive abilities of deception and attack. They are able to conceal their natural forms within the dead bodies of humans, resting their heads atop the severed necks of their prey. The considerable speed with which these creatures are able to erupt from their shells and attack combined with the deadly effectiveness of their natural weapons makes them exceedingly dangerous enemies. Many of a pennaggolan's targets are killed before they realize what is attacking them.

Natural creatures of the Shadowlands, the pennaggolan are capable of manifesting a wide variety of Taint-based powers. They rarely manifest true *maho-tsukai* abilities, but they can display a wide variety of physical and mental abilities as a result of their master's corrupting influence upon them. Together with the pennaggolan's natural immortality, this can result in an opponent with an enormous range of skills and centuries of practice in their use.



Pennaggolan in Rokugan

The pennaggolan are second only to the bog hags in their ability to move undetected through Rokugan. Because of their mobility and increased range, these creatures are among the most hunted of all Shadowlands denizens. Kuni witch-hunters are trained to recognize the one tell-tale sign of a pennaggolan's passing: the feeding pattern. Tales of strangulation and blood loss bring witch-hunters out in force, for if left unchecked these parasites can conceal themselves in the Empire for years or even decades at a time.

Shuten Doji

The shuten doji are Fu Leng's spirits of seduction. They whisper dark secrets in the ears of the weak and the ambitious, promising great power if they only open their souls to the spirit. They are much more able sensei than *kansen*, and can teach considerably more powerful spells to those willing to pay their price.

Shuten doji are the spawn of the three original spirits that escaped from Jigoku during the creation of the Shadowlands centuries ago. These three beings possessed powers almost beyond imagining, and they claimed the lives of countless samurai during the war against Fu Leng. The nascent Crab Clan faced these horrors and catalogued the abilities of the spirits. As a result, the wide range of abilities possessed by the three great shuten doji are frequently attributed to their spawn, the lesser shuten doji. Unknown to the Empire, the three great shuten doji returned to Jigoku after Fu Leng was defeated, leaving their spawn to serve their purpose for the Shadowlands.

Abilities

Lesser shuten doji possess supernatural powers of charisma. The promises they whisper in the ears of others can rarely be ignored by any but the most willful of men. Given enough time, they are able to break the will of virtually anyone.

Shuten doji are capable of possession, the act of taking over the physical body of another being and using it for themselves. The deceitful creatures often use this ability to make others believe that their powers are greater than they truly are. This helps to perpetuate the myth that all shuten doji possess the powers of mass possession. The downside to this ability is that the shuten doji have no material forms of their own and are unable to manifest in any way except in a host body.

The greatest ability of the shuten doji is their mastery of *maho*. They know a wide variety of spells and can teach them to any who wish to learn. There is often a price, but it is always something the student can pay (as the spirits want to teach *maho* to as many

humans as they can corrupt). The shuten doji can cast these spells themselves, although they find it a taxing process.

Shuten Doji in Rokugan

Shuten doji are not common in the Empire. They appear only to those who summon them or to those whose potential for corruption is so great that the spirits can sense them from afar. Once in Rokugan, they tempt and corrupt humans, teaching them the secrets of *maho* before returning to the Shadowlands to await another opportunity to spread Fu Leng's dark embrace to mankind.

The Shadowlands and the Living Shadow

Some of the more powerful servants of Fu Leng, such as the Oni Lords, the generals of the Shadowlands armies, or powerful *maho-tsukai*, are aware of the existence of the Living Shadow. Although they do not fully comprehend this entity's origins, they do recognize that it is a powerful force that has existed since the time when their master was a child millennia ago. They also recognize that the Living Shadow wishes to destroy all of creation, returning it to the primal void that existed before the Lady Sun and Lord Moon gave names to all things. This includes the Shadowlands, but as the Shadow's minions seem to be focused upon Rokugan first, the forces of Fu Leng see that the two share a common goal. For now.

As for the dark lord himself, it is unknown what his inclination toward the Living Shadow is. Even his most devout followers are not privy to the innermost thoughts of the Lost Brother. It is possible that his imprisonment addles his mind to an extent that he may not even consciously recognize the existence of the Living Shadow. Rokugan is his sole focus for now, and his followers understand his wishes in that regard.

The Empire must fall. All else is secondary.
For now.

Chapter Three Character



New Skills

Each of the following skills is listed along with the Skill Group to which it pertains. Optional rules for using Skill Groups were presented in *Winter Court: Kyuden Asako*, and are also available at <http://15r.alderac.com>.

Disguise (Awareness, Thief Group)

You know how to use clothing, makeup, posture, and voice to appear to be someone else. The basic TN to disguise your appearance is 10. This indicates that you no longer appear to be yourself, though you don't necessarily look like anyone else in particular. Disguising yourself as a member of another clan, family, or gender will impose significant penalties (to be determined by the GM). Disguising yourself as a specific person should never have a TN less than the target's (School Rank + Awareness) x 5. Once you are in disguise, others who actively attempt to pierce your disguise may make an opposed Investigation/Perception roll vs. your Disguise/Awareness. You may add 5 to your roll for each Raise you made on your initial Disguise roll. If covering a deformity that is very difficult to disguise, you must make two Raises for each increase in TN. The GM may impose additional penalties for

attempting to fool someone who knows the person you are pretending to be. The basic use of this skill can be duplicated using Acting, but not all those who need disguise themselves have knowledge of Kabuki. Many victims of the Shadowlands with no love of theater use this skill to disguise their unsightly deformities. This is considered a Low Skill.

Ogre Language (Intelligence, Shadowlands Group)

Shadowlands Ogres have no language of their own, but free ogres that have remembered something of their past have remembered their ancient language. These ogres sometimes teach this language to their ronin allies in return for lessons in speaking Rokugani. Ogres do not need this skill to speak their language. Even Shadowlands ogres understand it, though they do not remember why. Any character who takes this skill should have a very good story detailing how he or she learned it. This is considered a Low Skill.

New Advantages

Maho (2 points, Shugenja only)

You have somehow inherited, discovered, or found a scroll of forbidden magic. You have been able to resist the temptation of



drawing upon the magic's power... so far. Choose any *maho* spell of Mastery Level 1 from the *GM's Guide*. This Advantage may be taken multiple times, but each additional scroll beyond the first also gives you one point of Shadowlands Taint.

Taint Resistance (8 points, 4 points for Kuni Witch Hunters or Phoenix Inquisitors)

You are remarkably resistant to the corruption of the Shadowlands, and *kansen* avoid the purity of your spirit. All rolls to resist contracting the Shadowlands Taint or to cure any Taint you accumulate receive a +10 bonus to their totals. Any time you contract the Taint, you receive one fewer point than normal, to a minimum of one. In addition, all *maho* spells targeting you have a +5 to their TN, and any *maho* you attempt to cast has a +10 to its TN. You may never purchase or be given Shadowlands Powers (see *A Touch of Darkness*, page 57), and cannot use the Shadowlands Taint to boost your physical Traits. This ability is strong within the Kuni bloodline. It is not quite as strong in other clans, though Phoenix that carry this blessing tend to be promoted to positions as Inquisitors. You may not purchase this Advantage if you already have the Shadowlands Taint.

Twisted Karma (2–4 points)

You were born with a *kansen* looking over your shoulder, waiting for the right moment to corrupt you. For two points, your Mastery Level is considered one higher when casting one *maho* spell of your choice. (Pick one spell, even one you are not currently capable of casting.) For four points, you may either select three *maho* spells to be so affected, or select a single spell that you may cast as if your Mastery Level were two higher. This Advantage does not allow you to begin with the selected spells, though *kansen* will attempt to manipulate events so that you may more easily find them.



New Disadvantages

Nameless One (5 points, Nameless Ones only)

You are one of the rare Nameless Ones, creatures spoken of in hushed whispers. Once you were an Ishiken, a shugenja skilled in using the magic of the Void. The Shadowlands tried to corrupt you, and was expelled by a strange side effect of your Void magic. The clash between corruption and nothingness has left you shattered, a thing to be pitied. The only value the Phoenix Clan or anyone else places in you is as a weapon against the Shadowlands. You are a secret better left forgotten, a monster in human form. You are entirely immune to the Shadowlands Taint and can never accumulate any Shadowlands Points for any reason. (See the section on the Nameless Ones for more information on this Disadvantage.)

Shadowlands Taint (1–5 points)

Whether by birth or bad fortune, your character begins with the curse of the Shadowlands Taint. For each point you gain from this Disadvantage, you gain 2 points of Shadowlands Taint. Your GM may assign suitable symptoms.

Victim of Darkness (2 points, 4 points for Moto)

Though you may not realize it, your bloodline is weak against the corruption of Fu Leng. You always receive the maximum amount of Shadowlands Taint whenever you accumulate Shadowlands points. Rolls to resist accumulating Taint have a +5 TN penalty. Effects which cure or prevent the Shadowlands Taint have no effect on you. If you ever contract the Taint, characters with the ability to sense it gain a +5 bonus to their roll.



New Schools

A Word of Caution

GMs should look over the following schools and consider them carefully before allowing player characters to attend. Most of these schools are intended for highly Tainted characters or Lost NPCs. Only the Damned and the Nameless Ones are recommended for general use by players, and such characters can be difficult to work into a campaign. All players who wish to create a character using a school from this book must obtain prior permission from their GMs.

Keep in mind that most of these "schools" do not imply attendance at a school so much as a certain state of mind or an unfortunate combination of circumstances. They are referred to as "schools" for ease of reference and because they are comparable in power and function with existing schools.

The Damned Berserker School

Though the Crab take many precautions against the corruption of their bushi, accidents happen. When a defender of the Wall becomes Tainted, he either dies or joins the Damned. These unfortunate souls have resigned themselves to inevitable corruption. Though most Damned are Crab, one need not be a Crab to join. Many clans discard their Tainted bushi by sending them to the wall to die, and they find a home among the Damned. An oath of fealty to the Crab Clan is standard practice for these individuals, and they are considered Crab by their comrades despite their birth heritage. There is little prejudice or infighting among the Damned – what good does it do for dead men to fight one another?

A starting Damned character may spend one Character Point to gain a Minor Shadowlands Power (see page 60), but only if he has a

full rank of Taint. Keep in mind that those who display radical symptoms of Taint are usually executed by the Witch Hunters who watch over the Damned. The open embrace of the Dark Lord's power is not tolerated.

The Damned have created a few techniques, but one need not have familiarity with these techniques to join their ranks. All that is required for membership is the curse of the Shadowlands Taint and a desire to fight the Crab's eternal enemy. These are the front line troops of the Crab against the Shadowlands. Their careers tend to be harsh, violent, and short. They are seldom seen outside of Crab lands.

A Tainted Crab character may begin as a member of the Damned school. This indicates that the unfortunate bushi was Tainted early in his training. Any other Tainted character may join the Damned by purchasing the Different School Advantage. Any character (including Crabs) who join the Damned later in life must purchase the Multiple Schools Advantage. These Advantages cost 2 points less than normal, as becoming a member of the Damned is hardly a matter of prestige.

There are only three Damned techniques, as these soldiers seldom live long enough to achieve a high rank. The skills taught by the Damned include a regimen of acupuncture, meditation, and herbal medicines designed to make the Tainted berserker's descent into death less painful. Those who spurn these medicines risk the wrath of their Kuni overseers, who consider refusal of treatment a dangerous mental symptom.

While not all Damned are bushi, the Damned Berserker school is considered to be a bushi school. Only bushi may learn these techniques.

Benefit: +1 Willpower

Skills: Battle, Defense, Herbalism, Kenjutsu, Lore (Shadowlands), Meditation, any Weapon Skill

Beginning Honor: 1, plus zero boxes

Starting Outfit: (All considered to be Average Quality) Katana, Wakizashi, Bow, 20 Arrows of any type, Light or Heavy Armor, Helm, Traveling Pack, Kimono, any 2 weapons, finger of jade, 2 koku.

Special: The character must have at least one point of Shadowlands Taint.

Rank 1 Technique: Burning the Shadow

The Damned has learned a series of herbal and meditation techniques through which he can slow the corruption of his body. Once per month he may make a Void/Meditation roll vs. a TN of 30 in order to reduce his Taint by one point. He may not attempt this roll more than once a month, whether he succeeds or not. He may not reduce his Taint below a full rank, or below one point. This process is customized for the berserker's own metabolism, so the Damned cannot remove another's Taint. In addition, the Damned



bushi's fierce hatred of his own corruption has begun to turn his Taint outward, allowing him to add his Taint Rank to all attack and damage totals.

Rank 2 Technique: Turn the Dark Lord's Blade

The Damned berserker walks the razor's edge between embracing his Taint and using it as a weapon against evil. He may permanently gain one point of Taint to gain an extra attack each round. If this attack is directed against a Tainted opponent, the berserker gains no Taint so long as he personally kills his opponent within three rounds.

Rank 3 Technique: Shout at the Darkness

At this point, the berserker is very likely nearly Lost, but this will not stop him from giving his death meaning. The Damned berserker gains a number of Free Raises equal to his Taint Rank against all Tainted opponents. On a successful strike against a Tainted target, the Damned berserker may double the amount of Wounds inflicted. When he does so, he gains a full *rank* of Taint, and receives Wounds equal to those inflicted upon his target.

The Nameless Ones

The Nameless Ones are Isawa Ishiken (Void Masters) who were once corrupted by the Taint, but were changed by the conflict of Taint and Void within themselves. They have become something other than human. They are now weapons against the Taint who remember little or nothing of their former lives.

Nameless One player characters must be from the Phoenix Clan, and are required to take the Ishiken-do Advantage (from *The Way of the Phoenix*) and the Nameless One Disadvantage (immediately below). For those who do not possess *The Way of the Phoenix*, simply create a Nameless One as a normal Isawa shugenja with no Affinity or Deficiency, following the rest of these rules as given and replacing the Void spells with three spells of one element. This is not as accurate a depiction of what the Nameless Ones truly are, but it should suffice.

Nameless Ones are considered to be shugenja.

Benefit: +1 Void

Skills: Lore (Void Magic), Meditation 2, Shintao, Tea Ceremony, any 2 other skills

Beginning Honor: 2, plus five boxes

Starting Outfit: (All considered to be Average Quality, any two of Fine Quality) Kimono, Traveling Pack, Scroll Satchel, Wakizashi, 5 Scrolls, 3 sticks of incense

Beginning Spells: Sense Void, Drawing the Void, Sense, Commune, Summon, 2 spells of a second element and 1 of a third

Magic of the Nameless Ones

Nameless Ones possess no Affinity or Deficiency. (Before their change, they possessed an Affinity for Void.) They may spend any amount of Void Points they have remaining when casting a spell. Any spell they cast upon a Tainted opponent automatically gains a number of Free Raises equal to the Nameless One's Void. A Nameless One can sense this surge in power, so casting a spell on an opponent is an almost certain way of revealing their Taint. Nameless Ones may use Void Magic.

The Nameless One Disadvantage

The Nameless One Disadvantage is actually a number of smaller Disadvantages. To customize this Disadvantage for a particular Nameless One, select five points of Disadvantages from the following list. These signify the terrible mutations that have twisted his body. Only Nameless One characters may take these Disadvantages.

Amnesiac: 0-2 points

All Nameless Ones have some amount of amnesia. How much the character remembers depends upon the number of points of Amnesia that are taken.

0 points: You recognize important details from your former life, but cannot remember specific details or names. You often go through the motions of your former life without knowing why.

1 point: You do not remember people and places from your former life unless they were extremely important, and then you merely react on an instinctive, emotional level. You cannot recall the existence of your skills, though you can still use them on an instinctual level when the need arises.

2 points: You do not remember who or what you once were, and only have a short-term memory capacity. You tend to react to friends and enemies, but cannot recall events more than twenty-four hours distant. You receive a +5 TN penalty to all skills requiring a great deal of cognition or memory, and must spend an additional Experience Point to learn or Raise such skills.

Deformed Legs: 3 points

Your legs are twisted and useless; you cannot move without assistance.

Hideous: 0-2 points

All Nameless Ones have a deformed appearance. The extent of the deformity depends upon the points taken in this category.

0 points: Facial features are severely disproportionate. Limbs are too long or too short, posture is definitely not normal. +10 TN to all social rolls.



1 point: Inhuman or missing facial features. Limbs are severely deformed. Posture is extremely abnormal. Skin is loose, twisted, and puckered. +25 TN to all social rolls.

2 points: Extremely caricatured or additional facial features. Perhaps the head is stunted into the torso. Limbs may be whip-thin or grotesquely over-muscled. Skin is either stretched like thin parchment or hangs loose in random places. Posture curves directly forward or even backward. You are barely human in appearance. +40 TN to all social rolls.

No Ears: 1 point

You are not deaf, but have a great deal of difficulty reacting to sound. +10 TN to all Perception rolls involving sound or stealth.

No Eyes: 3 points

You are completely blind. +20 TN to all rolls involving sight.

No Hands: 3 points

Your hands are useless pads of flesh; you cannot hold a weapon or perform skills that require a great deal of finesse.

No Mouth: 1 point

When you need to cast spells, a spectral voice rises from somewhere deep within. You are forced to mash food through your flesh in order to eat, a painful and disturbing sight.

Shadowlands Antipathy: 0 points

All Nameless Ones possess this Disadvantage. Nameless Ones cannot abide the presence of Tainted creatures, and will attempt to destroy them whenever possible. There is no bargaining, no reason. Unless restrained, you will immediately attack and destroy any Tainted creature in your presence. Comrades can make an opposed Awareness roll against your Willpower to talk you down if attacking would not be the best option.

Spectral: 1 point

You are surrounded with a ghostly, shimmering aura. You do not actually walk so much as you hover several inches above the ground. If you possess deformed legs, you can move at normal speed with this mutation. This is a common deformity.

The Temple of Onnotangu

The followers of the Moon God do not realize that they walk a False Path. In truth, they follow the whim of Fu Leng. If they continue on the path they tread, they are doomed to corruption. Many monks of Onnotangu wander the Emerald Empire disguised as normal monks. It is entirely possible that one could become a member of the party. These monks may realize that they walk a False Path and alter their philosophies once they witness the selfless heroism of the party, but in doing so they mark themselves for death among their former comrades.

Cultists of Onnotangu are considered to be monks, and use the monk creation rules presented in *The Way of Shinsei*.

Starting Honor: 0

Skills: Hand-to-Hand, Meditation, Mountaineer, Shintao, Torture, any two Low Skills

Benefit: Monks of the Cult of Onnotangu always seem to have an Honor Rank of at least two if their true Honor is lower than two, so long as they do not publicly commit a dishonorable act. Monks of the Cult of Onnotangu may select any Dark Kiho (see page 136) when choosing kiho. Monks of Onnotangu roll one extra die on all actions taken beneath the light of the moon, but roll one less die whenever making Willpower rolls to resist contracting the Shadowlands Taint.

Special: A monk who turns his back on this False Path may purchase the Multiple Schools advantage and switch his temple to any of those presented in *The Way of Shinsei*. All benefits and penalties of this temple are lost, and the benefits of the new temple are gained.



The Moto Black Guard

When Moto Tsume led his family's famed cavalry force into the Shadowlands, he intended to end the threat of the Dark Lord's armies once and for all. In his arrogance, Tsume added to Fu Leng's armies a powerful new element of merciless, undying cavalry. The Black Guard, as the Moto call them, are all that remains of the army that entered the Shadowlands over a century ago. The Dark Lord has blessed his chosen soldiers with special gifts, sinister abilities that only they can master.

The Dark Moto are among the most feared of Fu Leng's minions for they possess not only the foul powers of the Dark Lord, but also the prowess and capabilities of powerful samurai. Many a Crab force, weakened by wave after wave of goblin warriors, has been shattered utterly by the merciless charge of the Black Guard.

Members of the Black Guard may choose to interrupt their advancement to learn various Shadowlands Powers (see the Shadowlands Powers section later in this chapter). When the level of Insight has been reached such that he would manifest a new Technique, he may instead choose to learn one Power of appropriate level.

Requirement: Taint rank must be equal to or greater than School Rank at all times.

Benefit: +1 Strength

Beginning Skills: Defense, Horsemanship, Horse Archery, Kenjutsu, Lore (Shadowlands), Yarijutsu, any one Bugei or Low skill.

Beginning Honor: 0.0

Beginning Glory: None. Only the Moto family knows the names of the fallen.

Starting Outfit: Katana, wakizashi, yumi (with 20 arrows), yari, Light or Heavy Armor. All items are considered of average quality despite their outward appearance.

Rank 1 Technique: Power in the Darkness

The embrace of the Dark Lord grants the Moto power beyond that of normal men, giving him unnatural strength. The Black Guard may add his twice his Shadowlands Taint Rank to all damage rolls.

Rank 2 Technique: Death is an Illusion

Once fallen, the Moto learn that their corrupted forms are nearly impervious to injury. They are able to continue fighting at their peak up until the point when they are utterly destroyed. The Dark Moto suffers no TN penalties from any wound levels.

Rank 3 Technique: Ride Beyond Death

Fallen though they may be, not even death can destroy the bond between Unicorn and steed. By spending an action, the Dark Moto may summon an onikage. If within the Shadowlands, an Onikage



simply appears from nearby. Within Rokugan, the hideous creature bursts forth from the ground itself, mystically summoned from the Dark Lord's realm.

Rank 4 Technique: The Dark Lord's Fury

The rage of Fu Leng resonates within the twisted soul of the Dark Moto. He may make two attacks per round, but his wrathful nature prevents him from using the Full Defense maneuver. Instead his Defense skill is added directly to his TN to be hit at all times, representing Fu Leng's protection of his minion.

Rank 5 Technique: Visage of the Damned

The Dark Moto can summon the essence of their corrupted nature and manifest it upon their tattered, rotting countenances, striking terror into all who gaze upon them. If the Moto wins initiative, he may sacrifice one of his attacks this round to force his opponent to take Full Defense.

The Unbroken

"They are only wave men, yet they strike a mighty blow against the Dark Lord. I have seen them in battle, and I would never wish to be the target of their fury."

– Shinjo Hikage

Cast out by the clans, Tainted by the Shadowlands, and given a slim chance at redemption by the Naga, the Unbroken truly have little to lose. They are a motley, battered band of wave men from across the Empire, yet they are as close as any brothers have ever been. They are a weapon, forged in the black fire of the Shadowlands, that leaps from the anvil to strike out at the hand that crafted it. The Unbroken intend for that strike to be mortal.

The Unbroken are a band of ronin given a chance to survive the Taint that wracks their bodies by a dangerous and experimental Naga ritual. The Taint has been driven deep within them where it cannot eat away at their mind and soul. Unfortunately, it remains within the body, slowly eroding the life span of the individual. This deeply buried Taint can only be expunged through ritualistically seeking out and destroying the Taint in others, whether they are the unnatural spawn of the Shadowlands or corrupted mortals from the Empire. If the Unbroken's Taint cannot be extinguished in the span of one year, he will die.

When in battle as a group, all members of the Unbroken swath themselves in bandages. This is a symbolic ritual that the group devised, one that clearly makes all Unbroken equal. Tainted or redeemed, founding member or new addition... it does not matter. They are of one mind and one purpose. They are one weapon against the Dark Lord Fu Leng.

Shadowlands creatures seem to be able to sense the threat that the Unbroken represent. Goblins, ogres, trolls and the like fly into a rage at the very sight of the bandaged ronin, assaulting them with every weapon at their disposal. It matters little to the Unbroken, for nothing in Rokugan or beyond can quench their burning hatred of Fu Leng and his minions.

Type: Otokodate

Required Traits: Willpower 3

Required Skills: Kenjutsu 2, Lore (Shadowlands) 2

Other Requirements: Driven (destroy Shadowlands creatures), Obligation (the Ashlim), minimum Taint Rank 1

Location: Shinomen Mori, ranging to the north and south

Technique: Kharmic Vengeance (5 points)

The Unbroken strive to exorcise the Taint within themselves by striking out against it in others. Whenever the ronin successfully hits a Tainted opponent or one who is a denizen of the Shadowlands, he may choose to sacrifice Wounds to inflict an amount of extra damage to his target equal to twice the Wounds he has taken. This must be done before damage is rolled. Any opponent killed in this manner reduces the Taint of the Unbroken by two points.



"All power has its price. Knowing that price in advance is seldom an option for the ambitious." – Yogo Junzo

The Power of Corruption

Though the Shadowlands Taint is a force of raw corruption, the temptation of power is the catalyst for this corruption. Those who willingly use Jigoku's blessings fall to its whims more quickly. All characters who bear the Shadowlands Taint may draw upon it in a subconscious manner, adding their Rank in Taint to the total of any Skill rolls involving Strength, Stamina, Agility, or Reflexes and



gaining one point of Taint in the process. Once a character gains ten points of Taint, his Taint Rank increases by 1.

This is hardly the limit of the power offered by the Shadowlands. Those who attempt to harness the powers of darkness (consciously or subconsciously) are capable of greater feats. Usually these feats come with an immediate price, causing strange deformities or twisting the character's psyche. These abilities are classified as Shadowlands Powers, and are divided into three groups.

Minor Shadowlands Powers

These are relatively minor abilities or simple mutations that give the character powers above the norm. A character must have at least one full Rank of Taint and spend one Experience Point or Character Point before he can acquire a Minor Shadowlands Power (inexpensive, yes, but these characters are paying for their power in other ways). The process of learning a Minor Shadowlands Power causes the character to accumulate one more point of Taint. This is the only sort of power available for most starting characters.

Major Shadowlands Powers

These abilities are markedly more impressive than Minor Shadowlands Powers. A character must spend five Experience Points before he can acquire one of these powers. The process of learning one of these powers causes the character to accumulate two points of Taint. A character must possess at least one Minor Shadowlands Power for each Major Shadowlands Power he acquires.

Greater Shadowlands Powers

These rare and terrible powers grant the character extreme capabilities, but also carry heavy prices. A character must spend ten Experience Points before he can acquire a Greater Shadowlands Power. The process of learning one of these powers causes the character to accumulate five points of Taint. A character must possess one Major Shadowlands power for every Greater Shadowlands Power he acquires.

Learning Shadowlands Powers

The maximum number of Shadowlands Powers that a character may possess is limited by his School Rank. A character who gains a new Rank of Insight may choose to learn a new Shadowlands power in place of a Rank Technique. This new power is learned with no expenditure of Experience, no increase in Taint, and without counting toward their maximum number of Powers. Since the

character has technically achieved a new Rank of Insight, he may purchase an additional Power normally.

Characters who fully embrace their Taint (typically Lost characters) can cannibalize old Rank Techniques, transforming them into Shadowlands Powers. By spending an appropriate amount of time refocusing their dark energies, a character may permanently give up his highest level Rank Technique, replacing it with one free Shadowlands Power. This process requires anywhere from two days to several years.

Shugenja and Shadowlands Powers

Shugenja stand closer to the elements than most. Unfortunately, due to the existence of *maho*, this also means that shugenja risk a greater possibility of corruption. A Tainted shugenja may choose to learn an extra Shadowlands Power rather than increasing in Rank as a shugenja.

A shugenja may also choose to cannibalize his highest Rank of mastery (lowering his School Rank by one) in order to learn a new Shadowlands Power. A shugenja who does so retains all of the spells he possesses, but his Mastery Levels are adjusted accordingly. A shugenja who cannibalizes the purity of his magic in return for dark powers may find himself unable to cast some of his old spells. For this reason, most Tainted shugenja chose to retain their mastery of magic rather than focusing on Shadowlands Powers. Lost shugenja find it difficult to resist the temptation, and soon find the kami turning their backs as they embrace the power of Fu Leng.

"The Shadowlands School"

Any character who uses a Rank of Insight or cannibalizes Rank Techniques to learn Shadowlands Powers is considered to have a Rank in the "Shadowlands School." These characters gain Insight and increase their Rank as normal characters, and gain a new Shadowlands Power immediately upon gaining a new Rank. Characters do not need to purchase Different School or Multiple Schools to join the "Shadowlands School," but they may never learn any future Rank Techniques from any other schools once they have joined.

Starting Shadowlands Characters

Player Characters who begin at the "Shadowlands School" are not recommended. Such individuals are doomed to corruption from the start, and make better NPCs. Nevertheless, here are the rules for characters who begin at the "Shadowlands School," presented for the sake of completion and the GM's use.



Mechanically, Shadowlands characters are identical to True Ronin. (Usually they are either peasants, ronin, or samurai from vassal families who were not allowed to attend the family school.) Any character who meets the requirements below may join the school, and may pay the listed Character Point cost for the Darkness Beyond Darkness technique.

Unlike most True Ronin schools, Shadowlands Characters may obtain a full 5 Ranks at the "Shadowlands School." (Or even more, if the GM allows Ranks beyond 5.)

"The Shadowlands School"

Required Traits: Water 3

Required Skills: Shadowlands Lore 1

Other Requirements: Honor is reduced to 0.0, Dark Secret (Tainted), 1 full Rank of Shadowlands Taint

Location: Everywhere

Darkness Beyond Darkness (3 points)

You may select a Major and Minor Shadowlands power. The Major Power counts as your Rank 1 Technique.

Natural Shadowlands Creatures and Shadowlands Powers

The Shadowlands is an unpredictable place, its inhabitants more so. Roughly one in twenty denizens of the Shadowlands possesses Shadowlands Powers. These powers work as they do for Tainted characters, except that powers which cause an increase in Shadowlands Points may instead be used a number of times per day equal to the creature's Earth, unless noted otherwise. Effects which depend upon the user's Rank in Taint instead rely upon the creature's Earth, unless noted otherwise.

The limits of these powers are as follows:

Creature	Maximum Number of Powers
Goblins, Hanemuri, lesser Oni (minor creatures)	1 Minor
Pennaggolan, Gaki (moderately powerful creatures)	1 Major, 1 Minor
Ogres, Trolls, Bog Hags (very powerful creatures)	1 Greater, 1 Major, 1 Minor
Oni (extremely powerful creatures)	GM's Discretion

Keep in mind that granting Powers to a monster greatly increases the threat it imposes. It is recommended that the GM not give these



powers to every creature the party comes across, but merely use them occasionally to keep player characters on their toes. A Goblin Warmonger with Blackened Claws is a surprise; an entire army of goblins with Blackened Claws is a nightmare.

Deformities

Some of the following Shadowlands Powers impose Deformities. These are special Disadvantages that cause the character to appear inhuman. Anyone who studies the character may notice Deformities by making an Investigation/Perception roll. The TN of this roll is listed with each Deformity. (For example Deformity/15 means a Deformity with a TN 15 to detect.) If you have multiple Deformities, an observer may roll separately to notice each one.

Characters may attempt to disguise a deformity with Acting or Disguise (base TN 10). This will increase the TN to notice the Deformity by 5, plus 5 for each Raise made on the Acting or Disguise check.

Scarification

Those who practice *maho*, as well as those who frequently use Shadowlands Powers that require scarification, may find it difficult



to hide the many cuts they must inflict upon themselves. A character receives a Deformity/20 for scarring himself in such a manner. Each time he cuts himself a number of times equal to his Earth within the span of one week, this Deformity TN is lowered by 5. Healing the scars (with Unearthly Regeneration or Path to Inner Peace) negates this Deformity.

Tea of Jade Petals and Shadowlands Powers

All Shadowlands Powers become inactive 1-10 minutes after drinking Tea of Jade Petals and Deformities recede. The tea is frequently used by Kuni Witch Hunters to drug a dangerous Tainted individual, negating his powers and simplifying his arrest and execution.

Minor Shadowlands Powers

Beyond the Elements

You are eternally surrounded with dark magic, making you especially resistant to the pure magic of the kami. All non-*maho* spells cast by or targeting you have their TNs raised by 10. All *maho* cast by or targeting you receives a Free Raise. You may cancel the Free Raise against hostile *maho*, but cannot cancel the effect on pure magic even if you wish to be targeted.

Drawback: The spirits shy away from you. Any shugenja who casts Sense in your presence will detect a strange eddy in the kami, and may suspect that something is wrong.

Blackened Claws

You may instantly extend claws of pure obsidian from the tips of your fingers. You gain one point of Taint every time you extend the claws, but there is no limit to the amount of time they may remain extended. The claws do 3k3 Wounds and gain a +5 initiative bonus the round they are extended. The Blackened Claws can harm creatures normally vulnerable only to crystal, obsidian, or jade. The Claws may be wielded using either the Tanto or Jiu-jitsu skill, or you may learn a Weapon Specialization in them.

Drawback: After taking this power, you grow to prefer using the claws above all other weapons, and must make a Willpower roll vs. TN 5 each round to avoid using the claws in a combat situation. Deformity/0 if the claws are extended.

Blessing of the Dark One

You have gained an uncanny resistance to pain and damage. Your maximum Wounds on each level are increased by 1.



Drawback: Your skin is slightly rubbery and inhuman. Deformity/10 for those who touch your skin.

Blood Sense

You have a bizarre sense for fresh blood. You instantly detect all warm blood within 50 feet per Rank of Taint you have accumulated. This sense is blocked by 2' of wooden obstructions, 1' of stone, or 6' of metal. It is not blocked by flesh; thus you can sense the location of living creatures in range. This ability functions exactly as the Sense spell, except that it senses warm, living blood.

Drawback: You gain an unnatural thirst for blood. If you see exposed blood you must make a Willpower check vs. TN 5 to prevent yourself from taking a taste.

Child of Darkness

You find yourself at home in the Shadowlands. Somehow, you feel an odd kinship for creatures of darkness and they return the gesture. Natural Shadowlands creatures will not attack you unless



you threaten them first. If you can communicate with them, they might obey your commands.

Note that what some Shadowlands creatures consider a threat may not be immediately obvious. An oni, for example, may consider your mere presence in its territory a threat. This power should be used with care, and how each individual creature reacts is up to the GM.

Drawback: None. This power is unpredictable enough as it is.

Claws of the Kumo

Small hairs grow from your forearms and shins, like a spider's. If exposed, you can use them to scale nearly any surface at normal walking speed. Extremely slick surfaces remain impassable. Adhesive surfaces, such as webs, are ignored and can be traversed without penalty.

Drawback: Deformity/15.

Darkness Unseen

Your Taint is more difficult to sense than normal. Those who can sense Taint have a +15 TN penalty to sense your Taint. Effects that automatically detect Taint require their user to make an Investigation/Perception roll vs. your Taint Rank x 5 to be effective. Effects that do automatic damage to Tainted targets (such as Jade Strike or Rest, My Brother) are not affected by this power.

Drawback: None.

Death Sense

You can sense the remains of dead creatures. The range of this sense is 50' per Rank of Shadowlands Taint. This sense is blocked by 2' of wooden obstructions, 1' of stone, or 6" of metal. It is not blocked by earth. This power also makes general distinctions between the type of dead (undead, human corpse, leather saddle, etc.) *Mahotsukai* often make use of this power in order to find corpses to animate as zombies.

Drawback: You have a dark, unnatural hunger for dead flesh. If you encounter dead, unmoving flesh you might be tempted to take a bite. Willpower roll vs. TN 5 to resist.

Eternal Health

Fu Leng may be the patron of corruption, but he is also quite adept at protecting his servants from unwanted pollutants. You are immune to all diseases and poisons, whether they are magical or non-magical.

Drawback: If you exposed to a disease there is a chance that you will become a carrier, spreading the disease to others as if you were infected until the GM deems otherwise.

Fu Leng's Hunger

Your stomach has become a furnace of infernal power, allowing you to eat and digest anything. Poison, acid, broken glass, even fire will do no harm once placed in your mouth and swallowed. You are still vulnerable to injected, inhaled, and contact poisons.

Drawback: Soon after gaining this power, you develop a taste for some unusual item (cockroaches, stone, hair) and eat it whenever you get a chance. You may make a Willpower roll vs. TN 5 to resist eating the item in inappropriate company. This roll carries a +10 TN penalty if you think no one else is watching.

Jade Sense

You have a natural sense for jade, crystal, and obsidian. You instantly detect all jade and crystal within ten feet per rank of Taint you have accumulated, regardless of obstructions. This ability functions exactly as the Sense spell, with regards to jade and crystal only. This spell can sense Tea of Jade Petals, and will immediately identify it for what it is. A Cloak of Night spell or other appropriate magic will block this Power.

Drawback: None.

Master of Blood

You are a friend to the *kansen*, a master of dark magics. If you are a shugenja, you may reduce the number of Wounds required to cast a *maho* spell by your Taint. This power may not be taken by non-shugenja characters.

Drawback: The *kansen* are jealous masters. The TN of any non-maho spell you cast is raised by 5.

Master of Shadows

You are at home in darkness, and the shadows tend to wrap themselves around you. You may roll and keep extra dice equal to your Taint on all Stealth rolls, and may attempt to vanish into the shadows even if someone is watching you. (Make an opposed roll of your Stealth /Agility vs. the watcher's Investigation/Perception.)

Drawback: You naturally attract deep shadows, even when there are none about. This counts as a Deformity/10 if you are in bright light, and cannot be disguised except by staying out of such light.

Taint Sense

You have a supernatural sense for corruption. The range of this sense is 50 feet per your Rank of Shadowlands Taint. This sense is blocked by 2' of wooden obstructions, 1' of stone, or 6" of metal. It is not blocked by earth. This power also makes general distinctions between the type of Taint (Tainted human, Shadowlands creature, corrupted land, corrupted *nemuranai*) In the Shadowlands itself,



this power is nearly useless as your senses become completely filled with corruption.

Drawback: You are strangely drawn to the Taint. Whenever this power activates, you will be tempted to seek out the strongest source of Taint in range. Once there, you may act as you wish, though you must try to remain near the Taint as long as possible. You may make a Willpower roll vs. TN of 15 each hour to shrug off this temptation.

Uncanny Speed

You can move as quickly as shadows before light. You may move your (Water + Taint) x 5 feet in a round, or double that if you take no other action that round. You face no penalty the round after running full speed (as a normal character does; see Movement on page 164 of the *Player's Guide*). By gaining a point of Taint, you may roll and keep a number of extra dice equal to double your Taint on your Initiative for one round.

Drawback: You are naturally fidgety and nervous. This counts as a Deformity/20, though an observer is more likely to think that you are hyperactive or addicted to drugs than Tainted. This Deformity cannot be disguised.

Unholy Beauty

Darkness can often be subtle. You receive none of the normal social penalties for being Tainted. Also, all Taint symptoms you accrue will be either mental or easily hidden physical symptoms. Deformities acquired by selecting other powers are not affected by this power. Note that this ability is useless for most natural Shadowlands creatures, who have a naturally inhuman appearance.

Drawback: None.

Unholy Stamina

Your Taint keeps you eternally full of energy. You may continue functioning without rest or sleep as long as you wish.

Drawback: Every three days you use this power causes you to develop another point of Taint, whether or not those three days are consecutive.

Unholy Vision

Those who possess this power will find that their vision is never clouded. You can always see clearly in darkness, smoke, or when magically blinded. This power activates automatically, though you can choose not to use it.

Drawback: When relying upon Unholy Vision, your eyes glow with a sinister green light. Anyone who can see you will notice easily. Luckily, this power usually only functions when visibility is in question, so it tends to do a good job of hiding itself.

Major Shadowlands Powers

Above the Elements

This power functions exactly as Beyond The Elements, except that the TNs of magic targeting you are raised by 15, and *maho* gains two Free Raises. Again, you can choose whether to allow the Free Raises, but you have no control over your resistance to normal magic. This power is cumulative with Beyond the Elements.

Drawback: The spirits shy away from you. Any shugenja who casts Sense will detect a great void in the kami, and will probably guess that something is wrong.

Beside the Darkness

By meditating for two hours, you can force your body to temporarily metabolize your Taint. All physical symptoms of the Taint vanish while this power is in effect, though missing limbs and the like will not be replaced. Your Taint is totally undetectable in this state, and effects which specifically harm Shadowlands creatures have no effect upon you. The effects of this power wear off abruptly at sunrise.

Natural Shadowlands creatures may not purchase this ability, with the exception of Bog Hags and pennaggolan. Bog Hags who put aside their Taint may neither use their disease-inducing ability nor take a new skin while using this power. Pennaggolan who put aside their Taint must remain in human form, and lose their Fear and Invulnerability.

Drawback: While under the effect of this power, you may not use any of your Shadowlands Powers, and may not use your Taint to increase your physical Traits. Each time this power is used, you gain a point of Taint. *Maho* may not be used while this power is in effect. This power cannot be canceled prematurely.

Billowing Darkness

By summoning the power of corruption you can create a cloud of darkness, surrounding you in a radius of 10' for every Rank of Taint you possess. All vision within the cloud is obscured. The cloud remains in place despite wind and weather conditions for a number of minutes equal to your Taint.

Drawback: You gain a point of Taint each time this power is used. Without Unholy Vision you cannot see in your own darkness.

Blood Domination

Your blood carries a powerful magic, housing many of the will-sapping attributes of the Taint. Any creature that has drunk as little



as a thimbleful of your blood becomes subject to your demands. You may make an opposed Willpower roll to cause any such target to obey your every wish for a number of hours equal to your Taint. If you do not command your target, the blood lingers in their system for a number of months equal to your Taint until you invoke this ability. Once you begin commanding the target, you cannot end the magic prematurely to save the effect for later.

Drawing enough blood from yourself to use this power causes one Wound.

Drawback: None, though it can be difficult to convince people to drink your blood. Mixing it in with something else is usually a good idea. See the above section on Scarification.

Blood Knows Blood

You are able to sense parts of your own body, no matter where they may be. Those who bear this power usually use blood (at least one Wound) as a tracking device, smearing a bit on their quarry and then unerringly following the path. There is no need to roll; the power simply works. The blood normally lingers about a week unless it is intentionally washed away. Those with more ghoulish tastes may leave longer lasting bits of themselves (fingers, etc.). This

is not recommended unless you have Unearthly Regeneration, not to mention the reaction bound to occur if the body part is discovered.

Hair and fingernails may not be tracked. Pain seems to be the price for this blessing. If you possess this power and Blood Domination, you may track those who have drunk your blood.

Drawback: See the above section on Scarification.

Corrupted Blood

Some people believe that there's a *kansen* looking over their shoulder. In your case there is. Any magic you use is instantly twisted and fulfilled by *kansen* rather than *kami*, causing any spell you cast to be treated as *maho*. Note that non-*maho* spells converted in this manner do not require Wounds to cast, nor do they cause your Shadowlands Taint to increase. They expend a spell slot for the day in the manner of normal spells. However, if you have no spell slots remaining, you may incur Wounds and increase your Taint (using the normal rules for *maho*) in order to cast an additional spell from the non-*maho* spell list using this ability.

Non-shugenja may not select this ability.

Drawback: You can never cast normal magic again, even if your Taint is cured and this power is lost. The *kami* really frown on this sort of thing.

Demonic Charisma

Not all servants of evil are loathsome and hideous. You may roll and keep an additional number of dice equal to half your Taint (round up) on all attempts to seduce someone. By gaining a point of Taint and making an opposed Willpower roll, you can prevent one person from noticing your physical Taint symptoms until sunrise the next day.

Drawback: None.

Father of Lies

When the Shadowlands is subtle, it is at its most dangerous. You may use your Taint to increase rolls involving mental Traits (Willpower, Perception, Awareness, and Intelligence) as well as physical Traits.



Natural Shadowlands creatures with this power instead double one of their mental Traits for a single roll, a number of times per day equal to their Earth.

Drawback: A point of Taint is accumulated whenever this power is used, just as when the Taint is used to increase physical Traits. Natural Shadowlands creatures gain no Taint when using this power.

Fu Leng's Venom

You can secrete a frightful, pain-inducing poison from your palms. This poison can be used in combination with Blackened Claws or it can be smeared over the blade of a weapon. There is no antidote for this poison and there is no resistance. Fortunately, it is not fatal. Any creature injected with this poison suffers a +5 penalty to all their TNs for a number of minutes equal to your Taint. Multiple doses impose a cumulative penalty.

Drawback: The poison has a harsh, ammonia-like smell and often bleeds from your hands when you don't wish it to. This imposes a Deformity/10.

Greater Blessing of the Dark One

As in the Blessing of the Dark One, but your maximum Wounds on each level are increased by 2. This power is cumulative with Blessing of the Dark One.

Drawback: Your skin is slightly rubbery and paler than normal. Deformity/5 for those who touch your skin or examine you closely.

Speak With the Voices of the Dead

You are able to speak with the spirits of the deceased. By standing over the remains of a dead person, or meditating in the place where they died, you can force their spirit to appear and question them. If you win an opposed Willpower roll with the spirit (assume their Willpower is equal to the amount they had in life) they are forced to answer one question as truthfully as they are able. If they win the roll, they may choose whether or not they wish to answer, or if they wish to lie to you.

Drawback: You gain a point of Taint every time you use this power. In addition, the GM rolls for the spirit secretly. You never know whether or not you've succeeded, and spirits hate being treated this way. Natural Shadowlands creatures gain no Taint for using this power, but may only use it once per day.

Terrible Armor

The dark power of the Taint has rendered covered your body with a stiff, scabrous armor. You may add your Taint Rank x 5 to your TN to be Hit.

Drawback: The armor is fairly obvious. Deformity/0 unless it's covered up somehow, and any bit of exposed skin will give it away. This Deformity is difficult to disguise.

Terror of Fu Leng

You radiate the terrible power of Fu Leng, radiating Fear equal to your Taint in a thirty foot radius. This Fear can be sensed by anyone within the radius, but doesn't affect your allies, who know (or hope) that your power is on their side.

Drawback: You can't turn this power off without gaining a point of Taint. Once it's off, you can't reactivate it without gaining another point of Taint. Natural Shadowlands creatures cannot turn this power off at all. If a creature already has a natural Fear Rating, the higher of the two Fear Ratings is increased by one.

Unearthly Regeneration

You heal with incredible speed. Every minute you recover a number of Wounds equal to your Taint. In addition, your injuries leave no scars, a convenient ability for those who practice *maho* or scarification. You do not regenerate lost limbs or body parts, though a severed part will reattach itself if held in place for several minutes.

Drawback: Every twenty Wounds healed by this ability cause you to gain another point of Shadowlands Taint.

Unholy Strength

You add your Shadowlands Trait in dice to all Strength rolls, including damage rolls. Note that you may still gain a point of Taint to add your Taint to your Strength, gaining an additional bonus.

Drawback: Your body has become grotesquely over-muscled from the power of dark magic. Deformity/10 to tell that something is very wrong. Even if you disguise your Deformity, you will still look as if you have been doing an awful lot of exercise.

Greater Shadowlands Powers

Beast of Fu Leng

The Taint has transformed you completely into a bestial, inhuman creature. The exact details of the transformation depend upon your appearance.

1) *Extra limbs* – Discolored or skeletal arms sprout from your ribcage, allowing an additional Hand-to-Hand attack per round.

2) *Quadruped* – You are a four-legged beast from the waist down. Your Water Ring is doubled for the purposes of determining movement. This is cumulative with Uncanny Speed.



3) *Flight* – Great skeletal wings with torn, leathery skin sprout from your shoulder blades. You may fly at your normal rate of movement.

4) *Tentacles* – A mass of squirming, intestine-like tentacles erupt from your body in various places. The distraction they provide grants a +5 to your TN to be hit. If you forego all other actions you may attack with the tentacles. This does no damage, but forces your opponent to make an opposed Strength check each round or be held helpless so long as you use your actions to maintain your grip.

Drawback: This power imposes a Deformity that can never be hidden or concealed. Using *Beside the Darkness* will not return you to your human form. The Beast of Fu Leng is your true form, now and forevermore. Wearing armor may be difficult without customization.

Bloodstrike Plague

Your body is covered with oozing sores, carrying a debilitating strain of Bloodstrike Plague. You are immune to the disease, though those who come in contact with you are usually not. Those who come in contact with the foul liquid you ooze must make a Stamina

roll vs. your Taint Rank x 5. If they fail, their Earth is lowered by one as they are infected with Bloodstrike Plague. All character statistics which depend upon Earth (including Wounds, Willpower, and Stamina) are lowered proportionately.

Each day an infected victim does not rest, they lose another point of Earth until their Earth reaches zero and they die. Each day they rest, they may make another Stamina roll vs. the original TN. If it is successful, they are no longer infected and become immune. If they fail this roll, they lose another point of Earth. Use of the Advanced Medicine skill can give bonuses to a victim's Stamina roll as the GM deems fit. Once a victim is immune, one point of Earth returns per two full days of rest. Those who come in contact with an infected victim must make a Stamina roll vs. TN 10 or become infected as well.

Anyone who touches you must roll to see if they are infected. Anyone who wounds you in combat is likewise splattered with fluids. Though it is indeed revolting, you may attempt to "flick" your disease-ridden fluids at others as a ranged attack. While there is no skill that pertains to this, it is possible you could learn one with



enough practice. The maximum range for such an attack is fifteen feet.

Drawback: The oozing boils that cover your body are almost impossible to hide. Deformity/0.

Book of Souls

Legend has it that Fu Leng's *Book of Souls* contains the frailties, weaknesses, and fears of every living mortal. This power gives you insight into the *Book of Souls*, a powerful ability to determine the shortcomings of others. By gaining a point of Taint and making an opposed Willpower check with a target, you learn a number of Disadvantages equal to your Taint Rank. The GM chooses which, if any, Disadvantages you learn. Using this power multiple times on the same individual will turn up new Disadvantages each time, until you have learned everything there is to know. You cannot successfully use this power against the same person more than once a month.

Drawback: You must look your target in the eyes. If they win the contest of wills, a chill passes through them and nothing happens. This is a foolish stunt to attempt against Kuni Witch Hunters, who are usually familiar with this power, know exactly what you're up to, and don't have anything to hide anyway.

Drawing Out the Darkness

The Shadowlands is everywhere, in everything. Some people just haven't realized it yet. Using this power requires ten minutes of concentration and constant physical contact with another living being. At the end of this time, you must make an opposed Willpower test against the target. If you succeed, the target gains a number of points of Taint equal to your Taint rank, permanently. You may not use this ability on the same person more than once a month.

Drawback: The Kuni Witch Hunters keep an eye open for this sort of thing. A sudden outbreak of Taint in the middle of a city is likely to draw swift retribution. Only fools use this power carelessly.

Feeding on Flesh

When your own strength is gone, there are always others who can lend you theirs. It only remains to convince them. If you kill a creature with your bare hands or natural weapons (such as Blackened Claws) you immediately regain a number of Wound Ranks equal to double their lowest Ring. Samurai killed in this manner never return as ancestors. No one is really certain where these poor souls end up, but it isn't Yomi.

Drawback: This power is not subtle. A terrible red light rises from your victim into your mouth when this power is used, and the howl of tormented souls can be heard for several yards.

Final Blessing of the Dark One

As in the Blessing of the Dark One, but your maximum Wounds on each level are increased by 4. This power is cumulative with both Blessing of the Dark One and Greater Blessing of the Dark One.

Drawback: Your skin becomes pale white porcelain, as hard as a china doll. Deformity/0. This Deformity is very difficult to disguise.

Protection of the Dark

By drawing on this dark power, you gain one point of Taint and Invulnerability for a number of hours equal to your Taint Rank.

Drawback: While you are using this power, your skin glows with a throbbing black energy. This is impossible to hide, and obviously sinister to anyone with any amount of common sense. Natural Shadowlands creatures with this ability may use it once per day for a number of hours equal to their Earth.

Outside the Elements

This power functions exactly as Beyond the Elements, except that the TNs of spells targeting you are raised by 20, and *maho* gains three Free Raises. Again, you can choose whether to allow the Free Raises, but have no control over your resistance to normal magic. This power is cumulative with Beyond the Elements and Above the Elements.

Drawback: The spirits flee from your presence. Any shugenja who casts Sense in your presence will detect a great negative vortex in the kami, and know immediately that something is horribly wrong.

Thy Master's Will

The power of Fu Leng's vengeance fires your every action, and even death is not a barrier to your power. Any time you are killed, you return from the dead some time later with an additional Rank of Taint. The first time this power activates, you become Undead, and are affected by everything that affects Undead. The GM determines exactly how long it takes you to recover from your death, but you always return at full strength. You retain all your abilities, Rank Techniques, Void, and control of your character (unless the increase in Taint causes you to become Lost). Technically, you are a Revenant, a living soul trapped in an undead body.

Drawback: Many negative spells affect undead, and soon after your first death your body begins to rot. The stench of death follows you ever afterward. This bestows a Deformity/0 that is impossible to conceal. You must make three Raises to increase the TN to notice your undead state by 5, and cannot raise the Investigation TN above 10.



Other Uses For the Taint

Sometimes bad things happen to good people. A character may become Tainted by accident, fall to corruption, and become Lost. If the GM and players do not wish to spend a lot of campaign time dealing with a character's corruption, then it may be better to let a Tainted character go and create a new one.

On the other hand, a character with the Shadowlands Taint can be a great springboard for future adventures. A Tainted character's search for redemption, vengeance, or honorable death can drive an entire campaign. If a character's corruption is intended to be an important factor in the story, then the following options are given to bring greater depth to the Taint.

Option: Involuntary Corruption

A GM may choose to waive the prices of the Shadowlands Powers. If a character has contracted the Taint and uses it frequently without thought for the consequences, the GM may choose a Shadowlands Power and spontaneously give it to the character. No Experience Points need be spent on this power, though Taint increases as if it was purchased normally.

The sudden appearance of a new Shadowlands Power at a dramatic moment may save the character's life, or it may serve to remind a player how close to the razor's edge he walks. Does he choose to use the new gift to save his friends or does he spurn it, clinging to some chance for redemption? If a greedy character begins using his dark gift frequently, Fu Leng may offer him *more* powers, increasing the chances that the foolish character will become Lost.

Option: Extremely Tainted Characters

Many sections of this book contain references to the Lost. In game terms, a Lost character is any character whose Shadowlands Taint is higher than his highest Ring. Though characters begin to act erratically and unpredictably long before then, this is the point at which it can be safely said that the character is wholly irredeemable.

According to the *GM's Guide*, player characters should become NPCs when their Taint Rank exceeds their lowest Ring. If the corruption and redemption of a character is crucial to the story, the GM may wish to waive this rule, allowing a player to control his character right up until the moment they become Lost. Such a Tainted PC will become increasingly difficult to control as his Taint slowly increases. Use the following guidelines for determining how such a character behaves. All penalties are cumulative.

Taint Rank higher than lowest Ring

You gain the Brash Disadvantage (if you did not already have it). You also receive a +5 penalty to all Honor Tests.

Taint Rank higher than two Rings

You receive a +10 TN for all Willpower tests to resist dishonorable behavior. You may acquire a taste for raw meat and tend to make emotional outbursts at inappropriate times. Finally, you receive another +5 penalty to all Honor Tests.





Taint Rank higher than three Rings

You must make a Willpower test vs. a TN of 15 to resist becoming violent in stressful situations. You still think like yourself, but have begun to develop harsh, bestial instincts that are swiftly becoming impossible to ignore. You receive another +5 penalty to all Honor Tests.

Taint Rank higher than four Rings

You must now make a Willpower test vs. a TN of 25 to resist becoming violent in stressful situations. At any other time, up to a number of times per week equal to your Taint Rank, the GM may force you to make a Willpower Test vs. TN of 15 or lose control in *any* situation. Your character falls under the GM's control for a number of hours equal to your Taint Rank and cannot remember what occurred during the lost time. Your bestial instincts are becoming stronger. Your sense of self is becoming weaker, and it is difficult to tell whether your bestial instincts or your human personality is your true self. You receive another +5 penalty to all Honor Tests.

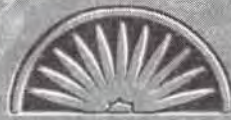
Taint Rank higher than highest Ring

You are Lost. For the record, you must make a Willpower test vs. TN 40 to maintain control of yourself at any time the GM wishes to

enforce such a test. If you fails, you lose control until the GM chooses to surrender it. The memory of missing time lingers only if you can't do anything to repair the damage. The Taint is now fully in control. Any sense of self that remains exists only as a cruel joke. Unless the GM plans to make redemption possible through some outside avenue, it is recommended that the player make a new character.

GMs should keep in mind that the Shadowlands Taint is an intelligent, cunning force for evil. Though many of its servants are mindless and stupid, the Taint itself is not. A Tainted character who loses control won't necessarily kill everything in sight if such an act would deprive the Shadowlands of a useful future pawn. The Taint is more likely to cause the character to perform acts that alienate him from friends, family, and clan.

With no one else to turn to, joining the Shadowlands becomes an increasingly more attractive option. True, the Taint often drives its victims to homicidal mania or self-destruction, but only when they would be useless as a pawn, or when the powers of darkness are trying to make a point.



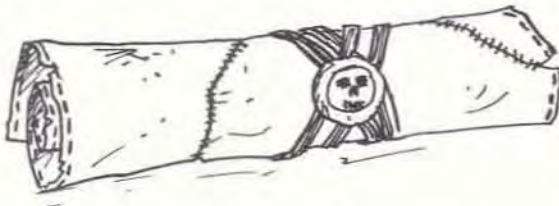
Option: Corruption Points

When a character gains enough Taint that he becomes Lost, several aspects of the Shadowlands Taint change. First, the character may no longer spend or recover Void Points. Second, the character gains a number of Corruption Points equal to his current Rank of Taint. These Corruption Points can be spent to produce any of the effects that are normally produced by gaining a point of Taint.

For those who have been entirely corrupted, Taint functions much like a shadowy reflection of Void. Once a character is Lost he uses his Shadowlands Rank, not his Void, to determine how many Raises he can make, how many times he may focus in a duel, and anything else that the Void Ring would normally determine. Corruption Points may be spent in all the same ways as Void Points. Void may no longer be increased by spending Experience points, though the character can now spend Experience to increase his Shadowlands Rank. The Lost character's Shadowlands Rank no longer increases in any other way. (Of course NPCs don't typically receive Experience, but the GM can use the growth of the player characters as a scale to determine an NPC villain's development.)

Corruption Points may be recovered in a manner similar to recovering Void. A Meditation/Taint roll vs. a TN of 20 recovers all Corruption Points. The Tea Ceremony skill does not recover Corruption points, but the Torture skill does. Making a Torture/Taint roll vs. TN 10 will recover a point of Corruption for all Tainted individuals who are present, up to the performer's Torture Rank. When performing this grisly task, the torturer may ply his skill upon himself or someone else; even an animal will suffice.

A night of sleep will restore all Corruption Points. While in the Shadowlands or any other Tainted area, a character recovers one Corruption Point every hour. It should be noted that those who have become Lost no longer acquire any more physical or mental symptoms. Most symptoms previously acquired symptoms begin to recede. These sinister individuals have paid a different price for their power.



Option: Keeping Track of Taint Symptoms

As a character begins to develop Taint, he slowly begins to show mental and physical signs of corruption. The following tables are designed to help quickly determine Taint symptoms. Each time the character receives three points of Taint, he develops a Minor Symptom. Every time the character receives a new Rank of Taint, he develops a Major Symptom. When the victim's Taint becomes higher than a specific Ring, he develops an Elemental Symptom that pertains to that Ring.

These rules for distributing symptoms are merely a guideline. After a time, an extremely Tainted character's symptoms tend to pile up. Symptoms should add interesting drawbacks to the campaign, not tedious bookkeeping. A GM should feel completely free to distribute as many or as few symptoms as he deems fit.

Working in the Wedge

The Shadowlands often uses these symptoms to alienate the Tainted from friends and loved ones. Trait rolls made to resist the effects of symptoms are made at a time of the GM's choosing, not the player's. The Shadowlands will always conspire to impose these rolls when the character is under other sorts of penalties (Wounds, distractions, etc.), causing them to behave strangely at the worst possible times.

Minor Symptoms (roll one die)

- 1-4 - Physical Symptom
- 6-10 - Mental Symptom

Minor Physical Symptoms (roll one die)

Even when these symptoms are noticed, it may not be obvious that they are Taint-related.

- 1 - Dry, itchy rash spreads on face and hands, making skin white and flaky. Deformity/15.
- 2 - White or gray streaks spread through hair. Deformity/10.
- 3 - Teeth become hyper-sensitive to hot and cold. Character will avoid eating such food.
- 4 - Hair becomes extremely greasy, all body hair grows more quickly than normal. Deformity/10.
- 5 - Nervous facial tic during periods of stress. Willpower vs. TN 5 to avoid. Deformity/10 that cannot be disguised.
- 6 - Severe allergy developed to common item. (Dogs, horses, rice.)
- 7 - Frequent nosebleeds. (Stamina vs. TN 5 to avoid once per day.)



- 8 – Hands shake uncontrollably. Willpower vs. TN 5 to stop. Deformity/10 if Willpower roll fails.
- 9 – The taste of blood fills character's mouth at all times. Saliva is red with blood.
- 10 – Boils grow in uncomfortable places (perhaps preventing horseback riding or holding a katana.) Deformity/15.

Minor Mental Symptoms (roll one die)

These are mostly small quirks and odd behavior that could be played off by a clever samurai without drawing suspicion.

- 1 – Character often looks off to the southwest (toward the Shadowlands) and smiles without realizing it.
- 2 – Character finds things inappropriately funny. Willpower vs. TN 5 to avoid; happens at least once a day.
- 3 – Character is extremely suspicious of strangers.
- 4 – Character has terrible nightmares every night. Must make a Willpower roll vs. TN of 15 or he won't sleep, imposing a cumulative +1 to all TNs (except the Willpower roll) per day without rest.
- 5 – Character develops irrational fear of some harmless object such as dogs, rice, or jade. Must make a Willpower roll vs. TN 10 to willingly interact with object of fear.
- 6 – Character tends to repeat everything he says. Willpower vs. TN 10 to avoid.
- 7 – Character has strange hot and cold flashes at random times. Shivers or sweats uncontrollably at least once a day.
- 8 – Character has occasional memory lapses. Roll Intelligence vs. TN 15 once per day at a time of the GM's choosing to remember important details.
- 9 – Character occasionally hears things, usually bits of conversation that did not happen.
- 0 – Character tends to mumble nervously under his breath, sometimes in a language he does not know.

Major Symptoms (roll one die)

- 1-6 – Physical Symptom
- 7-0 – Mental Symptom

Major Physical Symptoms (roll one die)

Some of these symptoms may not immediately be associated with the Taint. Kuni Witch Hunters and Asako Inquisitors are trained to be on the lookout for those that display any of the following.

- 1 – Gums become black, lips begin to recede from teeth. Deformity/10.
- 2 – Hair falls out in clumps. Character either goes bald or retains uneven patches of hair. Deformity/10.

- 3 – Eyes become dark and sunken. +5 TN to all Perception checks requiring vision. Deformity/5.
- 4 – One or more fingers/toes rots and falls off. Deformity/10.
- 5 – Character becomes very thin and gaunt. Ribs are visible through skin. Character becomes weak. All damage rolls are at -1 die, to a minimum of 1. Deformity/5.
- 6 – Skin becomes covered with painful boils, scabs, and blisters. Wearing armor is impossible without extreme pain, imposing +5 to all TNs.
- 7 – Character contracts a wet, persistent cough that does not go away. Often coughs up blood.
- 8 – Character's nose rots and collapses, leaving a great empty hole. Deformity/0.
- 9 – Character bleeds freely from body orifices at least once a day.
- 0 – Character's fingernails become long, black, and ragged. No amount of grooming can keep up with their decay. Deformity/15.

Major Mental Symptoms (roll one die)

While not all of these symptoms are associated with the Taint by the ordinary observer, they are all examples of bizarre behavior and will often cause a character to be ostracized. Again, these symptoms are all well known by Witch Hunters and Inquisitors.

- 1 – Character hears the voice of evil spirits. Must make a Willpower roll vs. TN 10 at least once a day or he will openly respond to the voices, sometimes shouting at them to go away.
- 2 – Character begins to hallucinate, seeing people who aren't there. He can ignore them if he likes, but it's difficult to tell who's real and who isn't.
- 3 – Character sometimes forgets his own name, or calls other people by the wrong names. Make an Intelligence roll vs. TN 15 to avoid doing this at least once a day.
- 4 – Character can't sit still for more than five minutes. Has to get up and walk around, needs to exercise constantly.
- 5 – Character begins to suspect that everyone around him is Tainted. Hallucinates symptoms in other people.
- 6 – Character sometimes thinks he is someone else, usually a historical figure. (Akodo One-Eye, Iuchiban, and the Emperor are popular choices.) Behaves accordingly. Willpower roll vs. TN 15 to resist, once a day.
- 7 – Character is overwhelmed by bloodlust during combat. Must make a Willpower roll vs. TN 15 or he will fight until all of his enemies are dead and dismembered.
- 8 – Character develops aversion to bright light. Will flee in the presence of bright light as if it had a Fear Rating equal to his own Taint Rank.



- 9 – Character discards all hygiene. Refuses to bathe, wash, or groom himself.
- 0 – Character develops extreme curiosity toward the Shadowlands. Will spend Experience Points to learn Lore (Shadowlands) if he does not have it. Must make a Willpower roll vs. TN 20 once a month or he will begin planning a trip to the Shadowlands.

Specific Symptoms by Element

These symptoms range from subtle and easily hidden to dramatic and difficult to conceal. Witch Hunters and Inquisitors recognize the more blatant symptoms on these tables immediately.

Earth (roll one die)

- 1-2 – Character does not feel comfortable without dirt and mud smeared over his face and body. Must make a Willpower roll vs. TN 15 once a day to resist the urge to do so.
- 3-4 – Character develops an unhealthy appetite for dirt, mud, and rocks. Will attempt to eat earth once a day.
- 5-6 – Dark ooze seeps from the character's pores instead of sweat. Deformity/5.
- 7-8 – Skin becomes pallid and rotten. Character appears to be a living corpse. Deformity/0.
- 9-0 – Character becomes completely immune to all helpful Earth magic. All harmful Earth magic receives a free Raise against him. *Maho* is unaffected.

Air (roll one die)

- 1-2 – Character is out of breath all the time. Must breathe heavily. +5 to all Stamina TNs.
- 3-4 – Character develops a keen sense of smell, reacts strongly to any unusual odors. Willpower vs. TN 10 to resist.
- 5-6 – Character's breath becomes foul and malodorous, like rotting meat. Deformity/5.
- 7-8 – Oddly colored smoke billows from the character's mouth as he breathes. Deformity/5 that is extremely difficult to disguise.
- 9-0 – Character becomes completely immune to all helpful Air magic. All harmful Air magic receives a free Raise against him. *Maho* is unaffected.

Fire (roll one die)

- 1-2 – Character develops an odd fascination with fire. Will attempt to be close to fire whenever possible. Must make a Willpower roll vs. TN 15 to avoid touching any fire he sees (and burning himself).

- 3-4 – Character becomes irrationally afraid of fire. Must make a Willpower roll vs. TN 20 or flee in terror from any open flame.
- 5-6 – Character's skin becomes covered with red welts, as if he had been burned. Deformity/5.
- 7-8 – Eyes roll out of head; are replaced by burning red embers. (Character can still see normally.) Deformity/0 that is extremely difficult to disguise.
- 9-0 – Character becomes completely immune to all helpful Fire magic. All harmful Fire magic receives a free Raise against him. *Maho* is unaffected.

Water (roll one die)

- 1-2 – Character develops unnatural thirst. Will drink five times as much fluid as a normal person.
- 3-4 – Character leaves damp footprints everywhere he goes.
- 5-6 – Character sweats constantly, even during cold weather. Deformity/5.
- 7-8 – Character's skin becomes covered with soft, moist scales. Deformity/0 that is very difficult to disguise.
- 9-0 – Character becomes completely immune to all helpful Water magic. All harmful Water magic receives a free Raise against him. *Maho* is unaffected.

Void (roll one die)

- 1-2 – Character becomes restless. Must Raise twice to be successful on any skill roll requiring patience and careful thought (including Meditation).
- 3-4 – Character's memory becomes fragmented. Must roll Void vs. TN 10 to remember even the simplest details of his life.
- 5-6 – Character becomes confused, and can no longer make Raises, including free Raises.
- 7-8 – Character's spirit becomes unfocused. He can no longer spend or recover Void Points.
- 9-0 – Character becomes completely immune to all helpful Void magic. All harmful Void magic receives a free Raise against him. *Maho* is unaffected.

Advantages as Shadowlands Powers

Certain Advantages may be purchased as Shadowlands Powers. These Advantages are mechanically similar to the normal versions, though they usually carry some strange drawback as well. Corrupted Blood of Osano Wo, for example, will grant the character resistance to temperature extremes, but may make his flesh unearthly cold.



Luck may always kick in at the expense of an ally. An Inner Gift may indicate the friendship of a helpful *kansen*, etc. ...

Minor Shadowlands Powers

Absolute Direction
Bland
Clear Thinker
Crafty
Dangerous Beauty
Death Trance
Heartless
Large
Luck (3 points)
Quick Healer
Strength of the Earth (2 points)

Major Shadowlands Powers

Blood of Osano-Wo
Daredevil
Hands of Stone
Inner Gift
Luck (6 points)
Strength of the Earth (4 points)

Greater Shadowlands Powers

Chosen by the (Dark) Oracles
Combat Reflexes
Luck (9 points)
Quick
Strength of the Earth (8 points)

Raises and Dueling for Shadowlands Creatures

For human characters, Void reflects how well the character can use all the elements in harmony. As a result, it is used as a mechanic for dueling and Raises. Unfortunately, many creatures native to the Shadowlands do not have a Void Ring.

How do they deal with these situations?

In most cases, a Shadowlands creature doesn't need to duel. However, if such a situation does come up, these creatures use an average of all their Traits (round down) to determine the number of times that they may focus. Raises are likely to be far more important. In regards to Raises, you can also use an average of all the creature's Traits (round down) to determine the maximum number of Raises they may make.

For a simpler result, the GM could merely judge that all Shadowlands creatures may have an effective Void of 2 for the purposes of Raising and focusing only, 3 if they are within the Shadowlands or another Tainted area.

Living With Taint (adapted from *Bearer of Jade*)

There is no reliable cure for the Shadowlands Taint. The best thing a Tainted individual can do is to cease drawing upon his Taint and hope that it doesn't get any worse. Even this is not a guarantee that the character will not become corrupted further. Once a person has become Tainted, the infection will slowly worsen until it overwhelms its host.

The following table indicates the interval at which one's Taint will increase.

Earth Ring	Check Interval
1	14 days/Rank
2	30 days/Rank
3	90 days/Rank
4	180 days/Rank
5	360 days/Rank
6	Earth in years/Rank

At the end of this interval, the character must make an Earth roll vs. TN 5. If successful, the TN increases by 5 with each additional interval until the roll is failed. The TN is then reset at 5. Each time the roll is failed, the host gains an additional Shadowlands Point. If he possesses any Shadowlands Powers, his corruption grows even more swiftly. Minor Shadowlands Powers bestow one extra point of Taint, each, per interval. Major Shadowlands Powers bestow two extra points of Taint, each, per interval. Greater Shadowlands Powers bestow three extra points of Taint, each, per interval. A regimen of acupuncture, meditation, plenty of sun, and a monastic lifestyle will let the character roll another die, and will decrease additional Shadowlands Points by one per power. (This assumes the character has not been actively using his Shadowlands Powers. Those Powers which cannot be deactivated do not count against this.)

Note that Tea of Jade Petals will prevent any further corruption if taken daily. There are other methods of curing the Taint permanently, but most are extremely difficult or unknown to the general populace. More detail on this is given in the Appendix.



A Note On Kuni Witch Hunters

The *tsukai-sagasu* of the Kuni are more intimately familiar with the dark powers of the Shadowlands than anyone in Rokugan. Training alongside their Kuni brethren, the Witch Hunters recognize the potency of magic. As their methods of training and abilities are already comparable to those of shugenja, spell casting seemed like the next logical step. Kuni Utagu, the current leader of the Witch Hunters, was the first to combine magical training with the Witch Hunter techniques, with remarkable success.

As a result, a select few members of the Witch Hunters have learned the art of magic. In reply, a handful of intrigued Kuni Shugenja have transferred to the Witch Hunter school to join the war against the darkness. Those Kuni who attend both family schools tend to be less skilled in magic than their brethren, and do not master the techniques of the Witch Hunters as quickly, but offer a potent combination of physical and arcane power. Witch Hunter PCs that wish to attend the Kuni Shugenja school must follow these strict guidelines.

1) The character must be a member of either the Kuni Shugenja School or the Kuni Witch Hunter School, and must purchase the Multiple Schools Advantage. This Advantage does not normally apply to shugenja. This is a special exception.

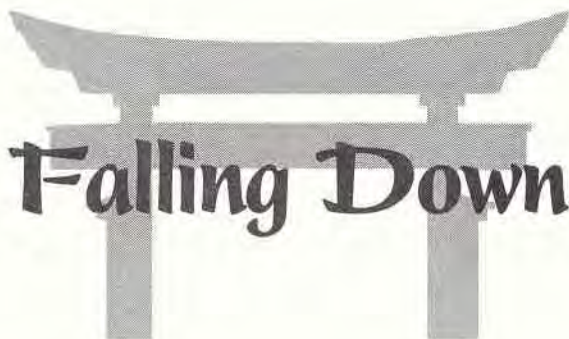
2) The character must know every skill offered by both schools.

3) The character may not possess any previously learned Rank Techniques from schools other than the Kuni schools. The character may not attend any shugenja school other than the Kuni Shugenja School. The character can never learn any future Rank Techniques from any school other than these two schools.

4) The character must have achieved a new Rank of Insight in order to learn a Rank from the other school, as per the normal rules for Multiple Schools.

5) If the character is a Rank 1 shugenja, he must know the spells Evil Ward, Jade Eternal, and Jade Strike or the Witch Hunter School will not accept him. If he is a Rank 2 shugenja, he must know Strength of the Crow or the Witch Hunter School will not accept him. A Witch Hunter entering the Shugenja school must learn these spells as quickly as possible.

6) The character may return to his old school upon gaining a new Rank of Insight, but he must pay for the Multiple Schools Advantage again. Once more, this is a special rule that applies only to Kuni Witch Hunters and Kuni Shugenja. In other words, Kuni Witch Hunters and Kuni Shugenja may transfer back and forth between schools as often as they like, but must pay six Experience Points each time. At no time may the character ever have more total Ranks than his Insight Rank.



Heritage tables for the Tainted would be unnecessary and unproductive. Every clan, every family, every level of the Celestial Order has been touched by the Dark Lord. Even the Hantei line itself contributed one of the greatest threats the Emerald Empire has ever faced: the Bloodspeaker Iuchiban. Any samurai could become Tainted, no matter what their heritage.

How they get that way is far more interesting.

There are many different paths to corruption. Some receive their scars from heroic battles against the forces of evil, while others gain it as a result of gathering dark, forbidden powers for themselves. Whether it came from the claws of a rampaging monstrosity or the gentle caress of a corrupted geisha, the Taint is a part of you now.

This table is intended exclusively for those players interested in creating characters who already possess the Taint when the game begins. A character from one of the Great Clans may choose to roll on both this table as well as the Heritage Tables of his clan, but must pay points for each table as appropriate.

A character may roll upon the following tables up to three times. The first roll is free, but subsequent rolls cost 1 Character Point per roll. Any Advantages or Disadvantages gained as a result of rolling on the tables below are free and character neither gain nor pay points for them. Begin with Table 1 and proceed as directed...if you dare.



Table 1: The Kiss of Darkness

Roll Result

- 1-3: **Corrupted** (Roll on Table 2)
- 4-6: **In the Line of Duty** (Roll on Table 3)
- 7-8: **Mysterious Circumstances** (Roll on Table 4)
- 9-0: **Taint-Born** (Roll on Table 5)



Table 2: Embrace of the Dark Lord

Roll Result

- 1-2: **Maho-tsukai**. You have willingly embraced the easy power of blood magic. Your Honor begins at a maximum of 1.0 and may never increase. You gain one *maho* spell scroll of your choice (subject to GM approval) and the ability to cast it. Roll on Table 6B.
- 3-4: **Dark Artifact**. You possess an ancient artifact that grants you power, but at a terrible cost. Knowing the risks, you have chosen to seize the power for yourself, chancing the consequences. The artifact boosts one of your traits, enabling you to roll and keep an extra dice whenever making a roll that involves that Trait. However, you are limited to a maximum number of Raises equal to your Void minus one. Both of these are in effect so long as the artifact is on your person. Roll on Table 6B.
- 5-6: **Failed Expedition**. You were part of an expedition into the Shadowlands. Things went very badly, and you betrayed your fellow samurai to survive. Perhaps you offered them for your safe passage, or perhaps you feasted on their corpses to survive. In any event, you escaped, but others seem to sense something is different about you. You gain the Benten's Curse Disadvantage. Roll on Table 6B.
- 7-8: **Willing Participant**. A loved one has chosen the dark path of Fu Leng. Rather than turn them in, you have chosen to help conceal their crimes in exchange for a taste of the power. You have participated in many dark rituals that have left you scarred and Tainted. You gain the Advantage Major Ally (*maho-tsukai*) and the Disadvantage Bad Fortune (scarred). Roll on Table 6B.
- 9-0: **Pact with an Oni**. You have truly sold your soul. Somehow you came into contact with one of Fu Leng's demons. Rather than run or fight, you chose to bargain for power. You may call upon the oni's power, substituting one of its Traits for the same Trait of yours once per month. When you do this, however, your Taint Points *double*. Roll on Table 6B.

Table 3: Against the Darkness

Roll Result

- 1-2: **Upon the Wall**. Your daimyo ordered you to serve upon the Great Wall to learn the true meaning of courage. Your body suffered, but your mind is strong enough to handle the horrors you have seen. You gain the Death Trance Advantage. Roll on Table 6A.
- 3-4: **Scouting Party**. You were badly wounded on a scouting trip into the Shadowlands. Rather than stop to dress your wound, you continued without rest to deliver the message that an attack on the Wall was imminent. Gain 5 Honor points. Roll on Table 6A.
- 5-6: **Rampage**. A Shadowlands creature escaped Fu Leng's realm and ran rampant across the Empire until you and your comrades killed it. Gain an additional Glory Rank. Roll on Table 6A.
- 7-8: **Taking the Wound**. While serving as a yojimbo, you leapt in front of a blow meant for your charge. The blade was crafted from obsidian, and you will feel the Taint of its cut forever. Your charge showered you with gifts in appreciation. You gain the 5-point Wealthy Advantage for free. Roll on Table 6A.
- 9-0: **Maho-hunter**. You aided a Kuni Witch Hunter in exposing and eliminating a *maho-tsukai* in your home province, but not before the Lost mage struck you with his dark magic. You gain a Minor Ally in the Crab Clan. Roll on Table 6A.

Table 4: Shadows of Doubt

Roll Result

- 1-3: **Amnesia**. You were found beaten and battered at the edge of the Shinomen Forest with no idea how you got there or how you received the Taint. You will do anything to learn the truth. Gain both the Higher Purpose Advantage and the Driven Disadvantage. Roll on Table 6A.
- 4-6: **Plague**. One of the plagues that have ravaged Rokugan in the past decade struck you and left you Tainted. The experience has increased your resistance to damage and disease. Gain the 4-point Strength of the Earth Advantage. Roll on Table 6A.
- 7-8: **Geisha**. While traveling on a mission for your lord, you stayed the night in a geisha house with an alluring woman. When you discovered you had been Tainted, you returned, but the entire house had vanished. Your travels among the lesser classes in search of answers has taught you much, though little you would share with others. You gain 3 ranks in a Low Skill of your choice. Roll on Table 6B.
- 9-0: **Damnation**. Your name has been given to an oni! You do not know who is responsible, but you can feel the creature's dark power growing. You must seek it out and destroy it before it consumes you utterly. You gain the Higher Purpose Advantage as well as the Dark Fate Disadvantage. Roll on Table 6B.



Table 5: Born into Sin

Roll Result

- 1-2: **Corrupted.** Your parent or ancestor was a corrupted minion of Fu Leng. They were destroyed, but not before passing their legacy on to you. You gain the Bad Reputation Disadvantage. Roll on Table 6B.
- 3-4: **Victim.** Your parent or ancestor was the victim of a powerful *maho* attack that left them Tainted and sickly. You inherited the Taint, but are resistant to spellcraft of all kinds. Gain the second level Magic Resistance Advantage. Roll on Table 6A.
- 5-6: **Veteran.** Your ancestor fought bravely at a major engagement with the Shadowlands, but did not emerge unscathed. Roll to see what battle they were involved in:
- 1-2: **The War with Fu Leng.** Your ancestor stood alongside the kami themselves and faced the forces of darkness. Your bloodline is a powerful one within your clan, but the curse of the founder occasionally surfaces in the form of Taint-born children. Gain 4 additional character points to be used toward the purchase of any Ancestor. Roll on Table 6A.
- 3-4: **Battle of the Landbridge.** Your ancestor crawled half-dead and Tainted from Earthquake Fish Bay following the epic battle of the Crab and Crane versus the Shadowlands. Already dead to his clan, he became ronin and eventually was granted fealty elsewhere. His secret lives on in you. Gain the Dark Secret Disadvantage. Roll on Table 6B.
- 5-6: **Battle of the Cresting Wave.** Your ancestor stood against one of the most powerful oni ever to exist: the Maw. Through incredible valor and sacrifice, he won the eternal respect of the Crab. You gain 4 additional Character Points which must be used to purchase ranks in Skills taught by one of the Crab schools. Roll on Table 6A.
- 7-8: **Five Nights of Shame.** You know that your ancestor fought during famous battle of the Snake and Phoenix, but you do not know on which side. You must know the truth or you will never feel at ease. You gain the Driven Disadvantage. Roll on Table 6B.
- 9-0: **Battle of Sleeping River.** Your ancestor fell prey to the touch of a Bloodspeaker cultist when Iuchiban returned. He fought valiantly and was excused for his Taint, but everyone still looks upon you somewhat differently. Gain the Disadvantage Benten's Curse. If you already possess this Disadvantage, double its effects. Roll on Table 6A.
- 7-8: **Mystery.** Your family has no history of the Taint whatsoever, yet you were born with it. Somewhere in your family's past lies a dark secret, and you reap both the benefits and the consequences. You gain the Advantage Combat Reflexes and the Disadvantage Frail Mind. Roll on Table 6A.
- 9-0: **Misguided Intentions.** After decades of service as the most minor of vassals, your parents were desperate to improve your lot in life. They turned to dark forces to grant you the power you will need to make a name for yourself. You gain 5 points to spend in ranks of Bugei Skills. Roll on Table 6B.

Table 6A: Condoned

Roll Result

- 1-3: **Absolution.** You have been forgiven for the Taint you bear, and few if any bear you ill will because of it. You have papers that you must carry on you at all times, and a Kuni Witch-Hunter checks in on you from time to time. Also, you may not marry without first informing the bride's family of your "condition."
- 4-6: **Ostracized.** You remain within your family and clan, but are kept at arm's length by most. Your relative isolation has forced you to rely upon your own abilities. Your Glory Rank may never exceed 3.0, but you gain the Clear Thinker advantage.
- 7-8: **Chance for Redemption.** You have been graciously offered the chance to redeem the honor of your family by sacrificing your life to atone for your Tainted honor. Gain the equivalent of the Deathseeker Disadvantage, although you will only be a Deathseeker in name if you are of the Lion Clan. For Crab characters, you become a member of the Damned. You may not advance in your current school, but will instead gain the first rank of the Damned when you hit the next Insight Rank.
- 9: **Outcast.** Your family and clan cannot abide your presence and the dishonor you bring upon them. Gain the Black Sheep Disadvantage.
- 0: **Honorable Retirement.** Your clan and family have absolved you of your role in acquiring the Taint, but cannot abide its presence. You have been sent to a monastery to live apart from your fellow soldiers. You are still samurai, but may not advance beyond Rank 1 in your school. The monks have trained you, however, and when you reach a new Insight Rank you may learn kiho as per *The Way of Shinsei*.

Table 6B: Condemned

Roll Result

- 1-2: **Undiscovered.** Your secret is safe. For now.
- 3-4: **Suspicious.** Though no one knows your secret, many are sure that you are up to no good. You must be extremely careful to keep up appearances, as even odd absences or strange hours could lead to your discovery. Gain the Bad Reputation Disadvantage. If you already possess it, double the effects.
- 5-6: **Blackmailed.** Somewhere, someone knows the truth. Rather than expose you, they are using you to further their own ends. Gain the 4 point Obligation Disadvantage.
- 7-8: **Accountable.** Your family daimyo has summoned you for an audience one month from now to account for your suspicious and dishonorable behavior. Your time is very short, and grows shorter by the day.
- 9-0: **Hunted.** The cause and extent of your Taint is widely known among those from your province. They have alerted the Imperial Magistrates to your presence, and a Kuni Witch-Hunter has been dispatched to investigate. You gain the Sworn Enemy Disadvantage.

Chapter Four

Who's Who



Kuni Utagu

Earth: 5

Water: 2

Perception: 4

Fire: 3

Intelligence: 4

Air: 3

Reflexes: 5

Void: 3

Shadowlands Taint: None

School/Rank: Kuni Witch Hunter 2, Kuni Shugenja 2

Honor: 2.1

Glory: 2.0

Advantages: Large, Strength of the Earth (2), Irreproachable (3), Heartless

Disadvantages: Antisocial (4), Driven, Contrary

Spells: (*Italics note Innate Ability*) *Sense, Commune, Summon, Jade Strike, Hands of Clay, Minor Binding, Grounding Energy, Evil Ward, Wings of Fire, Path to Inner Peace, Strength of the Crow, Fires From Within*

Skills: Athletics 4, Calligraphy 2, Defense 4, Herbalism 3, Hunting 5, Investigation 6, Katana 4, Lore (Shadowlands) 8, Meditation 5, Stealth 4, Tanto 5

Unlike many enemies of the Shadowlands, Kuni Utagu has not been marked by tragedy. His family is alive and well. He grew up without witnessing any of the atrocities of the Wall. He lost no childhood friends to the Taint. His village was never attacked by monsters. Though he knew that the Taint existed, for the first eleven years of his life the Shadowlands simply played no part in his life.

One day, a Witch Hunter visited Utagu's village. Utagu did not know who the man was, or why he wore such strange clothing. The man looked over the gathered children, pointed directly at Utagu, and said "That one."



The man was Kuni Atsutane, master of the *tsukai-sagasu*. In that moment, Utagu's life took a turn.

He was taken to the barren Kuni Wastes, where he first witnessed the ravages wrought by the Shadowlands. He was trained in the methods of the Witch Hunters, and the tactics of their enemies. Utagu was horrified to discover the depths of evil to which men would succumb when offered the power of darkness. He was disgusted by the beasts of the Shadowlands. He was terrified when he learned that while other Crabs battled Fu Leng's hordes together, it was a Witch Hunter's duty to face the power of the Dark Lord alone.



His sensei replied that if he was afraid, he could return to his village. The Witch Hunters had no time for those who were not dedicated.

Utagu refused. "I cannot leave now," he said. "If I leave, the darkness will have won."

Utagu's sensei was pleased by the sincerity of the reply, and the fire in the young boy's eyes. Utagu took to his studies with unmatched fervor, grasping the tsukai-sagasu techniques with ease. On his *gempukku*, Utagu ventured into the Shadowlands with a unit of young Crab bushi. When they returned, they carried the heads of a brood of oni none had seen before. Once Utagu reached the top of the Wall, he collapsed. The shugenja on duty discovered Utagu was near death from his wounds, but had showed no sign of pain until he reached the Wall.

"I will not let them see me fall," Utagu mumbled in his delirium. "Damn them to Jigoku, I will not let them see me fall."

Though his teachers were impressed with his performance, Utagu was not satisfied. If it were not for the shugenja, he would not have survived. "A Witch Hunter could not afford to rely on others," he said. "When the night comes, we are all alone."

In a move that surprised the Crab Clan, Utagu asked to be allowed to study at the Kuni Shugenja school. The Kuni were reluctant, but wary of angering such an important student of the Witch Hunters. They complied with his wishes, certain that he would fail. While Utagu's mastery of magic was somewhat limited, his progress was quite impressive for one trained so extensively in the martial arts. His sensei ordered that more Witch Hunters enter training as shugenja.

When Kuni Atsutane was murdered investigating a cell of Bloodspeakers in the Mantis Isles, Utagu was chosen as his replacement. Utagu is even more relentless than his predecessor. When he tracked down Atsutane's killer, her public execution stunned even the gruff sailors of the Mantis. The spectacle lasted seven days. Utagu stood by the dying *tsukai* the entire time.

"You have earned your place in Jigoku, *tsukai*," Utagu was heard to repeat over and over. "Savor it."

It is said that the Shadowlands fears Utagu. He is a man that does what he does without vengeance, without emotion, without mercy. He cannot be bribed, swayed, or reasoned with. He destroys the Shadowlands because it is what he was meant to do.

Utagu is not a man to have as an enemy.

Ichiro Hideo

Earth: 6

Water: 5

Strength: 4

Fire: 3

Air: 2

Reflexes: 3

Void: 2

Shadowlands Taint: 2.9

Taint Symptoms: Fragmented memory, foul breath, burnt eyes, hands shake uncontrollably

School/Rank: Ichiro Bushi 3

Honor: 1.3

Glory: 1.3

Advantages: Ancestor (Ichiro Fureheshu), Crab Hands, Blissful Betrothal (Agasha Momuko)

Disadvantages: Nemesis (Ichiro Koturi), Dark Fate

Shadowlands Powers: Blood Sense (is very close to acquiring more Powers)

Skills: Athletics 6, Defense 3, Jiujutsu 4, Kenjutsu 3, Lore (Bushido) 2, Mountaineer 2, Ono 6, Wrestling 2, Yarijutsu 2

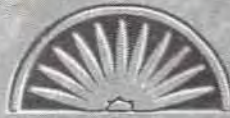
Ichiro Hideo was born to the most respected family in the Badger, heir to his father's estates. He was a popular child – handsome, brave, and strong as an ox. He embodied all of the qualities that the Ichiro family valued. Though he was not a clever boy, his brother Koturi was sharp-witted and cunning. The two were a perfect pair, completely inseparable. Among the Ichiro, everyone wanted to be Ichiro Hideo, or simply be near him. The young Badger accepted the admiration with modesty. He was fortunate to have everything he needed in life, and knew how lucky he was.

When he came of age, his father arranged a marriage with the Dragon to foster good relations between the two clans. The girl offered by the Dragon diplomat was a shugenja, Agasha Momuko. Though the Ichiro were generally wary of shugenja, Hideo quickly fell in love with the young Dragon during the summer she spent with the Badger. His brother Koturi was so intrigued by her tales of the mountains that he made plans to journey there himself. Hideo and the rest of the family felt that Koturi was being a bit foolish, but then Koturi had always been the impulsive one. At the end of the summer, Momuko returned to her home in the south.

A few months later, Koturi disappeared in the night. The note he left behind said that he planned to join the Agasha shugenja school.

Every few weeks, Hideo received letters from both Momuko and Koturi. Their correspondence was the joy of his life, as he loved his brother and his wife-to-be.





One day, the letters stopped. Seven years passed.

Hideo often wondered what had happened, but Badgers who had passed through the Agasha province assured him that both Momuko and Koturi were well. He put the matter out of his mind, concentrating on assisting his father with the rule and maintenance of Domogu province. Soon, he would be married and all would be well. Perhaps Koturi would even return home.

About a year ago, Hideo started having nightmares. He thought nothing of it, attributing it to the stress of helping his father manage the clan.

One day a few months ago Hideo woke screaming, covered with blood. He was chained in a cell deep in Kyuden Ichiro. Crab samurai stood on guard, questioning him constantly. They told him that his clan had been destroyed, and his father was dead. They told him he had the Taint. They asked him what had happened, but Ichiro could remember nothing.

Hideo could feel something in the back of his mind, something large and terrifying, something from his nightmares. He could feel the thing slowly growing stronger. When he finally saw the beast rampaging through the courtyard, he realized that he had been bound to an oni.

Hideo saw the surprise in his brother's eyes when Koturi learned that he still lived. He knows that there is a darkness growing inside

him, and that only Koturi could have placed it there. He no longer cares. His clan is dead. His family is dead. No reason remains for him to redeem himself. As soon as he has dealt with the thing that slew his father, he will embrace his brother's dark gift, and turn it on Koturi.

If Momuko gets in the way, then so be it. He knows now that she never loved him to begin with. If he must be damned, then everyone else is damned, too.

Ichiro Koturi

Earth: 3

Willpower: 4

Water: 2

Strength: 3

Fire: 4

Air: 2

Awareness: 3

Void: 3

Shadowlands Taint: 0.6

School/Rank: Agasha Shugenja 2

Honor: 1.3

Glory: 0.9

Advantages: Luck (6), Twisted Karma (4 - Summon Oni)

Disadvantages: Badger Outcast (shugenja), True Love (Agasha Momuko), Dark Secret (*maho-tsukai*)

Shadowlands Powers: None

Taint Symptoms: Nightmares

Spells: (*Italics note Innate Ability*) *Sense, Commune, Summon, Hurried Steps, Fires From Within*, Evil Ward, Know the Ground, Force of Will, Wind-Borne Slumbers, Heart of the Inferno, Path to Inner Peace, Summon Oni

Skills: Calligraphy 4, History 4, Hunting 3, Lore (Maho) 4, Meditation 6, Mountaineer 3, Shintao 3, Tanto 5

It seemed like such a good idea at the time.

Koturi doesn't like to think about how it he found the scroll. The important thing is that it *happened*. Somehow, he summoned a *kansen*, and that *kansen* offered him a deal. Koturi loved Agasha Momuko. He knew she loved him in return, but planned to marry Hideo nonetheless. That was part of why he loved her so much. She was so loyal, so giving. Hideo did not deserve her. He had been handed everything in his life without a shred of effort. Koturi was mocked for his desire to become a shugenja. He was mocked by his father, by his brother, by everyone except Momuko.

Why did the Badgers hate magic? Magic was the gift of the kami, of the Fortunes, of the gods! What sane man spurned the gifts of the gods? It was ludicrous. The *kansen* told him it could make them see the truth. Wasn't that what Koturi wanted?



Hideo was allowed to do anything. Hideo was given everything. The *kansen* said it could take everything away from Hideo.

When the two brothers had been young, Hideo became lost in the woods on the first day of winter. Koturi rode out despite his father's warnings and brought Hideo home. Though Hideo was stronger, Koturi had always been a superior woodsman. That same night, the blizzards hit. If Hideo had not been found, he would have died. Hideo did not even bother to thank his brother, but staggered off half-drunk to spend the night with a courtesan. Publicly, Koturi always pretended to be on good terms with his brother, but he never forgot the slight.

A life for a life, the *kansen* said. Hideo owed Koturi his life, and the debt had not been repaid. It seemed so easy. He could destroy his brother's reputation from afar, remove him from the picture without anything to connect him to the crime. Koturi would arrive in the nick of time and destroy his Tainted brother. He would be a hero.

Koturi made a deal with the *kansen*. The pact was made, and a new beast from Jigoku was given form.

Something went wrong. As soon as Koturi saw Kyuden Ichiro, he realized what a terrible mistake he had made. His family had been murdered. This was not what he wanted. Why was the oni so *strong*? It wasn't supposed to be so strong!

Koturi is terrified. Everything is out of control. All he wants to do now is kill the oni before it harms anyone else, and help his brother. He's so sorry. So very sorry.

He hopes that Hideo will be able to forgive him.

Agasha Momuko

Earth: 3

Water: 2

Perception: 3

Fire: 3

Air: 3

Void: 3

Shadowlands Taint: None

School/Rank: Agasha Shugenja 2

Honor: 2.7

Glory: 1.0

Advantages: Quick Healer, Allies (Kaiu Family)

Disadvantages: True Love (Ichiro Koturi), Bitter Betrothal (Ichiro Hideo)

Spells: (*Italics* note Innate Ability) *Sense*, *Commune*, *Summon*, *Evil Ward*, *Inferno's Tooth*, *Aura of Flame*, *Jade Strike*, *Fires From the Forge*, *By the Light of Lord Moon*, *Castle of Fire*, *Minor Binding*

Kiho: Grasp the Earth Dragon

Skills: Calligraphy 1, History 3, Lore (Shadowlands) 4, Meditation 5, Shintao 2, Tanto 2, Tessen 4

Momuko was born to a minor vassal family of the Agasha. Her father's prospects for advancement were minimal until the day that they met a diplomat from the Badger Clan. The Ichiro sought an alliance with the Dragon. They also wished to arrange a marriage to seal the bargain. The Agasha wished to foster good relations with the Minor Clan, but had no suitable daughters to offer. Agasha Tamori offered to grant increased estates and status to Momuko's father if he agreed to offer his daughter. Her father happily agreed.

As a result of the agreement, Momuko was allowed to train at the Agasha shugenja school. She was a satisfactory student, who quickly embraced the art of magic. After two years of study, she was allowed to visit Domogu province to meet her future husband. Though Ichiro Hideo was courteous, it seemed that the Badgers were resistant to the idea of a shugenja in the family. Momuko did not mind terribly, for she had met a kindred spirit who had as great a love and fascination for magic as she.

This was Ichiro Koturi, her fiancé's brother.

Over the course of their summer together, Momuko taught Koturi much about magic. In time, she began to realize that the feelings they had for one another encompassed more than a mutual love of the kami. Though she politely spurned Koturi's advancements, she



slowly began to acknowledge that she was in love with the brother of her husband-to-be. She decided to leave until the wedding rather than cause further trouble.

To her dismay, Koturi followed her to the Agasha provinces. The Agasha were intrigued by the boy's interest in magic. To Momuko's surprise, Lord Tamori agreed to accept Koturi as a student. Rather than live so close to temptation, she requested to be sent on a mission as far from home as possible.

She was dispatched to the provinces of the Kaiu. For several years she worked as yoriki to magistrate Kaiu Osuki. Osuki suspected that Momuko was running away from something, but made good use of her presence. During her duties at his side, she first encountered the Shadowlands. She learned to fight the creatures of darkness. She learned the binding magics of the Kuni. Her new responsibilities did not push her troubles from her mind, but they helped.

When Momuko heard that Osuki was planning a journey to Badger lands, she was ecstatic. Finally, she would get a chance to visit Hideo without Koturi's presence. Perhaps, given time, she could love him as she did his brother, and thus fulfill her obligation to her father. Perhaps, in time, Koturi would forget about her. Perhaps it would all work out in the end.

When she saw the ruins of Kyuden Ichiro, she realized things would never be the same. A terrible anger echoed in Ichiro Hideo's

Tainted eyes, and a strange guilt shone in Koturi's. Momuko knows the Shadowlands. She knows that the oni spared the three of them for a reason. She wonders if Hideo and Koturi are still the men she once knew.

Though she sincerely hopes that she is wrong, Momuko suspects that the brothers have something to do with the oni. If her suspicions are correct, she knows that she is the only one who can deal with them.

Togashi Kokujin

Earth: 3

Water: 3

Strength: 4

Fire: 3

Agility: 4

Air: 2

Reflexes: 4

Void: 5

Shadowlands Taint: 2.2

School/Rank: Togashi Ise Zumi 3

Honor: 0.0

Glory: 0.0

Advantages: Daredevil, Hands of Stone, Large, Combat Reflexes, Great Destiny

Disadvantages: Ascetic, Enlightened Madness (6), Bad Reputation, Fascination (Fu Leng's Name), Insensitive, Dark Fate

Shadowlands Powers: Child of Darkness, Blood Domination, Book of Souls

Taint Symptoms: Gradual darkening of his skin and his tattoos. Kokujin is also prone to outbursts of maniacal laughter and shouting, but it is unknown if this is the fault of his Taint or his natural madness.

Tattoos: Chameleon, Cloud, Crescent Moon, Spider, White Mask

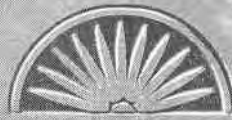
Kiho: Ai Uchi, Cleansing Spirit, Self / No Self

Skills: Astrology 3, Kaze-do 7, Lore (Shadowlands) 4, Meditation 5, Nazodo 3, Shintao 2, Stealth 5, Tattooing 3, Theology 2, Torture 3

Kokujin is a seeker of truth. To his mind, truth is a greater treasure than anything. In his way of seeing, truth is a power greater than any offered by the gods. He who controls the truth, controls reality. He who hides the truth, makes his own reality.

It was Togashi who taught him this, in the guise of an old tattooed man. When the blood-red ink first seeped into Togashi Mutsuma's veins so many years ago, he saw the Dragon Kami for what he truly was – a god, hidden in human form. For the briefest moment, Togashi was surprised that his secret had been exposed. Mutsuma's eyes were opened to the simplest truth of reality.

Power is grown from the seeds of deception.



Togashi's deception was at an end. Mutsuma laughed, for even a Kami held no power over him once his secrets had been exposed. The young *ise zumi* turned his back on the Dragon and ran into the mountains. He kept his former master's secret close; what good what it do him to expose it as foolishly as Togashi had? Secrets were power.

Mutsuma cast aside his Togashi name and took a new one – Kokujin. He swore that his old name would remain hidden better than his former master's. Kokujin wandered far from the lands of the Dragon to seek a new destiny. Eventually, he arrived in the Shadowlands. The spirit of the Dark Kami offered Kokujin great power, if he would surrender a bit of himself. The Taint seeped into Kokujin's veins just as Togashi's blood once had.

Kokujin took the Dark Lord's power. His skin became darkened from the touch of evil. The blood-red tattoos of Togashi took a smoky hue. The dark *ise zumi* laughed again, for the cleansing kiho the Dragon had taught him protected him from the price of Fu Leng's power. Now he possessed Fu Leng's secrets as well, and two gods were his dupes. Kokujin served no master but himself.

The black tattooed man follows his own path, his own twisted philosophy. He approaches life with the same open-eyed wonder of all *ise zumi*, but his ends are more sinister. He might offer to join a group of samurai on a quest, saving their lives time and again, only so that he can see the looks in their eyes when he betrays them at

a critical moment. He once committed himself to a monastery, begging for assistance in cleansing his Taint. The monks took pity on him and agreed to help him. He murdered them all in a single evening, laughing all the while.

Kokujin is impossible to reason with, for his reasoning changes with the wind. He follows the moment, does what suits him, and keeps his secrets close. In combat he is either savage or merciful depending on his whim. At times, he carves tattoos into his opponents made of ink from his own blood, then uses his Blood Domination powers to control his thralls. He enjoys the irony of creating his own "tattooed men."

The dark *ise zumi* has seen the approach of war, and is quite excited. The tensions between the clans, the rise of the Shadowlands Horde, the Wasting Disease, all of it at once cannot be coincidence. Someone is responsible. Somewhere in the middle of it all is someone with a secret. No doubt that secret is the best one of all.

Tsukuro

Earth: 4

Willpower: 5

Water: 4

Perception: 6

Fire: 5

Air: 3

Awareness: 4

Void: 2 (Can no longer use or increase his Void)

Shadowlands Taint: 78 (Lost)

School/Rank: Doji Magistrate 2, Shadowlands 3

Honor: 0.1

Glory: 0.0

Advantages: Clear Thinker, Quick, Tactician

Disadvantages: Cruel, Overconfident, Forsaken

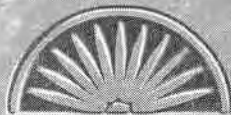
Shadowlands Powers: Taint Sense, Blackened Claws, Blessing of the Dark One, Greater Blessing of the Dark One, Billowing Darkness, Terrible Armor, Drawing Out the Darkness, Thy Master's Will

Taint Symptoms: Has become a walking, rotten corpse with burning red eyes.

Skills: Battle 8, Etiquette 2, Heraldry 3, Iaijutsu 3, Investigation 6, Kenjutsu 8, Kyujutsu 4, Law 5, Lore (Shadowlands) 7, Stealth 8, Torture 9

Once, long ago, there was a young Crane who was cursed.

The Asahina claimed that Daidoji Tsukuro was forsaken by the ancestors. They said that a streak of dark magic had been buried in his family long ago, and had risen once more with him. They told



him that he would one day become a terrible villain. He was doomed from the start, though he had done nothing to deserve it.

Tsukuro ignored the shugenja's warnings. How could he live with himself otherwise? How could anyone endure with such a curse hanging over their head? Impossible. He would prove them wrong. He would become a hero. One day, he swore, he would be Emerald Champion. He would protect and serve the ruler of the Emerald Empire. None would stand higher.

Such was not to be. The Asahina prophecy ruined Tsukuro's career. Every time he tried to advance, a superstitious official would block his promotion. Every innovation he developed on the fields of battle was attributed to someone else so that his superiors could avoid contact with "the cursed Crane."

Tsukuro turned to opium to console himself. He began to take bribes, lining his pockets so that he could live in comfort rather than glory. He abandoned his dreams of greatness, and adjusted to the bleak truth of reality. The bleakest truth was yet to come. When one of Tsukuro's superiors was investigated for corruption, the blame was shifted to Tsukuro. Though Tsukuro's criminal deeds were relatively minor compared to his commander's, Tsukuro was nonetheless arrested and ordered to *seppuku*.

Daidoji Tsukuro would not have it. He would not let the Asahina curse destroy him. He escaped and fled, running westward for many

days. In those times, the Carpenter Wall had not yet been built, and Daidoji Tsukuro found himself in the Shadowlands.

Tsukuro died on the barren wastes. When he rose again, a new light shone in his eyes. Perhaps the Asahina were right. Perhaps he was doomed to become a great villain. Did that mean that his own dreams could not come true as well?

One day, Tsukuro would protect and serve the ruler of the Emerald Empire.

One day, none would stand higher.

Today, legions of slaving beasts and undead monsters obey Tsukuro's slightest whim. He leads his troops forth from the Shadowlands, at the side of the Crab. The Crane cannot defeat Tsukuro; many of the tactics they use were originated by him centuries ago.

Tsukuro is a terror to behold. He wears a grotesque mempo crafted of stitched-together faces, a mockery of the oni-mempo of living samurai. In person, he is oddly calm and polite. Those who surrender are taken prisoner and treated well, at least until they are carted to Tsukuro's tent for "recruitment." Sometimes, the screaming lasts for days. Tsukuro's prisoners never see another sunrise except through the eyes of the Lost. Tsukuro is particularly fond of Emerald Magistrates, and goes out of his way to corrupt his former comrades.

Hida Kisada is aware of Tsukuro's actions and watches him carefully. One day, there will come a time when the Crab no longer need the sociopath undead general. Tsukuro looks forward to the challenge.

Muhomono

Earth: 4

Stamina: 6

Water: 4

Strength: 6

Fire: 4

Air: 2

Awareness: 4

Void: N/A

Shadowlands Taint: Innate (Ogre)

School/Rank: Ogre Bushi 3

Honor: 0.0

Glory: N/A

Advantages: None

Disadvantages: Bounty (100 koku and counting)

Shadowlands Powers: Blood Sense, Hands of Stone, Strength of the Earth (8)

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 2, Defense 2, Hunting 3, Jiujutsu 5, Kenjutsu 6, Lore (Shadowlands) 2, Rokugani Language 2, Subojutsu 6, Stealth 2, Torture 4



Muhomono is a free ogre, living on the Unicorn steppes. He leads a bandit horde of twenty ronin and fifteen ogres. He has named himself after the great ogre king from the Tale of the Bright Star. One day, perhaps, he will be as great as the ogre king. For the time being, he realizes that he is little more than an ogre outlaw. He contents himself with the terror and destruction that follow in his wake, but always looks to the future.

Muhomono was born in the Shadowlands. He does not remember the ancient ogre lands of which the elders speak. Deep in his heart, he doubts that the tales are true. It makes no difference. The passion the elders stir within him is real enough. One day, the all ogres will be free. He dreams of a day when the Great Clans, the nezumi, and Fu Leng all lie defeated before him. That day will become reality. He must simply work toward it.

The magistrates that hunt Muhomono have placed an enormous bounty on his head. He does not care; it only serves to prove how much the samurai fear him. Samurai – those who do not fear death – fear Muhomono. The prestige this carries among his fellow ogres makes his leadership indisputable. Even the mighty elders respect him, and believe that he is indeed the ogre king reborn. The thought amuses Muhomono during his lonely hours.

At times, Muhomono finds he misses the Shadowlands. He misses the solitude, the simplicity. When he was a lumbering brute,

he never had to organize troops or replenish supplies. He never had to worry about moving from place to place to avoid the Imperial Legions. He never had to look to the future. In a way, Muhomono does not consider himself free at all.

In spite of this, the ogre outlaw would never return to the Shadowlands. An ogre, once freed, can never allow himself to be shackled again. He desires to strike out at those who would make captivity seem preferable to confinement. He will see all the samurai who dare to call themselves superior put in their proper place. Muhomono will make Shinjo Yokatsu bleed for that one hundred koku bounty.

All Muhomono needs is opportunity, and the whole world will feel his revenge. That opportunity, he thinks, is coming. With the march of the horde, more ogres are leaving the Shadowlands than ever before. Soon, these captive cousins will begin to remember who they truly are. When they do, the ogre outlaw will be waiting.

Chuda Tenkazu

Earth: 3

Water: 3

Fire: 2

Intelligence 3

Air: 3

Void: 2

Shadowlands Taint: 2.2

Shadowlands Symptoms: Tenkazu's Taint has yet to seriously affect him physically or mentally. He is deluded, of course, and somewhat paranoid, but no serious derangements have manifested so far.

Shadowlands Powers: None (yet)

School/Rank: Chuda Shugenja 2

Honor: 0.3

Glory: 1.0

Spells: Sense, Commune, Summon, Blood and Darkness, Blood of Midnight, Dark Divination, Extinguish, Fires That Cleanse, Force of Will, Heaven Has No Justice, Sinful Dreams, Tremor

Advantages: Bland, Inheritance (jadoku)

Disadvantages: Dark Secret (*maho-tsukai*), Driven (study *maho*), Sworn Enemy (Chuda Reikado)

Skills: Bard 2, Calligraphy 2, Commerce 4, Craft (Mizugusuri) 2, Craft (Netsuke) 4, Investigation 4, Kenjutsu 2, Lore (Maho) 4, Meditation 2, Sincerity 4, Stealth 3, Torture 3, Tsangusuri 3

Born into a family of minor Mantis merchants, Tenkazu spent most of his childhood assisting his father in selling his wares. His mother died while he was still an infant, and traveling as they did, the only permanent thing in Tenkazu's life was his father Gorobei,



whom he revered and respected with a devotion surpassing that of most samurai.

When Tenkazu reached the age at which most young men were undergoing their *gempukku* ceremony, his father took him on a long journey to the northern Phoenix lands. He took Tenkazu to a secret cave deep in the mountains, where many ancient artifacts, weapons, armor, and scrolls were hidden. There, Gorobei revealed to his son that he was the heir to the traditions and teachings of the Snake Clan, supposedly destroyed by the Phoenix long ago, but kept alive in secret, passed from teacher to student for centuries. His ancestor was the student of a survivor of the Five Nights of Shame, a *maho-tsukai* of particular cunning and foresight. Though not descended directly from the Snake Clan themselves, they were the true heirs of their legacy.

Tenkazu began training that day in the dark arts. It did not matter that it was blasphemous, evil, or even that they could be executed if found out. All that mattered was that Gorobei wished his son to learn the ways of the Snake. To Tenkazu, there simply was no questioning the will of his father.

Decades later, Tenkazu has become a ruthless, devious, wholly corrupted sociopath. He wears the katana *Jadoku*, the ancestral blade of the Snake Clan, upon his hip. Believed to have been destroyed during the Five Nights of Shame, the dark blade rests in

an unassuming saya, unnoticed by those whom Tenkazu encounters. He revels in the audacity of his actions, certain that one day he will be their master and they will desperately wish to have paid more attention to the wandering Mantis merchant.

Tenkazu is not the most powerful of shugenja. He is, however, extremely cunning. On several occasions he has drugged, tortured and murdered shugenja of the Crane and Dragon clans to learn the secrets of their magical crafts. Occasionally, he uses these arcane techniques to craft a corrupted fetish or potion. These he blends in with the simple trinkets he always gives to the poor among the villages he visits. In this way he sows the seeds of corruption wherever he goes, spreading his dark lord's embrace to the ignorant and foolish.

In all of Rokugan there is only one who knows Tenkazu's secret, only one man that the *maho-tsukai* truly fears. The haggard, bedraggled ronin shugenja known as Reikado is the last true descendant of Isawa Chuda, founder of the Snake Clan. The ronin refuses the power that beckons him each day and remains uncorrupted by the sweet kiss of maho. He hounds Tenkazu across the Empire, growing ever closer to ending the merchant's phantom threat.

Tenkazu is plotting a trap for Reikado. He hopes to end the ronin's hunt once and for all. And in doing so, Tenkazu will claim the one prize that has escaped him for so many years, the one prize that will finalize his power: Reikado's blade, the ancestral wakizashi of the Snake Clan. Once it is his, the Empire will shake at the sound of Tenkazu's name.

All he needs now are pawns. Someone to eliminate Reikado for him, absolving him of any involvement. And having sacrifices for the ceremony to awaken the daisho of the Snake's full powers would be a benefit as well. Samurai are so easy to manipulate, trapped in their own web of bushido and duty. They will do his work for him. Now he only has to find the right samurai for the job...



The Dark Daughter of Fu Leng

Earth: 8

Water: 6

Strength 8

Fire: 6

Air: 7

Shadowlands Taint: 9.5

Shadowlands Symptoms: No obvious physical symptoms. The Dark Daughter appears as a strikingly beautiful young woman. The only tell tale sign is the ever-present blood upon her kimono, which is inevitably white, the color of death.

Shadowlands Powers: Billowing Darkness, Blackened Claws, Book of Souls, Child of Darkness, Demonic Charisma, Father of Lies, Feeding on Flesh, Master of Shadows, Outside the Elements, Unholy Beauty

Advantages: Dangerous Beauty, Way of the Land (Shadowlands)

Disadvantages: Compulsion (kill samurai), Driven (inflict suffering and pain), Overpowering Darkness

Skills: Hand-to-Hand 5, History 4, Hunting 6, Kenjutsu 4, Lore (Shadowlands) 10, Seduction 7, Sincerity 5, Stealth 5, Subojutsu 3 (Due to her incredible age and experience, the Dark Daughter may be assumed to have all skills not listed here at Rank 2.)

Hida Buntaro wept tears of grief as he stood motionless upon the Great Wall. He did not care if others looked down upon him for his weakness. All Crab samurai lived each day mere inches from death, but he still was not prepared for the enormity of the loss he has suffered this morning. He would not abandon his duty upon the wall, but yet the wound in his heart made him feel as though he had died already.

A slight stirring to his left caused Buntaro to whirl quickly with his tetsubo at the ready. Through tear-streaked eyes he beheld a young woman, a creature of exquisite beauty. "This is no place for you, girl. Get off the wall." Buntaro snarled the command, angry at his own distracted state of mind.

"I only thought to bring you tea, to ease your pain." The girl's voice was like a breeze through the sakura blossoms... soft and musical. Hands tucked demurely within her kimono sleeves, the girl smiled sweetly and took a step toward Buntaro. Red butterflies adorned her pristine white kimono.

"Ease... my pain?" Buntaro sputtered. This girl was intoxicating. Part of his mind was screaming to be cautious, but he could not overcome his desire to draw nearer to her, to smell the perfume of her hair.

"Yes. Your family is very worried. Your brother asked me to comfort you." Her voice was the sweetest melody ever played. Her



hands rustled in her sleeves. The butterflies were so vibrant in the moonlight. Such a deep shade of crimson, almost like blood.

Blood. Buntaro jerked upright from his slouch.

His brother had been killed in the line of duty on the wall early this morning.

Buntaro launched his tetsubo forward with all the strength he could muster. The girl knocked it casually aside, sending it tumbling over the wall and out of sight. He felt a stinging tug in his abdomen. Glancing down, he saw that the girl's claws had punched through his armor and deep into his body.

"You are strong, so very strong," she whispered in the moonlight. Her mouth descended toward his. As he died, he saw a dim red light emanating from her throat while the darkness closed in around him.

Some distance down the length of the wall, a Crab sentry noticed a pale red light from afar. Shouting an alarm, he and his brothers crossed the distance between in mere moments. All that awaited them were the torn remnants of a corpse and the armor that once belonged to Hida Buntaro. Soft, feminine laughter faded on the breeze. The bushi looked at one another, fear and hatred warring on their faces.

"The Dark Daughter has stolen another of our kinsmen."



The Dark Daughter of Fu Leng is an eternal, immortal evil. The child of a Kami, her power is unmistakable. The Kuni speculate as to the mother of this malignant creature, whether it is the Dark Lord's so-called Demon Bride or some other, unknown creature. Some among the Crab whisper that such beauty can only be the child of the Crane Thunder herself.

Whatever her origin, the Dark Daughter is a murderess without compare. All denizens of the Shadowlands pay homage to her, and even the dread generals Moto Tsume and Tsukuro are respectful of her might. She can appear anywhere within the Shadowlands, standing at one moment near the ruins of Hiruma Castle and at the next upon the Great Wall itself. She has claimed the lives of countless careless Crab bushi, and there are thousands who would give their lives gladly to slay her in the hopes that doing so might hurt her dark father in some way.

Whether she can die at all is a matter few wish to contemplate.

Kyojin

Earth: 7

Water: 5

Strength 7

Fire: 6

Agility 7

Air: 4

Reflexes 6

Shadowlands Taint: 9.0

Shadowlands Symptoms: No one will ever mistake Kyojin for anything except a denizen of the Shadowlands. He is centaur-like in appearance, with a mostly human upper body set upon a massive, bestial frame with four muscular legs with deadly talons.

Shadowlands Powers: Beast of Fu Leng (Quadruped), Blackened Claws (always activated, located on forelegs), Child of Darkness, Greater Blessing of the Dark One, Unholy Stamina

Advantages: Large

Disadvantages: Benten's Curse

Skills: Athletics 4, Battle 3, Defense 3, Hand-to-hand 5, Hunting 5, Iaijutsu 7, Intimidation 8, Kenjutsu 5, Lore (Maho) 4, Lore (Shadowlands) 6, Stealth 4

Special Abilities: *Additional Attack* - Kyojin receives an additional attack per round, for a total of two attacks per round.

He remembers the pain most of all.

There was a journey, or perhaps a quest of some sort, and fighting. A great deal of fighting. Then he was falling for a very long time, what seemed like an eternity. But then the pain came, and he learned how long eternity truly is.



The beast called Kyojin remembers precious little else of his life before. Indeed, he only remembers that there was something before he became Fu Leng's creature, but not what it was. It matters little, for his place is in the Dark Lord's army, and his role is that of an unstoppable destroyer. He would not change it, not even if he could.

Fogged as his memory is, Kyojin is not certain how long he has served the Shadowlands. He has fought alongside the dread generals Tsukuro and Moto Tsume for decades, perhaps centuries. He has claimed the lives of hundreds of samurai, many of them in duels. How Kyojin came to know the intricacies of dueling is also unknown, but in the midst of battle, when a suitable target appears, the red haze fades from his vision and he feels smoldering memories bubble up within him. The duel is that which he longs for: the perfect kill, the ultimate match of strength and skill.

Recently, Kyojin left the camp of Tsukuro's fractious forces and journeyed south into the Shadowlands. Pushed on by an urging he could not identify, he traveled for days without rest until he finally came upon what had once been a man. This tiny, spindly creature radiated a power that Kyojin had never before felt, and when he spoke, Kyojin could hear the will of his Dark Lord within the creature's voice.



"We must free him, Kyojin," Yogo Junzo rasped. "We must unleash his power upon the world for all eternity. We must undo what was done so many centuries ago." In awe of Junzo's power, Kyojin knelt before him and pledged his life to his service. Where Junzo would go, so too would he.

He rides now at the former Scorpion's side, never far from his new master. Their forces grow each day as all manner of Fu Leng's creations flock to their banner, and the secrets of the Black Scrolls loom closer with each passing sunset. Soon they will be ready. Soon they will unleash the true might of the Shadowlands upon the clans of the Empire. Soon, Kyojin will swim in a sea of his enemies' blood.

Few of Fu Leng's creations are as bestial or as deathly efficient as Kyojin. His upper body dwarfs that of all but the largest Crabs and brims with a strength that is found only in the savage ogres. His four powerful legs propel him to incredible speeds. Many a samurai has lost his life when Kyojin explodes across the battlefield in a dizzying orchestra of violence. Careful to avoid his deadly blades, many opponents fall to a lightning strike by the razor-sharp obsidian talons upon his forelegs. His most disturbing feature, however, is his face. Though perpetually covered by a helm and mask, there is something hauntingly familiar about Kyojin's features. Something that might once have been human.



Moto Sada

Earth: 5

Water: 4

Fire: 3

Agility 5

Air: 4

Reflexes 6

School/Rank: Moto Black Guard 3

Shadowlands Taint: 7.1

Shadowlands Symptoms: Rotting flesh, exposed bone, aura of unease

Shadowlands Powers: Terrible Armor, Uncanny Speed

Honor: 0.6

Advantages: Position (Moto Tsume's lieutenant)

Disadvantages: Bad Reputation, Driven (corrupt the Unicorn), Obligation (to Moto Tsume), Onikage Stink

Skills: Archery 4, Athletics 3, Battle 3, Defense 4, Heraldry 3, Horsemanship 7, Horse Archery 5, Hunting 5, Intimidation 5, Investigation 4, Kenjutsu 5, Lore (Shadowlands) 8, Shintao 1, Yarijutsu 4

A young samurai of great promise at the time of the ill-fated Moto campaign into the Shadowlands, Moto Sada brought great honor to his family when he was assigned to the Moto daimyo

Tsume's personal retinue. He rode proudly with his liege, prepared to wipe the scourge of the Dark Lord's creations from the face of the world forever.

In body, Moto Sada survived the fall of the Moto, crawling back to the Crab lands. His soul, however, never left that dark land. Shattered in mind and body, he spent a year in the care of the Ide family, who tried desperately to heal his scarred psyche. It was no use. One year and one month after his return, Sada escaped from his asylum and led a small force of desperate madmen to the Shadowlands, vowing to destroy the fallen Moto or die trying.

His vow has gone unfulfilled for over a century.

Exactly what happened when Sada returned to the Shadowlands is unknown. All that is certain is that instead of destroying the fallen Moto, he joined them. Now he serves his lord Moto Tsume in eternal death as he did in life. When Tsume orders the charge of the Black Guard, it is Sada who leads them shrieking into battle. The sight of his decaying face is the last many samurai have seen as a legion of undead *onikage*-mounted Moto fall upon them.

Unlike his brethren, Sada retains the tiniest kernel of the honor he once had as a samurai. There are times when he remembers the Moto family as it once was, before the Blood War took its toll upon them. In those moments, he experiences what might be remorse, but it does not affect his fulfillment of his duties. He serves Fu Leng now,



and his wrath in battle is unchecked by any human emotion. Were he to learn of the grim, secluded state of the Moto family today, any vestige of humanity left within him would surely be extinguished in a rage that would shake the heavens themselves.

While many denizens of the Shadowlands seem to have accepted the alliance with the Crab and the leadership of Yogo Junzo as master of a huge horde, the majority of the Moto Black Guard remain within the Shadowlands with their master Tsume. Should the Crab betray their oath, or if Junzo succeeds in weakening the armies of the clans, then the Moto shall ride forth into the Empire like a wave of death, destroying everything in their path. And at the front of that wave shall be Moto Sada, the right hand of Tsume.

It is his duty, and he will not fail.

Until that day comes, however, Sada has been given a mission. He and a small party of his unearthly kinsmen have ridden north into the largely inhospitable regions of the Crab lands. They are scouring the darkest recesses of the land, from the Kuni Wastes to the former holdings of the Falcon Clan south of the Shinomen. Those few that know of Sada's relentless quest wonder at his goal. Some whisper that he seeks one of the as-yet-unopened Black Scrolls to give Moto Tsume leverage over Fu Leng's new chosen minion Yogo Junzo. Others say that a bold raid into the Shadowlands by a daring Crab magistrate has resulted in the theft of an artifact the Black Guard require to maintain their unholy power. Still others believe that Sada seeks an ancient Kuni magic that either will restore him to life or allow him to destroy Tsume and seize command of the Black Guard. The intent of a corrupted madman is not for the minds of mortals.

The few Crab remaining within the afflicted provinces have requested Imperial Magistrates to aid in the destruction of Moto Sada, but the Imperial forces are needed elsewhere, and there are precious few among the Emerald Magistrates who would savor the task of facing Sada alone, much less with the Black Guard supporting him.



Shikageko

Earth: 3

Water: 4

Fire: 3

Air: 3

Reflexes 4

Shadowlands Taint: Innate

Shadowlands Symptoms: Rotting flesh, filthy, greenish skin, stench of death.

Shadowlands Powers: Blackened Claws, Hands of Stone

Honor: 0.4

Glory: 0.0 (2.0 as Murai)

Kiho: Ai Uchi, Musubi, Tsuchi-do

Advantages: Heart of Vengeance (Brotherhood of Shinsei), Way of the Land (Shadowlands, Scorpion lands)

Disadvantages: Bente's Curse (when not wearing her skin), Haunted (Murai), Insensitive, Vanity

Skills: Jiujutsu 4, Lore (Shadowlands) 6, Meditation 2, Shintao 1, Sincerity 5, Stealth 6

Special Abilities: If Shikageko successfully scores a hit against an opponent with her claws, the opponent has a 30% chance of catching a disease (she is more virulent than many of her kind). The disease is permanent until treated by a healer or shugenja's healing magic, and causes boils, blisters, and a loss of Stamina at a rate of one point per week.

Shikageko, a bog hag, first entered Rokugan over fifty years ago after being forced from her territory by a particularly vicious ogre. Moving north carefully under the cover of night, the hag settled in a small lake outside Taiyo One Toshi, a city within the Scorpion Clan's holdings. This fertile hunting ground served Shikageko well for many years, as she was careful not to take new skins too often. Eventually, however, the peasants came to believe that evil spirits haunted the lake. They avoided it, and cautioned travelers to do so as well. Shikageko became desperate and hungry.

In time a wandering monk came to the lake to meditate upon the serenity of the lake. Hungry as she was, Shikageko was wary of attacking the powerfully built monk. She stared at him for hours while he sat in absolute stillness and silence. Hours turned to days, and the days turned into a week. Finally, she could stand it no more. As the moon crept into the sky, she leapt from the reeds and attacked the monk.

The fight was brief, but very brutal. The monk's jiujutsu and powerful kiho were an even match for Shikageko's talons and supernatural strength. In the end, however, he could not overcome the hag's deadly prowess. As he knelt clutching his torn abdomen,



of bandits raiding a simple heimin family on the road. Appalled at her actions, she slaughtered the entire family in her rage. The hag wishes nothing more than to be free of the monk's corrupting influence, while retaining the gifts his skin grants. She has begun looking for an ally who can aid her. There is a *maho-tsukai* who travels the lands of the Scorpion in the guise of a merchant. He is young, but powerful in his own way. There are secrets she can offer him in exchange for his aid, and she has begun to contemplate approaching him.

Shikageko is an exceptionally crafty and dangerous enemy. Her frequent forays into Rokugan bring her into contact with many samurai, most frequently in her guise as the monk Murai. She will not hesitate to harvest a new skin to add to her collection, and her fondest wish is to spread chaos and misery throughout the Empire. Her rare moments of kindness and hospitality are followed by bouts of staggering hatred and violence as she rages against the image in her mind of the monk smiling at her.

Shikageko is, like all her kind, a true abomination to behold. Her skin is rotten and gangrenous, with filthy, matted hair and a stench like that of a bloated corpse that never fades. In her natural form she never strays far from water and constantly drips a foul, slimy substance. As Murai, Shikageko appears to be an older monk in prime physical condition, with extraordinary dexterity and coordination.

he looked up at the victorious hag and smiled through blood-smearred lips.

"You...shall be..." he sputtered, "my finest...student." With those words, he slumped to the ground, never to move again. Shikageko fell upon his corpse hungrily and quickly harvested his "garment" to wear. As she donned the monk's skin, she was overwhelmed by a flurry of sensations she did not understand. Disoriented from the experience and weak from combat, she collapsed.

Shikageko awoke to find herself in the care of the peasants of Taiyo One Toshi, who had taken in the wounded monk, believing that he had vanquished whatever spirit dwelled in the lake. She left their care as soon as possible and immediately returned to the Shadowlands.

Over the ensuing years, Shikageko has made many trips into Rokugan. The skin of the monk (a wandering ascetic named Murai who championed the cause of the people) has never degraded and remains as useful as ever. Shikageko values it above all her "garments" because of the potent powers it enables her to use. As the years have progressed, however, she has become aware of strange feelings and sensations that come over her when she wears the skin for lengthy incursions into the Empire. She occasionally finds herself meditating or offering simple prayers to the Fortunes, much to her horror. She even once leapt into combat against a trio

Yogo Junzo

Earth: 5

Water: 4

Fire: 3

Intelligence 5

Air: 7

School/Rank: Yogo Shugenja 3/Shadowlands 2*

Shadowlands Taint: 6.4

Shadowlands Symptoms: The power of the first Black Scroll has ravaged Junzo's body, transforming it into the visage of death itself. He resembles nothing so much as a shambling, rotted corpse.

Shadowlands Powers: Beyond the Elements, Corrupted Blood, Master of Blood, Outside the Elements, Thy Master's Will, Unearthly Regeneration, Unholy Vision

Spells: All known *maho* spells, plus many others. Elemental spells as the GM sees fit.

Advantages: Crafty, Forbidden Knowledge, Great Destiny, Strength of the Earth

Disadvantages: Benten's Curse, Driven (open the Black Scrolls), Overpowering Darkness, Yogo Curse



Skills: Calligraphy 5, History 4, Hunting 3, Investigation 5, Kenjutsu 2, Lore (Maho) 8, Lore (Shadowlands) 6, Meditation 3, Shintao 5, Stealth 5, Theology 5

* **Note:** Junzo's training with the Yogo Shugenja is beginning to atrophy and disappear as he walks further down the path of the Shadowlands. He has mastered new, more powerful magic and no longer practices the paltry ways of the Empire's shugenja.

How can they be so blind?

Junzo has always known that the physical is unimportant. None have ever understood that power and strength are all that matter. Shoju understood, or did until he was corrupted by that whore he married. Even then, he had the courage to try and save the Empire by placing himself upon the throne. He understood power.

When Shoju was killed for his actions, Junzo's soul cried out for revenge. He wished to damn the Empire and the clans for their lack of vision, and so he broke a promise kept since the dawn of Rokugan.

He broke the seal upon the first Black Scroll.

It was the most glorious moment of his life. At last he understood the ultimate truth: the physical is not unimportant... it is meaningless. That his physical form has become so corrupted means nothing. He is immortal now, and as such his power dwarfs

that of the fools in Rokugan who are bound to their karmic cycle by the petty gods they worship.

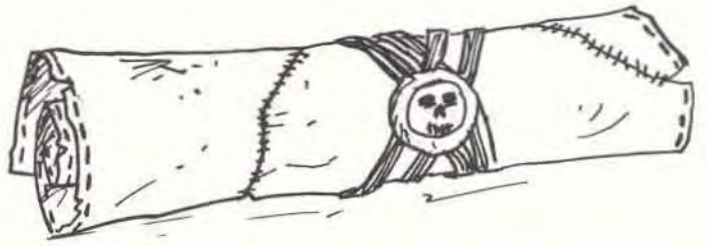
His subsequent journey to the Shadowlands only confirmed his new philosophy. The creatures there radiate power, magnificent energies that sustain them for centuries at a time. How could the clans not see the beauty and wisdom of this place?

Junzo will show them the truth. He must destroy the trappings of their false ways. The Brotherhood and the Fortunes must be desecrated, exposed for the lies they are. Only the one true Kami, his dark majesty Fu Leng, is generous enough to bestow true power upon his followers. His siblings are greedy, jealous weaklings who hoard their power and condemn their followers to a brief lifespan of a few decades while robbing them of the potential for greatness.

A massive horde of the Shadowlands has gathered in Junzo's name. They sense his power and recognize him as the favored servant of their master. Junzo's search for the Black Scrolls contained within the Shadowlands will soon be over. When he has learned all he can there, he will set forth into Rokugan to find and open the remaining scrolls. His horde will bring the truth of Fu Leng's superiority to all they encounter. And though they do not deserve it, he will bring the clans the sweet kiss of death and the unimaginable power of immortality as a resurrected servant of the Dark Lord.

Junzo will free the Empire from its bondage and show it the true meaning of power, no matter how many disbelievers he must kill to do so. Fu Leng will rule Rokugan, and Yogo Junzo, his loyal disciple, shall sit at his right hand.

Obviously, the dark powers Junzo has been exposed to have driven him mad. He now believes that he can destroy the belief system of Rokugan as it currently exists and unite the Empire in service to Fu Leng. A brilliant mind that once contemplated the intricacies of court, theology, and the ways of the kami has been shattered and now plots the downfall of the Great Clans. His very existence now only confirms the suspicions held by many that the Scorpion Clan was rife with corruption and dark magic.



Hida Amoro

Earth: 6

Water: 1

Strength 5

Fire: 2

Agility 3

Air: 1

Reflexes 3

Void: 1

School/Rank: Crab Berserker 3

Honor: 0

Glory: 2

Advantages: Large, Strength of the Earth (8 points), Death Trance (variant)

Disadvantages: Bad Reputation, Brash, Compulsion, Driven, Insensitive

Shadowlands Powers: Child of Darkness, Unholy Stamina, Greater Blessing of the Dark One, Feed on Flesh

Skills: Athletics 5, Hand-to-Hand 5, Intimidation 3, Kenjutsu 5, Tetsubo 5, Wrestling 5

Even before the Clan War began, bushi from all over Rokugan had heard of the infamous Hida Amoro. A berserker the likes of which no one had ever seen, Amoro embraced every character flaw which samurai abhor. He was rude and short-tempered, refusing to adhere to even the basic tenets of bushi. His temper remained on a permanent hair-trigger, ready to explode in a mindless rage at any moment. Legends held that he killed his own sensei at the age of twelve, and that the Hida school never acknowledged him as a true bushi.

None of it mattered to Amoro. His strength and stamina were almost inhuman, and his uncontrollable temper more than made up for his lack of formal training. Most Rokugani berserkers are so-called "dead eyes", entering a detached trance in battle which they learn through years of study and discipline. Not so Amoro. His berserk "trance" was a natural offshoot of his temper – a rolling red wave of hate that swept him along and did not subside until long after the battle is over. His combat prowess was a terror to behold. His body count often numbered in the hundreds, and if he ran out of foes to butcher, he would mindlessly turn on his own troops to sate his bloodlust. Before the war, he served mainly on the Kaiu Wall, where he could operate alone against the fearsome Shadowlands creatures which periodically attacked the Crab defense. His astonishing kill record (coupled with the belief that sooner or later he would meet his match) prompted the Crab commanders to quietly ignore his abhorrent personality.



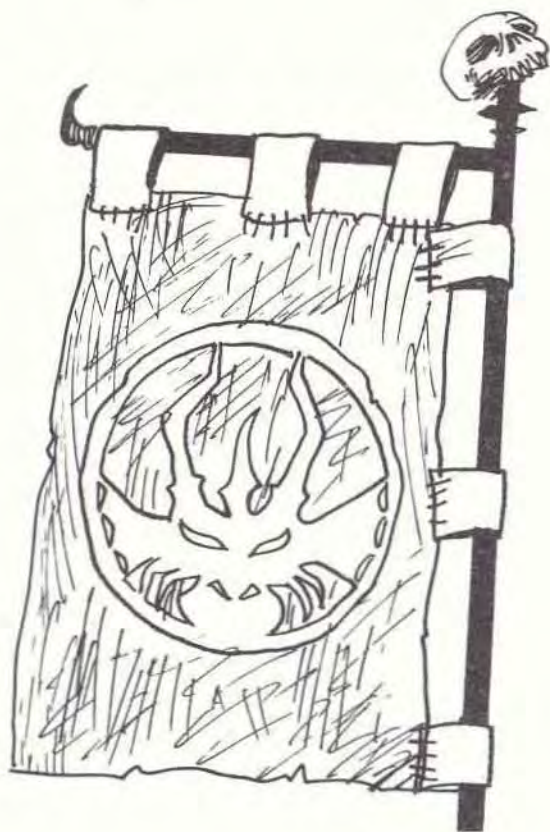
When the Clan War began, things changed. The Crab abandoned their long-held posts along the Kaiu Wall and began marching northward. Amoro was among them. His units skirmished several times with rearguard Crane forces, and each time Amoro emerged as the only survivor. Though Kisada was pleased with the victories, the berserker's toll on friendly forces was a source of great concern. He quietly considered placing Amoro on the field alone (an act which would have surely killed even a warrior so powerful as he), when Kuni Yori offered a gruesome solution. The shugenja animated a large number of zombies from a fresh battlefield and somehow bound them to Amoro's command. The berserker could thus continue his horrendous assaults against the Crane, while his undead troops absorbed both his blows and the enemy's without suffering harm. This solution proved remarkably effective, and Amoro's legion soon became universally feared throughout the Crane forces.

He was finally stopped just before the Battle of Beiden Pass. A group of Dragon *ise zumi*, accompanied by the Crane samurai Doji Kuwanan, intercepted his forces before he reached the Pass. The battle was fierce and ugly; the surviving Dragons do not speak of it and Kuwanan has sworn himself to silence, but Amoro's undead forces were utterly destroyed. The berserker himself apparently fell in battle; some say that Kuwanan slew him in an iaijutsu duel, while



others maintain that he somehow lost control of his troops, which promptly turned against him and tore him limb from limb. Whatever the reason, Kuwanan and the ise zumi finally ended his unholy rampage.

Or so it seemed. Recently, reports have filtered in to the Imperial City of a growing legion of zombies. Though bearing the Crab banner, they operate independently of Kisada's command, and the Great Bear has disavowed all knowledge of their activities. They are led by a undead warrior of great strength and cunning whose description matches Amoro's. He covers his rotting flesh with armor stitched from the hides of his victims, but his searing rage and primeval bellows match those of the dead berserker. The Asahina priests suspect that whatever magic he used to control his troops somehow infected him, causing him to be reborn as one of Fu Leng's corrupt followers. Whether he acts in Kisada's name or the Unspoken One's is irrelevant; if it is indeed Amoro, then his Shadowlands powers have rendered him even more powerful than he was in life. He must be stopped soon, or else his undying bloodlust will consume countless more innocent victims.



The unrepentant corrupt rarely experience the true cost of their crimes while still living. Only when they die do they finally understand the enormity of their sins. The gates of Yomi are forever closed to those who embrace the corruption of the Dark Lord. All that remains open to them is the desolate, forsaken realm of Jigoku, the realm of the damned. Here, the penance of the Tainted is measured by eternity.

While it is extremely rare, it is possible for the souls of the damned to escape their imprisonment. Powerful *maho-tsukai* summonings, accidents in the training of Kitsu *sodan-senzo*, or even sheer force of will by powerful spirits can lead to the release of corrupted spirits into the physical world.

These spirits are called *yokai*, the ghosts of the corrupted.

Yokai work in a fashion similar to ancestor spirits. They seek out those individuals who share similar goals or methods and watch over them, lending them a subtle hint of the power they once possessed in life. Unlike ancestor spirits, however, yokai are not overly concerned with the desires of those individuals they "guide." For the yokai, this process is far more about living vicariously through another than it is about furthering the goals of the Shadowlands as a whole.

Yokai are purchased in exactly the same way as Ancestors. Any character who possesses the Taint may purchase a yokai by paying the listed cost in Character Points. They then receive all listed benefits associated with the yokai. Be aware that some yokai have a negative point cost, and work in the same manner as Disadvantages.

Yokai: Chuda Bikomi (2 points)

Born to the Snake Clan after their descent into madness began, Chuda Bikomi was a great disappointment to his family. Utterly devoid of the ability to work magic through the kami, he was



relegated to serve as a simple yojimbo to his more mystically inclined relatives.

Bikomi was determined to contribute to the affairs of his family, regardless of whether or not he was a shugenja. He willingly embraced the Taint that had begun to spread throughout his entire bloodline, drawing upon it to make him faster and more cunning. Where many used the Taint to boost their strength and stamina to supernatural levels, Bikomi used it to master the art of stealth and subterfuge.

When blood was required for the Chuda's experiments into the nature of *maho*, it was Bikomi who would steal into the villages to the south and return suitable quantities. Magistrates who suspected the Snake Clan's corruption were found dead upon their tatami mats, their throats slit by Bikomi's blade. Those among the Chuda who could not reconcile their family's mission would leave the Snake lands, but never reach their destinations.

Prodigies of Chuda Bikomi share his talent for using the Taint to enhance their own speed and dexterity. When using the Taint to increase their Agility or Reflexes, their Shadowlands Rank is doubled.

Yokai: Gubukaru (-4 points, Shugenja Only)

Crab warriors still tell tales of Gubukaru upon the wall at night to remind themselves to never let down their guard. A goblin spellcaster, Gubukaru was an arrogant and self-important leader of a small warband of bakemono. Notoriously cunning for a goblin, Gubukaru would have his warriors create distractions so that he and a small number of his kind could infiltrate the wall. Once inside, they would desecrate shrines, destroy food stores, steal weapons, and generally wreak as much havoc as possible. What's more, Gubukaru's primitive, shamanic *maho* allowed them to claim the lives of several guards as well.

This deadly nuisance was dealt with once and for all by a Kaiu trap. Allowing the goblins to creep into the wall once more, the Kaiu lured them into an empty room and sealed them there. Lantern oil was generously applied through small holes in the walls before a torch was shoved in, ending the goblin's threat once and for all. Unknown to them, the finality of the Crab victory was undone when a Kitsu *sodan-senzo* inadvertently released Gubukaru from Jigoku, freeing his spirit to wander as a yokai.





Gubukaru only watches over those who practice maho. He delights in watching them strike down the uncorrupted, but becomes quite jealous of any *maho-tsukai* who demonstrates greater ability than he possessed in life. In his mind, after all, he was the greatest spellcaster who ever lived. Those guided by the Gubukaru's yokai receive 3 Wounds for each successful Raise they make casting any maho spell.

Yokai: Kotego (8 points)

For a time in the sixth century of Rokugan's history, the Crane Clan turned its attention from court matters stemming from the incident at Kenson Gakka to a series of murders within their own territories. Distracted by the hostilities between the Scorpion and the Lion, they had neglected to deal with a growing problem in their home provinces, and now nearly two dozen women and children had paid the price.

In efficient Daidoji fashion, the investigation was brief and intense. When it was concluded, a minor functionary of the Asahina had been executed for practicing *maho* based on the testimony of his superiors. These same superiors themselves came under suspicion when the murders continued after the execution. No less than six different samurai were dishonored or executed before the flurry of accusations slowed and the chief magistrate declared that a subversive cult was in fact responsible.

The province was heavily patrolled by Daidoji guards for nearly six months, and the family spurned all offers of aid from sources such as the Kuni witch-hunters. The situation was declared resolved after the death of an eta named Kotego. Terrified neighbors summoned the Doji magistrates to Kotego's home after his death, where they found a labyrinth of tunnels beneath his non-descript hovel. These tunnels contained several decades' worth of maho research and arcane materials for dark rituals.

Kotego watches over the discreet, helping to conceal them from prying eyes. A recipient of his tutelage may, when targeted by Taint-detecting abilities, make an Awareness roll versus the Awareness x 5 of the investigator. Success indicates that they have completely concealed their Taint.

Yokai: Kitsu Ujijyasu (5 points)

The tale of Kitsu Ujijyasu is one of the most tragic in all of the Ikoma records. He is held before young Kitsu in training as an example of the disaster that can befall the careless. As a young man approaching his *gempukku*, Ujijyasu had great difficulty in his lessons with the *sodan-senzo*. When alone, he was able to converse with the ancestor spirits easily, but could not perform adequately before his sensei. After months of this, he was expelled from the school, bringing great dishonor to his family.

Many months later, a passing Kuni witch-hunter informed the Kitsu that the young man was in fact communing with kansen rather than kami. Unfortunately, it was far too late, and Ujijyasu had become thoroughly corrupted by his exposure to the dark spirits. The kansen manifested to combat Ujijyasu's would-be executioners, and it took three *sodan-senzo* to keep them at bay while the grisly deed was committed.

Tainted individuals looked after by Ujijyasu's spirit receive his natural affinity for all Shadowlands creatures. In any social roll with creatures of the Shadowlands (intimidation, commands, and bargaining are all considered social rolls for this purpose), the character may roll and keep one additional die.

Yokai: Moto Yoshisuke (4 points)

Trained from childhood to be a living weapon against the Shadowlands, Moto Yoshisuke was considered to be one of the Moto family's finest warriors even at the time of his *gempukku*. Unfortunately, no consideration was ever given to his social training. During a brief stay at Shiro Ide, he overheard a light-hearted slight toward his family by a Crane courtier and immediately attacked and killed the man.

Horried and embarrassed, the Ide daimyo demanded Yoshisuke's *seppuku*. The young warrior refused, killing several guards who attempted to detain him. Fleeing the Unicorn provinces, he traveled south toward the Shadowlands, a place he had been destined for his entire life.

Arriving in the Crab lands, Yoshisuke demanded to be allowed to enter the Shadowlands that he might "cleanse the scourge that the Crab cannot." Angered, the Crab sentries refused him entry. He attacked and killed three armored men before scaling the wall and disappearing within the Dark Lord's realm.

Yoshisuke entered the Shadowlands planning to destroy anything he came across. Instead he found beings that shared his temperament and love of violence. He was lost to corruption within hours of entering. He rode alongside the Dark Moto for two decades before one of his destructive raids into the Kuni provinces ended in his final death.

Those haunted by Yoshisuke's yokai feel the same overwhelming violent urges that dominated his life. They receive two Free Raises on any Full Attack, but also must succeed on a Willpower roll versus a TN of 20 whenever insulted or slighted or immediately attack the offender.

Chapter Five

Sample

Characters



Character

Templates

Using These Templates

The very nature of Tainted characters makes them more difficult to use than the average character. Though all of these character templates are mechanically suitable for starting characters, placing them in a player character party can cause immediate problems. After all, what self-respecting Lion bushi or Unicorn shugenja would tolerate the presence of a Dark Moto in the party? It just doesn't make much sense without extenuating circumstances. A party constructed entirely out of Tainted characters is no better. The minions of the Shadowlands are divisive and treacherous, with their own separate goals and ideals. A few of these example characters are not even corrupted (yet) or are in denial about the nature of their corruption, and would be as belligerent towards other Tainted individuals as any ordinary samurai.




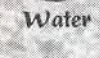





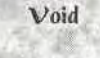
Common sense should prevail. The GM should avoid allowing characters that could not possibly survive the scrutiny of the rest of the party. It isn't fair to the player and it isn't fair to the GM, who probably hadn't planned on the player characters killing one another before the adventure begins. It is recommended that you use these characters as NPCs, especially as villains or foils for a group of low-level characters.

If you do choose to use one of these templates as a player character, the GM and player must carefully consider the character's place in the party. Make certain that the Tainted character has strong personal connections to one or more of the other characters. For example, take the aforementioned Black Rider template. Perhaps one of the other player characters is the Shinjo bushi with whom she has fallen in love. Another player character could be an Isawa shugenja who wishes to know more about the effects of Taint. This shugenja has agreed to protect the Black Rider so long as she causes no trouble, in return for the exclusive right to study her condition. Maybe a third player character is a Kuni Witch Hunter who has reluctantly agreed to the Phoenix's experiment at Lord Kisada's behest, but is watching the Black Rider very carefully for any signs that she has become a danger to others. Maybe the Black Rider has decided she wishes to redeem herself and turns to the other characters for help. Maybe her desire for redemption is all a farce and she only wants to drag the entire party into Jigoku.

The possibilities are endless if the GM and players are creative enough, but it should be noted that parties containing Tainted characters are fragile things. At any moment the entire campaign could grind to a standstill as the player characters turn on one another. The GM should be prepared for any eventuality before beginning such an endeavor.

Legend of the Five Rings™

Roleplaying

Stamina <u>3</u>		<u>3</u>
Willpower <u>3</u>		
Strength <u>3</u>		<u>3</u>
Perception <u>3</u>		
Agility <u>2</u>		<u>2</u>
Intelligence <u>3</u>		
Reflexes <u>2</u>		<u>2</u>
Awareness <u>3</u>		
Void Points Spent _____		<u>2</u>
		



Wounds

_____	<u>6</u>	+0
_____	<u>6</u>	+3
_____	<u>6</u>	+6
_____	<u>6</u>	+10
_____	<u>6</u>	+15
_____	<u>6</u>	+20
_____	<u>6</u>	Down
_____	<u>6</u>	Out
_____	<u>6</u>	Dead

Name: Student of Darkness

Clan: Lion

Profession: Shugenja

School: Kitsu Shugenja

Rank: 1

Insight: (Rings x 10) + Skills above 1 124

Shadowlands Taint: 0.1



Primary Weapon

Wakizashi 1k2

Roll & keep To Hit
Roll weapon Skill, keep Agility
2k2

Roll & keep Damage
Strength + Damage Rating
4k2

TN to Be Hit
Reflexes x 5 + armor if any
10 (no armor)

Initiative
Roll and keep Awareness; subtract Wounds
3k3

Glory: 1

□ □ □ □ □
□ □ □ □ □

Honor: 2

⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗
□ □ □ □ □



Skill Level

Astrology	<u>2</u>
Calligraphy	<u>1</u>
Etiquette	<u>1</u>
Heraldry	<u>1</u>
History	<u>1</u>
Kenjutsu	<u>2</u>
Meditation	<u>3</u>
Theology	<u>1</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Advantages and Disadvantages

Heart of Vengeance (Lion)	<u>+3</u>
Maho	<u>+2</u>
Gullible	<u>-3</u>
Dark Secret (Maho)	<u>-5</u>
Haunted (Kansen)	<u>-3</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____

Spells

<i>Sense, Commune, Summon,</i>
<i>Path to Inner Peace, Reflective</i>
<i>Pool, The Tie That Binds, Fires</i>
<i>From the Forge, Force of Will,</i>
<i>Cloak of Night, Summon</i>
<i>Undead Champion</i>

Innate abilities are in *italics*



Student of Darkness

What do they know? What do any of them know?

They told you that the ancestors would never heed your call. Even though you are a member of the proud Kitsu lineage, they told you that you would never be anything more than another shugenja. The powers of the *sodan-senzo* were forever beyond you. The ancestors were not listening. Your blood was not good enough.

Fools! You studied just as hard as any of the full-blooded Kitsu! You worked harder than most! Yet there was no room in the Temple of the Ancestors. You were exiled to a tiny temple to the Seven Fortunes, deep in the heart of the old Akodo lands. There you and your mediocre blood were forgotten.

As luck would have it, that temple was more than it appeared. One day while cleaning, you discovered a loose stone in the floor. Prying it aside, you were nearly overcome by the stench of raw decay. Terrified, you quickly replaced the stone lest something disastrous happen.

In time, you began to wonder about that tomb beneath the temple. What could be down there? Who sealed it there? Why? Surely you could handle whatever was sealed in that room. Perhaps you were not one of the vaunted *sodan-senzo*, but you were still a shugenja, were you not?

Prying the stone aside, you crawled into the tiny crypt. The walls were encrusted with slimy red moss, the color of dried blood. Chains of jade hung from the wall, shackling a skeleton long rotted and forgotten. Most interesting yet was the scroll case – shackled in chains as if it, too, could escape. When you slid the scroll free, a voice spoke in your head. Afraid, you tucked the scroll in your robes and left.

You have not used the scroll yet, but the voice speaks to you from time to time.






It tells you that the power to make ancestors rise again can still be yours.

It tells you that your blood is good enough.



Legend of the Five Rings™

Roleplaying

Stamina	<u>3</u>		<u>3</u>
Willpower	<u>3</u>	Earth	
Strength	<u>2</u>		<u>2</u>
Perception	<u>2</u>	Water	
Agility	<u>2</u>		<u>2</u>
Intelligence	<u>2</u>	Fire	
Reflexes	<u>3</u>		<u>2</u>
Awareness	<u>2</u>	Air	
Void Points Spent	<u> </u>		<u>2</u>
		Void	



Wounds

<u> </u>	<u>6</u>	+0
<u> </u>	<u>6</u>	+3
<u> </u>	<u>6</u>	+6
<u> </u>	<u>6</u>	+10
<u> </u>	<u>6</u>	+15
<u> </u>	<u>6</u>	+20
<u> </u>	<u>6</u>	Down
<u> </u>	<u>6</u>	Out
<u> </u>	<u>6</u>	Dead

Name: Damned Crane

Clan: Crane

Profession: Bushi

School: Damned Berserker

Rank: 1

Insight: (Rings x 10) + Skills above 1 117

Shadowlands Taint: 1.1



Primary Weapon

Katana 2k2

Roll & keep To Hit

Roll weapon Skill, keep Agility
3k2+3

Roll & keep Damage

Strength + Damage Rating
4k2

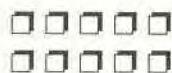
TN to Be Hit

Reflexes x 5 + armor if any
20 (Light Armor)

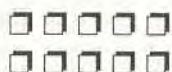
Initiative

Roll and keep Awareness; subtract Wounds
2k2+3

Glory: 1



Honor: 2



Skill

Level

Battle	<u>2</u>
Defense	<u>1</u>
Herbalism	<u>2</u>
Katana	<u>3</u>
Lore (Shadowlands)	<u>3</u>
Meditation	<u>2</u>

Advantages and Disadvantages

Different School	<u>+1</u>
Higher Purpose (Fight the Shadowlands)	<u>+2</u>
Shadowlands Taint	<u>-5</u>
Black Sheep	<u>-5</u>

Techniques

<u>Burning the Shadow</u>

Shadowlands Powers

Taint Sense

Taint Symptoms

Black, featureless eyes



Damned Crane

A year ago, you had an accident while on patrol in the Shinomen. While listening to what you thought was the sound of distant hoof-beats, you tripped on a tree branch and fell in the mud. Something crawled onto your face, injected itself into your eye, and died. Though you survived the illness that followed, a shugenja awakened you one morning and showed you your reflection in the mirror. Orbs of obsidian stared back from your eye sockets. Horrified at the corruption that consumed you, your family cast you from their presence.

You envy those with the luxury of dying quickly. Apparently, the Taint may linger for years before it destroys you. *Seppuku* is no solution. What dishonor would that cleanse? The dishonor of falling in the mud? Whose honor would such a deed save? Your family has already abandoned you. Your name has been stricken from their records. No. In this case, seppuku would be mere cowardice.

You journeyed to the lands of the Hida, seeking the only warriors who would still accept you. The Crabs looked at you with doubt, but only for a moment. When they saw your eyes, they knew what you were. They told you where you needed to go. You were led to the shabby barracks that house those who have fallen to Fu Leng's grip. You met the Damned and their Kuni commanders. Commanders? More like keepers. The *tsukai-sagasu* poke and prod you like an animal, waiting daily for you to tip over the edge.

So you are one of the Damned? The name seems fitting.

You have been taught to control your Taint and slow the corruption of your body. You have discovered that your Tainted eyes have an unnatural sense for other Shadowlands creatures. Though the Witch Hunters are suspicious of your power, they help you make good use of it. You are a tracker, a hound used to hunt other creatures of darkness. Each time you strike down a creature of darkness you feel a new purpose growing within you. Perhaps you were never meant to be a Crane at all.






You may not have a future, but for a time you have found a place.

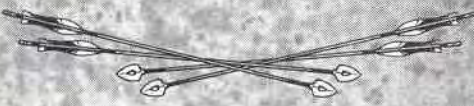
You will make the best of it.



Legend of the Five Rings™

Roleplaying

Stamina	<u>2</u>		<u>2</u>
Willpower	<u>2</u>	Earth	
Strength	<u>3</u>		<u>2</u>
Perception	<u>2</u>	Water	
Agility	<u>3</u>		<u>2</u>
Intelligence	<u>2</u>	Fire	
Reflexes	<u>3</u>		<u>2</u>
Awareness	<u>2</u>	Air	
Void Points Spent	<u> </u>		<u>3</u>
		Void	



Wounds

<u> </u>	<u>5</u>	+0
<u> </u>	<u>5</u>	+0
<u> </u>	<u>5</u>	+1
<u> </u>	<u>5</u>	+5
<u> </u>	<u>5</u>	+10
<u> </u>	<u>5</u>	+15
<u> </u>	<u>5</u>	Down
<u> </u>	<u>5</u>	Out
<u> </u>	<u>5</u>	Dead

Name: Black Rider

Clan: Unicorn

Profession: Bushi

School: Moto Black Guard

Rank: 1

Insight: (Rings x 10) + Skills above 1 117

Shadowlands Taint: 1.1



Primary Weapon

Yari 1k2

Roll & keep To Hit
Roll weapon Skill, keep Agility
3k3

Roll & keep Damage
Strength + Damage Rating
4k2+1 (5k3+1 from horseback)

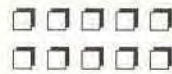
TN to Be Hit
Reflexes x 5 + armor if any
20 (Light Armor)

Initiative
Roll and keep Awareness; subtract Wounds
2k2

Glory: 0



Honor: 0



Skill Level

Defense	<u>1</u>
Horsemanship	<u>3</u>
Horse Archery	<u>1</u>
Kenjutsu	<u>1</u>
Lore (Shadowlands)	<u>2</u>
Stealth	<u>3</u>
Yarijutsu	<u>3</u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Advantages and Disadvantages

Heartless	<u>+2</u>
Strength of the Earth	<u>+2</u>
Moto Curse	<u>-0</u>
Shadowlands Taint	<u>-5</u>
True Love	<u>-3</u>
Lost Love	<u>-2</u>

Techniques

Power in the Darkness	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Shadowlands Powers

Blessing of the Dark One	<u> </u>
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Taint Symptoms

Pallid skin	<u> </u>
Gaunt, corpse-like appearance	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>



Black Rider

When you were little, your mother warned you not to stray too far or Moto Tsume would take you away. You thought it was a tale told to frighten children. You were wrong.

It was a week before your *gempukku*. Your parents had arranged your marriage with a Crab, but you would have none of it. You were in love with that green-eyed Shinjo boy, and you would see him no matter what they said. You were sneaking out to meet with him when the black rider appeared, galloping over the steppes on a skeletal steed, the Dark Lord's witchfire burning in his eyes. He rode you down and plucked you from the ground as gently as a flower. Holding you tightly, he bore you off into the Shadowlands.

You became one of them. A member of the Black Guard. You are a part of something far greater than the backwoods Moto who cower in Shinjo's shadow. You are powerful, merciless, invincible. You are a True Moto.

A month ago, you joined the True Moto on a raid into Unicorn lands. Your *onikage* was faster, more powerful, more responsive than any mortal steed. The Black Guard rode the night sky, circumventing the Kaiu Wall with Lord Tsume's dark magics. In a single night, your horde wiped a village from the map and moved on. The next day, you met sterner resistance. A sea of purple sashimono hovered on the horizon, the proud silver mon of Shinjo blazing in the rising sun. Battle was joined.

A proud Unicorn warrior galloped toward you. You held your blade high... and saw that green-eyed Shinjo boy you once loved... His eyes widened, and he stayed his blade. You should have killed him. In your moment of hesitation, another samurai knocked you from the saddle. Wounded and confused, you crawled off to hide.

The Black Guard are gone now, returned to the Shadowlands. You are lost and alone in Rokugan. You cannot cross the Wall by yourself. What disturbs you most is that you're not sure if you want to go back.

You wonder if he would accept you, despite what you have become.

You must see him one more time...





Unbroken Wanderer

You were born an abomination. Your father was a noble lord, your mother the peasant *maho-tsukai* who seduced him. Though your mother was executed for her crimes, your father could not bear to do the same to you. He gave you to a poor samurai family at the edge of his territory, and saw to it that your life would be anonymous and comfortable.

Your childhood was hardly comfortable. Early on, you discovered that your fingernails become sharpened claws when allowed to grow. Sometimes you heard voices encouraging you to hurt people. When you revealed these facts to your foster parents, they told you the truth. You had been born with your mother's Taint. They said that you only had two choices – either you could be strong and fight the corruption inside you for the rest of your life, or you could be weak and lose yourself to Fu Leng forever.

You could not accept either option. There had to be a cure. There had to be something you could do. This was not your fault. Why did you have to be the one born with such a terrible curse? You resolved that you would not go down without a fight. You would find a remedy for your condition. You left home for the lands of the Crab.

Someone else found you first. While passing through the Shinomen, you were surrounded by strange men and women wearing masks. They aimed their bows at you and prepared to fire, but another gave the order to halt. You turned toward the sound of the voice and saw yourself face to face with an enormous snake with the face of a man. Its form was alien and frightening, but its eyes were peaceful and its voice was calm. "You have found what you are seeking, little one," it said. "Like the others, you are bent but unbroken. Take my hand, and we shall mend your soul together."

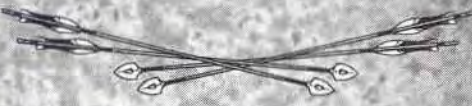
Since then, you have learned much from the strange ronin who call themselves the Unbroken, and the stranger creature that calls itself the Ashlim. You have become an enemy of the Shadowlands, and have learned how to destroy corruption to forge your own redemption. You do not have much time to purge the Taint from your body. It does not matter. If this is the only chance you have at a life free from corruption, you will take it.



Legend of the Five Rings™

Roleplaying

Stamina	<u>2</u>		<u>2</u>
Willpower	<u>2</u>		<u>2</u>
Strength	<u>2</u>		<u>2</u>
Perception	<u>2</u>		<u>2</u>
Agility	<u>3</u>		<u>3</u>
Intelligence	<u>3</u>		<u>3</u>
Reflexes	<u>2</u>		<u>2</u>
Awareness	<u>3</u>		<u>2</u>
Void Points Spent	<u> </u>		<u>3</u>



Wounds

<u> </u>	<u>4</u>	+0
<u> </u>	<u>4</u>	+3
<u> </u>	<u>4</u>	+6
<u> </u>	<u>4</u>	+10
<u> </u>	<u>4</u>	+15
<u> </u>	<u>4</u>	+20
<u> </u>	<u>4</u>	Down
<u> </u>	<u>4</u>	Out
<u> </u>	<u>4</u>	Dead

Name: Nameless One

Clan: Phoenix

Profession: Shugenja

School: Nameless One

Rank: 1

Insight: (Rings x 10) + Skills above 1 127

Shadowlands Taint: 0.0



Primary Weapon

Fine Tanto (5k1)

Roll & keep To Hit

Roll weapon Skill, keep Agility
3k3+2

Roll & keep Damage

Strength + Damage Rating
5k1

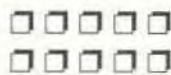
TN to Be Hit

Reflexes x 5 + armor if any
10 (no armor)

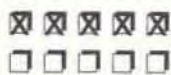
Initiative

Roll and keep Awareness; subtract Wounds
3k3

Glory: 1



Honor: 2



Skill

Level

<u>Etiquette</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>Go</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>Lore (Void Magic)</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>Meditation</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>Shintao</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Tanto</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>Tea Ceremony</u>	<u>1</u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>

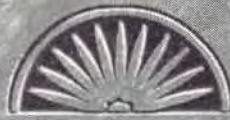
Advantages and Disadvantages

<u>Ishiken-do</u>	<u>+5</u>
<u>Magic Resistance</u>	<u>+2</u>
<u>Nameless One:</u>	
<u>Amnesia</u>	<u>-2</u>
<u>Spectral</u>	<u>-1</u>
<u>Hideous</u>	<u>-2</u>
<u>Can't Lie</u>	<u>-3</u>
<u>Lost Love</u>	<u>-2</u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Spells

Sense, Commune, Summon,
Sense Void, Drawing the Void,
The Fires That Cleanse,
Evil Ward, Jade Strike

Innate abilities are in *italics*



Nameless One

Who are all these people?

Who is that woman, and why does she cry when you are near? She seems so familiar... familiar, and yet... No, certainly she cannot be important or you would remember her. You would never forget someone so... but wait. There was someone... You can recall... a daughter? A wife? Who was she? The name... the face... all so far away now.

The world is such a strange place. No one looks you in the eye. Some are filled with fear, some with disgust, some with pity. The Void tells you this. The Void speaks to you as others do not. They all turn away. The Void stays true. You follow the Void's example; every word you speak is true. Sometimes, others do not appreciate that. Sometimes, your truth seems to hurt them. Like the time you told the Crane courtier that perhaps he would not have so much trouble concentrating before his daimyo if he were not confused by all the opium he had been smoking.

Why was everyone so upset by that? Could they not see the opium? It was there in his blood, plain as day. The Void showed you.

Sometimes... sometimes there is pain... You remember a library... and something dark and horrible clawing at your stomach... and then the Void... The Void saved you... Now you are different from everyone else.

Why must you be different? Why can't you remember anything?

The Inquisitors look upon you as if you are not human. As if you are a weapon to be carted about and stowed away when not in use. You are all too human. You would tell them as much... if only you could remember who you used to be.

Why won't anyone tell you who you were? Why won't anyone give you so much as a hint?


It does not matter. The dark and horrible thing is still out there... still consuming. You must stop it, must destroy it... before it consumes someone else.


Like that woman... that woman who is so dear to you... Whoever she is...





Legend of the Five Rings™


Roleplaying


Stamina 2  2


Willpower 2  2


Strength 2  2


Perception 2  2

Agility 2  2

Intelligence 3  2

Reflexes 2  3

Awareness 2  3

Void Points Spent _____  2



Wounds

4	+0
4	+3
4	+6
4	+10
4	+15
4	+20
4	Down
4	Out
4	Dead

Name: Mad Witch Hunter

Clan: Crab

Profession: Bushi

School: Kuni Witch Hunter

Rank: 1

Insight: (Rings x 10) + Skills above 1 120

Shadowlands Taint: 1.1



Primary Weapon

Tetsubo 1k3

Roll & keep To Hit
Roll weapon Skill, keep Agility
3k2+3

Roll & keep Damage
Strength + Damage Rating
3k3

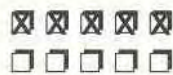
TN to Be Hit
Reflexes x 5 + armor if any
15 (no armor)

Initiative
Roll and keep Awareness; subtract Wounds
4k3

Glory: 1



Honor: 0



Skill	Level
Defense	<u>2</u>
Herbalism	<u>2</u>
Hunting	<u>2</u>
Katana	<u>3</u>
Lore (Shadowlands)	<u>3</u>
Stealth	<u>2</u>
Tetsubo	<u>3</u>

Advantages and Disadvantages

Large	<u>+2</u>
Quick	<u>+5</u>
Shadowlands Taint	<u>-5</u>
Brash	<u>-2</u>
Victim of Darkness	<u>-2</u>
Bad Fortune (disfiguring scar)	<u>-1</u>

Techniques

To Strike the Darkness	

Shadowlands Powers

Uncanny Speed	
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Taint Symptoms

Foul breath	
Festering scar	



Mad Witch Hunter

These things happen.

That's what you keep telling yourself.

In the meantime, you keep searching, trying to bring down as many of them as you can before you are Lost. The other Witch Hunters would be terrified to see what you have become. That's all right. This isn't their concern. Besides, it was not your fault. You did not see the second *maho-tsukai*, did not realize in time that his blade was Tainted. Before you could turn to face him, the obsidian blade was buried deep in your back.

Now you have a festering scar from hip to shoulder to show for your mistake, a scar that burns straight down to your soul. You have been touched by the Shadowlands, and it is slowly getting worse.

You know that you have made a few mistakes, have acted a bit irrationally. The bursts of speed you already display show that you are settling into the darkness a bit too comfortably. That bothers you, but not enough to report to your superiors. They would not understand. They would presume that you are being consumed by the power of Fu Leng and send you to a monastery to meditate for the rest of your life, however long that would be.

What purpose would that serve? You are a *tsukai-sagasu*! It is your duty to hunt evil! If anyone can fight back the darkness within, is it not you?

You will keep fighting. You will keep destroying the minions of Fu Leng, and use the power he has granted you if you must. If the Dark Lord was foolish enough to give his enemy such a gift, you would be a greater fool not to use it against him. If your Taint becomes too much of a problem, you can always stop using it later.

Right?





Appendix

Dealing With Corruption

Points of View

To help understand the Shadowlands, it helps to understand the mind-set of those that must deal with it. These individuals generally fall into the following four groups.

On the outside, looking in

This group encompasses those that may have some passing knowledge of the Shadowlands, but are as yet uncorrupted. These people are often mildly curious in some fashion, though they may never admit it. Most Rokugani, including most player characters, fall into this group.

On the inside, looking out

Some follow their curiosity too far. Some experiment with the powers of *maho*, not realizing what they are doing. Some wander too far beyond the Carpenter Wall without jade. Some end up, through no fault of their own, with the Taint. These individuals are

profoundly remorseful. They realize the peril they face, and seek a way to cure their condition. They generally avoid using superhuman powers granted by Taint. Player characters who become Tainted probably fall into this group.

On the inside, looking deeper inside

Sadly, many who become Tainted lose hope. Some do not willingly serve evil, but have resigned themselves to their fate and use their dark powers as a weapon (such as the Damned). Some embrace their fate and become willing servants of darkness (such as the Bloodspeakers). Sadly, there are a greater number of the latter than the former. These sorts of characters make excellent NPC villains, or, under the right conditions, dark and brooding player characters.

On the inside, looking for something to eat

Some embrace the Taint and think no further on the matter. They do not perpetrate evil for evil's sake. They do not fret about being hated and misunderstood. They simply are what they are, and what they are is *evil*. They care nothing for philosophy or conquest or revenge, but commit their atrocities for no reason at all. This is by far the most frightening and dangerous group, as they are completely unpredictable. Native inhabitants of the Shadowlands make up the majority of this group. A few Tainted humans fall into this area as well, notably the Moto Black Guard. This group is generally reserved for NPC villains. Player characters who become corrupted seldom degenerate this far before becoming Lost.

Tainted Psychology

Playing a Tainted character can be incredibly difficult. One of facet of such role-playing that is often overlooked is the difficulty of entering the mind-set of the doomed. The following is a brief and



extremely simplified primer on the psychological effects of recognizing one's own inevitable demise. A character who acquires the Taint is likely to undergo the following phases.

1) **Denial** – You refuse to acknowledge that you could possibly be Tainted. No amount of evidence will convince you; a shadow of doubt will always linger in your mind. You may convince yourself that it's all a bad dream. If you accept the truth, you will convince yourself that you will be able to overcome your corruption.

2) **Anger** – You are prone to outbursts of temper, either toward the Shadowlands or toward any others that you consider responsible for your condition (including those that diagnosed it). This may be accompanied by envy and resentment toward people who do not have the Taint.

3) **Bargaining** – You attempt to alleviate your condition through promises, usually with the Fortunes, the kami, or other powerful forces. Some may attempt to bargain with Fu Leng for a just a few more months of sanity. This is a dangerous phase indeed, for sometimes Fu Leng is listening.

4) **Depression** – An overwhelming feeling of hopelessness consumes you as you begin to realize there is no way to fight the condition. You might spend a great deal of time regretting past mistakes, agonizing over future opportunities missed, or worrying about what will happen to you when you finally become Lost. A character in the depths of depression may be left completely unable to act, and may even consider taking his own life in defiance of his daimyo's wishes.

5) **Acceptance** – This final phase is achieved with no particular degree of happiness or sadness, but a final realization that there is truly nothing you can do. You can now get on with your life, making the best of what little time you have left.

Though the above sequence is common, there are a number of other reactions to adverse psychological stimuli that could be combined with the above by a player who wishes to better roleplay the Taint. If some of these seem out of character, then consider them all the more seriously. Sometimes the human mind reacts to an adverse, stressful condition in a peculiar manner. The slow corruption and insanity the Taint brings is stressful indeed, and could cause even the most stable samurai to begin acting erratically. It should be noted that the following are not mental symptoms of the Taint itself, but simply the human mind's reaction to a horrible situation.

Repression

Instances of motivated forgetting. No amount of convincing will make you remember, and you may become offended at the implication that you could forget anything. "I've never even been to

the Shadowlands. I don't know what any of you are talking about, but this isn't funny anymore."

Rationalization

You produce excuses for what has happened rather than dealing with the real problem. "I don't have the Taint. Those Witch Hunters are just out to get me. They've always been jealous of my success."

Fantasy

You construct an elaborate fantasy regarding yourself and his situation, and proceed to launch yourself into it with no regard to reality whatsoever. "This is all a test! A test from the Fortunes! They want me to cure my Taint and then... and then I shall go on to become a great hero! An honored ancestor! I accept the challenge!"

Displacement

You take out your anger and aggression toward a substitute rather than expressing emotion in a normal or healthy manner. "Me? Tainted? Whatever. This is all a Crane plot. I swear I'll bathe in their blood before I let them see me sweat."

Projection

You begin to see the Taint in others and use it as an excuse for your own behavior. "So I hide my Taint. Everybody does it. I bet Hida Kisada has the Taint. How could he live so close to the Shadowlands so long and not have the Taint? I bet that's why he wears that helmet all the time. Well, if he can get away with it so can I"

The Mind of Corruption

"I have tried fighting the Shadowlands. I have tried running from the Shadowlands. In my darkest moments, I have even considered surrendering to the Shadowlands. Only one thing have I learned. The Shadowlands is alive, aware, and playing a game with us all. If you are not prepared to learn the rules of its game, I only have one piece of advice.

"Stay away from the Shadowlands."

–Hiruma Zunguri, Crab Clan Scout

The Shadowlands is alive, thinking, moving, acting at all times. It is not an intelligence as humans would understand it, but the land does seem to react to those who enter. Many say that the Shadowlands seeks to corrupt and destroy every living being that enters it. This is partially the truth, but it is not the primary motivating factor behind the Shadowlands' awareness.

Surprisingly, the Shadowlands merely wants to be left alone.



The Shadowlands has maintained a delicate balance at the edge of Rokugan for ten centuries by maintaining a proper level of fear. It must seem intimidating enough to keep its enemies at arm's length, while not appearing so dangerous that the clans unite to wipe it off the map. Indeed, if the Great and Minor Clans were to ally as one and attack the Shadowlands, the hordes of oni, bakemono, undead, and other abominations would be too disorganized and scattered to present a unified defense. Though the samurai armies have no reliable way of crossing the Black Finger River, the Shadowlands is not prepared to sacrifice ground and throw away troops fruitlessly. Instead, the land is playing a waiting game while the beasts of darkness await the return of the one that can lead them all to victory – Fu Leng.

Until that day, the Shadowlands reacts to each of those that enter in a suitable manner. It feeds upon fears, finds weaknesses, and attempts to make a visitor's experience so generally unpleasant that he does not wish to return. Those who enter unprepared are killed or corrupted. Those who take precautions against the Taint and environmental dangers receive more personal attention.

To say that the Shadowlands only seeks to kill and corrupt is to minimize the actual threat. The sinister intelligence of the Shadowlands thinks in the long term, and knows that allowing one terrified bushi to barely survive will cause five more to lose their courage once they hear the tales of the one that "escaped." This is the greatest secret of the Shadowlands. Those that are shown Jigoku's mercy seldom recognize it. Those who do escape are often hideously scarred, physically, mentally, or both, as a reminder of the encounter and a warning to others.

Those who know the Shadowlands well can testify that it seems a strangely moody place. The temperament of the land changes over the course of time, and the danger it brings increases and decreases proportionately.

At times, the power of corruption seems to swell within the Shadowlands. The land becomes more dangerous than normal, the frequency of attacks upon the Carpenter Wall increases, and even the weather can be downright deadly. The Crabs call these "angry seasons." They can last anywhere from a few days to a year. Defenses on the Wall are increased during the bad seasons, and even the Hiruma are loath to enter the Shadowlands' borders.

At other times, the Shadowlands seems almost peaceful. The weather is relatively constant, and though the threat of the Taint is always present, the inhabitants of the dark lands become less active. Exploration is much easier than normal during these periods, but the Crab are wary about allowing anyone past the borders during these times. These periods are also punctuated by brief outbursts of bizarre phenomena. Ruined castles appear from nowhere, sudden storms ravage the landscape, and time itself can be disrupted

severely. The Hida call these periods "prologue," as they are always followed immediately by an angry season. The prologue seems to serve no other purpose than to lull outsiders into a false sense of security, then trap them within the Shadowlands' borders.

It can be argued that the safest time to enter the Shadowlands is during the periods when Shadowlands activity is neither at a peak nor a lull. Though the normal dangers still remain, at least there is none of the extraordinary danger that comes from the extremes. Many Kuni that live near the Carpenter Wall make their living by reading the elements in an attempt to predict what will happen in the Shadowlands next. Though they are often wrong in their calculations, they are accurate enough that the Crab scouts regularly check their forecasts before daring an expedition.

Curing the Taint

Characters who have contracted the Taint may be left with a feeling of hopelessness. This is not entirely inappropriate. Shugenja have been searching for a way to cure the Taint for ten centuries, and have arrived at no satisfactory conclusions. Officially, there is no easy way to cure the Taint. For those who wish to try, the following suggestions are given. Only a handful of these methods are guaranteed to work. As for the rest, whether or not they are successful is entirely up to the GM.

Tea of Purification

Tea of Jade Petals is known to be an effective measure of fighting the Taint's growth, but it does not remove the infection completely. Some Nezumi tribes tell tales of a great stone of pure green that rests at the edge of the Festering Pit. If this stone truly exists, and it is composed of jade, its purity must be remarkable indeed. If some of this jade could be harvested and sprinkled over the jade lotus, perhaps a tea could be brewed that would cure the Taint? Only the Nezumi could get close enough to the stone to harvest a bit of it and find out. Perhaps you could offer something to the ratlings that would make such a dangerous mission worth their while.

Enlightenment

The Cleansing Spirit is a state of mind achievable by many enlightened monks. Those who obtain it can cure themselves of the Taint and restore purity to their bodies. However, this requires that the Tainted become a monk (see the Retirement rules in *The Way of Shinsei*) learn the Cleansing Spirit kiho, and spend a great deal of time in purifying meditation. It could take years, during which time the Taint slowly increases. Perhaps a monk exists somewhere whose spirit is so enlightened that he can extend the Cleansing Spirit to others?



Hidden Artifacts

The cure to the Taint may lie in some ancient, forgotten *nemuranai*. The Tears of Lady Doji were said to have such an effect. If you can find such a lost artifact, you may be able to cure yourself. Finding the clues that would lead to such a thing could be an adventure in itself. If the cure is in short supply, the party may find themselves in a race with other Tainted in an attempt to be the first to take advantage of it.

The Naga

The Ashlim has met with some success curing the Taint in the Unbroken, but the process is not perfect. A Tainted character might discover the Unbroken and volunteer to become a member. Perhaps a shugenja within the party may offer to add his own knowledge to the Jakla and work alongside the Naga to find a cure, or to help modify the magic that prevents Naga from becoming Tainted so that it would work for humans.

Nezumi Blood

Nezumi are naturally immune to the Taint. Some Kuni have conjectured that by entirely replacing a man's blood supply with that of a ratling, immunity to the Taint could be achieved. The rare Kuni that have dared to experiment along these lines have met with disastrous results, and are exiled from Crab lands if they are caught. Even yet, the possibility lingers that perhaps this technique is not as mad as it sounds...

Fight Fire With Fire

Who would know the secrets of the Taint better than the Lost? Perhaps there exists some powerful *maho* ritual that can expunge the touch of corruption from one's soul. The cost of such a magic would be great indeed, no question, but if it could save your soul perhaps it would be worth the price. It is widely known that oni steal human names in order to link themselves to Ningen-do. Could a human steal the name of an oni to force the darkness back where it belongs?

The Shadow

The powers of the Lying Darkness might be able to strip away corruption, just as surely as it strips away everything else. Is losing your entire sense of identity worth the salvation of your soul? Are you really saving anything at all, or merely signing on for another type of servitude? Others have escaped the Lying Darkness before; perhaps you would be better off taking your chances against the power of Nothingness.

Divine Intervention

A Kami, a Fortune, or Elemental Dragon may have the power to remove the Taint. The only problem is convincing them to do so. Divine beings typically stay out of mortal affairs, and directly challenging the power of Fu Leng by stealing one of his minions would cause quite a ruckus throughout the spiritual realms. How do you – a small, insignificant mortal – convince the gods that you are worth the effort?

Outside Assistance

Perhaps the shugenja of Rokugan are too close to the problem. Perhaps the secret to unraveling Fu Leng's corruption does not lie within Rokugan, but involves the strange magic of the barbarians. You may have to brave a perilous journey to strange and distant lands, with no guarantee of success, to cure your Taint. The *gaijin* lands offer entirely new dangers, however, and the Dark Lord may make a more concentrated effort to corrupt you in return for a chance to spread his Taint to other lands.

Surviving the Shadowlands

From a letter to Doji Motoshi of the Crane

Doji-sama,

Your son is dead.

Would that I could tell you of his valiant death against the minions of the Dark One. But we Crab are poorly versed in the flowery language of the court, and I may only write of what happened.

Your son Yorito arrived in our lands some ten days past. He was lavishly equipped with the finest weapons and provisions that the boundless wealth of the Crane can buy. Yorito's demeanor was optimistic. He would journey into the Shadowlands, he said, and return with a trophy to shame that of his cousin Doji Kuzwanan. Our attempts to dissuade him met with no success. We provided him with the jade he requested, of course. It would have been a dishonor not to remember your family's contribution of crops during our hardships last winter. Thus equipped, Doji Yorito set forth into the Shadowlands.

We believe he died within six hours.

Despite our attempts to counsel him on protection, Yorito refused to hear our recommendations, relying instead on his own studies of the Dark Lord's realm. He was indeed well equipped, but failed to



protect his rations from the Taint. They became corrupted, and our scouts believe that at some point he consumed a diseased rice ball.

He died within an hour. His death was not an easy one.

I regret that we are unable to return his ashes to you, but his body was destroyed within the Shadowlands so that your family might not be dishonored by his unwilling service to the Dark Lord.

May Amaterasu ease your suffering.

Hiruma Nunori

The Shadowlands is the single most hostile environment that a samurai will ever face. It is a living, self-aware ecosystem. All who enter will be toyed with, mocked, tortured, and eventually killed if they stay. Those who escape its wrath have earned but a brief respite, for it will remember them and their family. And one day it will have revenge.

It is hell on earth.

Yet somehow, despite all of this, there are those who willingly journey into the Shadowlands, risking their lives and souls for the greater good of the Empire. These fearless samurai, led by the valiant Hiruma family of the Crab, accept the horror and death that awaits them as necessary risks in the quest for information that may one day lead to the ultimate destruction of the Shadowlands.

The Foremost Rule

Above all else, a samurai in the Shadowlands must never permit fear to dull his senses. Fear has no place in the heart and soul of the samurai. The greatest weapon a samurai possesses in the midst of the Shadowlands is his mind, and the loss of it is almost inevitably fatal. A calm, rational man can survive in the Shadowlands for days with precious little else in the way of equipment. A well-equipped fool can die within sight of the Great Wall.

Samurai must be aware of their senses, but not place trust in them. They must not trust anything, no matter how familiar or harmless it may seem. The Shadowlands is a realm of death and corruption, and even the most innocent image can be filled with peril and murderous intent.

Basic Equipment

Several important pieces of equipment aid a samurai on a mission in the dark lands. The first and most important is jade. Jade must be taken even for trips that should not be of significant duration. Distance in the Shadowlands is a strange, mutable thing, and missions intended for a few short hours can stretch into weeks. Thus the Dark Lord punishes the foolish for their lack of foresight: an expensive lesson indeed.

With jade secured, a samurai's attention should be turned to his weapons. The Crab advocate taking a primary weapon, often a

tetsubo, with a secondary weapon ready should something happen to the first. Most Crab carry their daisho as a backup for their primary weapons. A weapon is absolutely essential for a trek in the Shadowlands, for rare is the creature or even plant that one finds there without some lethal attack. The thick carapace or armor found upon many of the denizens of the dark realm dictates a secondary weapon, as even the strongest blades have been known to break upon the hide of certain monstrosities.

The necessity of armor is somewhat in question when trekking through the Shadowlands. Stealth and speed are of paramount importance, and armor can hinder a samurai in this regard. However, many of the small dangers of the dark realm, such as poisonous insects and thorned plants, can be avoided with appropriate armor. This is left to the discretion of the individual samurai. The Hiruma rarely wear more than light armor, if that much, while Hida bushi who infiltrate the Shadowlands rarely leave behind their characteristic heavy armor.

With offense and defense accounted for, the samurai must take into account the need for sustenance. The Crab supply travel rations to most who enter the Shadowlands through appropriate channels. These rations, while hardly a delicacy, consist of dried and tightly packed rice and fish. Food and water spoil very quickly in the Shadowlands. To compensate for this, it is recommended that a samurai store his jade in the same container as his food. In addition to protecting his body from the Taint, the jade also protects his rations. There have been some experiments among the Kuni with containers that have minor Earth Wards placed upon them to protect food and water, but these are rare.

Other basic essentials for traveling in the Dark Lord's realm include flint and steel (although lighting a fire in the Shadowlands is difficult at best and deadly at worst), a map (for those not traveling with a knowledgeable Hiruma scout), and blankets for warmth should the need to stay overnight arise.

Specialized Needs

There are particulars that should be considered depending upon the nature of the mission in question. Standard incursions by the Crab clan include reconnaissance, recovery, and seek-and-destroy missions, though a wide variety of more infrequent journeys occur (such as the Kuni family's grotesque searches for test subjects). These outings require careful consideration and planning with regards to equipment.

One item that is coming into frequent use is the so-called "hearthstone" created by the Kuni family. This is a particular type of *tsangusuri* developed by the Asahina and given as a gift to the Crab. The stone contains the essence of a spirit of fire, and generates considerable heat without light. Many scouting parties have been



saved from bizarre weather conditions by use of this stone when a fire would have exposed them to hostile forces.

Camping in the Shadowlands

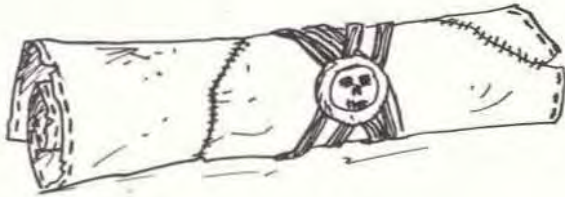
No samurai has ever willingly stayed the night within the Shadowlands. Many do so for the good of their clan and the Empire, but it is at best a nightmarish experience that can unhinge the mind of even the most stalwart bushi. The fluctuating light conditions, foul smells and unspeakable sounds ensure that few are able to rest while beyond the Wall.

The Hiruma have established what is considered the safest means of camping while in the Dark Lord's realm. Depending upon the size of the party, the group splits into smaller two- or three-man groups. These smaller groups sleep close together to conserve body heat (fires are very difficult to keep lit in the Shadowlands, and they serve as beacons for the night creatures that hunt there). The split-up units sleep a fair distance from one another so that a threat to one will not catch all the units unaware. The units rotate a watch, so that one full unit of two or three trained bushi are on watch at all times. This is necessary, as there are many threats that can kill a single guardian instantly and then proceed to decimate the group in their sleep.

Traveling in the Shadowlands

Moving through the dark realm is akin to balancing upon the razor edge of a katana. One misstep and death is the only outcome. Parties traveling in the Shadowlands can neither stay too close to one another nor stray too far, as there is great danger in either. Clustering together presents a target of opportunity to the enemy, while straying too far apart allows various creatures to pick off or even replace careless samurai.

The optimum mode of travel is in a staggered line, with perhaps three or four *ken-an* between party members. Anyone who disappears from sight for even the briefest moment must be considered an enemy until they can prove otherwise. Bog hags are the least of Fu Leng's minions with the power of deception. The most experienced scout should take the lead position, followed by any shugenja the party might contain and their yojimbo. The position at the end of the line should always be occupied by a bushi of exceptional cunning and prowess, for this is perhaps the most vulnerable place in the line.



Oni and the Dark Oracles

By Any Other Name...

Hideo fell from his horse, hands clutching the sides of his skull as pain shot through his eyes, fingers, every fiber of his being. Koturi winced. From where he waited several feet away he could hear his brother's teeth grind together. When Hideo finally looked up, a savage fire glowed in his burnt-out eyes.

"It's that way," he said, pointing to the east. "I can sense it. I can smell it."

"How?" Momuko asked, frowning in concern. "How do you know which way the oni went?"

"Why don't you ask my brother?" Hideo leveled his gaze at Koturi. "He's the great shugenja, isn't he?" Hideo lifted his ono from the ground, propped it over one shoulder, and marched off across the barren landscape.

Momuko looked at Koturi sadly, but Koturi could not meet her eyes.

When an oni is first summoned to Ningen-do, it must be granted the name of a human being or it cannot create a physical form for itself. By drawing upon the power of this name, the oni increases its power in the physical realm. Like a parasite, the oni draws power and sustenance from the host until it no longer needs the link to maintain its existence. The stronger the name, the stronger the oni will eventually become.

How a Name is Taken

In many cases, a shugenja who summons an oni will give the beast his own name. Even the most unskilled *tsukai* realizes that this is a bad idea, and will generally avoid doing so whenever



possible. A more attractive prospect is stealing the name of someone else.

The summoner cannot merely give an oni any name he pleases. A connection must exist between the summoner and host or the name will not be acceptable. One of the following conditions will satisfy the oni and allow it to enter the physical world.

1) The host voluntarily surrenders his name to the summoner. The summoner may then take give the host's name to an oni at any point later on. A name taken under torture will satisfy this condition, so long as the host submits. Magically inducing a subject to surrender his name does *not* work.

2) If the host owes the summoner his life, the summoner may give the host's name to an oni. If the host saves the summoner's life in return before the oni is summoned, this condition is violated. It should be noted that a samurai *always* owes his life to his lord. Those who choose to become ronin are safe from the potential harm of a *maho*-abusing daimyo, but once the name has been given, nothing can take it back save the destruction of the oni.

3) Certain oni summoning rituals allow an oni to manifest a small part of itself in the mortal world, usually a hand, eye, or tooth. If a host can be induced to accept the oni's gift as part of his own body, his name has effectively been given to the oni. If the host ever voluntarily removes and destroys the oni's gift, the link is broken. Most such "gifts" bestow substantial supernatural powers on the host. Resisting their temptation can be quite difficult.

Stealing the name of another is always a matter of delicate balance. The more powerful the host, the more powerful the oni will eventually become. However, choosing too strong a host may make it difficult for the oni to impose its will. Choosing a host that will resist the temptation of the Taint will give the oni a greater opportunity for growth, but a resistant host might also pose a threat to the young demon.

A host cannot have his name bound to more than one oni at a time. Once the oni is free, it may create spawn that share its name. Oni still bound to a living mortal are always unique.

Other Creatures' Names

It has been theorized that other creatures besides humans could have their names bound to oni. Oni do not accept the names of animals. Neither do they accept the names of Naga or Nezumi, as their immunity to the Taint makes them poor hosts. Spirits such as kappa and kitsune are likewise unsatisfactory, as their own presence in the mortal realm is tenuous at best. It is possible that the names of kenku, zokujin, ningyo, and other living mortal creatures could be used.

Growth and Development

When a name-bound oni is summoned, it begins its unholy existence as a Lesser Oni. (See the "Creating Oni" section in the *GM's Guide*.) These oni may have one Minor Shadowlands Power and one Major Shadowlands Power. The oni immediately knows its summoner and its host, and will recognize them no matter how they disguise themselves. In addition, the oni possesses a strong link to its host. The creature is able to sense its host's emotional and physical state, although it cannot actually read its host's thoughts. An oni has an acute sense for when its host is strong and when he is weak.

Once per week, the young oni may attempt to draw power from its host's name. The host must make an opposed Willpower roll against the oni. If the oni succeeds, the host gains two points of Shadowlands Taint. If the host wins, he has terrible nightmares but suffers no other ill effects. Each time it loses, the oni gains a cumulative +5 bonus to its opposed roll until it wins, at which time the process begins again with no bonus. Keep in mind that the oni knows when its host is weak, and will attempt to draw power at the most inconvenient times (under severe Wound penalties, no Void Points remaining, etc.). Each time the oni wins the opposed roll, it may increase one of its Traits by one, permanently. The oni must increase its Traits until all of its Traits are equal to the host's. If the host only has 3 Stamina, for example, the oni could not increase its Stamina to a 4 until the rest of its Traits matched the host's.

An oni that has increased all of its Traits to the level of its host may select additional Shadowlands Powers instead of increasing Traits. It can trade two successful tests for one Minor Power, 4 successful tests for one Major Power, or 6 successful tests for one Greater Power, following the normal prerequisite rules for Shadowlands powers. Keep careful track of how many tests the oni has won, as this is important to record its development.

When the oni succeeds at five Willpower tests, it becomes a "true" Oni (no longer a Lesser Oni). It now gains an additional Minor and Major Shadowlands Power. When the oni wins fifteen Willpower tests, the oni becomes a Major Oni. It gains an additional Minor Power, an additional Major Power, and one Greater Power. The rare oni which wins thirty Willpower tests becomes a true Oni Lord and requires special consideration.

Oni in the early stages of development are often protective of their hosts, as a dead host means no further growth. They usually seek to avoid harming their hosts, and may even obey their host's commands instead of those of the summoner. If they can arrange an agreement where the host intentionally fails his Willpower tests, the oni will become extremely cooperative.



An oni continues making opposed Willpower checks each week until the host becomes Lost. At this time, all potential contained within the host's name is exhausted. No further Willpower tests are made, and the oni ceases to become any stronger. Once the host's name is exhausted, all bets are off. Most oni cease being cooperative and protective, disposing of their host as quickly as possible to eliminate a potential threat.

The Host

The oni is not the only one changed by name-binding. The host also experiences a variety of strange magical changes, changes which weaken him significantly but also make him uniquely equipped to deal with the demon.

The Shadowlands Taint gained by being linked to an oni is special. Symptoms gained by this Taint tend to be minor. Though this Taint is affected by all things which normally affect Shadowlands Taint, it is not permanent, and those knowledgeable in Shadowlands Lore can identify the symptoms of the Oni-Bound (TN 25). If the oni dies before the host becomes Lost, all of the host's Taint and symptoms vanish, permanently.

There are always exceptions, of course. If the victim ever intentionally uses his Taint, or develops Shadowlands Powers, then he has embraced the Taint and doomed himself. Killing the oni will no longer remove the Taint, though it will stop the weekly Willpower tests.

As the host's Taint increases, so does his bond to the oni. The host gains an increasingly stronger sense of the oni's location and activities. Unfortunately, the host also develops an irrational reluctance to harm the oni, which increases as the oni grows stronger. All of the following are cumulative.

Less Than 1 Rank of Taint

Host has a dim awareness of the oni's location from time to time, mostly in his dreams. Has nightmares whenever the oni does something particularly terrible.

Taint Higher Than Lowest Ring

Host may make a Perception roll vs. TN 15 once per day to know what direction the oni lies in regards to himself. Target may no longer make Raises on any rolls against the oni.

Taint Higher Than Two Rings

As in "Higher Than Lowest Ring", but the host may attempt the Perception roll once per hour. Oni may make an opposed Willpower roll to prevent the use of this ability. All the host's attack rolls against the oni suffer a +10 TN penalty.

Taint Higher Than Three Rings

Host can make a Perception roll vs. TN 20 once per day to see the oni's current location and what it is doing. This vision lasts several minutes. Host may no longer spend Void Points against the oni for any reason.

Taint Higher Than Four Rings

Host knows the oni's location and what it is doing at all times, unless the oni makes an opposed Willpower test to block the ability for one hour. Host gains a point of Shadowlands Taint each time he attempts to attack the oni (like the Taint gained from failed Willpower tests, this Taint is not permanent).

When a character becomes Lost, he maintains his link with the oni. For this reason, many oni hunt down their former hosts and destroy them rather than allow a threat to linger.

Tea of Jade Petals

A host who treats himself with Tea of Jade Petals can temporarily relieve himself of his Taint symptoms as normal. Unfortunately, the Tea does nothing about extra Taint accumulated by failed Willpower tests. While Taint will not affect a host in any way while he is using the tea, the oni still grows stronger and the GM keeps track of the increase of Taint normally. While under the effects of Jade Petal Tea, the host cannot track or sense the Oni. All penalties imposed when facing or rolling against the oni remain.

Oni-Bound and Oni Hunters

There are two groups currently operating in Rokugan that have a special hatred for oni – the Kuni Witch Hunters and the recently awakened Naga.

Witch Hunters know the intricacies of the host-oni relationship quite well. If a host is bound against his will, the *tsukai-sagasu* will do everything in their power to destroy the beast before it is too late. In most cases, they take the host along on the hunt so that the beast can be tracked more easily. If an oni seems too powerful, the Witch Hunters will kill the host without hesitation to prevent it from growing any stronger, though they take no pleasure in such a grisly deed.

The Naga have no knowledge whatsoever about oni-binding. Oni cannot take the names of Naga, and the creatures of the Foul that they once battled came directly into the mortal world through portals similar to the Festering Pit. The Jakla know that there is some connection between oni and mortal pawns, but they don't understand it yet. They would like to study the phenomenon in detail, but other difficulties with the Awakening are more pressing



at the moment. Humans willing to share such information would be welcomed with relatively open arms.

Oni Lords

Very rarely, an oni who takes the name of a mortal may obtain such power that it becomes an Oni Lord. These creatures wield unimaginable power, second only to Fu Leng himself. Luckily, the probability of an oni taking a name so powerful and living to take the full power of its host is very small. Only six times in the history of the Empire have such creatures been unleashed, and each one is unique. There are really no rules to creating an Oni Lord, as it should happen so rarely – if at all – that the GM should use his own judgment. However, all currently existing Oni Lords have a few powers in common.

Spawn

All Oni Lords possess the ability to create lesser spawn of itself – Lesser, or in some cases True, Oni. These spawn usually resemble the oni at an earlier stage of its development. The Oni Lord can monitor and control its spawn at all times, and need not fear their betrayal. They are essentially nothing more than remote extensions of itself, much like an arm or a leg.

Banishment

The Oni Lord gains the power to banish its physical form to Jigoku to prevent its death, but cannot return again unless summoned. It may send its spawn to the mortal world via the Festering Pit or other portals, but cannot free itself without assistance. Such a thing is said to have happened many years ago to the First Oni, the Maw, and the Oni Lord Akuma. The Bloodspeakers once had magics that could free an Oni Lord, but these were lost with the defeat of Iuchiban.

Corruption Aura

The area within a mile of the Oni Lord becomes slowly corrupted as if it were the Shadowlands itself. People remaining in this area risk becoming Tainted if they do not protect themselves accordingly. This corruption of the land is usually temporary. Plants and wildlife quickly recover when the oni leaves, but if the Oni Lord remains in place for a long period, the land may be forever corrupted.

Keep in mind that though the Shadowlands seems to be a mindless horde to the rest of Rokugan, the minions of Fu Leng maintain a delicate pecking order. The ascension of an Oni Lord is certain to send ripples throughout the power structure of Jigoku. A new Oni Lord will attract servants, sycophants, and enemies, and will change the way the entire Horde is organized. The existing Oni



Lords are quite satisfied with the current balance of power, and will act swiftly and ruthlessly to maintain it. Player characters facing an oni on the rise may suddenly find themselves with some unexpected (and almost certainly unwanted) allies. Rival Oni Lords often send their spawn to kill a powerful young oni's host, seeking to cut off its source of power before it can fully come into its own.

New Oni

The Shadowlands is preparing for war. With the coming of war, it has prepared new weapons to use against the clan. Primary among these are oni, the most powerful denizens of the Shadowlands. The following section details new oni released by Yogo Junzo and other *tsukai* with the coming of the Clan Wars.

The Elemental Terrors

The archives of the Kuni make many vague references to oni composed of corrupted elemental magic. The truth of these tales was rather foggy until recently. A rare gathering of the four Dark Oracles heralded the emergence of five extremely powerful new oni from the Festering Pit – the Elemental Terrors.

The arrival of the Terrors heralds a great darkness on the horizon, as it signifies that the Dark Oracles have taken a more active hand in the outside world. The Terrors' arrival in the mortal realm sent a backlash through the elements that could be detected as far away as Kyuden Isawa. While the power of these Terrors is nearly equal to the six Oni Lords, they stand apart from the politics of the Horde and obey only their masters – the Dark Oracles.

The five oni and four Oracles have retreated to a polluted lake in the heart of a dead volcano near the Festering Pit, where the "six elements" meet in perfect balance. This place has come to be known as the Womb of Terror. There, the Terrors have begun creating spawn and sending them out across the spirit realms to deserving minions of Fu Leng.

The Elemental Terrors are unlike Oni Lords in that they have taken no mortal names. The Dark Oracles summoned these creatures directly from the Pit, where the barriers between Ningen-do and Jigoku are weakest. Unlike most oni who escape from the Pit, these creatures are intelligent and extraordinarily powerful. They take their names from the Elemental Rings. Through rare collaboration between all four Dark Oracles even an Oni of the Void has been created, defying Rokugani beliefs that the Void is beyond corruption.

The following statistics describe the spawn of the Elemental Terrors. These spawn that follow are the messengers and enforcers of the Dark Oracles, and could be encountered anywhere in Rokugan. Surviving an encounter with one of the true Terrors (those

that create the spawn) is an extremely unlikely prospect, especially since all five tend to remain in a group near the equally powerful Dark Oracles. If the GM truly wishes to use the original Elemental Terrors, use the spawn statistics as a guideline, improving their power levels to whatever is deemed fitting for the campaign.

Note: All Elemental Terrors may cast Sense, Commune, and Summon with their own Elements at will. Anyone casting Sense or Commune in the presence of an oni of the same element will be overwhelmed by corruption, and rendered unable to cast spells of that element for one hour.

Oni no Kaze, Elemental Terror of Air

Earth: 2

Fire: 4

Water: 3

Air: 7

Rolls When Attacking: 6k4

Rolls For Damage: 5k2

TN to be Hit: 35

Carapace: None

Wounds: 20: +5; 40: +10, 80: Dead

Special Abilities:

Flight – Oni no Kaze can move up to Air x 5 feet each round and still act. Double that distance if it does nothing but move.

Invulnerability (Takes double damage from all magic.)

Twisted Elements – All spells cast within 100' by enemies of Kaze have their TN raised by 25. Any spell that fails due to this increase in TN is immediately added to Kaze's spell list, and the scroll is destroyed.

Spells – Knows up to 10 randomly chosen spells of any Mastery Level. Oni no Kaze has unlimited spell slots in each element. However, when Kaze casts a spell, it is permanently removed from its spell list. Kaze is considered to be a Rank 5 shugenja with affinity for all elements.

Oni no Kaze resembles nothing so much as a over-sized dead baby bird, as tall as a samurai. It tends to hover awkwardly at all times, not touching the earth unless it must. It speaks in a strange, high-pitched voice and often laughs for little or no reason.

Oni no Kaze is the terror of shugenja; it always attacks such individuals last, in order to give them ample opportunity to waste their magic. It knows it is physically weak, so it fights unfairly, hovering just out of range and using magic to protect it from missile attacks. When summoned, it usually requires a payment in spells, cast specifically so that it may absorb and destroy them. While this



Oni is the most intelligent of the Terrors, it is extremely unfocused and prone to distraction.

Oni no Mizu, Elemental Terror of Water

Earth: 3

Fire: 2

Water: 7

Air: 4

Rolls When Attacking: 5k4

Rolls For Damage: 6k3

TN to be Hit: 20

Carapace: 5

Wounds: 25: +5; 50: +10; 100: Dead

Special Abilities:

Teleportation – Oni no Mizu can collapse in upon itself and reform anywhere else within 500'. It may also act during a round in which it performs this action.

Invulnerability (Is vulnerable to fire, and takes double damage from all fire-based attacks.)

Engulf – Oni no Mizu automatically engulfs and digests any creature whom it kills with an attack. It may then shape-shift into the form of that creature at will, perfectly mimicking form, appearance, speech, and non-magical equipment. (Magical items and scrolls are not engulfed.) It absorbs the memories of those it engulfs, though this knowledge is not specific enough to allow it to call upon skills, Rank Techniques, or spells. Mizu can only replicate the last creature it engulfs; if it engulfs someone else, all previous memories and ability to replicate other creatures are lost. Oni no Mizu cannot teleport when replicating another creature's form.

Oni no Mizu seems to be an amorphous blob of polluted water, roughly 6' in diameter. It moves with startling speed, and prefers to hide in wait within larger bodies of liquid. Its voice is garbled and indistinct in its natural form. When in the form of another, it may speak with the stolen form's natural voice if it chooses.

This Oni is cunning and clever. It enjoys appearing when it is least expected, taking over the form of an important individual, and destroying enemy forces from within. Oni Mizu is perhaps the subtlest of the Terrors, and enjoys creating weakness so that more powerful Terrors such as Oni no Jimen and Oni no Taki-bi can press their advantage. It usually demands little more payment than a chance to produce carnage and kill people. Occasionally it demands the sacrifice of a large, important body of water which it may live in for a time and Taint.

Oni no Taki-bi, Elemental Terror of Fire

Earth: 4

Fire: 7

Water: 2

Air: 3

Rolls When Attacking: 7k7

Rolls For Damage: 4k1

TN to be Hit: 15

Carapace: 4

Wounds: 30: +5; 60: +10; 120: Dead

Special Abilities:

Flight – Oni no Taki-bi can hover up to 30' above the ground at its normal movement rate.

Flaming Aura – Anyone who touches Oni no Taki-bi takes 1k1 damage from fire. Any wooden or partially wooden weapons (including arrows, bo, and tetsubo) incinerate upon contact with the Oni and are rendered useless.

Invulnerability (Is vulnerable to water; takes 1k1 Wounds per gallon of water hurled at it, and takes double damage from all ice-based attacks.)

Hurl Flame – Oni no Taki-bi may scoop balls of flaming energy from itself and hurl them at opponents. It may hurl these projectiles up to 1000'. They inflict 5k4 Wounds in a 10' radius.

Oni no Taki-bi appears in the form of a beautiful human woman composed of bright green witchfire. It speaks with a husky, seductive voice and is fond of pretty men. Though its beauty and grace are stunning, it is nearly as blunt and straight-forward as Oni no Jimen. Oni no Taki-bi tends to take the straightest course to its enemies, burning and destroying anything in its path. This Oni enjoys the destruction brought about by fire. When summoned, it often demands the sacrifice of a temple, castle, grove, or piece of artwork by fire.

Oni no Jimen, Elemental Terror of Earth

Earth: 7

Fire: 3

Water: 4

Air: 2

Rolls When Attacking: 5k4

Rolls For Damage: 7k4

TN to be Hit: 10

Carapace: 10

Wounds: 35: +5; 70: +10; 140 : Dead



Special Abilities:

Stone Passage – Oni no Jimen can pass through barriers made of earth, metal, or stone at its normal movement.

Invulnerability (Is also vulnerable to steel of Fine Quality; it is said that the purity of the metal rebels at the corruption that is Oni no Jimen.)

Quake – The earth shakes in this Oni's wake. All skill rolls within 100' of the Oni receive +5 to their TN. All skill rolls within 10' receive +10 to their TN. This shaking causes fragile structures to crumble and fall apart.

Oni no Jimen appears to be a huge mountain sculpted in the shape of an ogre, five *ken-an* (15') tall. It is nearly mindless, charging toward the strongest-looking enemy and attacking until nothing remains standing. It is also quite simple in its choice of payment – blood-drenched earth satisfies its tastes well.

Until the time comes for battle, this Oni is stoic and patient. It is willing to defer to the commands of its summoner, or to other Terrors if they are present. It knows that it is not the smartest Terror, but it is certainly the strongest. When the time comes for wanton destruction, Oni no Jimen truly shines.

Oni no Akeru, Elemental Terror of the Void

Earth: 3

Fire: 3

Water: 3

Air: 3

Void: 7 (*special, see below*)

Rolls When Attacking: 3k3

Rolls For Damage: 3k3

TN to be Hit: 15

Carapace: 7

Wounds: 20: +5; 45: +10; 90: Dead

Special Abilities:

Invulnerability (Standard.)

Walk Through Nothing – Oni no Akeru can meld with shadows at will, vanishing into nothing. Anyone attempting to find this Oni must make an opposed Perception roll against the oni's Void. The Oni must reveal itself before it can attack.

Void – Oni no Akeru is the only known Shadowlands creature that can use Void. This Void is not its own – it must be stolen from another source (see Void Sap). The Oni begins with a Void of 7, and can spend Void Points normally. Oni no Akeru's Void Ring increases and decreases equal to the Void Points it has remaining. It recovers its Void at a the rate of one per hour (by stealing Void from the elements around it) until it has seven again. If Oni no Akeru ever has a Void Ring of 0, it is destroyed.

Void Sap – Any Void Points spent within 100' of Oni no Akeru are canceled and added to the Oni's own Void. It may make an opposed Void roll against any opponent it strikes in combat. If this attack is successful, Oni no Akeru steals one Void Point from its target as well as inflicting normal damage. For every two Raises the Oni makes on its attack roll, it steals an additional Void Point. It may steal Akasha Points as if they were Void Points.

Void Strike – By spending ten Void Points, Oni no Akeru can release a focused beam of stolen Void. It must roll to attack normally. If the beam hits, it inflicts 10k10 Wounds on a single target. Targets killed by this attack are utterly and completely consumed. Their bodies and souls are lost. At the GM's discretion, such a consumed character cannot take advantage of the Kharma rule.

Telepathy – Oni no Akeru communicates without sound. It may mentally broadcast and receive messages with other thinking creatures within 1000'. It cannot read thoughts other than those specifically directed toward it.

Oni no Akeru is the most alien of the Terrors. Though it claims that it is a creature of corrupted Void, it could be more accurately described as a creature of stolen Void. It appears to be an enormous insect crackling with dark energies. It stands nearly three *ken-an* (9') tall, but walks with a constant hunch. It is often introspective, but extremely moody. It is as likely to approach a situation with thought, care, and discretion as outright violence. Oni no Akeru cannot speak, and communicates solely through telepathy.

This Oni is the de facto leader of the Elemental Terrors, as it is its wisdom that often brings the conflicting Terrors into agreement. It accepts no payment when it is summoned. Instead, it simply analyzes the situation and obeys whatever master it chooses.

Other Oni

Oni no Pekklee

Earth: 2

Willpower: 8

Fire: 2

Water: 1

Air: 6

Rolls When Attacking: 2k2

Rolls For Damage: 1k1

TN to be Hit: 30

Carapace: 0

Wounds: 30: Dead

Skills: Courtier 6, Etiquette 7, Investigation 5, Seduction 6, Sincerity 6, three other High Skills at 3



Shadowlands Powers: Blackened Claws, Blood Domination, Book of Souls (Pekkle oni always have at least these three powers)

Special Abilities:

Hidden Darkness – An Oni no Pekkle's Taint cannot be sensed by any means. Continuous effects which harm Tainted creatures (such as Evil Ward) do not affect it. Instantaneous effects such as Jade Strike harm it normally. The only other way to identify a Pekkle as a creature of darkness is by its blood, which is pitch black and very thin.

Controlled Appearance – A Pekkle can change its age at will, ranging from infancy to up to eighteen years of age. A Pekkle can change its gender at will.

Retribution – When Oni no Pekkle dies, it releases a cloud of intense, concentrated corruption. All creatures within a 30' radius must make an Earth roll vs. TN 25 or immediately gain 1-10 points of Shadowlands Taint.

Pekkle were not original oni, but spirits of *Sakkaku*, the realm of tricksters, corrupted by Fu Leng's oni spirits. While other Tainted beasts must content themselves to prey on Rokugan from the outside, Pekkle may move freely within the Empire. Pekkle appear to be beautiful children. Some masquerade as infants and leave themselves where they will be found, thus creating the perfect disguise by regulating their aging over several years.

Pekkle are always somewhat androgynous in appearance and have a strange, ethereal beauty. These oni can think like humans, are naturally familiar with Rokugan's social mores, and take to the court like flies to honey. They usually pose as geisha, concubines, or servants. Pekkle are the spies of the Shadowlands. It is their duty to attach themselves to important individuals and gather information. Rarely are Pekkle ever forced to tip their hands through such coarse duties as assassination or open combat – that is the purpose of less valuable minions. These oni are extremely rare, and their talents are too valuable to sacrifice foolishly.

A Pekkle's human-like appearance and mentality can be a drawback as often as an advantage. While a Pekkle never truly becomes redeemed, occasionally these oni become so comfortable amid human society that they would rather maintain their place than serve the Dark Lord. It is unknown how many of these creatures could be hiding in the shadows of Rokugan society, shifting from one identity to another to maintain a life of luxury.



Oni no Hideo – Name-Bound Oni

Earth: 4

Fire: 3

Water: 3

Strength: 4

Air: 2

Reflexes: 3

Rolls When Attacking: 7k3

Rolls For Damage: 10k3

TN to be Hit: 15

Carapace: 5

Wounds: 20: +5; 40: +10, 80: Dead

Shadowlands Powers: Claws of the Kumo, Death Sense, Unearthly Regeneration, Unholy Strength

Special Abilities:

Fear 2

Invulnerability (Special; Oni no Hideo is not vulnerable to jade, only to crystal and magic)

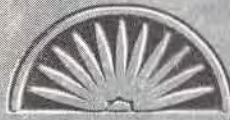
Corpse Form – Oni no Hideo can take any corpse and add it to its own body. Each corpse added in such a manner heals 30 Wounds previously inflicted upon the oni. It cannot heal itself beyond its maximum Wounds in this manner. Any zombies or other animated corpses absorbed in such a manner are destroyed.

Limitations – Hideo is still bound to Ichiro Hideo (see "Who's Who" in Chapter Four).

Hideo is an example of a name-bound oni. It appears to be an enormous pile of corpses, roughly sculpted into human form. Somewhere, deep inside the mounds of dead flesh, is the oni itself. It is a rather small and pathetic creature, something like a skinless iguana.

Hideo has just finished increasing its Traits to those of its host – Ichiro Hideo. Any further Willpower Tests it wins could be used either to purchase new Shadowlands Powers or to increase its Traits in a manner of its choosing. Oni no Hideo is currently hoping that Hideo and his comrades will come hunting for it. Along the way, it hopes that Hideo will become stronger, for if Hideo's Earth Ring should increase there exists a slim possibility that this Oni could become an Oni Lord. However, the Badger has begun to embrace his Taint. If the Badger does not stop using his Shadowlands Powers, there won't be enough of his soul left for the Oni to feed upon and it will never achieve Oni Lord status.

In combat, Oni no Hideo is brutal and savage. It knows that it is invulnerable to jade, and tries to wipe out its opponents before they realize their error. It avoids shugenja, for it knows that they hold the power to slay it. It is drawn to burial mounds and other areas with large supplies of dead flesh, as it can use this material to restore itself.



Oni no Ogon – Oni of Gold

Earth: 4

Fire: 4

Water: 2

Perception: 5

Air: 2

Awareness: 6

Rolls When Attacking: 5k4

Rolls For Damage: 4k2

TN to be Hit: 10

Carapace: 3

Wounds: 15: +5; 30: +10, 30: Dead

Skills: Appraisal 8, Commerce 7, Disguise 7, Investigation 5, Sincerity 5, three other Craft Skills at 3

Shadowlands Powers: Darkness Unseen, Father of Lies

Special Abilities:

Fear 0 (Special)

Invulnerability (Special; Oni no Ogon may not be harmed by weapons of jade or crystal, but it can be harmed by magic, gold and silver. For the record, most koku are made of a copper alloy. Some are made of gold.)

Treasure Sense – Oni no Ogon can sense gold, silver, and precious gems within 100'. Limitation – Ogon can only touch gold, silver and precious gems that are freely given.

Treasure Satchel – Ogon becomes more powerful in proportion to the amount of treasure it carries. For every 100 koku worth of valuables it has hoarded, it gains +1 to its Fear rating and an extra dice rolled on all attack and damage rolls. There is no bonus gained for treasure in excess of 500 koku. An Oni no Ogon with this much treasure will hurry back to the Shadowlands to deposit it.

Shape-shift – Ogon can transform into a hideous old robed man at will.

Oni no Ogon spawn live outside of the Shadowlands, and are usually found wandering free near areas of great wealth. It is said that the first such oni was summoned by a foolish Yasuki merchant to make him rich. The oni did indeed make its master wealthy, but then stole the Yasuki's wealth and fled to the Shadowlands. The original Oni no Ogon is not an Oni Lord, but stole the secret of creating spawn from Oni Lord Tsuburu. It now sends these creatures far and wide in search of treasure.

These are sly and treacherous oni. Though they are adept at finding treasure, the original spell that created Oni no Ogon forbade it to take wealth without permission. Instead, these oni must fool someone into giving treasure to them. Usually, this amounts to a deal made between the oni (in disguise) and a human. If the human

obtains treasure for an Oni no Ogon, it will return the service. These oni hold always uphold their end of the bargain, but twist the letter of the agreement to bring as much pain and misery as possible. These Oni travel about with all their treasure bundled in a sack or chest upon their back. They never put their treasure down (outside of their lairs), for if they did, they couldn't pick it up again. They never, ever sleep.

These creatures are extremely cowardly, and avoid combat with those that can harm them. The only time an Oni no Ogon will fight for its life is when its hoard is threatened. Those who dare to steal from one are in for a great deal of trouble, as it will seek out others of its kind to gain vengeance.

The Dark Oracles

There exist in Rokugan a secretive group of shugenja whose power is so great that they can no longer truly be considered human at all. These beings possess a power that transcends that of mortals, linking them with the Celestial Heavens themselves. They are known only as the Oracles of Light, or more commonly the Oracles.

Little is known about how the Oracles came into being. The Phoenix believe that sometime in the years following the defeat of Fu Leng, the great Elemental Dragons each chose to impart a fraction of their power to a particularly enlightened shugenja. The reasons for such a decision are unknown, but certain scholars propose that the Dragons wished to know more of mankind, this creature that had brought low one of the kami. By merging their power with a human, they could more fully understand the mind of a mortal. And in the process, perhaps they could bring the gift of wisdom to mankind through their avatars, the Oracles.

When the existence of the Oracles became widely known throughout the Empire, it also became known to other, darker sources. The nameless entities of Jigoku writhed in hatred of their ancient foes, the Dragons. If the Heavens would have their pawns among the humans, then so too would Hell. The evil forces there found willing and suitable pawns among mankind and whispered dark secrets in their ears, some of the same secrets that they once whispered in the ear of Fu Leng.

These mortal pawns found themselves with nearly limitless power at their disposal, but at a terrible price. The dark magic they wielded corrupted them and all they touched. The elements themselves were fouled by their spells. The corrupted shugenja eventually made their way to the Shadowlands. There, in a sort of harmony with the corruption of the elements all around them, they achieved true power. They became the Dark Oracles.

The Dark Oracles have remained removed from the Shadowlands for centuries, much as their counterparts in Rokugan



do. They are revered as demi-gods by the denizens of that corrupted realm, and the truly greedy or ambitious seek their patronage for major assaults upon the Wall or rival warbands. Malicious and cruel, the Dark Oracles find most such candidates wanting. Few survive their disapproval.

In preparation for the coming war, the Dark Oracles have held an unprecedented gathering near the Festering Pit. Bringing their darkest, foulest rituals to bear, each has created a spawn of pure elemental corruption, an Elemental Terror with unheard-of potential for destruction. Pooling their magic, the four collaborated to create a hideous monstrosity that can only be described as an Elemental Terror of the Void. The very existence of this being casts doubt upon the Phoenix Clan's theories as to the nature and existence of the Void.

The Dark Oracle of Earth

The Dark Oracle of Earth is a silent being, manifesting itself only once every three or four centuries. Its voice is heard in the crashing of the rocks during earthquakes, and in the rumble of the hills before the explosion of the volcano. The Kuni fear that the Dark Oracle's power to corrupt the essence of the Earth itself could, if brought to bear, extend the corruption of the Shadowlands far to the north of the Great Wall.

One of the more approachable of the Dark Oracles, the One of the Dark Earth has lent its aid to some of the more insidious foes of the Empire over the years. It was responsible for passing on the secrets of corrupt Earth magic that allowed the Maw to befoul and destroy the land of Hiruma Castle.

The Dark Oracle of Water

Believed to be the most accessible of the Dark Oracles, the Dark Oracle of Water is an insidious creature whose cruelty known no bounds or limits. It manifests itself as a body of water so stagnant and poisonous that it takes the color of obsidian. Those who seek the Dark Oracle of Water's favor may immerse themselves within this foul pool, should they be able to locate it. Doing so may gain the Oracle's gifts, but more often the creatures who enter die a screaming death as their very body and souls are dissolved and merged with the Oracle, or they emerge from the pool mutated into something more monstrous and mindless than they once were. The Dark Oracle revels in the chaos of its minions, and frequently has them bring more prey to feed its dark urges.

The Dark Oracle of Water is believed by some to manifest itself in the Sea of Shadow, that region of the seas that has been corrupted by the Shadowlands. Survivors of ships unfortunate enough to have been trapped within that stretch of hell recount the feeling of an ominous intelligence guiding and shaping the creatures and weather

around them, as if toying with them before savoring their moment of destruction.

The Dark Oracle of Fire

Even in pure elemental magic, fire is the element of destruction and consumption. The horror of a being of corrupted fire is almost beyond imagining. The lava flows that consume and destroy entire miles of the Shadowlands, spilling into the sea and consuming the life of the creatures there... this is the power of the Dark Oracle of Fire.

This being is the explosive death of the volcano, the burning wastelands of the southern Shadowlands, the foul balefire that strikes from the night sky of the Dark Lord's realm. It is a creature of boundless hate and rage, destroying all who approach it without thought or consideration. For this the Crab are thankful. If the entity were to lend its power to the many warlords found in the Shadowlands, their power would be nearly beyond limit. As far as any are aware, however, the Dark Oracle of Fire has consumed every living thing that has ever approached it.

The Elemental Masters believe that the current Dark Oracle of Fire was once the Oracle of Fire. Centuries ago, an unknown shugenja from the Isawa was chosen to ascend to replace the previous Oracle of Fire. He disappeared and was not seen for over a decade. Then he mysteriously reappeared. In a rage, he destroyed several Phoenix and Dragon villages with incredibly powerful fire magic, obliterating all who opposed him. He was only stopped when his own magic seemed to overwhelm and consume him. At the same time, a massive explosion of fire was witnessed deep in the Shadowlands from the Great Wall. At first thought to be a volcanic eruption, the Kuni now believe the insane Oracle was summoned and corrupted by the forces of Jigoku or perhaps the other Dark Oracles themselves.

No one is immune to corruption. No one.

The Dark Oracle of Air

Possessed of a singularly malevolent sense of mischief, the Dark Oracle of Air is one of the more active Dark Oracles. It is the voice that has seduced so many samurai to leave their comrades within the Shadowlands and embrace the darkness there. The whisper of the foul breeze through rocks and rotted trees, the rancid stench of death that fills the marshes, and the gale-force winds that tear entire parties and ships apart are all manifestations of the Dark Oracle of Air. From time to time the Dark Oracle of Air has been known to show favor to those children of Fu Leng who display a talent for deception.

Entire battles between the Crab and the minions of Fu Leng have been stopped by rolling clouds of noxious gas that spill forth from the Shadowlands. These clouds kill anything that breathes them in,



regardless of whether it be samurai or goblin, shugenja or oni. These actions demonstrate a dangerous truth regarding the Dark Oracles: they are above the war that has waged for the past thousand years. Death, destruction, and corruption are their only goals. While they may lend their aid to the creatures of Fu Leng from time to time, they are by far the most unstable and unpredictable elements to be found within the Shadowlands, and that makes them all the more dangerous.

The Dark Oracle of Void

If such an entity exists, it is unknown. The Elemental Masters believe that such a creature could not exist, as the Void is beyond all things and cannot be corrupted. The Kuni, however, theorize that the Void is all things and nothing at the same time. And if it is all things, can it not encompass the Taint as well? Perhaps, they whisper, the Dark Oracle of the Void is Fu Leng himself.



As mentioned in Chapter Two, ogres who escape the Shadowlands slowly begin to change. Over a period of many months, these creatures increase in intelligence. Free ogres are drawn to other free ogres by a strange homing instinct, one suppressed by centuries in the Shadowlands. These groups gather in remote places, where the recently freed are educated and informed of their history. Once they learn what they truly are and what the Shadowlands has done to them, they return to what comes naturally.

They conquer.

While free ogres are indeed former slaves of Fu Leng, they are hardly innocents. Even when restored control over their own destiny, ogre mentality is warlike, vengeful, and violent. Ogres have no sense of honor other than loyalty to their own kind. They have an appetite for flesh (though they do not eat other ogres) and prefer to devour their meals alive. Ogres consider humans pathetic creatures useful only as slaves or food. Ogres society is extremely militant in nature; each ogre has an exact rank and station. Promotion comes through

a monthly ceremony of ritual unarmed combat, or through seniority. Anything that is not an ogre is an enemy or a slave.

Ogres occasionally work with other creatures, but are only comfortable in a position of command. They consider themselves superior to humans, but have learned to be wary of samurai. Ogres know that ronin – “no-color samurai” – are humans cast out of their own world, and that these outcast, desperate creatures make good warriors who will fight beside those strong enough to offer a good living. Ogres will adopt ronin into their group, but only if the ronin defer command completely to the ogres and obey without question. In the ogre’s mind, the ronin are not comrades. They are slaves.

Free ogres work beside other Shadowlands creatures only if it is in their best interest. A free ogre will agree to work in return for a great reward, such as weapons or food, but would rather die than return to the Shadowlands. Ogres work beside trolls and goblins if necessary, but treat them as worthless cannon fodder.

Under no conditions will an ogre willingly work with nezumi. These creatures destroyed the once-proud ogre race. Ratlings are slain whenever possible. A free ogre will never stoop to eating a nezumi, as they believe the rat’s cowardice will infect their blood.

Free ogres still possess the Taint, and can never be cured of it by any means – but they do not consider the Taint a weakness. The Taint is the Father’s final gift, a scar given by a worthy opponent in battle. One day, the ogres will return the favor. One day, the ogres will face Father once again, and they will have the answer to their questions.

Free Ogre Characters

An ogre is not recommended as a player character. These creatures do not work well with others and will be attacked on sight by most samurai. Even the most noble, honorable ogre instinctively looks upon those outside his race as food sources, and finds it difficult to resist his bestial instincts and the Taint that festers deep within him.

Every six months an ogre remains outside the Shadowlands, all of his mental Traits increase by one. This continues for the next two years. When a trait reaches four, it no longer increases, though others Traits below four still increase until the two years are complete.

After the first increase, the ogre gains the capacity for speech and unerringly senses the direction of the nearest group of ogres outside the Shadowlands. There, other ogres may teach the ogre their ancient language and the language of humans. They may even teach a few of the techniques used by the ogre bushi of old.

GMs may give the following ogre bushi techniques to free ogre villains if they wish. An ogre requires 20 less Insight to increase in



Rank (due to the lack of Void) and may only learn techniques from this school. Likewise, normal humans are far too small and weak to take proper advantage of these techniques, and cannot attend this school under any circumstances. There are but three techniques, though it is rumored that there may be more. Ogres do not seem to die of old age, so great heroes of the old ogre empire may wander the Shadowlands, unaware of what they once were. One of them might hold the secrets of these lost techniques.

Ogre Bushi School

Benefit: None

Skills: Battle, Defense, Hunting, Jujutsu, Rokugani Language, Stealth, one Weapon Skill

Beginning Honor: 0 (Ogres operate according to their own concept of honor, which varies wildly from the Rokugani norm)

Starting Outfit: (All items except weapons are Poor Quality; scavenged or stolen) Tattered clothing, Light Armor, 2 weapons (enormous club inflicts 1k5 but has a -5 Initiative penalty)

Rank 1 Technique: Muhomono's Strength

Named after the legendary king of the ogres, the ogre may voluntarily reduce his attack roll by a number of dice to increase his damage roll by an equal number of dice. Dice must be reduced before the attack roll is made.

Rank 2 Technique: Muhomono's Speed

The ogre king was an army unto himself. When using an enormous weapon, the ogre can make broad, sweeping attacks. By imposing a +10 TN penalty to a single attack roll, the ogre may apply this attack roll against everyone within 10', friend or foe. Any combatants struck by this attack are damaged normally. This must be declared before the attack roll is made.

Rank 3 Technique: Muhomono's Armor

A true warrior of the ogre heritage needs no feeble metal for protection. The ogre's Carapace rating increases to 9.



The Shadowlands Across Rokugan

When Fu Leng fell to Ningen-do, he created a portal referred to as the Festering Pit. This portal is believed to be the source of all corruption within the Shadowlands, but it is not the only breach leading to the dark regions of Jigoku. There are many areas strong in corruption throughout the Emerald Empire, little pieces of the Shadowlands scattered where no one would expect to find them. Some of these areas are temporary. Occasionally the Taint can be removed merely by exorcising the spirits who encourage corruption. Sometimes, the Taint succeeds in maintaining a stronger hold and a bit of Ningen-do becomes Lost.

Unfortunately, many of these areas remain undiscovered. The Taint wells up most frequently in areas of strong negative chi, such as caves, ruined castles, and other dark, lifeless regions. As these locations are typically far from human settlement, the Taint can grow unchecked for a long period.

The following are a few examples of Tainted lands outside of Rokugan. When traveling through these areas, characters will face the same dangers as they would in the Shadowlands itself. Taint is acquired normally for those who do not carry jade, and magic becomes more difficult to cast. The *GM's Guide* contains more information on what happens to those who linger too long in a Tainted area.

The Ruined Keep of Fu Leng

The Ruined Keep is an extraordinarily massive obelisk, estimated to be over three hundred *ken-an* (about 1000') tall. The tower is constructed entirely of obsidian, and seems to have no doors, windows, or any other notable structures. During the War Against Fu Leng, the Ruined Keep served as the Dark Lord's base of operations. The Ikoma Histories give several conflicting reports of its location, including the Shinomen Forest, the Spine of the World Mountains, and within sight of Otosan Uchi. The Keep was the site of the historic meeting between Shinjo and Fu Leng before the war began in



earnest. The Keep has been sighted in a handful of locations over the centuries, but has always vanished before it could be fully investigated.

The Ruined Keep of Fu Leng seems to be able to appear when and where it wishes. Up until recently, it has limited its wanderings to the Shadowlands. It has been sighted near the Kaiu Wall every time the Crab Clan declares a Twenty Goblin Winter, whereupon it attempts to snap up as many wandering ronin as it can. In recent years, it has begun to appear outside of the Shadowlands. Recently, an unconfirmed sighting reported it a day's ride from Kyuden Kakita. It seems that either the Ruined Keep is becoming bolder, or it is searching the Empire for something.

Using the Ruined Keep

The Keep is alive, intelligent, and malevolent. It controls its structure, creating doors, windows, or other structures as it needs them. Countless Shadowlands creatures live within the Keep, trapped against their will. With its master gone, the Keep has amused itself by playing games with those who enter. The Ruined Keep could potentially appear anywhere, though it always does so with the intent of driving interesting people (such as player characters) into its depths for entertainment.

Oddly, the Keep does not directly kill anyone who enters. It leaves that up to its other residents and the many fiendish traps, mazes, and puzzles it has created over the centuries. The Keep seems to possess a bizarre sense of honor; those who can face its challenges are released, though rarely in the same place where they entered. In truth, it is not exactly clear what the Keep wants, or why it acts the way it does.

Forest of the Dreamers

It is a small patch of forest in the shadows of Shiro Iuchi. The Unicorn who live nearby seldom speak of it. A constant patrol circles its edges, turning away the foolish or curious. The Forest of the Dreamers is an extremely dangerous place, made more dangerous by rumors of the great riches that lie within.

The story began one hundred years ago with an Isawa ronin named Fujio. He believed that he could use the legendary sands of Sleeping River to create potent magical medicines, and retired to the nearby forest to begin his experiments. After a few years, he reported great success. Fujio began selling his magical anesthetics to the samurai of Rokugan for unheard of prices. When the Phoenix Inquisitors investigated the matter, they discovered Fujio had used a subtle yet potent *maho* to create to elixirs. The potions summoned evil dream spirits known as *shiyokai*, who would put the drinker to sleep and proceed to feed upon his soul.

A contingent of Witch Hunters were dispatched to bring Fujio to justice. A great battle ensued within the forest, from which no one

returned. Those who dared investigate reported that the trees deep within had become blackened and twisted. Those that wandered too close to Fujio's home reported a strange lethargy. A few fell asleep; the rest fled. Those that slumbered in the Forest of the Dreamers never returned.

Rumors abound that the wealth Fujio accumulated selling his Tainted potions remains hidden somewhere in the forest. The Unicorn turn away anyone reckless enough to enter the area, but some manage to slip past their patrols.

Shiyokai

Earth: 1

Water: 1

Perception: 3

Fire: 3

Air: 5

Shadowlands Taint: Innate

Rolls When Attacking: None

Rolls For Damage: None

TN to be Hit: 25

Wounds Per Level: 15: +10, 30: Dead

Skills: Seduction 6

Special Abilities:

Ghostly Form – A shiyokai is intangible and invisible at all times. It may pass through any materials except for jade and crystal. A shiyokai may only be harmed by magic, or by jade, crystal, or *nemuranai* weapons.

Spells – Wind Borne Slumbers (variant) This is the only spell a shiyokai can ever cast. This spell functions as if it were *maho*, though the shiyokai need not wound itself. The duration of this magic is one hour; the spell is otherwise identical to the one presented on page 209 of the *Player's Guide*. Treat the shiyokai as a Rank 2 shugenja.

Telepathy – The shiyokai can automatically read the surface thoughts of those around it, and communicate with others through their thoughts.

Dream Corruption – The shiyokai feed upon the minds of sleepers. Each hour, it makes an opposed Willpower test against one sleeping subject. The shiyokai gains +5 to its Willpower roll for every 2 points of Disadvantages the target has, feeding off of its target's weaknesses to cast him into a terrible nightmare. If the shiyokai wins the opposed roll, the sleeper takes Wounds equal to the difference as injuries inflicted in the dream become real. If the sleeper wins the opposed roll, he immediately awakens. Only one shiyokai may feed upon a sleeper at a time.



Shiyokai travel in packs. They use telepathy to read the minds of intruders, then communicate telepathically, pretending to be the spirit of a friend or loved one. Using Seduction, they encourage their potential victim to be calm and rest, at which time they cast Wind Borne Slumbers. Only when all intruders have been overcome by sleep or flee do the shiyokai begin to feed. A GM may forego the above mechanics for Dream Corruption, making a character's nightmare a small adventure instead. Note that the nightmares of shiyokai are more a matter of psychological conflict than straight-out combat. If the victim overcomes his fears, he awakens unharmed. If he is defeated by his past failures, the shiyokai wins.

Kyuden Bayushi and Traitor's Grove

After the Scorpion Coup, Bayushi Tomaru, Soshi Bantaro, and several of Bantaro's students returned to Kyuden Bayushi to plan their vengeance. Though the Imperial Legions had burnt the castle to the ground, the secret sub-basements remained, and from there Bantaro began organizing the remaining Scorpion shugenja. Bantaro managed to steal Bayushi Shoji's corpse during the chaos at the end of the Coup, and has sent his students far and wide seeking some method of returning his fallen lord to life. In the meantime, his students come and go disguised as ghosts, keeping the curious well away from the ruins.

Bantaro's experiments have as yet been unsuccessful, but already the mad Soshi has begun traveling dark roads of magic better left undisturbed. Drawn by the negative chi and strong, hateful emotions of the Scorpions gathered at Kyuden Bayushi, the Taint has grown very powerful. The fictitious ghosts of the ruins have noticed several real gaki prowling the area. Weapons and armor have gone missing from Traitor's Grove. Things move around without warning within the basements themselves.

Bantaro vehemently denies reports that the castle is becoming corrupted. He is too obsessed with his failure in Otosan Uchi to listen to reason. He has eagerly embraced *maho*, though not as thoroughly as his cousin, Yogo Junzo. Bantaro believes that his mind and his will still serve Bayushi Shoji. He is quite mad, and Bayushi Tomaru is beginning to wonder whether he made a mistake in allying himself with the shugenja.

A splinter group of Bantaro's former students and yojimbo have abandoned their master. Led by a young Scorpion saboteur named Bayushi Tasu, they have struck out on their own to try to find some way to stop Bantaro. Tasu's hopes are not high. He knows that the Scorpion have few friends left in Rokugan. He will not risk hiring ronin, for despite Bantaro's madness Tasu will not risk exposing the secrets that remain in Kyuden Bayushi's recesses.

Alone, he and his small rabble cannot possibly stop Bantaro. In the meantime, they do all they can to confuse and misdirect Bantaro's operatives in the field until another solution can be found.

The Seas of Shadow

"Sea of Shadow" is a term used to describe any area of the ocean that suddenly becomes corrupted. This happens most frequently near the Kenkai Hanto Peninsula, Earthquake Fish Bay, and other areas close to the Shadowlands, though such phenomena have been reported as far north as the Phoenix coastline. Seas of Shadow occur when a bit of corruptive energy is washed out on the tides, carried into the greater body of the ocean. These areas usually do not persist long; most are dispersed by the greater purity of the sea. Seas of Shadow can usually be identified by a sudden darkening of the water and sky, or by thunder when there are no clouds about.

Skull Tide Gaki

Earth: 1

Water: 1

Fire: 1

Air: 1

Shadowlands Taint: Innate

Rolls When Attacking: None; those who fall into the tide take damage automatically

Rolls For Damage: 5k3 per round submerged

TN to be Hit: 10

Wounds Per Level: 5: Dead

The skull tide is the most terrifying threat of the Seas of Shadow. It is a powerful swarm of Tainted gaki, resembling a swarm of hundreds of skulls floating on the surface of the sea. The skulls create a terrible, disorienting sound by clattering their teeth against the wood of a ship.

The clattering creates Fear 4. In addition, those who hear the sound must make a Willpower roll vs. TN 10, which increases by 5 every minute until it is failed. Those who fail become extremely paranoid and violent, striking out at others for little to no reason or attempting to escape the ship by leaping overboard. Anyone who falls into the skull tide takes Wounds as listed above until they are devoured or rescued. If the skulls can be forced to stop chewing on the ship, all effects caused by the clattering immediately fade.

The skull tide possesses no special invulnerabilities, but the sheer number of skulls makes destroying the entire swarm unlikely. Any ship that remains within the tide will slowly be chewed until it sinks, at which time the tide will devour anyone left alive. Only fleeing offers any real hope of survival. A skilled sailor may keep ahead of



the tide if he catches a good wind, requiring an Agility/Sailing roll vs. a base TN of 15, modified for prevailing weather conditions.

The Shadowlands Marshes of Shinomen

Deep inside the expanses of the Shinomen there lies a vast marsh that few human eyes have seen. The air there is filled with a thick haze that impedes the vision, and the stench of decay is more than most men can bear. All living things avoid the marsh, and the only sounds to be heard are the hissing of gases and a slow, sloughing sound as if something were moving unseen through the foul mud.

Unknown to Rokugan, the marsh is a testament to the power and wrath of the Naga.

Three hundred years ago, prior to the awakening of the Naga race, the attention of the Empire was focused on the arrival of the Unicorn Clan near the southern border of Rokugan. The brief but intense conflict between the Crab and the new arrivals created a window of opportunity that the denizens of the Shadowlands were only too ready to exploit. Led by a powerful gaki, a large force smashed through the meager Crab defenses near the western end of the Great Wall and drove north toward the Empire.

During their trek through the Shinomen, the horde came upon a temple of sorts. Within it they found several sleeping, serpentine creatures and a large clutch of pearl-like eggs. Without the slightest hesitation, they destroyed the temple and everything within it.

The death of the Naga eggs sent a shockwave through the Akasha. A large number of Asps and Constrictors were wrenched from their slumber and driven into a frenzy. Less than two days after the destruction of the temple, the Naga fell upon the horde with a vengeance.

The Naga immunity to the Taint and their powerful pearl magic was unlike anything the Shadowlands creatures had seen before. They were completely devastated by the enraged Naga. The relentless assault of the jakla and their pearl magic reduced many of their enemies to a viscous ichor that seeped into the ground and corrupted the essence of the field upon which they had fallen. Once the battle was concluded, the Naga placed wards to prevent the spread of the marsh, and then returned to their slumber.

Those few samurai who have stumbled upon the Shadowlands Marshes are ignorant of their origin, yet can sense the foulness that permeates them. There is a malignant, lingering presence, perhaps some remnant of the creatures killed there, that seeks to corrupt all that it comes into contact with. Denied the opportunity to spread by the powerful Naga wards, the marsh instead preys upon those who wander through it. Those traveling through the marsh find themselves bogged down, held fast by the viscous ooze that seems to comprise the entire marsh. Those who are not consumed outright

by the filthy mire are trapped for days or weeks until the Taint consumes them, at which time they are released to spread corruption throughout Rokugan.

Taint may be acquired while in the Shadowlands Marshes exactly as in the Shadowlands themselves. However, the concentrated filth of the marsh means that a +10 is rather than a +5 is added to the difficulty number of the Earth roll made for each day spent within the Marsh. Those captives who consistently resist the Taint for several days will be consumed by the impatient *nukarumi*, the bizarre, semi-solid monstrosities who dwell there.

Nukarumi

Earth: 3

Water: 5

Fire: 3

Air: 2

Shadowlands Taint: Innate

Shadowlands Powers: Unearthly Regeneration, Unholy Speed

Rolls When Attacking: 6k3

Rolls For Damage: 5k2

TN to be Hit: 15

Wounds Per Level: 25: +10, 45: Dead

Skills: Wrestling 6

Special Abilities:

Semi-solid Form – The nukarumi are the spiritual vestiges of dead Shadowlands creatures which possess the Tainted sludge of the Shadowlands Marshes and use it to create vaguely humanoid forms with the above statistics. If they sustain Wounds that would kill them, their body is dissolved until such time as they regenerate all Wounds.

Suffocation Attack – If a nukarumi can grapple with an opponent and pull him down into the marsh, it can suffocate him. This requires five rounds of successful Contested Wrestling rolls.

The Lost Temple of Onnotangu

Centuries ago, scouts from the Kitsune family of the Fox Clan were exploring the most recessed regions of the Spine of the World Mountains in hopes of finding resources to expand the holdings of their clan. Dangerous weather conditions led them to seek shelter within a deep ravine. The chasm extended deep into the earth and was so twisted that the light of the sun could never reach the bottom.

Descending to the floor of the crevasse, the Kitsune discovered an ancient temple, seemingly devoted to the worship of Onnotangu, the dark Lord Moon. Attempts at investigation were cut very short, however, as the temple was defended by a terrifying type of monk. Details are sketchy, as the sole surviving scout was badly shaken by his experiences and took his own life shortly after recounting the



tale to his kinsmen, but these monks seemingly possessed incredible powers of darkness and shadow. Their skin was a deathly pale from their complete seclusion from sunlight, and they had blackened scars where they had branded themselves with insidious symbols. The lone Kitsune survivor was able to escape only by virtue of using spells that generated light, the one thing the Monks of the Moon were not able to tolerate.

Accounts of this lost temple eventually made their way into the courts of the Empire, where they caused quite a stir. Most scoffed at the notion of a hidden Moon cult, all of which had supposedly been wiped out during the early days of the Empire. The Dragon Clan seemed to take more notice than most, however, and the clan daimyo dispatched a contingent of bushi and shugenja under the command of a Kitsuki Magistrate to investigate the matter. Unfortunately, the directions given by the Kitsune prior to his suicide proved to be completely unreliable, and the search was called off after a few weeks. Most samurai families do not believe the rumors of such a place, but the peasants who dwell near the Spine of the World Mountains know better than to venture into the wilderness on the nights of a new moon.

The Lost Temple of Onnotangu does exist, and it is unique in Rokugan in that the monks there are corrupted by both the Shadowlands Taint and the Living Shadow. Oddly, the two forces keep each other in check, and those unfortunate enough to stray into this dark place do not have to check for the Taint. The monks that dwell within the temple, however, may draw upon the powers of both and are extraordinarily dangerous, even to trained samurai.

Monks of Onnotangu

Earth: 3

Water: 2

Fire: 2

Agility 5

Air: 3

Void: 2

Shadowlands Taint: 2.1

Shadowlands Symptoms: Pale, pasty skin, a foul stench of the Shadowlands, unnatural hungers, others that vary among individuals

Shadowlands Powers: Blessing of the Dark One, Unholy Vision

Shadow: 2 (see *The Way of Shadow* for relevant abilities)

Kiho: Breath of the Kumo, Corrupted Touch

Skills: Athletics 4, Climbing 5, Jiu-jitsu 4, Lore (Onnotangu) 5, Lore (Shadowlands) 4, Theology 3

Special Abilities:

Light Blindness – Living as they do in complete darkness, the Monks of Onnotangu are incapable of seeing in any light brighter

than that of the full moon. They can tolerate the presence of lanterns or torches, which nonetheless make them uncomfortable.

Servants of Darkness

Some corrupted locations that arise in the Empire are less the result of native Shadowlands creatures than that of the corrupted souls of men. Some in the Empire so lust for power and comfort that they not only will embrace the Taint if the opportunity presents itself, but can even corrupt the environment around them with the force of their evil. This can arise anywhere, although such people appear more frequently around those in Rokugan's lower castes. Geisha houses, mines, eta villages, or even merchant caravans can become bastions of the Shadowlands in this fashion.

These subtle threats are in a way more dangerous than oni or ogres. A physical threat can only damage the body. Seductive, spiritual threats of this nature strike at the very soul and honor of the Empire.

Mishinako

Earth: 3

Water: 3

Fire: 2

Intelligence 3

Air: 3

Awareness 5

Void: 2

Shadowlands Taint: 1.9

Shadowlands Symptoms: Mild delusions of grandeur, believes herself destined to become the new bride of Fu Leng

Shadowlands Powers: Beside the Darkness, Unholy Beauty

Advantages: Dangerous Beauty

Skills: Conversation 4, Etiquette 4, Lore: Shadowlands 3, Sincerity 5, Stealth 3

In her lust for power, Mishinako surrendered to the embrace of the Dark Lord when she met a *maho-tsukai* nearly two decades ago. She immediately used her new abilities to arrange the demise of the madam of the geisha house where she worked. The intervening years have seen her rise to power as the head of one of the most influential geisha houses in the Unicorn lands. Her geisha are all devout followers of Fu Leng, and while they are careful to whom they reveal themselves, they try to convert or corrupt as many samurai as possible.



Dark Nemuranai

Dark Oracle's Covenant

The unbridled power of the Dark Oracles is well known, as is their strange reluctance to interfere personally with outside events. Those that dare seek the Dark Oracles take their lives into their hands, as these strange creatures are as likely to destroy supplicants as assist them. It is said that there exist certain *nemuranai* that exist "outside the elements," that provide protection against the power of the Dark Oracles. Whether these items were created by the Light Oracles or are a side effect of the Dark Oracles' existence is unknown. These four items are called the Dark Oracles' Covenants.

When one of these items is carried, its bearer may not be harmed in any way by the appropriate Dark Oracle, the Elemental Terror that serves it, or its spawn. Carrying the favor allows a mortal to demand one favor of the Oracle. Beware: interpretation of the favor is left to the discretion of the Oracle. Once the favor is fulfilled, all protective powers of the favor are permanently negated for that bearer. Carrying the Covenant of one Oracle does not protect its bearer in any way from the other three Dark Oracles.

Covenant of Earth – A fist-sized black diamond that seethes with eternal cold.

Covenant of Fire – A small metal lantern. All fire that burns within it is a dark green, and radiates no warmth. If no fire burns within, the Covenant has no power.

Covenant of Water – A rusted metal jug. All fluid placed within it becomes foul-smelling and polluted with excrement. If no fluid is placed within, the Covenant has no power.

Covenant of Air – A large kite made of tanned skin, stretched over bones. When let loose in the sky, it moans softly.

The Dark Oracles' Covenants radiate the Shadowlands Taint, and slowly corrupt the area in their immediate vicinity while left immobile. A character carrying a Covenant accrues the Taint as if he were in the Shadowlands, though jade absorbs this corruption as normal.

The Kuni are aware of the existence of the Covenants, but consider them too dangerous for any mortal to possess. Each one has been found and abandoned in the Shadowlands at least twice, but has cropped up elsewhere in Rokugan centuries later.

The Anvil of Despair

This foul tool of twisted magic was created by the Bloodspeaker Asahina Yajinden in collaboration with Iuchiban. It is an enormous anvil crafted of black iron, gleaming with the barest hints of red. The Tainted iron was taken from the mines of the long-lost Boar Clan, stained with the blood of the First Oni. The Anvil carries a nearly limitless capacity for evil. Phoenix legend claims that the Anvil was seized and destroyed years ago, but recent sightings place the Anvil in the lands of the Unicorn, Crane, and Mantis.

The Anvil's capacity for evil is unlimited. It once created the legendary Bloodswords, and could create more Tainted weapons, armor, and items if presented with the proper materials. To create truly legendary weapons, metal stained with the blood of an Oni Lord is required. However, the Anvil is not picky and can be used to craft items of impressive lethality using the blood of lesser creatures – such as humans.

Using the Anvil requires at least one craftsman with the Weaponsmith skill and one with the Lore (Maho) skill – although these can be the same person – and a victim. The victim must be chained to the front of the Anvil, which slowly sweats a foul red alloy that can be folded into metal. Each week the craftsmen who labor on the Anvil receive 1-5 points of Shadowlands Taint (a single craftsman does not receive double Taint). If this Taint is negated by any means, the Anvil's magic does not function. Each week that the victim is chained to the Anvil, the Anvil inflicts 40 Wounds that cannot be healed until the victim is released. If the victim is released alive before the work is done, the work is ruined. If the victim dies during forging, another can be chained to the Anvil with no loss in productivity.

A Lore (Maho) and Weaponsmith roll must be successfully rolled each week against a TN determined by the GM. If neither of these rolls are successful, no further work is accomplished, though Taint and Wounds are inflicted normally.

The Anvil of Despair can be used to create any items the GM deems fit, but weapons are most common. The chart on the next page can be used as examples of a few *maho* powers that can be placed in weapons.

Weapons created by the Anvil of Despair always have a bizarre, macabre appearance (screaming faces worked in the metal, an



unhealthy blue glow, etc.) and radiate the Shadowlands Taint. Also, most of these weapons impose a Willpower check upon their enemy in times of stress. The results of failing this check vary, but are always fitting to the purpose of the weapon. (The bloodsword *Revenge*, for example, provokes berserker rages, while *Ambition* causes its wielder to be weak against those who are similarly ruthless.) The TN of this check is generally 5 per 20 Wounds folded into the weapon, but can vary at the GM's discretion.

The Porcelain Mask of Fu Leng

Yogo Junzo returned from the Shadowlands carrying this strange artifact, and claims that it once belonged to the Dark Kami. The truth of the tale is open to speculation, but the power of the mask is undeniable. When placed upon a living human's face it seals itself to flesh and bone, and cannot be removed without killing the wearer. The Mask's wearer immediately gains a number of Shadowlands Powers of his choice, equal to his Insight Rank x 2. He may ignore the normal prerequisites for selecting Shadowlands Powers. Each day the mask is worn, the wearer must make a Willpower roll vs. TN 30. If he fails, he gains a full Rank of Shadowlands Taint. If he succeeds, he receives a cumulative +5 penalty to this roll each day until he fails, at which time the TN resets to 30. When a character who wears the mask becomes Lost, he immediately dies, his body exhausted and destroyed by dark energies. The mask can then be pried loose and used again.

The Deafening War Drums of Fu Leng

Created by Yogo Junzo, these drums are a testament to the maniacal Scorpion's dedication to his new master. They are enormous taiko drums, crafted of dark wood harvested in the Shadowlands. The drum heads are made of dark leather, hides of ogres stretched and tanned. The drums are beaten with great shafts of corrupted jade.

The drums are, as their name suggests, deafening. Their beat can be heard as far as a mile away. After the drums have been played for ten minutes, their magic begins to take effect. All corpses within range of the drum's beat will animate as zombies (see zombie stats in the GM's Guide). These zombies attack any non-Tainted creatures nearby or, if commanded by the creature playing the drums, form

Skill TN	Total Wounds	Effect
20	10	Weapon gains a free Raise against specific enemy. Up to five per weapon. A sample of hair, fingernails, or blood of enemy is required.
25	20	+1 die on attack or damage. Up to five per weapon.
30	40	Once per strike, the wielder may re-roll all attack or damage dice that roll less than his Shadowlands Taint Rank.
35	80	Weapon inflicts one point of Shadowlands Taint per strike.
40	100	Wielder heals a number of Wounds equal to the enemy's Earth x 4 whenever that enemy is slain with the weapon.

into groups and attack as an organized military unit. If the beat of the drums is interrupted for more than a round, the zombies will mill about randomly, attacking whatever comes near (including each other). If the beat of the drums is interrupted for more than ten minutes, the zombies become normal corpses once more. The zombies will never attack creatures with the Taint, even if commanded to do so.

New Spell

Jade Eternal

Element: Earth

Mastery Level: 2

Duration: 1 day

Area of effect: 1 pound of jade

Range: Touch

This spell causes a piece of jade to become extraordinarily resistant to the Taint. For the duration of the spell the jade still protects its bearer from corruption and harms creatures of the Taint as normal, but its inevitable corruption is slowed to imperceptible levels. While this magic is in effect, the jade loses none of its potency, and does not rot when exposed to the Taint.

Note that this spell will not increase the effectiveness of Jade Powder or Tea of Jade Petals, as the duration of these items is limited by other factors.

Kuni Witch Hunters who become shugenja keep this spell in effect upon their jade badge of office at all times. Witch Hunters who have no magic of their own will often visit a shugenja to have their badge blessed before venturing into the Shadowlands.



New Maho Spells

Seduction is the key to corruption. Few but the truly twisted and mad would join the Dark Lord's cause if there were no reward. But Fu Leng does reward his followers, seducing them from the path of righteousness with the promise of dark powers undreamt of by the minds of sane men. This serves two purposes. First and foremost, it strengthens the pawn. Fu Leng has no use for weaklings. To corrupt and destroy all that his hated siblings have wrought is his goal, and only strong, powerful minions will be of use to him. Secondly, the strength of his minions serves to demonstrate the futility of resistance. As mankind realizes the scope and breadth of Fu Leng's power, his task grows simpler. Not to mention, of course, that the power demonstrated by a *maho-tsukai* can spark the lust for power in others. The cycle is never-ending.

A *maho-tsukai* who was once a shugenja maintains his previous School Rank. One who learns from the kansens, like a corrupted peasant, is treated as a True Ronin shugenja, and begins at Rank 1. When a *maho-tsukai* casts a spell, he casts it like an ordinary elemental spell, with the following exceptions.

An elemental shugenja rolls a number of dice equal to his Ring in the spell's Element; a *maho-tsukai* rolls his Earth Ring, up to the point at which he becomes Lost. A Lost *maho-tsukai* instead rolls his Taint Rank. A *maho-tsukai* keeps dice equal to his total School Ranks. For instance, Yogo Junzo, who is Lost, has a Taint Rank of 6, is a Rank 3 Yogo shugenja and Rank 2 in the "Shadowlands School," rolls 6 dice (his Taint Rank) and keeps 5 (his total School Ranks).

A *maho-tsukai* must spill the blood of an intelligent being on the earth to cast maho spells. He must do a number of Wounds to the victim equal to twice the spell's Mastery Level.

When he rolls to cast the spell, he gains points of Taint equal to the difference between the TN and the number rolled, whether or not the casting was successful. This can be minimized by carefully choosing which dice to keep, but practitioners of maho always walk the razor's edge.

A *maho-tsukai* does not cross off any spell slots when he casts a maho spell. The energy required to cast the spell probably did not come from the caster; whether or not it did, the lost energy is represented in the form of Wound Levels, either to a victim or to the caster himself.

Blood and Darkness

Mastery Level: 1

Duration: 10 rounds

Area of Effect: Special

Range: Special

Summoning the foul darkness of Jigoku, the caster can plunge the area around him into total blackness. The caster may create a

zone of absolute darkness around him with a radius of 3' per Wound sacrificed during the casting of the spell. At the discretion of the caster, this field of blindness can be the deepest shade of crimson rather than black.

Blood Rite

Mastery Level: 1

Duration: Permanent (healing)/1 hour (augmentation)

Area of Effect: 1 Target

Range: Touch

Blood is the element that fuels the power of *maho*. With this simplest of rituals, the *maho-tsukai* can convert large amounts of blood into dark energy, which can then be used to heal the caster or others, or to temporarily increase their physical abilities. For every ten Wounds sacrificed, the caster may either heal five Wounds or increase a physical trait (Agility, Reflexes, Stamina or Strength) by one point for the duration of the spell.

Heart of the Damned

Mastery Level: 1

Duration: 10 rounds

Area of Effect: Self

Range: 15'

Seizing energy from the souls of the recently dead, the *maho-tsukai* can boost his own power temporarily. For each corpse targeted by this spell, the caster may add one to any Trait of his choice for the duration of the spell. This may only be done once per corpse, and undead may not be targeted. Their energies are already in use and may not be tapped. The basic version of this spell targets one corpse. An additional corpse may be targeted per Raise.

Legacy of the Dark One

Mastery Level: 1

Duration: 10 rounds

Area of Effect: 1 Target

Range: 30'

This spell calls upon the Dark Lord's power to obfuscate a target's relationship with the universe itself. For the duration of the spell, the target's Void is considered to be one rank lower. The penalty may be increased by one for every two Raises made.

Rise Again

Mastery Level: 1

Casting Time: 3 hours

Duration: 1 day

Area of Effect: Personal

Range: Touch



Fu Leng blesses his followers with the gift of rebirth, although the nature of the process is hideous indeed. A *maho-tsukai* may prepare this arcane ritual so that upon his physical death, his spirit will remain in the physical world. Eight hours after death, the caster's soul will re-enter his body, healing it to the Down level in the process. The ritual of preparation and the caster's death may not be further apart than the spell's Duration, or the effect wanes. This spell may only be cast once every month.

The Caress of Fu Leng

Mastery Level: 2

Duration: Instant

Area of Effect: 1 target

Range: 35'

The ultimate corruption of the elements, this loathsome spell summons a tiny fraction of the Dark Lord's inhuman power to corrupt even that which is beyond the Taint: jade. This powerful summoning is the only known way to corrupt jade other than by long periods of exposure. The jade itself undergoes a rapid deterioration, becoming soft and black until it resembles obsidian. This spell is often cast upon scouting parties deep within the Shadowlands by malicious *maho-tsukai*. The spell will corrupt all jade held by an individual targeted by the spell, or one single jade item that is individually targeted.

Dark Wings

Mastery Level: 2

Duration: 5 minutes

Area of Effect: Self

Range: Self

A useful means of escape or rapid travel, this spell causes leathery black wings to erupt from the caster's back. These wings are quite sturdy and resemble those of the hanemuri found in the Shadowlands. They can be used to strike opponents with two Raises on a Hand-to-Hand roll, inflicting normal unarmed damage. The caster can fly at a speed equal to twice his normal movement rate for the duration of the spell.

Hate's Heart

Mastery Level: 2

Duration: 5 rounds

Area of Effect: 1 Target

Range: 20'

Subtle and devastating, this cunning *maho* spell fans the flames of conflict in others, causing them to explode into violence seemingly without provocation or cause. The target of this spell must succeed on a Willpower roll or else fly into a homicidal rage towards whomever they are interacting with at the time. The TN for this test

varies according to the individual with whom the target is speaking. A Disadvantage that specifies hostility toward the other person (i.e. Heart of Vengeance, Sworn Enemy, Nemesis, etc.) adds 10 to the TN. The TN of the target's roll may be increased by 5 for every Raise the caster makes.

Target is speaking with	Willpower roll TN
Close family or friends	5
A superior	10
An associate	15
A total stranger	20

Mists of Fear

Mastery Level: 2

Duration: 5 rounds

Area of Effect: 1 Target

Range: 25'

The caster can summon an image of that which his target fears most, usually in the form of a person or thing associated with that fear. To the target, the caster appears as this person or object. This effectively gives the *maho-tsukai* a Fear rating of 3 for the duration of the spell. Obviously, this will activate any Phobia Disadvantages possessed by the target.

Obsidian Armor

Mastery Level: 3

Duration: 10 rounds

Area of Effect: 1 Target

Range: Touch

This spell summons a powerful but temporary aura of corruption that surrounds the caster. This aura serves to disrupt Taint-targeting spells or special abilities that are directed at the caster. For example, a Jade Strike that is cast upon the *maho-tsukai* will first encounter the mystical barrier of Obsidian Armor and destroy it, never reaching the *maho-tsukai* himself. This spell effectively counters the first spell or special ability directed at the caster that targets the Taint (including Tomb of Jade, Rest My Brother and the aforementioned Jade Strike). A second such attack will affect the *maho-tsukai* normally.

Pekkle's Visage

Mastery Level: 3

Duration: 1 hour

Area of Effect: Personal

Range: Personal



Used by *maho-tsukai* to avoid detection for centuries, this spell conceals the Taint from others for a limited time. With concentration, the caster focuses his Taint and forces it to recede from his outward physical and metaphysical appearance. All physical symptoms vanish. While the spell is in effect, the Taint may not be detected on the caster by any means. However, all Shadowlands abilities are lost for the spell's duration. The spell may be reversed prior to the length of the duration by casting it a second time. This is the only spell the *maho-tsukai* may cast while under the effects of Pekkle's Visage.

Gift of the Maker

Mastery Level: 4

Casting Time: 1 hour

Duration: 1 day

Area of Effect: Personal

Range: Personal

Often cast as an act of desperation or madness, Gift of the Maker calls out to the Dark Lord for his blessing and power. The *maho-tsukai* does indeed receive Fu Leng's power, but at a terrible cost. This spell allows the sorcerer to manifest one of the Major Shadowlands Powers for a short period. The power will fade, but its listed Deformities are gained permanently. The Dark Lord's gifts are never without a price.

Possession

Mastery Level: 4

Duration: 10 rounds

Area of Effect: 1 Target

Range: Touch

By usurping the control of his target's body, the caster can effectively take over the physical form of his opponent. This requires a contested Willpower roll, but success on the part of the caster means that he controls the target's body as if it were his own. The caster's body remains completely motionless during this time, and the spell can be broken if the caster's body is disturbed. The target's self-preservation instincts are still intact, and any attempt by the caster to force the body to cause itself harm requires an additional Willpower contest.

Fierce Blood of the Earth

Mastery Level: 5

Duration: 1 year

Area of Effect: Personal

Range: Touch

This dark spell was once unique, but was spread throughout the Shadowlands by the necromancer Kuni Girakuma. When cast, the spell completely consumes the life essence of one living being, which

must be supplied by the caster. This life force is absorbed into the caster, healing all immediate damage and halting the aging process for one full year. Continued use of this spell dries and cracks the skin and desiccates the internal organs. If at any point the caster loses all Taint, he is destroyed instantly.

Rise, Taint

Mastery Level: 6

Duration: Concentration

Area of Effect: 10' radius

Range: 25'

The caster may summon one of the most deadly beings in the Shadowlands, an Elemental Terror. This spell requires a large quantity of the appropriate corrupted element, and is therefore difficult to cast outside of the Shadowlands or other Tainted areas. Whatever element is most prevalent during the casting determines which Elemental Terror answers the caster's call. The Terror will not blindly obey, however. It first demands a price for its service, and such prices are high indeed. Once an arrangement is reached between the caster and the Terror, it will obey the caster's orders without question. Any who fail to come through on their part of the bargain are doomed, however, as the Terror will come for them and drag them to the Shadowlands for unimaginable tortures.





Dark Kiho

In essence, a kiho is a measure of an individual's state of harmony with the elements, a tiny piece of enlightenment that manifests itself in an obvious, physical sense. With this in mind it would seem that those monks who have embraced the Shadowlands would be unable to use kiho, corrupted as they are by the Taint.

This is not the case.

The element of corruption that shugenja call the Taint disrupts and alters the balance of elements within all who become infected by it. The effects are unpredictable, but it is possible, for example, for a person who becomes Tainted to have the element of Earth within them increased at the expense of Air, or some other combination. In fact, the Taint has often been likened to a sixth element itself, existing as it does outside the realm of Void, that which is all and nothing.

So yes, it is possible that an individual who possesses the ability to perform kiho and who becomes Tainted will lose some or all of his abilities. However, there is an equal possibility that he will keep some or all of them, and may even develop new, horrific kiho based upon the element of corruption within him.

To learn a kiho, the dark monk must have the relevant Ring + School Rank equal to or greater than the kiho's Mastery Level. No dark kiho may ever be used during the same round as an elemental kiho; the energies for the two are simply too different. Upon each use of a dark kiho, the monk must roll Void versus a TN equal to the kiho's Mastery x 5. Success means that the monk gains a single point of Taint. Failure means that the monk gains a number of points equal to the kiho's Mastery Level.

Breath of the Kumo

Type: Dark

Element: Air

Mastery: 4

Each of the elements that exist within a dark monk has been corrupted by the presence of the Taint. With concentration, the monk can turn these corrupted elements against his foes. By concentrating for one round, the dark monk can summon forth a blast of foul air from deep within his lungs. This air is a noxious poison, debilitating to even the strongest bushi. The monk must be within arm's reach of an opponent to use this attack, which affects the target so severely that a Stamina roll against a TN of 20 is required or the opponent will spend the next two rounds on the ground retching violently.

Child of the Corrupted Dragon

Type: Dark

Element: Taint

Mastery: 5

This horrifying kiho allows the monk to merge with the foul corruption of the Taint itself, removing him from the grasp of the elements. Spells from any element other than Void that target a monk employing this kiho have their TN increased by the monk's Earth x 2. A monk using Child of the Corrupted Dragon has skin the color of a moonless night, with shadows that seem to crawl across his flesh and eyes that burn a sickly green. This kiho lasts for a number of turns equal to the dark monk's Taint rank.

Corrupted Touch

Type: Dark

Element: Taint

Mastery: 3

By channeling the Taint through a potent finger strike, the dark monk may pass a tiny essence of corruption into his target. While this is not enough to give the target the Taint, it does disrupt the target's elemental balance and harmony. Anyone struck with Corrupted Touch is considered to have a Void Ring of zero for a number of turns equal to twice the dark monk's school rank. The monk must successfully strike his opponent hand-to-hand to use Corrupted Touch.

Essence of Corruption

Type: Dark

Element: Earth

Mastery: 4

Similar to Corrupted Touch, this kiho channels a portion of the dark monk's Taint into an outward display of corruption. By striking any nonliving object, the monk may corrupt and corrode it with his own essence. Wood rots, stone breaks, and metal rusts. Especially well-constructed objects (such as the average katana) will not be destroyed, merely sullied and in need of restoration by a trained weaponsmith. Dark monks have been known to use Essence of Corruption to destroy the peasant weapons of their opponents, or even the walls of buildings in which they are fighting, allowing for an escape route while the monk's opponents scramble to escape the collapsing structure.

Venom's Touch

Type: Dark

Element: Water

Mastery: 5

With a precise strike, a dark monk can corrupt the flow of Water through an opponent's spirit, disrupting the normal balance of the soul and inflicting tremendous pain. With a successful hand-to-hand attack, the monk causes intense pain in the target, whose inner balance is painfully wrenched out of alignment. The target of Venom's Touch suffers 2k2 Wounds per round for a number of rounds after the strike equal to the monk's Taint rank.

Legend of the Five Rings™

The Way of the Shadowlands

When the kami fell, the Dark Brother fell further than most. Fu Leng was changed by what he found in within the earth; his foul touch transformed the bright lands of southwest Rokugan into a foul wasteland. Only by uniting were the clans able to defeat him so long ago.

Though Fu Leng was defeated, his legacy lives on. The Shadowlands are the most painful reminder of Fu Leng's power, but the Dark Lord's terrible influence is hardly contained by the Kaiu Walls.

The Taint is everywhere. Everyone is vulnerable, even brave and noble samurai.

Time is on Jigoku's side. Rokugan begins to turn against itself, and Fu Leng will not sleep forever.

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