



*Legend of the Five Rings*

# Night of a Thousand Screams



**L-2**  
*City of  
Lies*

*An Adventure of Danger and Intrigue  
in Ryoko Owari*

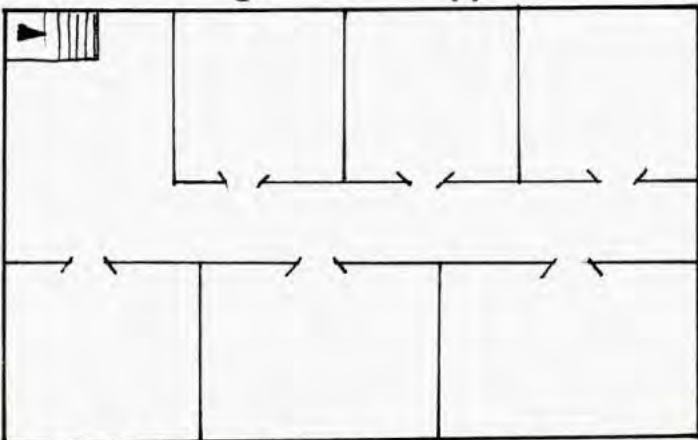
Written by Ree Soesbee, with John Zinser and Cris  
Dornaus  
with art by Cris Dornaus



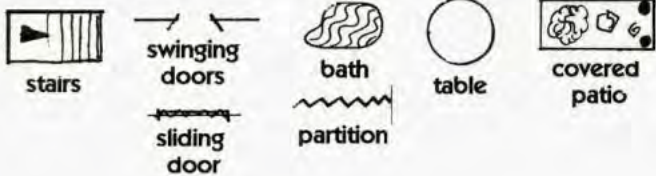
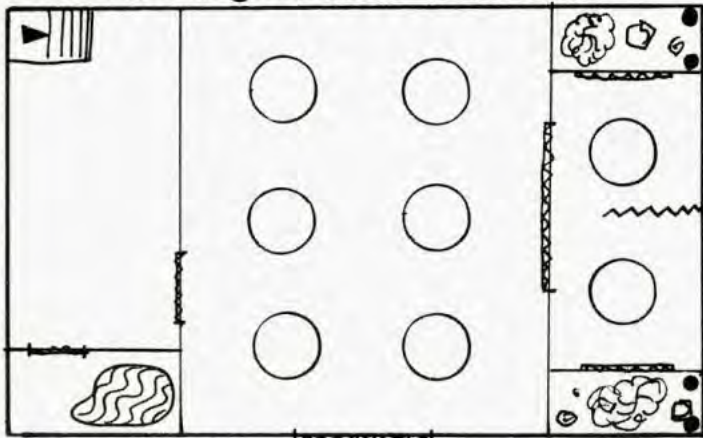
# Legend of the Five Elements

# Night of a Thousand

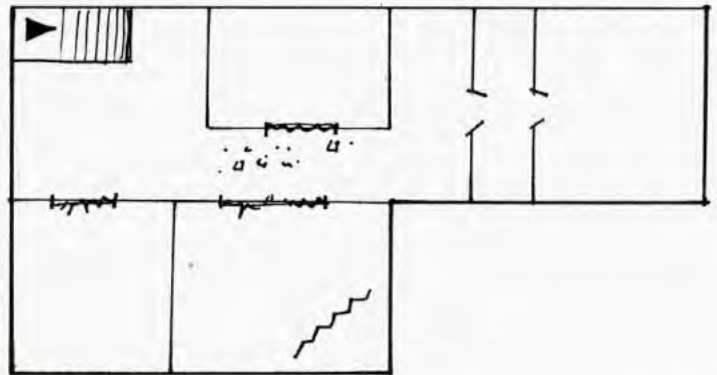
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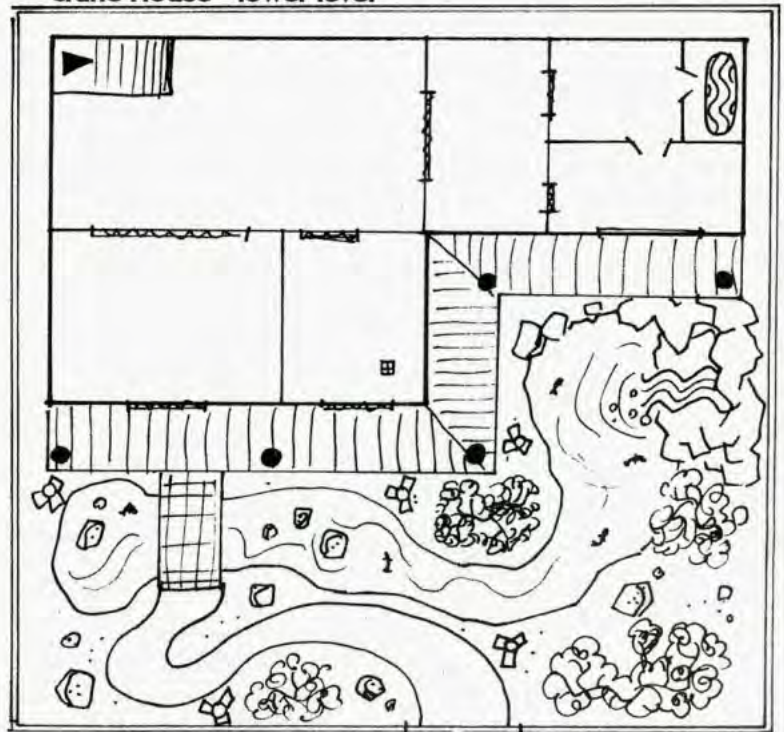
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Crane House - upper level



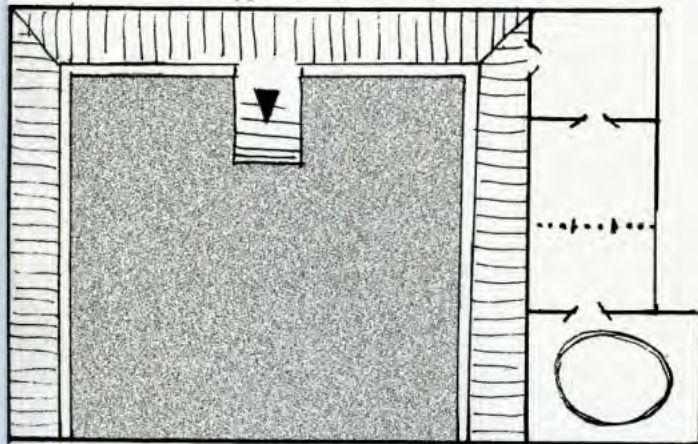
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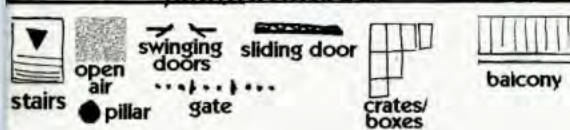
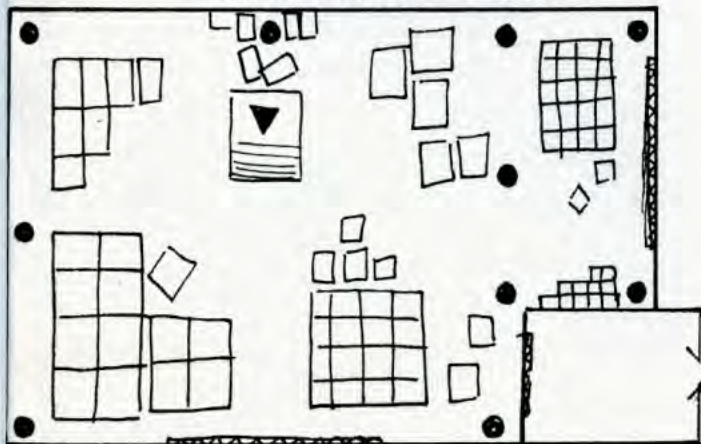
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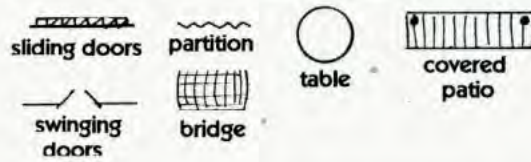
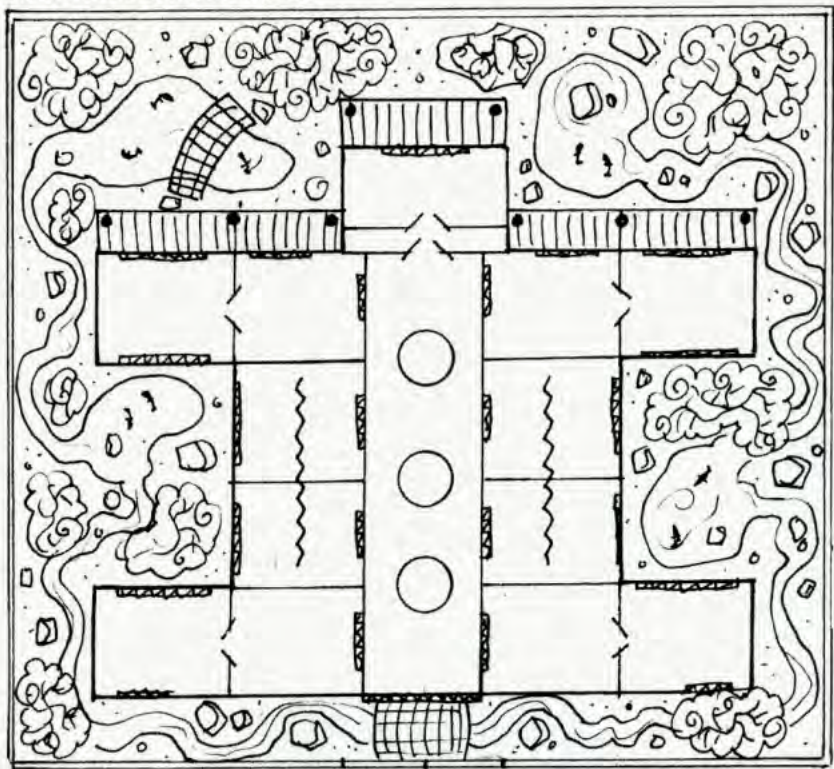
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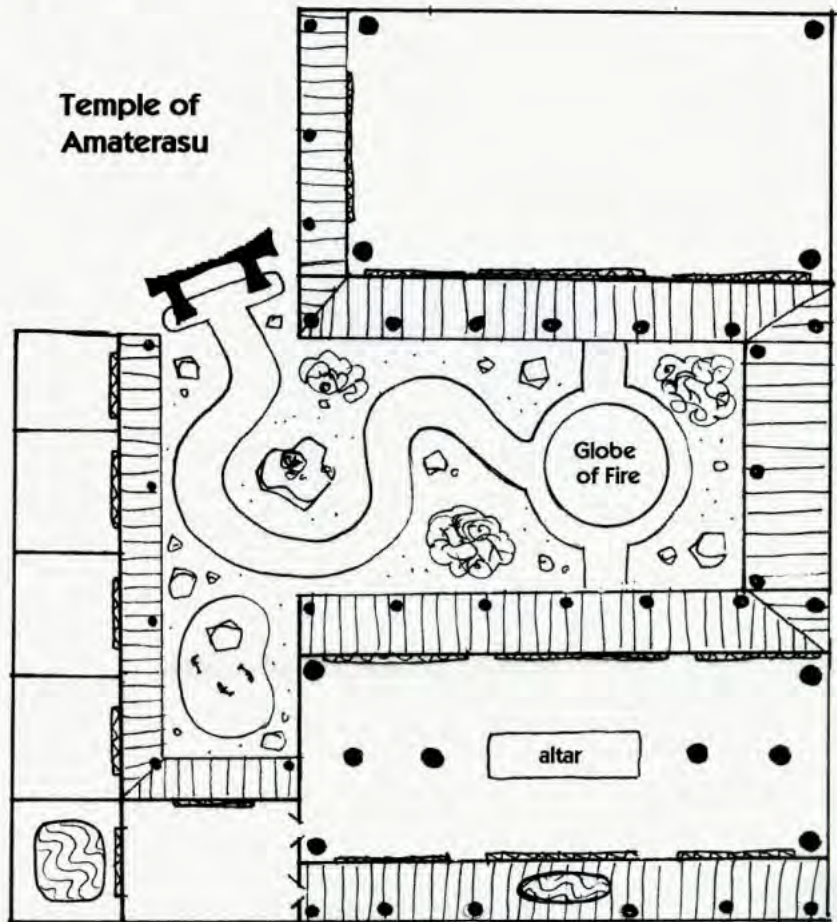
Shosuro Warehouse - lower level



House of Water Lilies



Temple of Amaterasu





# Legend of the Five Rings

## Night of a Thousand Screams



*"Before this night is over, this city will hear the echo of a thousand screams..."*



## Credits

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## EVENTS IN RYOKO OWARI

The events in this supplement sweep along at a rapid pace. This is intentional.

What makes the adventure interesting is the players' reactions to these events, and their ability to work on limited information and use reasoning and logic to put clues together. The events in this module will happen even if the PCs are not there, but the ultimate outcome for Ryoko Owari will be much worse if they are not there to interfere.

Further, throughout the adventure, you will see a lot of boxed text. This text is intended to be read aloud by the GM to the players, so that they can understand what is happening around them. Much of it contains important clues and hints, and is vital to the successful completion of the adventure.



# Introduction

## WHAT IS NIGHT OF A THOUSAND SCREAMS?

This sourcebook contains one full-length adventure full of combat, cutthroat deals, and dark magic. It is the second in the line of story packs for the *Legend of the Five Rings* RPG, and the second of the 'L' series. As you may have guessed by now, 'L' stands for the *City of Lies*, the location where this adventure takes place.

This source pack is designed to link with the larger RPG boxed set, *City of Lies*, although you do not need that supplement to play this adventure. If you do have access to *City of Lies*, however, get it out – you are going to want to read up on some of the important people and places in the city of Ryoko Owari before you run this adventure. *Night of a Thousand Screams* takes place within the darkest bed of villainy and wretched lies known to Rokugan, and starts right in the heart of things.

Each story pack is an "episode" in a larger campaign for your players, and *Night of a Thousand Screams* is no exception. Although it is designed to be played as part of a larger plotline, carried through several stories with recurring characters and themes, *Night* can be played as a completely separate adventure.

This episode was designed to help answer the question, "What can I do to add more combat to my game, without killing off all the player characters?" The world of Rokugan is a dangerous place – a katana can kill with one stroke and tremendous Oni from the Shadowlands can do even worse things, all with relative ease. We know the combat system is lethal. We designed it that way.

Unlike *Honor's Veil*, *Night of a Thousand Screams* was created to show some of the more in-depth aspects of combat, and some of the ways a GM can use the *Legend of the Five Rings* combat system without slaughtering players like sheep. Four-foot razor blades and poison-tipped claws can certainly ruin someone's day. But combat is often the only way to solve a situation. When your opponent has no sense of honor, no concept of the value of life, and no ears with which to listen to reason, then there's going to be a battle. But remember – not everyone who opposes you is your enemy.

## THE THEME OF NIGHT OF A THOUSAND SCREAMS

"Dark magic exacts a heavy price" is a theme which runs through this adventure. The samurai will be faced with *maho tsukai*, dark sorcerers, sellers of trinkets from the Shadowlands, and some of the most evil beings on the face of Rokugan. Terrible Oni and vicious criminals rampage through the pages of this story, and the characters are going to be asked to deal with them. Yes, much of that will mean combat – but before you go too far, realize that not all combats have to be lethal.

An opponent can surrender, be knocked unconscious, or beg for his life before the fight even starts. A clever samurai will be able to tell when he has been beaten by his enemy, even before swords are drawn. Simply facing each event in this adventure with the attitude "kill it before it breeds" is not going to get the players very far. Even in the corrupt city of Ryoko Owari, there are still laws. There are just more ways to bend them.

# Gamemaster Notes

## Background

Ryoko Owari Toshi is the dark jewel of the Scorpion lands. It is called by some the City of Green Walls, by others, the City of Stories. It is the City of Lies, and its festering suburbs reek with underhanded dealings, blackmail and deceit. Shady inns line the thin and twisted roads, along with warehouses holding everything from illegal gains to honest trade. It is a haven for those who seek to escape the law, and a major cornerstone of trade between the Scorpion and the Unicorn clans.

The provincial governor of the city is a woman named Shosuro Hyobu. She's powerful, both through military control and political intrigue, and when she needs assistance, she can call in the power of the Scorpion Clan to assist her in maintaining the city against threats. It's a trump card she doesn't play often, for misuse can be dangerous. Those who displease her, however, or who do not carry out her wishes will soon find themselves trapped between the Scorpion Clan and the visiting Unicorn dignitaries in the city. Why? Because Ryoko Owari is the linchpin of trade for both clans, and any disruption in its trade could mean starvation for hundreds of people in both clans.

Although the Scorpion are not often thought of as the 'militaristic' type, their prominent city is defended by an honor guard, known as the 'Thunder Guard' or 'Red Plumes', under the command of Hyobu's son, Shosuro Jocho. They serve as the police and civil guard of the city, although they tend to confine their activities to the more profitable sections of town.

There are also a number of mercenary gangs, or *kajinin*, who work in the city. Often hired by merchant houses or powerful individuals, these gangs patrol select areas as defined by their patron, are in charge of fire control in the case of emergency, and sometimes are associated with powerful criminal syndicates, as well. These *kajinin* mind their own business and keep to their allotted areas, but defend what they consider their 'turf' with deadly force.

The final authority in the City of Lies is the system of Magistrates. Imperial Magistrates and Scorpion or Unicorn Clan Magistrates are always resident in the city, looking out for their clan's affairs or the interests of the Emperor. Other clans may have representatives here, as well, watching out for a traveling dignitary or investigating some minor treason within the city. It's very possible that Player Characters may be Magistrates in their own right, either visiting or permanently located within Ryoko Owari's green walls.



## Synopsis

*Night of a Thousand Screams* serves well in almost any kind of campaign, but it is particularly well-suited for Magistrate characters. Magistrates, the arm of the Emperor's law, serve their clan or the Emerald Champion, and are often required to investigate foul deeds or unusual occurrences. *Night of a Thousand Screams* is filled with both. If your characters are already Magistrates, their responsibility as 'police' of the Empire should motivate them to investigate the strange happenings in the *City of Lies*.

If your party is comprised of players who are not Magistrates, the adventure begins with the characters entering Ryoko Owari and seeking out a nice inn. Tired from their long journey, they eagerly anticipate the Bon Festival which will be going on all night long. The Bon Festival, a yearly celebration in Rokugan, gives honor to the dead

## HOURS OF THE DAY

Hare: 6AM to 8AM

Dragon: 8AM to 10AM

Serpent: 10AM to 12PM

Horse: 12PM to 2PM

Goat: 2PM to 4PM

Monkey: 4PM to 6PM

Rooster: 6PM to 8PM

Dog: 8PM to 10PM

Boar: 10PM to 12AM

Rat: 12AM to 2AM

Ox: 2AM to 4AM

Tiger: 4AM to 6AM





### CHALLENGE, FOCUS, STRIKE

You will notice, as you read through this text, that many of the scenarios (particularly the combat-related ones) are written in the "Challenge-Focus-Strike" style, similar to the basic rulebook. This is to help the Gamemaster progress the characters through the background information, to the initial problem, and into the combat.

It is best if the Gamemaster reads through *Night of a Thousand Screams* before running the adventure, so that they can tell when each combat is appropriate.

Also, the background information is important to note: fighting in this module has deliberately been placed in unusual locations, so that the players can use strategy and unusual tactics to avoid outright hacking into their opponent.

Discretion, and a large table to dodge behind, is often the better part of valor.

and appeases the souls of the ancestors. It is also a time of remembrance, when people speak to the souls of their long-departed ancestors and family, and seek to understand the mysteries of death. It is an honorable festival, in which the ancestors hear the supplication of their families, and seek to help them through the coming year.

The streets will be filled with representations of the Great Kami, the Dragons of Myth, and white-faced 'ghosts' and spirits of the past. The Bon Festival is a time when the dead souls of the past are closest to their heirs in the world. Every action you have taken in the past year is judged by your ancestors, and you are asked to atone to them for any misdoing. As recompense, the ancestors are expected to reveal wisdom you will need in the times ahead, and to look favorably on their descendants who honor them properly.

During the festival, there are fireworks, parades, music, traditional dances, and long twisting streamers. Cakes made of bleached white rice and covered in brown sugar are made to remind people that death (symbolized by the white) is a part of all life, no matter where it hides. The festival is a celebration of life as well as death, and people revere the life they have and enjoy the great parade as it passes through the streets of the city. The characters are enjoying the cool evening before the Bon Festival in the city of Ryoko Owari, when their Inn is attacked by an Oni with eyes like fire. Two Crane merchants are murdered, and an investigation leads the characters to a ransacked Unicorn warehouse, a Shosuro lost in the grasp of a failed Oni summoning spell, and a stolen shipment of masks. Through the night, the players are attacked, chased, fled from, trapped, tricked and assaulted numerous times, by numerous enemies. The reasons for the murders grows more complex as the characters uncover a *maho* ritual being performed by the Moon Cult, kill the Oni with an ancient and magical sword, and follow the trail of the stolen masks into the dark heart of the city.

By the time they are done, the players will have faced the Cult of Lord Moon, challenged the sorcery of *maho-tsukai*, and been attacked by an army of undead seeking to destroy an ancient artifact of the Sun Goddess. All of these perilous events happen between the sunset and dawn of a single night ... the *Night of a Thousand Screams*.



At 5:30 (nearly the end of the hour of the Monkey), the sun is about to set, and dusk is gathering, making the streets gray. People are hurrying home from work and other duties, preparing for the Bon Festival which will begin just after dark.

The Inn of the Orange Blossom is a lovely establishment on the corner of Saffron Street and Brass Avenue, near the waterfront in the merchant section of Ryoko Owari. It is a quaint little inn, with a few rooms upstairs, and tables downstairs where travelers and city residents gather. The master of the house is named Hametsu, a roly-poly man with a thick beard. He is a Unicorn, and loves to regale his listeners with tales of the days when the Unicorn traveled across the mountains. Of course, he wasn't alive for any of those escapades, but they are real to him nonetheless, and he will cheerfully describe them to any paying customer.

He is assisted by his wife, Kimoko, and his young daughter, Hakiku. They are both pleasant individuals who smile a lot and ask no questions. Other patrons fill the inn, preparing for the evening's festivities, and banners and flowers cover the doorway of the Orange Blossom.

The inn is located at (1) on your city map, and the players should be shown where it is. It will be a base for much of their activities during the adventure, and could remain an important spot for future campaigns in Ryoko Owari.

It is the inn's practice, as with most common establishments, to check any obvious weapons at the door. There is a small alcove which is safe from prying eyes, and the swords and other

weapons will be kept here, for safekeeping, while the characters are in the inn. A few swords and a spear, belonging to the other patrons of the inn, already rest within the alcove, and the characters will know that this is common practice in Rokugan. PCs who refuse to relinquish their weapons will be politely asked to leave. They are welcome to stay outside while their companions eat sumptuous food and drink excellent *sake* ...

### CHALLENGE

Magistrate PCs have probably come to Ryoko Owari to serve their clan or the Emperor with some minor function, or as part of their duties to see to the safety of the Empire. They may even be residents of the city, entrusted with its care and the safety of its citizens. In this case, they may be visiting the Inn of the Orange Blossom as a moment of peace and quiet away from their hectic Magistrate schedule, eating dinner with friends and discussing tonight's Festival.

If they are not Magistrates, it is best if the PCs have either come into town with a minor dignitary (who is now safely housed in Shosuro Palace for the festival, and will not be needing the characters' assistance for a few days), or live in or near the town, and have come to celebrate the Bon Festival. In either case, they have retired to this little inn, to partake of its hospitality, its rice, and its fine *sake*. The PCs are taken to a private room, beside the common room, where they are treated to their meal. The door to their area is left open, and the characters can see several tables full of guests in the common room. They are enjoying themselves, eating food, and talking quietly. One of them, a group of well-dressed Crane Clan dignitaries, seems out of place.

If a party member approaches another table before going to their room, most of the characters in the inn will bow with proper respect and introduce themselves. The patrons are primarily simple *heimin* and merchants, resting from a long journey or visiting relatives in the town.

The Crane, on the other hand, will introduce themselves as Doji Juzo, Doji Usiina, and Daidoji Anitano, three merchants of some note in the city. An Intelligence + Courtier roll against a TN of 15, by someone who is familiar with Ryoko Owari, will further identify the men as being servants of the local Crane *hatamoto*, or advisor to a *daimyo*. The *hatamoto*'s name is Doji Tsumetsu, a distant cousin of the Doji noble house and servant of a

rather powerful Crane *daimyo* on the border. The Cranes run a thriving business in Ryoko Owari, trading goods from Crane lands for high prices. They are not the only Crane merchants in town, but they are the most powerful. If asked, they will reply only that they are discussing a private business matter, and will offer no further information. One of the men, the Daidoji, looks to be a bodyguard and seems to be less interested in the talk at the table than the other two. He will keep an eye on the player characters, as well as the other patrons of the inn.

The three men have sold several items for the Festival to a lesser merchant shop at good prices, and have made a substantial profit. Some of the items they have been responsible for selling include streamers, fireworks, masks and costumes, noisemakers and other frivolous items. The men will not invite the players to join them and will politely refuse any offer to join the party.

### Focus

Once the PCs are seated in their room, the innkeeper's daughter enters and takes the characters' orders. She begins carrying food to the table from the common room and assisting the party with any questions they have about the inn. Have the players **roll initiative** after being seated in their private room. Hakiku is serving them rice and fish, the usual fare, and all seems to be well in the inn. Although you have asked them to roll initiative, nothing untoward seems to be occurring at this time.

Five minutes after the party has settled in, there is an explosion in the common room. Pieces of wood and ceramic rip through the paper walls, and the serving girl falls to the floor. The explosion has ripped the doors from their hinges, and sent a large piece of wood through her chest.

At this point, the GM should begin around the table, asking each player to describe what their character is doing. Skip anyone who does not have a swift answer. It is best to ask the person with the lowest initiative roll first, and continue up the line until reaching the person with the highest initiative roll. In this way, the player whose character begins first (and thus, thinks fastest on their feet) has more opportunity to react to the explosion. Players have little time to act before all the Crane are killed, and above all, the urgency of immediate action should be stressed.



### MINOR ONI

EARTH: 3

WATER: 2

FIRE: 1

AIR: 1

Reflexes: 5

Rolls When Attacking: 4k2

Rolls For Damage: 2k1

Bite: 2k2 + Contested Earth Roll vs. the Damage or the victim gets the Taint (1-3 pts).

TN to be Hit: 25

Armor: 3

Wounds Per Level: 5: -1;

10: -2; 20: -3; 25: Dead.

Abilities: Multiple Attacks per Turn (2), Leaping (up to 15' without Raising).

These beings are almost comical, but not to be laughed at, even though they would likely misunderstand the sound. Minor Oni aren't bright, but they are capable. They are fast and can attack twice a round (leaping onto their targets with claws, and adding a bite). Finally, they are only barely able to communicate. Their 'speech' sounds like frenzied, maniacal screeching. Those that try to understand them will almost be able to make out words, but ultimately fail. As said before, they are almost comical.



## ONI NO CHIZARO

EARTH: 6

WATER: 4

Perception: 6

FIRE: 3

Agility: 4

AIR: 3

Reflexes: 4

Rolls When Attacking: 8k3

Rolls For Damage: 5k3

Bite 7k3 + Contested  
Earth Roll vs. the Damage  
or victim gets the Taint (1-5  
pts)

Talons (at elbows) 3k2

TN to be Hit: 30

Wounds Per Level: 30: -1;

50: -2; 70: -3; 90: Dead

Abilities: Fear 2, Children,  
Invulnerability, Multiple  
Attacks per Turn (3).

Leaping (up to 25' w/o  
Raising), Saliva Attack, Keen  
Sense of Smell.

The Oni no Chizaro's primary attribute is its ability to pluck its 'children,' from their resting places in ridged spine. He can do this up to ten times before he must wait for them to regrow (a process which takes an hour). One hour after the Minor Oni has been outside the Oni no Chizaro's body, they will dissolve into muck.

Normal weapons only do 1/4 damage against the Oni (although pure jade weapons will do 1/2).

Through the ripped wall you see an inhuman creature much larger than a man holding one of the Crane dignitaries above his head. It stands easily seven feet tall, with three eyes, a long slithering tongue, and a long row of pods bulging between the ridges of its extended spine. Its body is a blackish green, covered in slime. The smell is brackish and foul. Long, dripping claws reach out to shred the Crane it holds above its head, ripping through muscle and sinew with a minimum of effort. Another Crane lies dying in a pool of blood, and the third has leapt to his feet, trying to back away from the creature.

The girl, Hikiku, will die in two rounds unless one of the player characters immediately attends to her wounds. The Crane at the Oni's feet (Daidoji Anitano) is already dead, and the one in the air is rapidly dying. Only the third Crane, Doji Juzo, seems still alive and active.

The Oni attacking the bar is the Oni no Chizaro, but the players shouldn't be given that name. Although we refer to it as 'Oni no Chizaro' in the GM's text, you should only refer to it as 'the Oni' when talking to the players.

### STRIKE

All the patrons of the Inn are stunned and cannot react to the attacks of the Oni. It is only here to kill the Crane dignitaries, ignoring all others, and will kill the third Crane next turn. The only way to stop the Oni from completing its mission is for a character to disrupt its attacks. Because the characters should all be weaponless (unless someone has dishonorably hidden a weapon), this will most likely involve a pummeling attack against the Oni during the second round. Another option could be to push the Crane out of harm's way before the Oni can reach him. The Oni is intelligent, and will deal with immediate threats before going back after the Crane.

Doji Juzo is a courtier, not a fighter, and will not attack. Instead, he backs cowering into a corner, watching the combat in abject terror. The other patrons of the bar will do the same, some fleeing and screaming, some fainting, and some trying to hide.

In the second round of combat, unless *The Path to Inner Peace* or an equivalent is applied, the damage to the Crane on the floor (Doji Usiina) will kill him. One of the patrons of the inn, a

ronin samurai, will have leapt to the weapons alcove and grabbed his katana. On the fourth round, if the Oni has not killed all the Crane, he jumps into the fray. However, he isn't much help, and he will most likely be killed the same round he enters the combat. Because he has a sword, the Oni will consider him to be the greatest threat, unless the PCs are doing some phenomenal damage with their bare hands.

The Oni will continue its rampage, headed for the cowering Crane. Any NPC who gets in the way will be slaughtered with a backhand swing of the Oni's terrible claws. The inn owner, Hametsu, will grab any PC not in the battle and scream, "Do something! People are dying!" If the Oni cannot get to the Crane within 5 rounds, he will hear the stomp of feet charging the inn (the Thunder Guard, responding to the screams). With a roar of frustration, he will tear two of the 'pods' from his spine and throw them to the floor.

The Oni screams in frustration and reaches one long, clawed hand to its back, where you see numerous growths protruding from its spinal ridge. With a savage rip and a vile tearing sound, the Oni pulls one of the lumps from its back and flings it to the floor with a sticky 'glop.' Within the blink of an eye, the round fleshy mass sprouts spidery legs with sharp claws, and opens three small, glowing eyes. The Minor Oni's jaw opens to reveal rows of sharp teeth, much like the original Oni, and it skitters toward you with phenomenal speed.

These 'pods' will swiftly (within seconds) uncurl into the Minor Oni. These smaller creatures will continue the assault against the players. The two Minor Oni will fight until death. When they are killed, they will dissolve into puddles of black, tarry, smelly glop on the floor.

It is important to note that this scene is an introduction to the adventure which is about to take place. The Oni no Chizaro is a powerful being, summoned from the Shadowlands to serve a sinister purpose which will be explained as the party delves into the mystery. The Oni is an important 'bad guy,' and no party should be able to kill him in this brief encounter. On the other hand, because the Oni is not there to directly harm the players, he should not be allowed to slaughter your PCs either.

If Oni no Chizaro is truly threatened, he will drop as many as 5 of the 'pods' from his back,



## ONI NO CHIZARO (CONTINUED)

The open nodules that the Minor Oni leave behind when they are drawn from their nestling places can be targeted by a no-dachi or polearm thrust (requiring 3 Raises), resulting in twice normal damage (thus, 1/2 total for common weapons). The Minor Oni can also be targeted while they are nestling, requiring a Raise and resulting in full damage to the Minor Oni 'child.' Minor Oni take normal damage from all weapons.

Finally, the Oni no Chizaro can sample things around him with his tongue (see pg 19). His saliva will break apart the victims' tissue. The effects upon the target of this disgusting attack remain for 6 Turns minus his Earth Ring if he fails a Simple Stamina Roll with a TN of 15.

You may want to earmark this page, as the players will have several encounters with the Oni no Chizaro during the *Night of a Thousand Screams*.



unleashing a barrage of Minor Oni to do his bidding. He will escape by leaping out the front door, over nearby houses, and vanishing in tremendous bounds across the city's rooftops. If he is seriously harming the players, be sure to remember that the Oni's goal is only to kill all three of the Crane NPCs. Once he has eliminated them, he will escape in triumph.

This scene is intended to frighten your players and imply that someone in the city is using *maho*. As the Gamemaster, be sure to make the scene as intense and real for your players as possible without actually killing them.

### Doji Juzo

Doji Juzo, if he survives, will thank the players with all his heart. He isn't brave, but he is kind, and knows he could have been destroyed utterly if the PCs had not helped. If he lives through the combat, he will owe a minor boon to the PCs, and will tell them so. His friends are most likely dead, and he will be roughly questioned by the Thunder Guard who come to settle the disturbance.

Juzo will tell the PCs that he has no idea why the creature attacked him and his companions.

"We are simple merchants," Doji Juzo says, his eyes still wild with fear. "We haven't done anything to gain the enmity of an Oni! I've never even been to the Shadowlands! I don't know anything about it! It was awful! Did you see it? Ten feet tall!" He rants for a bit, but as he calms down, the Thunder Guard begin questioning you all about the incident.

You hear Juzo repeating the story to the Guard, and telling them about his day. From what you hear, it's been relatively routine - he takes simple merchandise to a buyer, 'gifts' them with the merchandise and receives payment. The merchandise is all for the festival, and seems to be nothing more than an elaborate list of party favors: streamers, fireworks, masks and costumes, and noisemakers. Nothing he seems to have done is questionable, and he provides names and contact information of three merchants whom he has dealt with today. He seems legitimate, and his contacts seem to be upstanding businessmen.

Assuming the characters tell the truth to the Thunder Guards, they will be left unmolested.

If none of the Crane survived, all their belongings will be taken to the Crane manor, location 4, in the Noble's Quarter.



At the beginning of the Hour of the Rooster (6pm), the sun is setting and the streets are emptying.

After the battle, the innkeeper will try to clean up his poor establishment, while his wife grieves over the loss of their daughter. Several *eta* arrive on command of the Thunder Guard, in order to



clean up the dead bodies of the Crane and the serving girl. The innkeeper, Hametsu, will vary between gushing thanks to the PCs for their quick actions, and tearing his hair out in grief over his daughter and the state of his little inn. He apologizes several times to the PC he shook during the combat, and will do almost anything to make amends.

He fears that this attack will ruin his reputation, and that his inn will be cursed by the spirits of the Crane samurai who were killed while enjoying his hospitality. Many times, he will recite prayers to the Fortunes, and whisper apologies under his breath to his ancestors. While the Thunder Guard is making their last minute investigations and asking the PCs a few final questions, the sudden appearance of a dark shadow in the doorway will startle Hametsu into dropping a tray of sake and rice.

When the man enters, Hametsu launches into another round of apologies, and swiftly cleans up his mess, his hands shaking with stress and anxiety. The man smiles at Hametsu understandingly, removing his large straw hat.

At the doorway of the inn, you hear a crash. Hametsu bends down quickly, to retrieve a large tray of rice and sake he was carrying, and a man steps through the doorway nearby. "I'm sorry, sir," Hametsu stammers, "You startled me, my Lord. I'm so sorry ... I'm sorry ... Please, let me assist you ..."

Over Hametsu's frantic apologies, you hear the stranger say cheerfully, "No, no, innkeeper, that's not necessary." He removes his straw hat and reveals a mane of white hair, pulled back into a samurai's topknot ponytail. His expensive blue kimono and hakama, and fine *daisho* are the very image of a Crane samurai, but the smiling eyes and ready grin are mischievous rather than stoic and elegant.

With a bow, the stranger approaches the party, and several of the Thunder Guard around you return a slightly deeper bow. "My Lord Magistrate, Oruku-sama," one of the Guard says, "it is a pleasure to see you again."

The Crane will introduce himself to the players as Doji Oruku, a Crane Magistrate in the city, serving under the distant authority of the Doji house. He is tall and athletic, his clothing characteristically elegant and pristine, but not too fancy or elaborate. This is no preening,

plumed Crane, but rather a warrior whose goal is to discover the truth. His manner is confident and easygoing. His dark eyes shine with a canny intelligence and he is quick to flash a roguish grin. He is a man who has the highest respect for life, but has learned that it cannot be taken too seriously. His natural charisma endears him to most people he meets – he is much better at making friends than enemies. He is a skilled fighter, has a smooth tongue, a quick wit, and an adventurous spirit.

Doji Oruku is an NPC (non-player character) who will be traveling with the party throughout the adventure, if they accept his help and friendship. He is trustworthy and capable, although not to the point of overshadowing the players. As the evening unfolds, Oruku should be used to prod the characters, to remind them of clues they may have missed, and to encourage them to follow the proper protocol. He knows the City of Lies well, and can also serve as a guide to finding places in the city which the characters may not be familiar with. Be careful not to let Oruku do all the work – he's not there to solve problems or make decisions. He should be played as a friendly, courageous man whom the players can trust and use as a source of information about Ryoko Owari.

### CHALLENGE

Doji Oruku has come to investigate the deaths of the Crane. Because the dead men were his kinsmen, Oruku takes this attack very seriously.

He will walk around the Inn, looking at the shattered tables and ruined paper walls, and will ask the players to describe what occurred. Once he has been brought up to date, he will thank the players for their courage in attempting to save his kinsmen (even if the players weren't successful).

Several eta have arrived by this time, swift to do their work and remove the bodies. Oruku will direct the eta to carry the dead bodies to the crematorium, outside of the city. They will scurry to carry out his orders. One of them, a young boy, will look around at the inside of the inn with a sort of awe, and smile shyly at the player characters before remembering his place and dropping his eyes to the work at hand. If the players try to talk to him, he will fall to his knees and bow, as is proper, and answer any questions they may have before scrambling to help his father and the other eta.

Oruku will then invite the characters to sit and have tea with him while they talk. Hametsu will bring out what's left of his finest stock for them. He will explain that he is going to join the search to discover what has happened, and that he and his family would be indebted if the players would lend their talents to assist him. If the players are already Magistrates, they will know that it is their duty to help another Magistrate in this situation, and if they are not, they will certainly understand that gaining a friend in the Crane family is a good idea. In any case, they will be comfortably drinking tea and talking perhaps ten to fifteen minutes later, when the young eta boy rushes in the door, his face soot-stained and his feet bleeding from a long run over rough terrain.

The boy is panicked and out of breath, bursting out with the following:

"The crematorium..." pants the boy, obviously out of breath. His eyes are white rimmed, and he is terrified. "There are bandits, attacking the crematorium and trying to steal the bodies!" He points out the door, in the direction from which he has come. "Please, samurai-sama, they are attacking my father ... the bodies of your friends ... please help us!"

### FOCUS

It takes about five minutes to reach the crematorium at a steady jog, which is about as fast as the boy can manage at this time. The crematorium is located at position (2) on your Gamemaster's map. If the characters already know where the crematorium is, they can reach it at a dead run in about two and a half minutes, but they will be winded unless they have Athletics. Winded characters attack at a -1 to all dice until they have a chance to catch their breath (rest for two full actions).

A party of fifteen to twenty bandits have attacked the crematorium, not expecting any resistance from the eta. The place has been destroyed and is partly on fire, adding to the confusion of screaming eta and sword-wielding bandits. When the party arrives, the Crane bodies are lying on the floor, their shrouds ripped open and their clothing rifled through. One or more of the bandits may still be searching through the corpses and the area where the bodies are kept, to the side of the giant kiln used for cremation. The eta escorts lie dead as well, cut down by the blades of the bandits.



## THE ETA VILLAGE

The lowly eta village rests on the far side of the river from the body of Ryoko Owari. Although it is the home of the lowest caste in Rokugan, it is still a tidy place, with well-lit streets and cleanly swept roads. The houses are neat and well-spaced, and some celebrants wander through the streets dressed as zombies and ghosts. For the most part, the people seem happy and well-fed, although their clothing is brown and worn, and made of the roughest materials.

The peasants of the eta village fall to their knees as the samurai pass them by, afraid to catch their attention. Once the characters are past, they scurry to their feet and go about their business again.

It is completely legal for a samurai to kill an eta, even for some imagined slight – such as not bowing swiftly enough. However, characters who go around killing another daimyo's eta might want to reconsider their actions before that daimyo begins to seek retribution ...



## TOUCHING DEAD FLESH

Touching dead flesh (even if it was thrown at you and you didn't mean to) is a major transgression in Rokugani culture. To put it simply, a person who has touched dead flesh is our cultural equivalent of someone who has thrown up on themselves, but refuses to change clothing because it's 'impractical'.

Others don't want to go near them, don't want to touch them or any of their belongings. Shugenja won't heal them, or cast spells on them. Other players and NPCs might not even talk directly to them, considering them temporary *eta*.

A player who touches dead flesh must be purified by a shugenja through a complex ritual. Any shugenja knows how to enact this ritual, which takes fifteen minutes and requires walking under a Torii Arch (an Ancestral Shrine). There's a Torii Arch at location 14, the temple of the Sun Goddess. Its the only one in Ryoko Owari.

The PCs arrive in time to catch a number of the bandits on their way out. The bandits are generally a cowardly lot, and do not want a fight with the Magistrates, but they have no desire to be caught either. They will make a break for the door at the rear of the building when the party enters, but only a few will escape before the PCs close in.

## STRIKE

Several of the bandits will engage the PCs in combat - enough to keep the PCs busy while their friends escape. The bandits have no reason not to use the dead bodies as shields, and any of the burial implements (bone cutters, jars of entrails, skulls and half-charred bones) as weapons. Remember, a samurai who touches dead flesh is dishonored, even if it's a jar of entrails or a body thrown at them by a fleeing bandit ...

This should be a huge fight, with bandits flinging bodies and vile gobbets of flesh everywhere. The party must destroy the bandits who have desecrated the corpses, and still find out why the men were here in the first place. Any captured bandits will attempt to escape or force the players to kill them. Under extreme duress, they will reveal that a man known to them only as "Silence" sent them to steal any remaining belongings of the Crane dignitaries and deliver them to the leader at a prearranged meeting place. They do not know anything else about the leader, the specific item he may have wanted, or where he can be found other than the meeting place. They were hired through an inn on the wharf, and they didn't ask questions.

One of the bandits has a small bag containing 10 koku and bearing the Crab mon in his possession. He refuses to talk about it, but it should be pretty clear that this was the payment for the deed.

Six bandits have managed to escape through the rear door as the party enters. After the fight, Oruku will urge the PCs to give chase (especially if there are no surviving bandits in the crematorium to tell the party what happened). Once the party gives chase, they will be separated according to which bandit they choose to follow.

Oruku leaps through the rear door beside you, watching the fleeing shadows of the escaped bandits run through the maze of alleys in the *eta* village. He points with his katana, and selects one

of the shadowy figures. "That one's mine!" He cries out, grinning wickedly at you. "Get the others! They may know something!" Then he leaps into a run, chasing after the man. "I'll see you in an hour at the Orange Blossom, or I'll tell your bravery to my ancestors!" He yells over his shoulder, and then he is gone with an exhilarated laugh.

Five more figures are racing away, and you have only seconds to react.

Four of the bandits are headed deeper into the *eta* village, while the other two are going toward the Wretched Gate back toward the city. The one Oruku chooses is one of the ones headed into the village.



At this point, the characters will have to split up and chase after the fleeing bandits. The Gamemaster may choose one of two styles for running this part of the adventure. First, you can simply turn to each player and run the scene in public for all the other characters to see. Secondly, you may choose to take each player out of the room, one by one, and run the scene individually, relying on the players to remember any information they have gained and pass it on to the party later. Half the fun is in watching the players try to tell each other what happened, and brag about their exploits (real or imagined) over a round of sake.

If the size of the party does not match the amount of fleeing bandits, you may wish to increase or decrease the number of escapees. Each PC should have a separate bandit to chase, with no pairing up, so that each player can handle the scene on their own.



The following chase scenes are written for PCs without magical skills. Some scenes will have to be altered, depending on the skills and abilities of the individual chasing each bandit. Shugenja PCs should have as difficult a time capturing their bandit as do the bushi, and each scene should be exciting and dangerous. Don't be afraid to make one or more of the bandits into ronin (and poorly trained) shugenja, if it makes for a better story.

The *eta* village is of moderate size, and rambles about the area surrounding the crematorium. It is highlighted with the numeral (3) on your Gamemaster's map.

## Chase One: The Eta Village

The first bandit attempts to escape into the eta village, relying on speed and cunning to lose his pursuers. The PC will not lose sight of him during the chase, however. When he is getting close, the PC will see the bandit leap into an eta house, and hear shrieks and fearful cries from inside the hut. When the PC enters, the bandit has a young boy held in front of him, a knife pressed to the boy's neck. The bandit claims that he just wants to get away, and will release the boy unharmed if the PC leaves.

If the PC attempts to negotiate, the bandit will argue unreasonably for a few moments, and then fling the boy aside, launching an attack on the player. Note that the boy is eta, and therefore the samurai PC has no real need to make sure that he survives. However, a good samurai values all life, even that of an eta, and so the PC should attempt to keep the boy from harm.

If the PC attacks the bandit, the man will slash at the boy, possibly wounding him but not killing him. Then the bandit will push the boy toward the samurai and try to flee out the back of the hut.

**CLUE:**  
None

## Chase Two: The Eta Geisha House

The second bandit hopes to lose his pursuer by ducking into a nearby geisha house. The house is in the eta village and the women are mostly old and unattractive. The geisha scream at the sight of the man, and the Oka-san of the house will chase after the attacker with a wooden stick, yelling bloody murder.

Inside the house, the bandit will push past several guests and knock over many (worthless) art objects, fleeing up the stairs of the small house and onto the roof. He will shove one unfortunate woman down the stairs behind him, making her fall headlong into the player. If the player stops to catch the woman before she is injured, the bandit will escape to the rooftops, leaping from one to the next in a desperate bid for freedom, and will probably escape.

If the player ignores the woman's plight and charges after the bandit, the man will be cornered in an upper floor room before he can climb out onto the roof. The bandit will attack, but if he is injured or obviously outmatched, he will surrender and plead for mercy.



### BANDITS

**EARTH:** 2  
**WATER:** 2  
**FIRE:** 2  
**AIR:** 1  
**Reflexes:** 2  
**VOID:** 2  
**Skills:** Knife 1, Athletics 1, Defense 1, Hand-to-Hand 2, Gambling 1  
**Weapons:** Aiguchi 1k2  
Note: Bandit #5 has a katana (3k2), and Kenjutsu 2  
**Advantages:** Luck (3 pts).  
**Disadvantages:** Bad Reputation (Bandit), Compulsion (2 pts.; varies)

These men are an example of the depravity in Ryoko Owari. They are scum, preying on the weak and exploiting the helpless. They will do anything to survive.

During the fight, they will use all advantages. Bodies used as shields will only provide 2 points of Armor). The daunting effect upon the sensibilities of their opponents is not to be ignored. Samurai who (willingly or not) touch the dead lose 1 point of Honor (up to a maximum of 3, as determined by the GM).





### CLUE:

This bandit has a scroll with a weekly sale schedule and item manifest for a Scorpion Merchant house (see sidebar). It describes many items, from wicker baskets to fine silks, to masks and party favors for the festival. If the bandit is not caught, but escapes across the rooftops, he will drop the manifest on the roof of the Geisha House in his haste. A successful Perception roll at a TN of 15 will notice the fallen scroll.

## Chase Three: The Alley

This bandit is very strong and fast. The PC must win a contested roll of Stamina to catch him. If the PC fails, the bandit will escape after plaguing him with difficulties. If the PC wins the Stamina contest, he can catch up to the bandit after only a few of the trials below. If the PC has projectile weapons or magic that can help catch the bandit, more interesting trials may have to be devised by the Gamemaster.

Each turn of combat, the Bandit will charge through the eta village, toppling things and throwing refuse back at the player. Some of the

difficulties the bandit will place in the way of his pursuer include:

- Topples over a large stack of wicker baskets in the PC's path, forcing the PC to make an Athletics test against a TN of 15 to successfully leap them.

- Hurls the lid of a nearby casket at the PC. The lid is made of heavy wood, and will almost certainly cause some minor damage if it hits the character. The bandit will have to roll an attack against the PC, rolling 2k1 to hit, and one die of damage if the hit is successful.

- Slings a bundle of metal poles, designed for use as fishing boat poles, at the character, rolling them down a flight of thin, rickety stairs. The bundle will separate, blocking the stairs and possibly hitting the character. The character must make an Agility roll at a TN of 20 to successfully avoid the falling poles. If they are unsuccessful, they will take one die of damage from the rolling metal.

- Leaps through a thin rice-paper wall into an empty house, rolling and waiting for the PC to charge blindly through the same wall. If the player follows the bandit, the bandit will get one free round of attacks against the player, as the player could not see the bandit hiding in the house, and the bandit knew the player was



coming. This round of attacks is not made with any special bonuses. The fact that it is a free round of attacks for the bandit is enough of an advantage.

Finally, after all this, if the bandit is defeated in combat, he will surrender before being killed, if possible.

**CLUE:**

If the bandit is captured, he is willing to tell them all he knows, but only if he gains the PC's word that he will go free afterward. Once he has the PC's oath, he will tell them that the party of bandits was hired to find the Crane and steal their swords. He believes that one of the swords belonging to the Crane was magical, although he doesn't know anything about what magic the sword contains. He also knows that the man who hired them was very nervous, and seemed to be in a terrible hurry to get the sword.

## Chase Four: The Fishery

This bandit makes it past the *eta* village, into the wharf section and the warehouse district. He heads for the docks and ducks into an empty fishery, avoiding the hanging fish and butchered meat in barrels by the side of the warehouse. He will hide behind some crates in the building, counting on the shadows to hide him from sight. When the PC who is chasing him is close enough, he will tackle them, surprising the PC unless they make an Awareness roll against a TN of 20. If the bandit wins a contested Strength roll against the character, the bandit will gain an additional die to his roll if the PC is surprised.

If the PC wins the roll, the bandit will miss and fly headlong into a tremendous basket of fish heads. If he fails, both will fall into the basket. Whether the bandit flies in and makes a tremendous splash, or the PC is shoved in and the bandit gets away, there is sure to be plenty of explaining to do when the poor player, covered in smelly fish heads and entrails, returns to meet his friends at the Orange Blossom ...

**CLUE:**

None.



## Chase Five: Return to the Orange Blossom

The last bandit is small and quick, and runs away from the *eta* village at top speed. He will lead the player a merry chase, all the way back to the inn of the Orange Blossom. At the Inn, he will turn to face the player, realizing that there is no escape. Poor Hametsu, sweeping the floor after the terrible night he's already had, will hold the broom like a bo staff, obviously and pitifully incompetent. His wife, cleaning glasses at a table nearby, will take one good look at the bandit, and pass out in a heap in the corner.

By the time the PC arrives, the bandit is ready for him. Hametsu stands over his wife, glaring and holding the broom, and the bandit has his katana out, facing the door where the PC enters. His voice is hoarse and gravelly, and he spits on the ground as the PC enters.



### THE MANIFEST

The character who chases Bandit #2 through the *eta* geisha house will find an unusual parchment on his captive.

If a character has the Commerce skill, they will automatically recognize this as a receipt from a Shosuro warehouse, usually kept by the warehouse after purchases are transacted. Remember, Commerce is a dishonorable skill for a samurai.

Others will simply realize that the parchment seems to have the house address and names of the Crane merchants (Doji Juzo, Doji Usiina, and Daidoji Anitano) listed along with three other addresses. The first is the address of the Shosuro warehouse, the second is another warehouse downtown, and the third appears to be a merchant's shop in the Merchant's Quarter. The Crane's house address has been circled.



## HATAMOTO

In Rokugan, there are many different titles of respect that a daimyo can bestow on their loyal retainers. Among these, one of the highest is hatamoto.

A hatamoto is an advisor, often someone who is given the authority to speak with their daimyo's voice in council or trade agreements.

Anyone with the title hatamoto can be considered a minor daimyo, and someone worthy of great respect and admiration. The characters should be aware that Doji Tsumetsu is a person with a certain amount of power, who can advance their careers if he is impressed ... or reduce them to menial tasks devoid of glory if he is offended.

"Let me go, (samurai/Magistrate)" the bandit snarls, spitting on the ground again and leveling his sword at you. He's obviously competent, and has a strange, fanatic gleam in his eye. "I'll end your pain now, my friend," he says in a rough voice, "for before this night is over, this city will hear the echo of a thousand screams..."

If the PC does not back down, the bandit will let out a chilling battle scream, and attack. He will fight to the death, and will show no mercy to his opponent.

### CLUE:

This bandit is not dressed like the others, as his clothing is finer and cleaner. He, too, has a pouch with the Crab mon on it, which contains 5 koku.



Half past the Hour of the Monkey (7pm), the sun has set and a gentle darkness lingers over the streets of Ryoko Owari. Lamplighters travel along the streets, lighting lanterns at each corner and greeting the stragglers who are returning home from a hard day of work. The atmosphere is cheery, and people are starting to turn out for the Festival, only hours away.

After the chase scenes are finished, the players should meet back at the Inn of the Orange Blossom. Any prisoners they have can be contained in the stables, tied and gagged if necessary. Hametsu will carry his poor wife to her room and return with some more sake for the players while they share stories and wait for Oruku. The player who had the misfortune of chasing his bandit through the fishery can be treated to a hot bath just down the street at the

bath house, a suggestion which Hametsu will make loudly but politely very soon after the player shows up at the inn.

After some time, Oruku shows up with blood on his kimono, but no prisoner. He will smile and tell this tale:

"I chased the bandit for some time, my friends - the man was quick, and he obviously knew the city well." Oruku sips his tea quietly while he talks. "The bandit led me to a burnt out building near the warehouse district. When I entered, he attacked me, and although I tried to convince him to surrender, I was forced to kill him." Oruku sighs. "I was able to pull my strike enough that the bandit could speak to me before he died. He told me that he and his partners were hired in a downtown inn, and had been sent to the Inn of the Orange Blossom to kill my kinsmen and steal their belongings. When they found out that an Oni had done the job for them, they simply followed the eta to their village and tried to plunder the bodies." Hametsu quietly brings another plate of cherries to the table, and you hear the distant sound of fireworks outside, signaling the beginning of the Bon Festival.

If the players have found out that the bandits were looking for a magic sword (information obtained from bandit number three), Oruku will look thoughtful and volunteer the following information:

"One of the Cranes killed here tonight, Daidoji Anitano, was known for his bravery in battle," Oruku says. "Before he was sent to the City of Lies to serve these merchants as their bodyguard, he fought at many battles against the Crab in the south. I had often heard him bragging about his prowess, and about a fine sword he found in the swamplands near the Crab border of the Shadowlands." He thinks about it for a moment, and continues, "Perhaps that sword was a bit more interesting than I had thought ..."

Oruku will tell the players that if the Daidoji's sword indeed had any value, it would be in the hands of the Crane Consulate, most likely at the manor house of Doji Tsumetsu, the *hatamoto* in charge of Crane affairs in Ryoko Owari Toshi. If the players think it is important (and, of course, it is), Oruku can lead them to Tsumetsu's house immediately.



## OBSIDIAN HOURGLASS

The Obsidian Hourglass is a minor *tsangusuri*, or magical item, which can be used on one occasion. It contains minor powers, as all *tsangusuri* do, and is destroyed once it is used.

The hourglass is shaped in dark stone, with small powdered grains of obsidian within its glass bowls. Once shattered, the obsidian slowly trails out, leaving those within its radius asleep for twenty minutes. The user of the item is the only person in the radius who is unaffected by the sleep, but if he should touch or molest any of those sleeping, they will all instantly awaken.



find that he is sleeping deeply, and nothing will revive him.

Upon entering the front corridor of the house, the overwhelming urge to go to sleep will overcome the players. They must make a Willpower roll against a TN of 25 each round, or fall asleep in their tracks. If they continue to succeed, they can move forward into the front room, where they will see a tattooed man escaping up the stairs. He seems unaffected by the sleep spell.

The players cannot catch the tattooed man, who is very fast (and not sleepy). After four rounds, no further rolls will be needed – the PCs will fall asleep.

### CHALLENGE

The house is under a spell placed by the tattooed man, who has used a minor *tsangusuri* (one-use magic item). All the Cranes inside the house are sleeping. As the players begin to awaken (twenty minutes later), they hear loud clanging noises beyond the doorway.

When the characters begin to awaken, it is twenty minutes later, nearing the end of the Hour of the Monkey. If the players look cautiously beyond the doorway, they will see a group of small Oni – remarkably similar to the ones ripped from the Oni no Chizaro's back in the Inn of the Orange Blossom – ransacking the house.

You look into the room from which the clanging noises are coming, and see a strange sight. Two small Oni, apparently identical to the ones you saw at the Inn of the Orange Blossom, are ransacking the house. Nearby, one has lifted the maid from the floor and is looking under the body, the other is shredding pillows with his claws and peering inside them. Three more are headed for the stairs. Another drags a wakizashi against the floor, making large dents in the hard wood. They seem to be looking for something.

Doji Oruku leads the PCs back to Doji Tsumetsu's manor house, taking them through the Dragon Gate into the Noble Quarter. The house of the Crane *hatamoto* is position (4) on your Gamemaster's map. The house is large, with wooden stairs leading up to a thick walkway that surrounds the house.

The courtyard of the home is well-manicured, with a winding stream and a small bridge over a cobblestone path. The house itself is a sprawling wooden structure, with painted paper walls and sliding doors; it is small for the neighborhood but obviously the best kept home in the area.

As the party approaches the house, they feel a strange sleepiness wash over them. Perhaps it is only a natural reaction to the events of this night? Or a side effect of drinking too much *sake*?

The gardens around you are lovely, the small stream reflecting the starlight and the occasional flicker of a skyrocket in the night sky above you. As you approach the house, you feel a yawn stretch across your face. You look at your companions, and it strikes you as strange that they all look equally weary. Perhaps the excitement of fighting the bandits has made all of you a bit drowsy, or perhaps something odd is going on here ...

When they approach the steps to the front door of the house, there are no guards. The door is ajar, and scuffling sounds can be heard from the corridor. Oruko calls out, but there is no answer. The players enter the house and find a guard in Crane regalia lying on the floor just inside the doorway. At first glance, the man appears dead, but if the players look at him carefully, they will





While they were sleeping, the Oni's henchmen have arrived at the house, searching for the masks. They aren't gentle, and as the players watch, the Oni who was looking through the sleeping maid's kimono will tear her open and peer inside, just in case.

### Focus

As the players fight the Minor Oni, they will flee and try to continue searching the house. Their first mission is to search for the masks. They don't know how to speak, nor are they smart enough to communicate, so they can't surrender or volunteer any information. In fact, they are not much smarter than a well-trained dog, but are far more vicious.

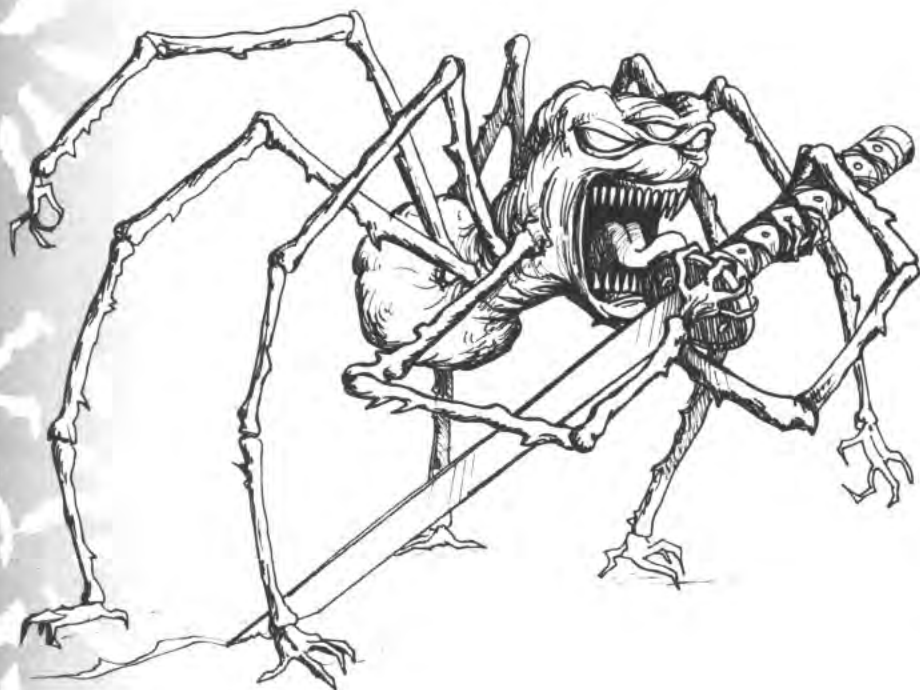
The Minor Oni are the size of toddlers, with spiderlike legs, claws, and three glowing orange eyes. They seem to almost be miniature versions of Oni no Chizaro, and their swift movement and huge leaps almost defy gravity. Their huge eyes glow with an unearthly orange light as they scamper uncertainly, jumping across the room with little grace and less control. When they see the characters, they will shriek in surprise, scrambling and leaping away from the PCs.

The players may chase the first Minor Oni upstairs, or follow the three who had been going

in another direction. Upstairs, three more Minor Oni are racing about, chasing each other with table legs and chortling wildly while they search the bedrooms. They can't seem to get into one room, where the players hear women screaming in fear and see clothing and bits of crockery flying through the torn door at the Minor Oni. The wall opposite the door is covered in blotches of brightly colored paint, and a broken mask lies in the hallway among fragmented pieces of furniture.

If the players look into the room, they will see the following:

Three young women dressed in Crane robes and their nanny are huddled behind a dressing screen, flinging impromptu ammunition at anything which enters the room. The floor is covered with broken crockery, half-painted masks and spilled paint and glue, shredded costumes and a broken paper-mache Dragon head. The women behind the screen are throwing anything they can get their hands on at the door, and are too hysterical to see you standing there. You are forced to dodge a particularly large vase, but the silk kimono which sails after it hits you squarely in the face, and a pot of blue paint explodes on the wall beside you.



In the room at the end of the hallway, a bellowing roar echoes through the house. Players upstairs and downstairs will hear it clearly, and recognize it as the noise made by the Oni no Chizaro.

Throughout the house, wall hangings have been torn apart, vases crushed, flowers scattered and jeweled boxes torn apart carelessly. One of the Minor Oni is still carrying the guard's unsheathed wakizashi, and he leaps down the hall at top speed with it, careening wildly into walls from the unaccustomed weight.

### STRIKE

The players will probably chase the Oni with the wakizashi into the main bedroom, where they find the



## MINOR ONI

EARTH: 3

WATER: 2

FIRE: 1

AIR: 1

Reflexes: 5

Rolls When Attacking: 4k2

Rolls For Damage: 2k1

Bite: 2k2 + Contested Earth Roll vs. the Damage or the victim gets the Taint (1-3 pts).

TN to be Hit: 25

Armor: 3

Wounds Per Level: 5: -1;

10: -2; 20: -3; 25: Dead.

Abilities: Multiple Attacks per Turn (2), Leaping (up to 15' without Raising)

Although these stats are printed earlier in the adventure, we reprint them here, for your convenience.



little fellow caught up in the tremendous claws of the Oni no Chizaro. The bedroom has been torn apart, and a tremendous and elaborately carved wooden chest lies smashed against one wall, clothing and other pieces of personal attire lie scattered about.

This room is a master bedroom, probably the personal chambers of Doji Tsumetsu. In the center stands the horrendous Oni from the Inn of the Orange Blossom, holding the little creature in one hand, and the *wakizashi* in the other. At his feet lies an overturned box of party favors, including a shipment of masks which were to be painted for the festival, but are now shattered and ruined. The large Oni appears to have been searching through the large box of masks when it was interrupted. Holding the little Oni, it stops for a second and runs its long, dripping red tongue over the length of the sword. Then it roars in frustration and snaps the sword in two with one hand. The little Oni shrieks in fear and dismay as the greater Oni starts to crush him, and then it sees you in the doorway. With a roar, the huge Oni flings the smaller one at you like a living projectile weapon, and leaps for the roof.

The Oni no Chizaro will leap through the ceiling, reaching the roof with its initial jump. If

necessary, it will create three more minor Oni as soon as it reaches the roof, throwing them down into the bedroom to keep the players busy. Once again, the Minor Oni will fight until death, and when they are killed, they will dissolve into puddles of black, tarry, smelly glop on the floor.

If the players take a moment to investigate the cartons Oni no Chizaro was searching, they will find them to be full of broken porcelain masks, costumes, and paints for the festival. The mark on the boxes is that of a Shosuro merchant warehouse, down on the docks of the city. This mark is also the same house symbol on the manifest gathered from Bandit #2.

If the players climb up to the roof to see where the Oni has gone, they will notice two things: first, that the Oni has headed for the warehouse section of town, and secondly, that a man is in the shadows of the house two stories below, watching.

The Oni sails across the rooftops with tremendous bounds - often going nearly twenty feet in one jump. You turn away, unable to match the Oni's speed and agility, but as you do, something else catches your attention. A man stands across the street below, in the shadows of the house, watching the Oni sail through the heavens.



## ISE ZUMI AND TOGASHI IKYOTO

The mysterious *ise zumi*, detailed more fully in the *Way of the Dragon* sourcebook, are a monastic family of tattooed men and women who follow the Dragon Clan Champion, Togashi Yokuni.

Each time an *ise zumi* gains a School Rank, they return to the Dragon mountains to gain a tattoo. These tattoos give them certain powers and abilities which they can call upon during their travels.

Although many *ise zumi* choose to stay in the mountains of the Dragon clan, Ikyoto is one of the few who prefer to travel. He is in Ryoko Owari for his own enigmatic reasons, but he owes a certain loyalty to the merchant, Whisper.

Although Ikyoto does not wish to fight the party, if he is attacked, he will defend himself. Ikyoto's stats and abilities are listed on page 28.

The man looks up at those on the roof, then, with a strange brief bow, he turns and vanishes into the alleyway behind him. As he passes through a bright shaft of moonlight, you notice that beneath his vest and simple pants, his body is covered with strange, glistening tattoos, and he carries a sword in a blue *saya* (sheath) across his back.

The man who escapes into the alleyway is Togashi Ikyoto, a traveling *ise zumi* from the Clan of the Dragon. He is clever and will use the powers of his tattoos (the Bat and the Monkey) to elude any pursuit.

Once the PCs have cleared the house of the rest of the Minor Oni, they will discover that the rest of the household is waking up. The guards are shocked to see what has occurred, and the nanny and maidens will tentatively come out from behind their screen to thank the players for saving their lives.



During the beginning of the Hour of the Dog, people are starting to come out into the streets, preparing for the festival. Children scamper about, holding small sparkling lights, and



laughing as they dart about in their costumes and masks.

While the Crane household is recovering from the events, Doji Tsumetsu and his three guards arrive, hands on their swords. Swiftly, the servants will gather, and the old nanny will bow and tell the tale of the terrible Oni and the spell it cast over the household. She will point out the PCs and tell about their bravery and valor in the combat.

One of the Guards will step forward and kneel before his Lord, asking humbly for the right to commit *seppuku* because he was not able to remain awake and protect the household.

"No, Naigotai-san. Evil *maho* magic is at work here." As Tsumetsu says this, the servants mutter fearfully to themselves and make the sign of the Fortunes in the air, begging for the *kami* to take mercy on them.

Tsumetsu turns to the party, then, and looks carefully at each of you in turn. "You have defended my house and protected my children's lives. In return, I owe you a reward for your valor. Please accept the hospitality of my home, and allow me to give you a gift." He commands one of the samurai with him to bring out a small bag which the samurai has been carrying.

Tsumetsu removes a small satchel, perhaps as large as a bread-bag, intricately stitched with the *mon* of the Crane.

He will turn to the player with the highest Glory and offer them the bag as a gift for the entire party. Assuming the samurai shows proper manners and refuses the gift three times, Tsumetsu will be pleased with their politeness, and treat them with great favor. If they do not respond appropriately, he will assume they are uncultured ronin and will be offended, but polite.

Within the bag are four *tsangusuri*, or Asahina fetishes. These items are magical, and can be used only once each. The first item is a small jade statuette of a sun. The second is a black sandalwood fan. The third is a small key made from a fish's skeleton, and the fourth is a golden pear. Doji Tsumetsu will describe the powers of each of the items as he offers them to the party.

**Black Fan** - User may roll 2 dice and add the result to their Glory points for one hour. Those listening to the user of the Fan during that time are struck with awe and respect, and the user

gains one free Raise toward any Oratory, Command or Sincerity rolls.

**Bone Key** - Opens one door, even if locked or magically sealed. Physical traps are negated, magical ones are triggered.

**Golden Fruit** - Will cure any poison in a person's system if they eat the entire piece of fruit. In addition, it will heal 1 die of damage.

**Jade Sun** - Creates a globe of true sunlight, illuminating a 10' area for 30 minutes. Also, unlike the others, it can be used three times before it becomes useless.

As he hands you the final item, Tsumetsu says, "This item is blessed by the Sun Goddess herself. Not only does it summon her light, but it is said that it has the power to restore a lost soul to Amaterasu's merciful grace."

### CHALLENGE

The Crane will invite the party inside the manor house. Servants scurry about, trying to clean the house and serve the visitors. Soon, a tiny old man will enter the room, and all inside will bow. Doji Tsumetsu will introduce him to the players as his father, Doji Ukidanu.

The old man slowly walks up to the party. He looks over the members for a moment, then breaks out into a wide, toothless grin. "Do you play Go?" he asks in a croaking and ancient voice. "I want to play Go, and I will play it with ... you."

GM Note: Doji Ukidanu will choose the player, or one of the players, who saw the *ise zumi* escape into the alley, if possible.

Although it's obvious the old man is a little senile, he seems friendly, and insulting the father of the *hatamoto* to the Doji house would probably not help your new friendship with the Crane. Ukidanu totters out to a table lit by a stone lantern, and begins pulling out the pieces and setting them on the board, all the while muttering happily to himself.

If any of the players has the either the Battle or Courtier skill, they probably know the rudimentary rules of the game. In any case, one of the players should accept the old man's offer, and begin a game of Go with Ukidanu. The game will last through the next series of actions.

Tsumetsu sits at a low table with the rest of the PCs, drinking a cup of hot tea and speaking of the strange things which are occurring in the city tonight.

Eventually, the *hatamoto* explains where he was when his home was attacked. "I had been called away," he explains. "Actually, Oruku, I was looking for you. It seemed a job more suited to a Magistrate than a *hatamoto*, but in your absence, I was forced to accept the duty. You see, one of the Unicorn warehouses in the Merchant Quarter was attacked, and all their trade stock was destroyed." He shakes his head sadly. "It's a bitter day when the criminals of this city must take to robbing party favors for the Bon Festival." He casually sips his tea, and Oruku shares a glance with you.

"Festival items?" Oruku says. "That's strange." "What is stranger still," says Tsumetsu, setting down his tea cup, "is that the criminals went to all the trouble of breaking into the building and tearing open all the crates, but didn't actually steal anything."

In the background, the little old man chuckles happily, and places another piece on the Go board, completely involved in his game.

### Focus

Tsumetsu gladly describes the scene at the Unicorn warehouse - crates ripped open, boxes overturned, and items ruined. If not for the huge tearing claw marks in the boxes, the Thunder Guard would have thought that it had simply been done by vandals.

The time of the attack on the Unicorn warehouse was approximately 6:30 (just past the Hour of the Monkey), coinciding with the players' battles with the bandits. The only items which both the Unicorn and the Crane currently have to trade are for the festival, specifically masks, costumes and fireworks.

Outside, the fireworks are lighting the sky fairly regularly, marking the official beginning of the festival. People are gathering in the streets with torches, celebrating their ancestors. Tsumetsu tells the party that a grand parade has been planned for the hour of the Goat (2 - 4am), and will weave through the entire city, following the perimeter road. He will invite the players to come and enjoy the celebration, and will offer them masks and costumes from his personal stock.



### How To Play Go

Go is a game of strategy played on a board marked with a grid of 19 vertical and 19 horizontal lines (361 intersections). Two players, one with white stones and one with black stones, take turns placing their stones on the intersections in order to surround as much space as possible.

Once a stone is placed, it cannot be removed unless it is captured by an opponent's stones. One point is awarded for each captured stone, and for each intersection controlled by the player. When there are no more possible ways a player can gain territory or capture stones, the game is over.





## ONI LORE & ONI LORDS

There are two types of Oni in Rokugan - those born in the Shadowlands from Fu Leng's foul magic, and the demon servants that can be summoned from the dark realm of *Jigoku* through *maho*.

Shugenja who attempt to raise and control Oni must match wills with them, granting them the name of a living human. The person who 'gives their name' to the Oni becomes linked to it, and if the Oni manages to usurp control, they can destroy their master and keep the name. This grants them a solid presence in the physical world, tremendous powers - and the freedom to use them as it wishes.

As can be expected, these 'Oni Lords' delight in using their newfound freedom to cause pain and destruction. The fortunately rare occurrence of Oni escaping to become Oni Lords are detailed in *The Book of the Shadowlands*.



The high point of the parade, Tsumetsu will tell the players, is the lighting of the Dragon Globe:

"The Globe at the Temple of the Sun Goddess will be lit by the Sun's own fire, bringing Amaterasu's blessings to all the citizens of Ryoko Owari. Its a grand moment, my friends, and more than merely symbolic. They say that if the Sun Globe is not lit, the Sun will look down on our city in disfavor, and we will have misfortune in the next year. But why would anyone want to anger the Sun? Its all just a children's tale, of course, and nothing more."

### STRIKE

While the players talk to Tsumetsu, the Go game in the corner progresses to its conclusion. About halfway through the game, the player should make an Intelligence + (either Battle or Courtier) against a TN of 15. If the player has neither of those skills, they should make an Awareness roll with a TN of 25. If successful, they get the feeling that the little man is manipulating the game, forcing them to a specific outcome.

Once the game has progressed, the player realizes that his only chance of winning is to make a stylized move called "the Tattooed Friend." It requires the player to make a move and trust that the opponent will outsmart himself. Once the player makes the move, the Go Master will concede the victory to the player, and laugh with glee.

"You are a good player!" chortles the old man. "You play well! We should play again ... but later, later. Not now. Too much for samurai to do this night, neh?" The old man mumbles something to himself in a senile haze, and starts to stand. "You

win the game, and you should have a prize. Wait, wait. I have something."

Ukidanu fumbles about in his *obi* for a minute, then in each sleeve, and then finally pulls out a thin statuette shaped like a silver hourglass. The hourglass is broken, and only a few grains of sand rest in its glass globes. Ukidanu smiles broadly, showing a tremendous amount of lost teeth.

"Found that for you outside house. You won it, you keep it. Be careful - don't sleep your life away!" He cackles uproariously, and waves to you as he bows. Then, singing a nursery rhyme to himself, he turns and walks up the stairs of the house.

You touch a few of the last motes of sand in the glass and a strange weariness washes over you, but is quickly gone again.

The sand left in the hourglass is the last of the Obsidian Hourglass *tsangusuri* used by the *ise zumi* to put the house to sleep just before the Oni arrived. It is now a useless trinket, useful only for allowing the players to have a clue about the cause of the mysterious sleep.



The Unicorn warehouse is not far from the Nobles' Quarter of Ryoko Owari. Walking to and from the warehouse will require the party to pass near several areas of celebration, seeing such things as mock Dragons made of streamers and wood, children wearing unusual porcelain masks, and people dressed as ghosts in long trailing white kimonos.

You arrive at the warehouse, which is currently being protected by some of the Thunder Guard. You hear voices inside ...



If the characters go to the warehouse, they will be approached by the Thunder Guard, asking their business. If any of the characters are Magistrates, the guards will bow and allow the characters inside. If they are not, Oruku will step forward as a Magistrate, and the guard will let the party through.

In the warehouse, the characters find two of the Thunder Guard talking to the Unicorn merchant. Shinjo Sanefusa, the son of the actual owner, is criticizing the Guard, the evening, the wares, and anything else that catches his attention. Sanefusa is a small, talkative man who is opinionated, repressed, and very unhappy about the state of his father's warehouse. Although his father is sixty-eight years old, and should have retired long ago, his irascible temper has kept him from entering a monastery, and he still runs the family business – as well as the life of his son.

“... But you don't understand, Dokuu-san. My father's shipments for the festival were in these crates! Look at them, they're ruined! How can we take these to the festival now?” The little Unicorn man is sweating heavily, mopping his brow with a silk cloth as he gestures at the mess.

And it is a mess. Boxes have been overturned, huge claw marks torn through others, and fireworks and costumes are tossed about the straw floor like confetti. The Unicorn, whom the Thunder Guards call Sanefusa-sama, continues lecturing even as he watches you approach.

When the characters speak to Sanefusa, he will be polite, even obsequious, and will constantly blather on about how angry his father will be when he hears of this. He will pick up one of the broken masks and thrust it into one of the player character's hands, asking what should be done with the rubble, and what the city intends to do.

Shinjo Dokuu, a Unicorn Magistrate and shugenja, will smile and be helpful to the characters. He usually works at the prison, but because of the festival, he has been sent to write down the merchant's complaint. He is a thin, pale-looking man with a crooked smile and a shy nature. He tells the players that if they need him for anything, they can find him at the prison (location 11) later tonight.

The boxes show every sign of having been shredded by Oni no Chizaro: claw marks, huge clawed footprints in the straw, and the marks of small, scuttling feet along the walls and cartons, as well as slime, drool, and more black tarry gunk. The area guard says that he heard only a large roar, and by the time he could arrive from the far side of the docks, the doors had been ripped open. He swears he saw something awful leap through the air, but won't describe it, out of fear. If the characters describe Oni no Chizaro, his eyes become huge, and he nods, his face turning white.

On the carton of masks and costumes, there is the symbol of a Scorpion merchant, also depicted on the manifest gathered from Bandit #2. The mark was also on the carton of costumes and masks at Doji Tsumetsu's home. Any character who has been in Ryoko Owari for more than a month can make an Intelligence + Heraldry roll at a TN of 15 to know where the Shosuro warehouse is located.

## THE AUTHORITIES

Although as a Magistrate, Oruku or the players, could turn the entire case of the rampaging Oni over to the authorities, Oruku will counsel the players against it.

Not only are the authorities corrupt, but the Thunder Guard is spread thinly throughout the city, and have their hands full with celebrants and other common problems. There are very few people in Ryoko Owari who know much about Oni and *maho*, and it can be assumed that they aren't willing to share their knowledge.

All that involving the authorities would do is create a situation where a bunch of inept police are being killed, and nothing is being solved.





## WAREHOUSE GUARDS

EARTH: 2  
WATER: 2  
FIRE: 2  
Agility: 3  
AIR: 3  
VOID: 2

**Skills:** Acting 1, Sincerity 1, Athletics 2, Defense 2, Kenjutsu 2, Poison 2, Stealth 2, Archery 2

**Weapons:** Katana 3k2, Wakizashi 2k2.  
**Weapons (Archer Variant):** Dai-kyu w/ 20 normal arrows

**Advantages:** Crafty (Scorpion Clan Book)  
Crafty (2 points): You're good at being bad. All Low Skills have one Rank, even if you did not purchase them.

**Disadvantages:** Bad Reputation (Bandits).

**School:**  
Rank 1 Bayushi Bushi - The guards roll two dice for initiative and keep both.

# S:40: The Heart of the Problem

The darkness is complete, and the streets are lit by lanterns and the occasional firework exploding overhead. The time is approximately one third past the Hour of the Dog.

The warehouse rests near the river, at location (6). It is far from the celebrations occurring in other parts of the city. Two Scorpion guards are watching the street vigilantly. The players will most likely have approached the warehouse by an alley just across the street, hidden from view of the guards. Shadows flicker past the second-story windows, and voices echo through the building into the street.

## CHALLENGE

No amount of discussion will allow the party to simply enter unannounced, even if the PCs use their Magistrate position as leverage. At best, announcing their status will get the party a rough glare and slow compliance. When the guards open the warehouse door, they will wait until the party is inside and then shout, "Magistrates! Get them or we're all dead!"

The PCs will have to defend themselves or be slain. Guards will flood through the office door, and from behind the cartons on the first floor, blocking the any escape.

The warehouse stores cargo waiting to be loaded onto river boats. Searching the bottom level will yield only the typical store of a warehouse. You see crates scattered around, but little else. Some of the cartons seem to contain masks, and some contain other party favors, as well as the Shosuro's usual trade: silks, rice, beans and grains. The building is constructed of sturdy oak beams, and a set of shaky-looking stairs lead up to the second floor.

## Focus

The Scorpion are expecting a fight. They have been warned that enemies are looking for them, and have hidden in the warehouse to evade pursuit. It doesn't matter who the characters are, only that they have compromised the security of the hideout. The warehouse is actually almost abandoned, as only a few men have remained faithful to the bandit leader. Chizaro, their leader, will remain upstairs amidst his *maho* circle. The guards are scruffy, and look terrified – as if they would rather die fighting the players than live out the rest of this night.

The Shosuro guards know that Chizaro is dealing with Oni and with *maho* magic. Those that have remained will fight to protect the secret, knowing they would be condemned to death should they be discovered.

## STRIKE

### The Warehouse:

Four guards, plus the two from the doorway, will charge the PCs on the ground floor of the warehouse, dodging between crates and barrels and engaging in combat as rapidly as possible. One of the guards will pull the door to the street closed, and drop a tremendous oaken bar over the solid wooden doorway.

Warehouses are made of solid wood, with tremendous pillars in the walls to hold the ceilings aloft. Any character being thrown against the walls will not find the soft buffer of paper and balsa wood, but rather the sturdy brace of oak.

To the rear of the warehouse, hidden under a large blanket, the characters will find another shipment of boxes. These boxes are nearly all empty, but appear to have contained more elaborate masks. The few boxes which still have masks in them have been opened and searched recently. The masks are all porcelain, expensive-looking, and unpainted.

On the side of these boxes is an unusual *mon*. A blurred Lion *mon* and a strange kabuki mask decorate the boxes. None of the players has ever seen the kabuki mask logo, although it implies the crates belong to a minor merchant, or traveling artisan group. They certainly don't belong to the Scorpion.

### Stair to the Upper Level:

The stairs are old and rickety, and any fighting or acrobatics will cause them to sway wildly. This will force any characters who fight on the stairs

to make an additional Raise for each attack, and an Agility test against a TN of 15 once per round to stay upright on the lurching stairway.

#### The Upper Level Balcony:

The balcony circles the upper perimeter of the warehouse, and overlooks the warehouse floor below. Two more Scorpion bushi rush from the doorway when the guards shout their warning, and will remain on the balcony with *dai-kyu*, shooting arrows down at the PCs from above. If the PCs charge them, they will draw their katana and fight back. Perhaps an overzealous guard or two could be thrown to his death on the crates below?

#### Overzealous Guards

Speaking of overzealous guards, three more Scorpion lie in wait behind the office door to ambush the party. Because they are disturbed by the *maho* at work in the rooms beyond them, and are, after all, overzealous, they will react too soon. Instead of gaining surprise against the party, they will simply charge through the door once they see any of the PCs on the balcony. One of these bushi has the keys to the gate beyond the office door.

#### Office:

The room from which the three guards charge is a simple office, with a low table, a pot of water, and some half-eaten bowls of rice. Otherwise, it is empty. A door is on the other side of the room, and a bright light emanates from beneath it.

#### Locked Room:

The door to this room is locked, but the door will come down if a significant amount of force is applied. Any character with a Strength of 2 or higher can make a Strength check against a TN of 15 to break down the door.

This room is a rectangular area, divided into two sections by a series of iron bars with a gate in the middle. The gated area appears to be the storage area for valuable goods, and large cartons of goods rest on the other side of the iron bars. Another door also stands on the far side of the gate. There are a few candles in this room, on a low table where the front two guards were seated, but a great deal of the light in this room is coming out from under the far door.



There are three more Scorpion in the main room, two on this side of the gate, and one behind the gate. The closer two will immediately attack the party, while the third will wait behind the gate with a small *han-kyu*, firing arrows at the PCs through the iron bars.

If the party doesn't have the key to the door, the archer will run out of arrows after he has fired 20 times. The barred gate is a much more formidable task to remove or destroy, and can only be attempted by a character, or characters combined, with at least a Strength of 4. Once out of arrows, or the gate has been broken down, the Scorpion will stop fighting and surrender. He also has a key to the gate, and will unlock it for the party if they swear to spare his life.

The Scorpion's name is Shosuro Fujun, and he is terrified – of the PCs, the Oni, and especially Chizaro and the *maho* being performed in the other room. He's ready to spill his guts, if the party gives him a chance. The door behind him is unlocked.

"Please, listen to me ..." the Scorpion begins. "My name is Shosuro Fujun, and I serve the Scorpion house. It wasn't our idea. We are bandits, but we aren't sorcerers ... I didn't know what he was doing with the candles. And the blood. Please ... you've got to believe me ... you've got to help me, or all the souls in this city will be devoured."

### HOW MANY GUARDS ARE THERE?

There are two Scorpions at the gate to the warehouse, four more inside the main room, two more (archers) up on the balcony, three inside the first office, two more inside the locked room, and another archer behind the iron gate. This, plus Shosuro Hodei, makes a grand total of 15 Scorpions inside this warehouse.

It's probable, if the players just attack outright, that they will die. A clever group of players should realize that the warehouse has several tactical advantages: crates to hide behind; stairs to dash up and down, and doors to go through.

Direct combat gets players killed. Tactical combat and strategic planning can save lives. Encourage your players to use their advantages.



## SHOSURO FUJUN

EARTH: 1

WATER: 1

Perception: 3

FIRE: 2

Agility 3

AIR: 3

VOID: 2

Skills: Acting 2, Sincerity 5, Archery 3, Kenjutsu 1, Etiquette 2, Poison 1, Stealth 2, Sleight of Hand 2

Honor: 1.5

Glory: 2

School: Shosuro Butei  
(Actor) Rank 2

Weapons: Han-kyu with 20 arrows, Daisho.

Advantages: Quick

## SHOSURO HODEI

EARTH: 3

WATER: 1

Strength: 3

FIRE: 2

AIR: 2

Reflexes: 3

VOID: 2

Skills: Acting 1, Lore (Shadowlands) 1, Sincerity 1, Athletics 2, Defense 2, Iaijutsu 1, Kenjutsu 2, Poison 1, Stealth 1, Forgery 1, Locksmith 1

Honor: 2

Glory: 2

School: Shosuro (Butei)  
Actor Rank 2

Weapons: Daisho.

Advantages: Strength of the Earth (2 pts)

Disadvantages: Frail Mind

Although Fujun doesn't know much, he will gladly tell the players everything. His Master is beyond the well-lit door, and there is *maho* there.

### The Main Office:

One final guard is standing in this room, outside the circle of candles.

Other than a tremendous circle of candles and two men, the room is completely empty. One man sits in the center of the candles, muttering to himself and drooling slightly, as if he has little idea what he's saying anymore. His head is newly shaved, and his robes are fouled with dirt. Small bowls of blood stand at the base of each candle, and as the wax drips down, the blood slowly overflows onto the floor. The second approaches you cautiously.

The final bushi, Shosuro Hodei, does not want to fight. If his brother, Shosuro Fujun, has survived, Fujun will call to Hodei and tell him to surrender. The man in the circle will look up at the party, but continue chanting weakly. There

should be a tense silence before Hodei sheaths his katana and bows.

"I don't know who you are, strangers, but you look like Magistrates." The Scorpion says the word as if it were a curse, and wipes his mouth with the back of one sweaty hand. "If you're smart, you'll take one look at Chizaro-san and flee. Go on, turn your backs and run. This city is going to be gone by morning, so there will be no one to tell the tale to your Lords." His voice sounds ragged, defeated, as if he has no hope of survival.

The candles around the man on the floor form a physical barrier that cannot be crossed. Shugenja Lore or Shadowlands Lore at TN 20 will reveal the circle as a form of summoning magic, but a poorly cast version. Any shugenja can tell that the circle was cast by an amateur. There is no way to break the magical barrier.

Shosuro Hodei is Shosuro Chizaro's right hand man. He knows much more about the ritual and the Oni than his brother Fujun does. After he



watches the players poke at the barrier for a few minutes, he will interrupt rudely:

"You won't even hurt it. Fools." He snarls again, pointing at the old man. "Would you believe that he is only as old as I am?" Hodei turns to you, and smiles. "He's been aging since dusk. Since he called that ... thing.

"You want to know about the Oni? I was here when he cast that circle. Just after the three men came to visit him this afternoon." Hodei shrugs, "What matters is that he gave his name to it. Do you know what that does to you?"

After a pause, Hodei continues. "A few days ago - three, maybe four - some of our men attacked a caravan. What they brought back was rich. Money, silks, and some crates of things for the festival. Costumes, mostly, and masks. Really expensive masks. So my boss, Chizaro," he indicates the man chanting in the circle, "sold the things to three of his best buyers: a Crane, a Unicorn and a Crab."

"Then, today, some men came to visit Chizaro. Said they knew about the caravan. They wanted the masks. Just one box. One *specific* box. Out of ten boxes of porcelain masks, they just wanted one. Nothing else. I don't know why, but they were serious about it. When we didn't have them, they shut themselves in here with Chizaro and stayed a long time. They looked like normal guys - one of them was really big, not muscular, just heavy." He spits on the ground, and continues, "Then I saw their wrists. One of them had a big, black moon, branded right here." Hodei lifts his arm and points at his inner wrist.

"Moon Cultists - worshippers of Lord Moon. You don't mess with their kind. Things get ugly real fast, when you're dealing with the kind of people who want to put out the Sun herself." Hodei looks around uneasily.

"Chizaro said they were going to kill him. He had to get the masks back, and soon. But there was no way we could do it. Not in one night.

"That was when he used the spell ..."

Hodei doesn't remember anything remarkable about the three men who talked to Chizaro. They wore brown and looked like average citizens, all overweight and boring. He does know that the Oni was summoned to find the masks, and that the spell will end at dawn, when the Oni will gain Chizaro's name permanently, and if he does ...

"... then this city will burn in flames, and all the people inside Ryoko Owari will be nothing more than food for the Shadowlands. One Oni can't do that, no, but one Oni with a name," Hodei shudders. "an Oni Lord, loose in Ryoko Owari. Then you will hear a thousand screams, little men, and some of them ... will be your own." He turns to you, and his face is pale and hopeless. "Kill it, samurai, now, while you still can. Kill it, or we all die."

Chizaro won't move, and he will continue chanting. If asked his name he will say, "I cannot remember. My name ... my name? My name is ... so simple ..." A series of mutterings, then "I do not have a name, ...or do I?" The candles will burn down at dawn, and the Oni will have Chizaro's name permanently. Shosuro Chizaro is not a shugenja, his will is not especially strong, and the spell he has cast is a third-rate, bastardized form of a proper Oni summoning ritual. Unless the characters can destroy the Oni before the candles burn out, it will seize control, destroy Chizaro in some horrible, bloody way and emerge, free and powerful to rain havoc upon the City of Lies.

The Scorpion brothers know that the masks were stolen from an unmarked caravan, travelling from Lion lands. They also know the masks were sold to three buyers: Doji Juzo, Shinjo Sanefusa, and a merchant named Whisper, who owns a shop downtown (location 8).



On the dock outside the Scorpion warehouse (location 7) waits the strange tattooed man who was at the Crane manor. When the party leaves the warehouse, he will stand in the light and let them approach him. As they do, he will walk



## NEW ABILITIES

Above (and elsewhere in this adventure), you will find new information about the Scorpion and Phoenix Clans. Do not panic! The Scorpion Clan Book is nearly done, and should arrive in stores soon, and the Phoenix Book is right behind it. But for now, here are the things you'll need for the NPCs we've included here:

### Advantage:

**Crafty (2 points)** You're good at being bad. All Low Skills have one Rank, even if you did not purchase them.

### Disadvantage:

**Curse of the Kami (10 points)** You have little connection to the Elements beyond that required to grant you sentience. Any spell you are trying to cast has its TN increased by 10 and takes twice as long to cast. Finally, you can never learn any special school Techniques or develop any of your own.

## SHOSURO BUTEI (ACTORS)

**Rank 1:** A Scorpion Has a Thousand Faces: Add your School Rank to your Awareness when trying to influence or persuade, or when others are trying to tell if you're lying.

**Rank 2:** The Scorpion's Sting: If an opponent is unable to defend, you may attack with a TN of 5 and your Raises are not limited to your Void Rank.



## TOGASHI IKYOTO

EARTH: 2

WATER: 2

Strength: 3

FIRE: 3

AIR: 2

VOID: 3

Skills: Nazodo 2, Shintao 3, Hand-to-Hand 3, Meditation 2, Etiquette 2, Defense 2

Honor: 3.5

Glory: 2.8

School: *Ise zumi* Rank 2

### Tattoos:

**Monkey:** All Stealth skills are raised by dice equal to his School Rank.

When attempting to be charming or personable, he may not keep a number of dice above his School Rank.

**Bat:** Reflexes raised a number of rounds equal to his School Rank, does not affect his TN to be hit.

As long as this tattoo is active, his Strength cannot be greater than his School Rank.

Togashi Ikyoto is on a personal quest for enlightenment. He is, in intent, the Togashi ideal. But his chaotic inner demons haunt him, and he withdraws from society even while desperately clinging to it. He has forsaken common amenities and refuses offers of kindness, but he is not without a heart, or a soul.



backwards, watching them, until he is perched on the end of the dock, grinning slyly.

As you approach, the strange tattooed man smiles at you. He whispers softly, but it is carried across the water. "As the Tao says: When the work is done, wait, wait, bide. Abide, my friends, and we will speak. Patience brings knowledge."

### CHALLENGE

Basically, Togashi Ikyoto is telling the players to stay back. He will point at them as he speaks, and make other hand gestures indicating that he wants them to stay a distance away. If the players do not stop, he will act as if he is going to dive into the water, and repeat his whisper again, more chastisingly. Once the players stop, he will smile widely and nod. If they approach threateningly, or come too close, Ikyoto will dive into the water, and be gone.

"Now I will tell you what you wish, if you wish. Nothing is as it seems, you know. Nothing at all." The strange man points at his chest and says, "Ikyoto."

The *ise zumi* (for that is what he obviously appears to be) is dressed in a black vest and loose trousers, with no weapons or other items. He stands slightly over five feet, but his gait implies strength and dexterity. On his arms, chest and shoulders, you see strange, twisting tattoos

intertwined with the figures of a bat and a monkey.

Ikyoto smiles at you and swings up onto one of the thick poles to the side of the dock, keeping his balance easily. As he talks, his hands move through the air in intricate patterns and his smile never lessens. "I know what you seek. A fortuneteller cannot tell his own fortune. But I know your part in this. You want the sword ... Whisper's new sword. The Blade of Secrets."

### FOCUS

Togashi Ikyoto is not a thief, but his tattoos make him a perfect infiltrator. Ikyoto owed a favor to Whisper, the Crab who bought the masks from Shosuro Chizaro. In order to pay the debt, he was to steal the sword from Daidoji Anitano and give it to Whisper. He has now delivered the sword and his debt is paid. Ikyoto isn't stupid; he knows that something bigger is going down in the city.

Ikyoto has followed the players to this location. He knows nothing of the Scorpion or the mask, simply that Whisper needed the sword to defend himself against the Oni. The tattooed man is not willing to risk his own life for Whisper, but wants to see that his friend survives. He believes that the Magistrates can help his friend, and so, he has met them here and will divulge information about the location of the sword and the sword's history and powers.

However, like so many other *ise zumi*, Ikyoto speaks in riddles rather than saying what he means. He believes that if the players are too stupid to understand, then they don't have much of a chance against the Oni anyway.

Feel free to use these quotes to lead the players on, but be sure to allow them to have certain critical information. If your players aren't getting the hints, or if you think they are too subtle for your playing style, feel free to make up your own. After all, Ikyoto is trying to help.

### STRIKE

The information which Ikyoto is trying to give the players can be summed up: The Oni is hunting Whisper, and Whisper found out. Whisper has the Crane sword. The sword is magical, and has powers as well as drawbacks.

Togashi Ikyoto doesn't know exactly what the sword does, but he knows that it is dangerous and can kill the Oni. He also knows that Whisper is in

a great deal of trouble, and he is concerned about his friend. He will encourage the players to go to Whisper's shop, and will tell them the location.



hopes that they will look down in favor on their descendants.

Whisper's shop is a seedy little dive in downtown Ryoko Owari, near the armorer's district, on Monk's Edge Avenue and Diamond Street. (location 8) The shop is dirty, compared to the others nearby, and its paper door hangs slightly ajar.

You find the shop, labeled with the wooden sign "Whisper's Antiques, Artifacts and Oddities." This must be the place. As you approach the door, you see only a faint flickering light inside, and hear scuffling, chittering, and the sudden loud "Bang!" of a table being knocked over. Something has gotten here before you ... and it doesn't sound human.

Inside Whisper's shop, things are in chaos. The shop is a small, one-room building, with balsa wood and rice paper walls, and several low tables, shelves, and items strewn about the floor. Minor Oni are scrambling everywhere, looking in everything.

Nearing the end of the Hour of the Dog, the streets are full of people leading their children to the Sun Temple and carrying torches through the streets. The characters may pass by a small shrine, where people are praying to their ancestors, in



### PORCELAIN MASKS

Although every shugenja has heard about magical Porcelain Masks, few outside of those dedicated to the use of *maho* have ever seen one. The mask found under Whisper's rug is an authentic Porcelain Mask, capable of raising the dead.

When such a mask is placed on the face of a dead body, the body animates with a vaguely sentient presence. For as long as the mask remains attached to the body, the zombie will continue to follow its master's spoken commands, fighting blindly and obeying even the most dangerous order with no thought.

The mask found beneath the rug radiates *maho*, and is always warm to the touch. If it is placed on the face of a living being, that person will be forced to make an Earth roll at a TN of 15 or become paralyzed until the mask is removed. Of course, any one who carries such an item with them will certainly be accused of being a *maho-tsukai*, and is more susceptible to the Shadowlands Taint (gains 1 point of Taint per month).

#### WHAT IKYOTO SAYS

1. The simplest questions are the hardest to ask.
2. Not all blooming flowers bear fruit.
3. The price of greatness is paid by the great: but we all reap the benefit.
4. A name is the power of becoming something you are not.
5. A fog in the morning hides the dawn. A fog at night is nothing - how can you hide what you cannot see?
6. While you wait, your enemy practices.
7. The sword? Ah, the Blade of Secrets ... if you can bear its burden, you can find its might.
8. If a man is in need, he is ready to be an ally.
9. With courage, buy victory. With blood, buy peace. With death, buy life.

#### WHAT IKYOTO MEANS

1. Ask another question.
2. You're wrong.
3. It's dangerous, but worth it.
4. The name makes the Oni powerful.
5. It is best to approach the island with caution and through hidden means.
6. You don't have much time.
7. Wielding the sword has drawbacks. (See description, pg 32-33)
8. Whisper needs your help.
9. The sword is dangerous, but the only way to defeat the Oni.





## TEARDROP ISLAND

The most popular ways to sneak across to Teardrop Island are: Rafts; swimming against the current of the river; striking a bargain with a fisherman, trying to sneak aboard a ferry of cargo.

The players should outline their plan to the GM, who can decide if it requires a few simple skill rolls (sneaking aboard the cargo ferry) or an extended roleplaying session (convincing a fisherman to sneak them across).

Once the characters sneak across the river, they may have to do some climbing (See 'Yemon's Legacy' in the *City of Lies* boxed set). There are also large cliffs, fences and other barricades to dissuade illegal entry.

In either case, it should be a challenge to find another way to Teardrop Island. Gate is very careful to eliminate all potential threats to 'his' island, and the Thunder Guard support his attempts to keep the island free of weapons.

Once you open the door, the cause of the disturbance and noise is obvious: five of the little Oni are ransacking the place (with no more courtesy than they used at the Crane house). Tables are on their sides, the cash box is on the floor, and at least three koku in change has spilled about on the floor. One of the little monsters leaps from a high shelf, toppling the one he leapt from. This is met with screeches and angry spits from the others on the floor, who are tearing apart what seems to have been a sack of trinkets. The last Oni drags a chipped porcelain mask out from under a brightly woven rug, and screeches eagerly to the others.

As the Oni look toward him, one catches sight of you in the doorway and screams a warning.

The Minor Oni will fight to the death. The only exception is the Oni with the broken mask, who will attempt to leap past the players and into the street, carrying the porcelain mask with him. If allowed to escape, he will carry the mask back at the Scorpion warehouse.

If the players search the shop, they will find: false 'Oni ears'; paintings; several kimonos; three koku in small coins from the cash box. There are many other things in this shop, ranging from the esoteric to the bizarre - all of it junk.

Beneath the rug, the players will find a loose board. A small space beneath the board contains an iron box with nearly twenty koku (a fortune!) in it, as well as two ledgers of scrolls, one containing Whisper's accounts and the other detailing his daily activities. There is room between the box and the ledgers to conceal the porcelain mask which the Oni was carrying.

Whisper is fanatic about his journal, writing every day without fail for the past year. In the journal, Whisper makes mention of a young geisha named Suruko. Suruko works at the House of Water Lilies, on Teardrop Island, and is a dear friend as well as his favorite geisha. He speaks highly of her and seems to be in love with her. In the last entry, he scribbles hastily:

*There is no time to waste, and I must hurry. Time is running short, and the Oni will be here any minute to kill me. I've heard of his rampages across the town, and the only one left is me. Ikyoto brought the sword - my last hope! - and now I go to my dark fate. Suruko, Suruko, I have to see you, just one more time, before I die ...*

The mask which the Minor Oni was carrying radiates *maho* magic to such a strong extent that any shugenja with Lore: Maho will be able to discern that something 'isn't quite right' about the mask. Spirits brought by *Summon* or *Commune* will refuse to touch the mask, proclaiming that it is 'part-alive' and that it is evil. The mask is definitely magical (See sidebar, pp 29).



Teardrop Island is the location of the Licensed Quarter - the area where geisha houses and other pleasures await those with the wealth to afford such luxuries. It is a place for samurai to express *ninjo*, human feelings and desires.

On this delicate island are several famous geisha houses: the House of the Morning Star, the House of Foreign Stories, and the House of Water Lilies, to name only a few. The House of Water Lilies (location 9) is a fairly recent establishment, as it has only been open for forty years. This causes the geisha of the other houses, to look down upon the Water Lilies with derision, calling them 'little sisters.' Further, they take great pleasure in implying that the patrons of the Water Lilies are either low-class, poor, or stupid.

### CHALLENGE

It is well known in Ryoko Owari that visitors to Teardrop Island must leave their weapons at Swords Polished, the 'gateway' to the licensed quarter. If the characters wish to bring their weapons along (in preparation for an imminent Oni attack), they must find another way onto the island. Players should be reminded of this circumstance as they approach the island.

There are several ways to sneak onto Teardrop Island, all of them illegal. Rafts carry visitors across in secret, characters can choose to try their



luck at swimming against the current of the river, or they can strike a bargain with a fisherman to try to ferry them across under cover of cargo, unloading them at a cargo dock rather than the main dock. In any case, let your players decide how they wish to gain access to the island.

If the characters take the public ferry, they will go through Swords Polished. Swords Polished is the public entrance, where Gate (the keeper of the house) will greet them and politely ask for their weapons.

The ferry gently docks against a long, well-maintained strip of wooden planking, leading to the entrance of an imposing building. At either side of the dock, three burly samurai wait to aid the ferryman, and escort you into the building.

Inside, you are greeted by Gate, the keeper of Swords Polished. "Welcome, friends!" He smiles with a polite bow. He is a tremendously large man, with bulging muscles and a tough glint in his eye. "I'm sure you are tired from your journey across the river. Welcome, on this night of the Bon Festival, to the most beautiful place in Ryoko Owari! Please, allow me to take your weapons, so that they may be brightly polished in the name of your ancestors."

If the characters leave their weapons behind (all of their weapons, including spell scrolls - Gate is very thorough), they will be well-cared for and maintained, and gladly given back to the characters on the way back. Gate is clever, knows the danger of spells is equal to that of swords, and doesn't miss much.

If the characters sneak onto the island, they will have to come through the cargo dock just to one side of Swords Polished. They may be wet, or dirty from hiding in cargo, and must be careful not to be seen by the many Thunder Guards which roam the island. They need to hide their weapons carefully, for if they are seen with live steel or a bundle of obvious spell scrolls, the Thunder Guard will certainly be called to investigate.

If the characters are watchful, in either case, they will notice that they are being followed by another Minor Oni, who seems to be watching their actions and keeping an eye on them. If they notice it, it will scream in terror, and will flee if the players attempt to attack it.

### GATE'S STATS

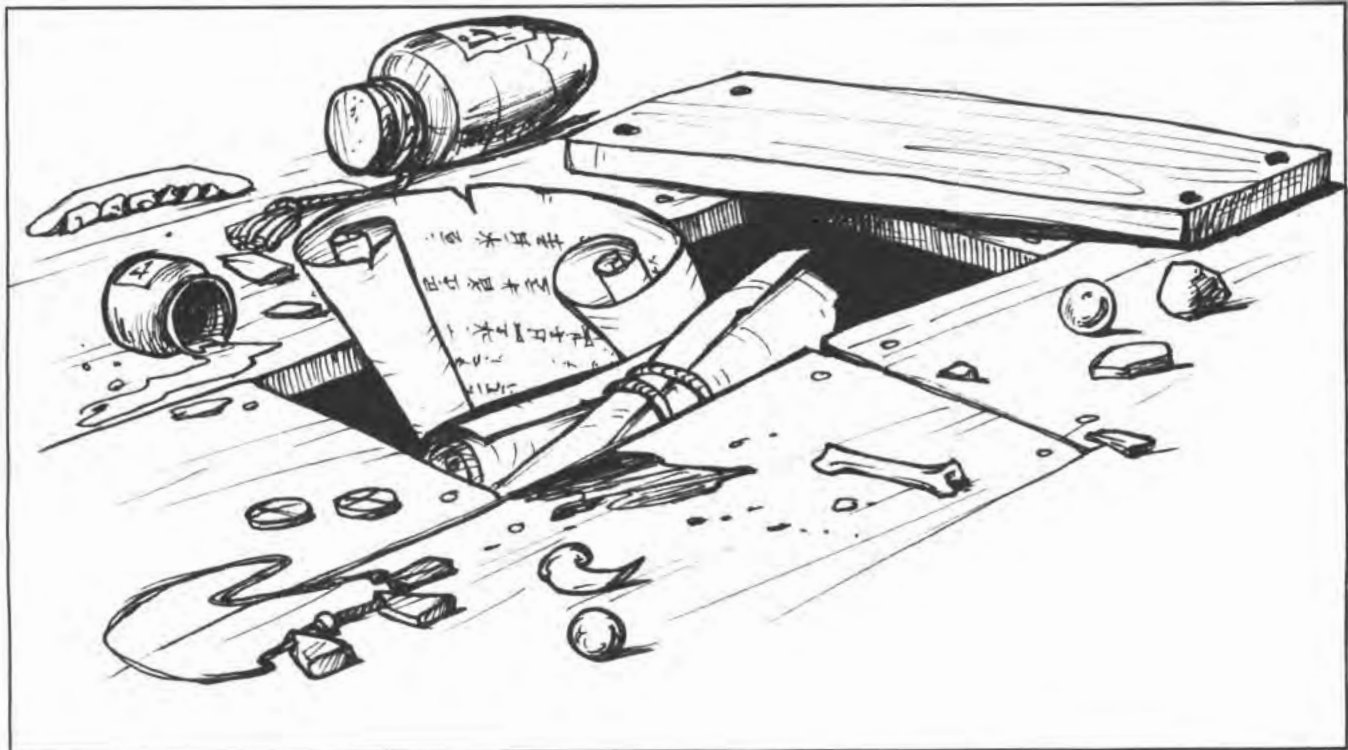
EARTH: 3  
Strength: 4  
WATER: 2  
FIRE: 3  
AIR: 2  
VOID: 4

Honor: 3  
Glory: 3  
School: Akodo Bushi 3  
Weapons: Katana (3k2)

**Akodo Rank 1:** May ignore the effects of an opponent's armor, or get a free Raise when attacking.

**Akodo Rank 2:** Adds Honor to the total of Hit and Damage rolls.

**Akodo Rank 3:** May attack twice per turn.





## THE BLADE OF SECRETS

The only weapon in Ryoko Owari that can significantly harm Oni no Chizaro is the Blade of Secrets. The Blade of Secrets has a blade with a strangely serrated edge, and glows in the presence of the Shadowlands Taint. Legends say the blade was forged in a place where the Fortunes roam, and that it is here in Rokugan to remind its peoples of the old ways and to impart knowledge when they are ready to learn.

But the sword's title has another meaning, for it is also said that those who seek secrets must suffer for the knowledge. In this case, although the sword is uniquely equipped to dispatch the Oni, it is advised that the PCs proceed with caution (something anyone versed in artifact lore, *nemuranai* lore or *tsangusuri* could advise).

First and foremost, the sword does full normal damage (3k2) to the Oni. Should the wielder ever Raise while using the sword, all *jigoku* will break loose.

As GM, ask the player how many Raises he wishes to attempt. Then have them roll for the attack as normal, but do not increase their TN.

## 10:45: House of the Water Lilies

The House of the Water Lilies (location 9) is near the water's edge, in the center of Teardrop Island, just across the street from the House of Foreign Stories. It is clean and polished, with sparkling hardwood floors and beautifully carved artwork on the pillars which hold up the roof. Revelers from the festival crowd the streets, and fireworks explode in the sky above. The sounds of celebration carry clearly from the city across the water, and brightly lit boats with colored lanterns crowd both shores. People walk through the streets, wearing masks of porcelain, silk, and paper. A woman dressed as a ghost approaches the party as they make their way to the House of the Water Lilies, begging for coins in the name of



their ancestors. Any character who gives the woman a coin will receive a free reroll (at the GM's choice, for the player's benefit) during the next fight. Don't tell the characters this, simply tell them to reroll their failed roll with an enigmatic smile. Their ancestors are watching over them!

As you approach the House of the Water Lilies, a plump Oka-san, her ornate robes patterned with lilies, comes out to greet you. "Good evening, honored guests. I am Bashiko, the owner of this proud house. Ah, such honorable visitors. Please, come inside. Would you like *sake*? Perhaps some hostesses to serve you on this festival night?" She smiles warmly, and her eyes twinkle.

She leads you through the sliding doors and into a large common room. A maiden is playing a stringed biwa, and her voice echoes merrily through the corridors of the large house. While there are several men and women in the outer chamber, all talking quietly or listening to the singer, you see no sign of Whisper.

If the characters press the Oka-san, she will politely turn aside their questions about her guests or *geisha*. She will tell them that Suruko is busy this evening with an important guest, and that they can just as easily be served by another *geisha* instead. However, if they tell Bashiko that they are Magistrates on official business, her face will fall, and all charm will drain out of her eyes. She will insist that her house is in fine condition, and that she is on time with her taxes.

Once the players make her understand that they just want to see Whisper, she will lead them into a room paneled in copper-colored wood. Inside, they will see Whisper and a *geisha* with untouched *sake* on a table nearby.

### CHALLENGE

Half past the Hour of the Boar, the characters should be entering the room. As they do, Whisper will stand. Once they tell him they are Magistrates (or at least, Oruku is), he will sink



down onto the cushions again, and look crushed. While the characters introduce themselves, Suruko will look at Whisper with affection. If the Magistrates begin to take Whisper away without questioning him, she will beg that he be allowed to tell his story. Then, after a moment, he will say the following:

"It all began last evening. With the festival coming, I was preparing my shop – buying items which would make a profit. I'm a merchant, just a merchant." He sighs nervously. "I followed the Cranes to the warehouse district. I knew they had contacts, and I wanted in on the deal. I just wanted to make a little koku, for ..." his voice trails off, and he looks at Suruko for a moment.

"I was going to buy her contract, you see." He looks down at the floor. "The masks which the Scorpions sold me seemed of tremendous quality – they didn't know what they had! I was going to make a fortune. And I did. But then, the Oni came.

"I heard about it when it attacked Doji Juzo. I thought it was coincidence. But then the Unicorns, and Sanefusa's warehouse ... now I'm the only one left. The only one who bought those cursed masks. Have you seen them? Worth ten times the price I paid for them. Ten times, and I only got three when I sold them again... but you know how Crabs can bargain.

"I know a little about Oni, from my days in the Hida lands, and I knew the sword that Daidoji Anitano had brought back from the Shadowlands was enchanted. It may be the only thing in the city which can kill the Oni."

**Focus**

Whisper smuggled the Crane Sword across the river, to the island, by taking it on a raft under cover of darkness. Although Suruko knows the sword is here, neither the Oka-san nor the Thunder Guard know about the illegal weapon.

At this point, he will draw the hidden sword out from under the pillows, and offer it to the players with a resigned look on his face. As he does, there will be a terrible, explosive crash from the far rooms of the geisha house, followed by screams and the bright flicker of rapidly spreading flames. Roars of rage and glee indicate that Oni no Chizaro has arrived, and is searching the geisha house for Whisper.

Whisper will be petrified, the sword hanging limply in his hand, and the other hand reaching

out for Suruko. "By the Fortunes ..." he whispers, and the sword in his hand begins to glow with an eerie blue light. Even through its *saya*, the sword's glow can clearly be seen. It is obvious that Whisper has never held a sword in his life, much less fought an opponent as devastating as the Oni.

At this point, the characters have a choice: flee, and leave Whisper to face the Oni himself, or defend him. If they choose to flee, the Oni will not chase them through the house, but they will still need to run through the flames and devastation. If they come near the Oni, they will be attacked at random as Oni no Chizaro searches through the house.

There are no 'back entrances' to the geisha house: Whisper will have to face the Oni or die in the fire. The characters have only a few seconds before the Oni tears through the thin paper doors. If they wish to take the Crane sword from Whisper, he will not resist.

**STRIKE**

This is the no-holds-barred, knock-down fight with Oni no Chizaro. The Oni knows that Whisper is the last person it must find, and further, if the players brought the porcelain mask with them to the geisha house, it can 'smell' one of the objects it was summoned to retrieve.

As noted in the sidebars, the Oni no Chizaro takes only 1/4 damage from regular weapons, and has other defenses as well. It will target its attacks in this order: Whisper, the player with the Porcelain Mask, and the player with the sword. The Oni will easily kill Whisper in the first few rounds of combat. One patron of the inn will arrive during the fight, and will assist the players to kill the Oni, if possible:

A man bursts through the torn door behind the massive oni. With a *kiai* shout, he dives toward the Oni, barehanded. The man is dressed in plain, black and grey silk robes, but bears the mon of the Crab.

After the Oni kills Whisper, it will attempt to kill the character with the mask. If possible, it will take the porcelain mask and flee back to the Scorpion hideout. The man who charged through the door is an important NPC, and will live through this fight. If the Oni is killed, it will disintegrate into a puddle of black tar onto the burning geisha house floor with a tremendous scream of fury.

**THE BLADE OF SECRETS (CONTINUED)**

They will think that the TN is higher than it actually is, and may be surprised when they find that a lower attack roll hits. Damage for attacks with Raises are figured with one extra die per Raise (rolled and kept).

Then (also secretly), make a note that one of his Void Points is expended. An additional Void Point will be expended with every Raise. When the PC runs out of Void, he begins to lose Earth Ring Points. Do not mention this until he tries to use his Void, or when he begins to lose Earth.

These effects progressively get worse, until at Earth 0, the PC falls into a coma-like state for 36 –(Earthx4) hours. Thereafter, his Void and Earth Ranks will be 1 lower than before permanently, and he will be plagued with dreams of realms and truths not meant to be known. Feel free to impart any other vile effects upon him that you wish. He's earned them ...



## THE MOON CULT

The worship of Lord Moon is an unusual cult in Rokugan, but an old one. From time to time, a group of 'Moon Cultists' pop up, claiming that they want to 'free Rokugan' from the Sun Goddess's tyranny. The Moon Cult is rarely the same from place to place, and has widely varied ideas about how Lord Moon wants to be worshipped.

Some try peaceful resistance, some use sacrifice and *maho*.

In Ryoko Owari, the Moon Cult rises from a dissatisfaction with the Priesthood of the city. *Osama*, the leader, organized the once useless group into a paramilitary organization, and he is determined to become the most renowned *maho* user since Iuchiban.

Most members of the Cult are more powerful or more skilled than Orinomo, but they accept his leadership because he is a skilled orator and a persuasive figurehead. He is also blessed with an internal charisma that others naturally find difficult to ignore.

# 11:00: A Friend in Need

After the fight, the Thunder Guard will rush into the House of Water Lilies, gathering to put out the fires. The stranger, Meishozo Nisei, will help the party get their injured out of the burning building, risking his life (if necessary) to save them. Nisei is strong, and confident – and very serious about his job as a Witch Hunter. However, he has a dry wit and a quick mind, and loves to use understatements to get his point across. He is



a plain-looking man, with short hair pulled into a samurai's topknot and simple robes.

As you gather outside the House of Water Lilies, the flames leaping across the building's roof, the stranger smiles. "My name is Meishozo Nisei. I'm a Witch Hunter, trained by the Kuni. I found traces of that beast back at the warehouse district, and I've been tracking it ever since."

Once the players tell Nisei about the masks, or show him the chipped mask, he will say:

"*Maho*." Nisei says, looking at the mask. He looks around, realizing that the chaos caused by the Oni is drawing a crowd. "Do you know anywhere we can discuss this matter privately?"

Once in private, Nisei continues:

"A caravan was robbed in the mountains some distance from the city, where a cult of Moon worshippers masquerading as an acting troupe had been found. We thought we had killed all the cultists, but then we found out about the caravan. Before I caught up with it, it was raided, and all the contents stolen.

"It seems that these cultists were more of a threat than they had seemed. They were producing *maho* items – porcelain masks – to be sent to someone in Ryoko Owari.

"I followed the trail of the stolen items to Ryoko Owari, but I wasn't the only one. It seems that some of the Moon Cult members here have found out about the masks, too. Three men, one overweight, and all dressed in grey and brown kimono with *no mon*.

"I don't know what the Moon Cult wants with the masks, but I can guess. And if I'm right, this city could be in serious trouble."

Nisei can tell the players some of the dangers of the porcelain masks. He knows that they can be used to create zombies and other undead minions, to serve the Nameless God. The zombies will fight for whoever summons them, and can spread plague, Taint, and other foulness.

Meishozo Nisei says that the masks must be found: who knows what kind of trouble they might cause, if left to chance? He asks to come with the party on their investigation, and will use his skills in investigation and his Lore: *Maho* to aid them in their search for the masks.



# 11-2:00: Secrets and Threats

There are many Crab merchants in Ryoko Owari, but the only ones known to deal in stolen or black market items are known to Oruku. Whisper mentions in the house of the Water Lilies that he sold the masks to a Crab:

Oruku pauses thoughtfully. "Hida Muchi, Kuni Ryo, Yasuki Nobuko and Kaiu Shinya." Oruku says thoughtfully. "All of them have been brought up on charges of dealing in stolen items within the last year, and I don't think any of them have the brains to recognize *maho* when they see it. I'd start with any one of those four."

Oruku can give the players the addresses for the Crabs, but will not accompany them on their mission. Unless the Oni is still alive, Doji Oruku will insist that he be allowed to return the Crane sword to Doji Tsumetsu (the *hatamoto*). While he is gone, Nisei and the players can interrogate the Crab merchants in any order they like. All the Crab merchants are within a short walk of location 10 on the GM's map.

## HIDA MUCHI

"Whatsa matter, boy? Scorpion got yer tongue?" The huge Crab who answers his own door growls down at you. He's massive, his thick arms and wide chest proving that there is a lot of muscle under that flab.

Muchi is the stereotypical Crab: large, uncouth, dirty and loud. Any Scorpion in the party will be glared at suspiciously and treated poorly, and any Crab in the party will be clapped on the back and treated to some warm *sake*. Muchi is jaded, arrogant, and he hates Scorpions.

A while back, Muchi's daughter was married to a Scorpion bushi in Ryoko Owari. The Scorpion was caught in an underhanded deal, and was forced to commit *seppuku* - along with his wife and two year old son. Muchi blames the Scorpion for the death of his daughter and grandson.

Hida Muchi would do anything to destroy the Scorpion, including the use of *maho*. It's an obsession, really, and the Crab will eagerly latch onto anything which could be used to hurt the Shosuro family in the city. Characters will also notice he fits the description of one of the three Moon Cultists who came to visit Chizaro.

If asked about the other Crabs, Muchi will say:

"Now, I don't know about *maho* - that's not my job. I'm a merchant, not a shugenja." Muchi snorts, and slurps down another bowl of *sake*. "You want someone who knows more than me, you go ask Shinya-san. That Kaiu knows more than he's telling, and he's been weird lately. Seems to be leaving in a real hurry tonight, too. I don't guess these masks are the kind to make a man run for his life, are they?"

## MEISHOZO NISEI

EARTH: 3  
WATER: 3  
FIRE: 3  
Perception: 4  
AIR: 3  
VOID: 3

Skills: Athletics 1, Defense 2, Herbalism 2, Hunting 3, Investigation 4, Kenjutsu 3, Law 2, Lore (Shadowlands) 4, Lore (*Maho Tsukai*) 3  
Honor: 2.5  
Glory: 4.5  
School: Witch Hunter Rank 3  
Weapons: Daisho  
Disadvantage: Dark Secret

Special Items: Jade Pendant





## IF THE ONI LIVED

If Oni no Chizaro lives through the fight at the house of the Water Lilies, then it must have accomplished its three objectives: kill Whisper; kill the player with the mask; take the mask back to Shosuro Chizaro.

Unfortunately, that isn't the end of the Oni's servitude. Its bargain with Chizaro includes retrieving *all* the masks in that shipment, not just one. The other masks are out there, and the Oni has until dawn to find them. As long as the Oni is still a threat, Doji Oruku will agree that the party needs to keep the Blade of Secrets.

The Oni will follow the scent-trail of the masks to the Cultists, and will arrive at location 13 shortly after the players attack the Moon Cultists (3:30am). At that point, the battle will become a three way free-for-all. The Moon cultists will be trying to eradicate the character infidels, and the Oni will be trying to destroy the Cultists and find the masks.

Of course, Oni no Chizaro is starting to get a little frustrated, and its interrogation techniques leave a lot to be desired ...

## KAIU SHIRYA

By the end of the hour of the Boar (12pm), Kaiu Shinya will be packed, and leaving Ryoko Owari

"I really can't talk right now - my wife and I were just leaving."

That's about as much as the party will be able to get out of Kaiu Shiryu, unless they actively threaten him in some way. He is carrying boxes out of his shop, placing them in a small rickshaw cart in front of his modest home. His obviously pregnant wife is helping him pack, and turns her eyes away from the Magistrates as if in fear of them. She will not talk, and attempts to engage her in conversation will cause Shiryu to ask the party to leave.

Shiryu has little to say, and will evade any and all questions. In the *City of Lies* boxed set, you will find more information about Shiryu and his motivations, including the fact that the real Kaiu Shiryu has been 'usurped' by a Spider Oni. The man the players are talking to at this time is the Oni, and radiates Shadowlands Taint to anyone who can detect it.

"Excuse me, please, but my wife is pregnant, and we have to get her to her mother's house at Yogo Shiro as soon as possible. I fear it's going to be a difficult birth." The Kuni runs one hand through his hair, and his eyes dart about nervously. "Look, if anyone in the city knows anything about *maho*, it would be that Kuni. He deals in dark magics, you know." Shiryu throws another bag onto the cart, and says, "He knows much more than he says about *maho*, and that many of his customers are known to be dealers in dark magic and Shadowlands lore. If you want to find your masks, leave an honest merchant alone and talk to the *maho-tsukai*."



## YASUKI NOBUKO

"I'm so sorry," the Lady of the House, Yasuki Nobuko, says, smiling. "But I have a very important buyer here now. If there's something I can do for you briefly, it would be my honor to assist the Magistrates of the Emperor, of course, but you see, I'm really very busy right now ..."

Yasuki Nobuko will only speak briefly with the party, because she has an important buyer in her house, a Phoenix whom she will imply is a cousin of the Isawa daimyo. If asked about the masks, she will say that she has sold only costumes and kimono for the festival, and that her business isn't doing very well right now - which is why her buyer is so important. If the party is rude enough to ask, or if she thinks they are implying that she may be selling the masks to the Phoenix in her house, she will drop the subtle hint that the Phoenix (Isawa Orimono) is here to purchase a rather large amount of grain and foodstuffs to take back to Isawa castle for the winter.



She is prone to gossip, however, and will smile behind her fan and play the pretty noblewoman for as long as it works. If the players don't seem to be leaving, her guise will change into that of a strong-willed merchant, and she will become more forceful.

If asked about the other Crabs:

"I don't like to spread gossip, my friends, but word has it that Hida Muchi is in some trouble with the Scorpion right now. Surely you heard about the death of his lovely daughter? Such a tragedy.

"Well, he would do anything to get back at the Shosuro, you know." She smiles, whispering, "If anyone was going to back the Moon Cult in the city, it would be Muchi. The Moon Cult, it is said, wants to destroy the Temple of the Lady Sun, and cause her to curse the city. Muchi would be for anything that hurt the Scorpion - and their precious city. Not out of fanaticism, of course - but out of revenge."

A Phoenix PC in the group may make an Intelligence roll against a TN of 15 to recognize the individual with Nobuko. He is a Phoenix, and his name is Isawa Orimono. Although he isn't a shugenja (he flunked out of the Isawa Shugenja

school), he is the cousin of the current Isawa *daimyo*, and is in town conducting minor business negotiations for the Phoenix Clan.

### KUNI RYO

"*Maho?* Me? How dare you!" The little shugenja puffs up, leaning on his staff. "The rumors you've obviously heard from the Unicorn are false, trumped-up charges and lies." He turns as if to go back inside and gestures for his apprentice to close the door. "Anyone with any sense would know not to believe a Unicorn's thoughts on magic!

"If you have anything else to say," he sneers, "you'd better come to the point quickly."

The Kuni denies knowing anything about *maho*, but it's a bluff. Although he tries to make the players believe he knows nothing, he is actually a practicing *maho-tsukai*. Once the party tells him what they are looking for, he will ask questions as if he doesn't understand what they are talking about, trying to get more information out of them about the nature and location of the masks.

Before the players leave, he will get an address (probably the Inn) where he can reach them, implying that he may have friends who know more than he does, and he'll get back in touch with the players after he's gotten more information from them. This, too, is a ruse. Ryo plans to have his apprentices ambush the party after the players find the masks, and steal them for himself.

If asked about the other Crabs, Ryo will mutter:

"*Maho.*" Ryo huffs again, still annoyed. "I don't know, but I'd suspect that such a rare item would fetch a fine price on the black markets. Yasuki Nobuko has been having money problems lately - I offered her a high price for her dirty little shop, but the woman's too stubborn to take it. She needs money to stay afloat, and she's willing to go to great lengths to get it. I'd try her, if I were looking."

### KAIU SHIRYA

Kaiu Shinya is described in great detail in the *City of Lies* boxed set, but here's a quick overview of his situation.

Shinya journeyed into the Shadowlands, and was captured by a spider spirit, who traded the Kaiu his freedom for his name. Taking the Shinya's form as well as his name, the Spirit returned to the Crab lands and was welcomed by the Crab as a returning hero.

Eventually, the real Shinya escaped, and has been pursued by Magistrates for years, because they believe that *he* is the spider - a clever lie fabricated by the spirit. Now the spirit lives in Ryoko Owari, and has a wife with whom he has conceived a child. Although he has not told his wife that he is a spider spirit, she knows that something about her husband is just not 'quite right,' and is afraid of him.

The spider spirit is fleeing Ryoko Owari because he has heard the real Kaiu Shinya is on his way, and is determined to kill him. The spider knows that he is too weak from being in human form to kill the real Kaiu Shinya, so he is trying to escape.







## KUNI RYO

EARTH: 1  
WATER: 3  
FIRE: 2  
AIR: 2

Awareness: 3

VOID: 2

**Skills:** Calligraphy 2, Lore (Shugenja) 2, Lore (*Maho-Tsukai*) 4, Meditation 2, Shintao 1, Sincerity 1, Bo Stick 1, Defense 2, Commerce 2, Intimidation 1.

**Honor:** 1.5

**Glory:** 1.5

**School:** Kuni Shugenja 2  
**Weapons:** Bo Stick (2k2).

**Spells:** *Sense, Commune, Elemental Ward, Force of Will, Strike at the Roots, Weapon of Earth, Amaterasu's Anger, Fires of Purity, Reversal of Fortunes, Sympathetic Energies (innate)*

**Advantages:** Innate Ability (see spells)

**Disadvantages:**

Overconfident

Shadowlands Taint: 2.5

This pitiful merchant is so supremely sure that he can manipulate anyone with his spellcasting ability, that he often ignores the fact that he isn't very good. He can alter people's fates and change their attributes, yes, but if he were such a grand master, would he not be elsewhere in Rokugan, influencing the future of the Empire? Instead, he is a lowly merchant, something he will likely only realize at his death (which, given the chip on his shoulder and most PCs' reactions to said chip, could be sooner than he thinks).



After talking to the Crabs, the party should have some idea who they think is involved, but not enough information to convict anyone. While they debate and argue, ask the players to **roll initiative**, but let them sit for a while and talk about the pros and cons of why each Crab might have the masks.



Then, all of a sudden:

From the roof of a nearby building, a figure appears. A low voice chants ominous syllables, and a bright flash of light hurtles down at you. Oruku shouts in pain, struck by the bolt of flame, and you hear more voices raised in spellcrafting in the alley to one side.

After Yaraiko, on the roof, casts the spell *The Fire from Within*, the three shugenja will fight the party. They have a tactical advantage: one is on top of the building, and the others are in narrow alleys to either side, waiting for the party to separate. If the party advances into the alleys, they will find that they can fight one at a time, as the alley is too narrow to fight side by side.

After the battle, the apprentice on the rooftop (Yaraiko) will try to flee. If captured, Yaraiko will surrender and beg for mercy. Though wounded, Oruku will suggest the party take the apprentice to the prison, to be dealt with by the authorities. At the prison, the apprentice will admit she was sent by Kuni Ryo, to follow the players and steal the masks. Ryo may be implicated in the attack, but "He does not have the masks," says the apprentice.

At this point, it will be the apprentice's word against Ryo's. Ryo has more glory and honor, so the apprentice's word isn't enough to implicate him. Yaraiko will be put to death for attacking Imperial Magistrates, but there is little that the prison system can do about Ryo.



Ryoko Owari's prison system is much like that of the rest of Rokugan. It is not a place to hold people until they are determined to be guilty or

innocent: it is a holding ground before the execution. If you have been brought to the prison, you are already assumed to be guilty.

The prison is located near Ryoko Owari's Civil Hall, (location 11). The Civil Hall is three stories high, antiseptic and impersonal. Its high parapets fly the *mon* of the Scorpion clan, a stern reminder of whose law truly rules the City of Lies.

There are two types of cells in the prison: those above ground, and those below. The first are airy, stoic and plain, with a simple straw mat, and a kneeling cushion. The second are dank, dismal caverns filled to the brim with a seething mass of *heimin*, fifty per room. It is doubtful that these chambers are ever cleaned, and they reek of foulness.

On the ground floor of the prison are the torture chambers of the Shosuro. Clean and tidy, the implements which line the walls of these large chambers gleam from use and care. The front half of the ground floor has covered walkways and lovely wood-paneled chambers for the judges to hear the pleas of the condemned.

On the way to the prison, the players have to wend their way through drunken revelers, samurai in masks and costume, and startling bursts of light in the heavens. A giant Dragon (six

men dressed in a paper-mache and streamer costume of a fire dragon) dances through the streets near them, swaying from side to side in an elaborate dance. The crowd is slowly making its way to the Dragon Gate, where the parade will be beginning in about an hour.

### CHALLENGE

When the players bring in the captive shugenja, a pair of burly guards will quickly take Yaraiko to the holding chambers above the ground, to await her sentencing tomorrow morning. Once in the prison area:

As the guards lead the young shugenja to her cell, a thin-looking young man (whom you recognize as Shinjo Doki, the shugenja at Shinjo Sanefusa's warehouse earlier tonight) comes jogging up to you, bowing hastily and shuffling through a stack of scrolls. "Oruku-san, Magistrate-sans, what a wonderful coincidence! I was just thinking that you might be interested in a group of prisoners brought in an hour ago ... I know you were investigating the attack on Sanefusa-san's warehouse, and these men are talking about some stolen masks. I thought the two might be related. Do you have a moment?"



### APPRENTICES

**EARTH:** 2

**Willpower:** 3

**WATER:** 2

**FIRE:** 2

**AIR:** 2

**VOID:** 3

**Skills:** Lore (Shugenja, Maho-Tsukai) 2, Defense 1, Kenjutsu 2, Herbalism 1.

**Honor:** 0.8

**School:** Kuni Shugenja 1

**Weapons:** Daisho

**Spells:** *Sense, Commune, Summon, Benevolent Protection of Shinsei, Elemental Ward, Weapon of Earth, Amaterasu's Blessing, The Fire From Within, The Path to Inner Peace.*

**Shadowlands Taint:** 0.5

These two men and one woman are Kuni Ryo's apprentices. This terrible twist of fate has landed them in Ryoko Owari, where they waste away "learning" from a man they have nearly surpassed in ability already. But Ryo has been the source of interesting information concerning the Shadowlands and maho, two subjects these apprentices look on with bright-eyed (and arrogantly foolish) curiosity. So they follow his direction (mostly) and listen when he speaks (sometimes), but will only go ahead with his plan to steal the masks from the PCs because they want to know more about them. Don't mistake that they will risk themselves in any way for the masks. They won't.



## THE RONIN

EARTH: 2

WATER: 2

FIRE: 2

AIR: 2

Awareness: 3

VOID: 2

**School:** None (True Ronin).

**Weapons:** Bo Stick (2k2) or Katana (3k2), Wakizashi (2k2).

These men are horse thieves and scoundrels who have spent the last year in Unicorn lands. They wish nothing more than to avoid the authorities and cultivate relationships with the lucrative traders in Ryoko Owari. They will fight only if absolutely necessary, preferring to escape through the winding alleys of the city. Keep in mind, however, that they are unfamiliar with the streets here, and may accidentally run into a dead end or other obstacle if chased. They will surrender unconditionally rather than risk significant personal injury, spouting all manner of things they have done over the last few years that would ensure their long-term incarceration.

## Focus

Inside the prison, the characters are taken to one of the formal, wood-paneled questioning chambers, where they are invited to sit and drink some *sake* while the prisoner is brought in. When the servants slide the doors aside:

A scraggly-looking man is shoved into the room by the guards, and shoved to his knees in surly acknowledgement. Without a word, he eyes you, a look of annoyance crossing his face as the Scorpion guard shakes his sword threateningly in its saya. The man is wearing brown and gray robes, the usual costume of ronin or lesser houses who do not wish to be easily associated with their Lord.

"I don't know who you are, Magistrates, but you should know," the prisoner begins, "there is nothing you can do to me. Lord Moon has my soul, and I can never be free of him. No power can release me. I am his servant." He snarls and laughs out loud, obviously deranged.

Before you can say anything, in reply, the prisoner looks [GM: Insert Player Name, preferably a Lion or Crane] in the eye, and spits upon the wooden floor. "And even if I hadn't given Lord Moon my soul, I still wouldn't have to talk to dishonorable filth like him." The guard behind him pummels the man in the back of the head with his saya, but the man curses and yells, "[Clan name] liars! Your kind should have been fed to the hunger of the Moon long ago, and saved us the trouble of keeping you alive!"

All players should make an Awareness roll at a TN of 20, to notice a black circle branded onto the man's inner forearm. A perceptive player will remember this mark from Shosuro Hodei's description of the three Moon Cultists who came to visit the Scorpion warehouse and threaten Chizaro about the masks.

The Moon Cultist (Hida Gyogi) is, obviously, trying to get himself killed. If his taunts do not make the PCs react, he will launch into more vile epithets about the characters' history, cowardice and family. The guard behind Gyogi will look at the player in question and loosen his sword, obviously asking for permission to kill the screaming prisoner.

If the player kills Hida Gyogi, or lets him be killed, do not read the boxed text of his interrogation. If the player does not, he will lose significant face, and one point of Honor.

The door leading into this room is still open, and it is certain that passing Scorpion Magistrates in the hallways, as well as the Scorpion guards, will see and hear the confrontation. Make sure the character understands that they are all listening and watching as his family's honor is questioned.

If the players kill the Moon Cultist, they will gain no information about the masks or where they are located. They will not continue to the 'Death of a Merchant' scenario, nor will they be able to find Isawa Orimono before his zombies attack the Temple of the Sun Goddess. Let me reiterate: this cultist is important.

There are two ways to handle the situation. First, through torture and interrogation, and second, through a less obvious means.

## STRIKE ONE

If the party interrogates Hida Gyogi, he will continue to be surly and violent. The Scorpion will suggest using the torture chambers in the other parts of the prison, to make him more willing to discuss what he knows. If the players take this suggestion, Gyogi will lie on the torture block, providing the following false information:

"It was ... all Ryo's idea. The Kuni *mahotsukai*. He's dangerous. He wants the masks for himself. We found out about the masks when they were brought into town by the Scorpion, and arranged to buy them through some little merchant. I don't know who. Ryo wants to use the masks in a ritual to summon an Oni Lord to destroy Ryoko Owari. There's an abandoned manor house (location 12) just north of the Fisherman's Gate. He's going to perform the ritual there, tonight."

If the players travel to the house, (arriving at just past the middle of the Hour of the Ox - 3:30am) they will find it abandoned, and see only flickering lights inside. If they break in, they will discover a group of three ronin, fleeing from their Unicorn Lord. The ronin know nothing about any of the problems in Ryoko Owari, and are just in the wrong place at the wrong time. If the players burst in on them, they will fight to defend themselves, hoping to flee. The ronin believe the PCs are here to capture them for the minor crimes they committed in Unicorn lands.

## STRIKE TWO

The second means to acquire information from the Moon Cultist lies in the fetish, the Jade Sun, given to the party by Doji Tsumetsu. As they decide what to do with Gyogi, players should roll their Awareness. If they succeed against a TN of 20, a player will see that the small carving is shining faintly through the satchel, sleeve, or other carrying pouch. Once brought out, it glows more brightly, and will increase in luminescence as it approaches the cultist.

Hida Gyogi, the cultist, will scream as the light is brought near him, his eyes wide and fearful. If the Jade Sun is placed against the cultist's shadow-brand, it will remove the brainwashing caused by the Moon Cult.

As you hold up the small jade figurine, the man starts to tremble, and his black moon scar on his inner forearm begins to turn brown. Suddenly, as if something controlled your actions, you feel the figurine start to pull your hand toward the man, toward his strange mark.

The man screams as you place the Jade Sun against his blackened scar. His eyes roll back into his head, and he arches in pain and terror. Another scream, and then the fetish bursts into brilliant sunlight, which bathes the room in a warm, cheery glow. As the man's struggles grow fainter, you see the scar on his wrist begin to heal, shrinking and turning back to the normal color of the man's skin.

Gyogi's eyes open suddenly, and his face is contorted by fear and pain. "Oh, great kami ... did I really do all those horrible things?" He is like a man freed from prison, and he looks up at you with respect and awe. "You freed me. I don't feel the presence anymore. It's ... it's gone."

After this, Gyogi will be more than willing to help the party, giving them all the information he knows and begging to commit *seppuku* for his crimes. If he is allowed to live, he will join a monastery in penance.

"We found out about the masks when we saw the Scorpion try to smuggle them into the city. At first we thought they were just *tsangusuri* - you know, little magic items? But then, O-sama found out what they were: Porcelain Masks of the Unnamable One, with the power to bring the dead to life, and command the undead husks of an army of zombies!" The man shudders. "It was

terrible. O-sama ... I don't know his real name ... he's the leader of the cult.

"He bought the masks from a merchant, and we were to load them from a Crab warehouse downtown to his hideout by the river. I never met the merchant, but O-sama was going to stay there until the deal was finished. We left. That's when the Magistrates found us, and brought me here.

"All I know is that the cult plans to 'conquer the light'. Their goal is to destroy anything Lady Sun prizes. Please, stop them. If I could help you any more, I would." The sincerity in Gyogi's face is clear.

The rest of Gyogi's information indicates that the 'secret hideout' of the Moon Cult is on the wharf near the Bridge of Drunken Lovers, at location 13.



Just past the Hour of the Ox, celebrants crowd through the streets, and the party must shove past them. One man, dressed as a zombie, with torn clothing and grey paint on his skin, will leer at the party from behind his porcelain mask, following them for a few blocks - all in fun, of course.

Down by the river, at location 13, the players will find a rather innocent-looking home, with a candles glowing from the inside.

This area is devoid of celebrants, as the Parade of the Dead is about to begin. People are gathering on the other side of the river, and this area is relatively empty save for a few weary celebrants on their way home. The last few stragglers race across the Bridge of Drunken Lovers. Bright sparkling fireworks arch in trails above you, dimmed now as the city prepares for the Grand Parade at the end of the Festival.

## O-SAMA

O-sama is the assumed name of Isawa Orimono, the leader of the Moon Cult in Ryoko Owari.

Orimono is a power hungry man who has been made bitter by his rejection from the Phoenix shugenja school. He has spent the last ten years learning how to be a shugenja anyway (although not a very good one) and he believes that he has 'given his spirit' to the Moon God in exchange for the ability to cast spells.

He leads the Moon Cult not through power or spellcasting skills, but through his charismatic leadership and high intelligence. Few of his 'followers' know his true name, and have been told simply to refer to him as O-sama.





## MOON CULT SHUGENJA

EARTH: 2  
WATER: 2  
FIRE: 2  
AIR: 2

Awareness: 3  
VOID: 2

Skills: Calligraphy 2, Craft (Varies) 2, Heraldry 2, History 2, Kenjutsu 1, Lore (Shugenja, Maho Tsukai) 2, Meditation 2, Shintao 2

School: Varies, Rank 1  
Weapons: Daisho or tanto  
Spells: Sense, Commune, Summon, Corruption of the Earth, Curse, Counterspell, Know the Shadows, Accounts of Shorihotsu, By the Light of Lord Moon, Heart of the Inferno  
Honor: 0  
Glory: 0  
Shadowlands Taint: 1.8

### CHALLENGE

Inside the house, the players can hear the faint music of a *biwa* over the roar of the nearby river. If the party knocks on the door, there will be no answer. Behind the house, a balcony overlooks the river, lit by colored paper lanterns. The party must open the door themselves and enter the house without invitation.

### FOCUS

Inside the house, five Moon Cultists (four bushi and a *maho-tsukai*) are celebrating their victory.

Four men and two women are on the balcony, listening to a young girl play music. *Sake* glasses are dropped and swords are drawn as the men see you open the door, and the elder of the two girls raises her hands and begins to chant foul words, invoking the spirit of the Moon.

Roll initiative, and watch the spells fly. The woman is a *maho-tsukai*, a priestess of Lord Moon, and the men are her retainers. The girl with the *biwa* will scream and try to run past the players and into the street.

If any of the players look over the balcony, they will notice the focus of attention of the group: a body, wrapped in oilcloth, which they were weighting with strips of lead. If any of the players pulls the body up onto the balcony, or if they summon *eta* to do it for them, the oilcloth will unroll and reveal the devastated corpse of Yasuki Nobuko.

The smell is terrible. As the oilcloth slides off the caved-in chest of the body, you notice that the killing wound was caused by magic: her chest has been burned and blasted by some external fire, leaving only dark smudges and charred flesh behind.

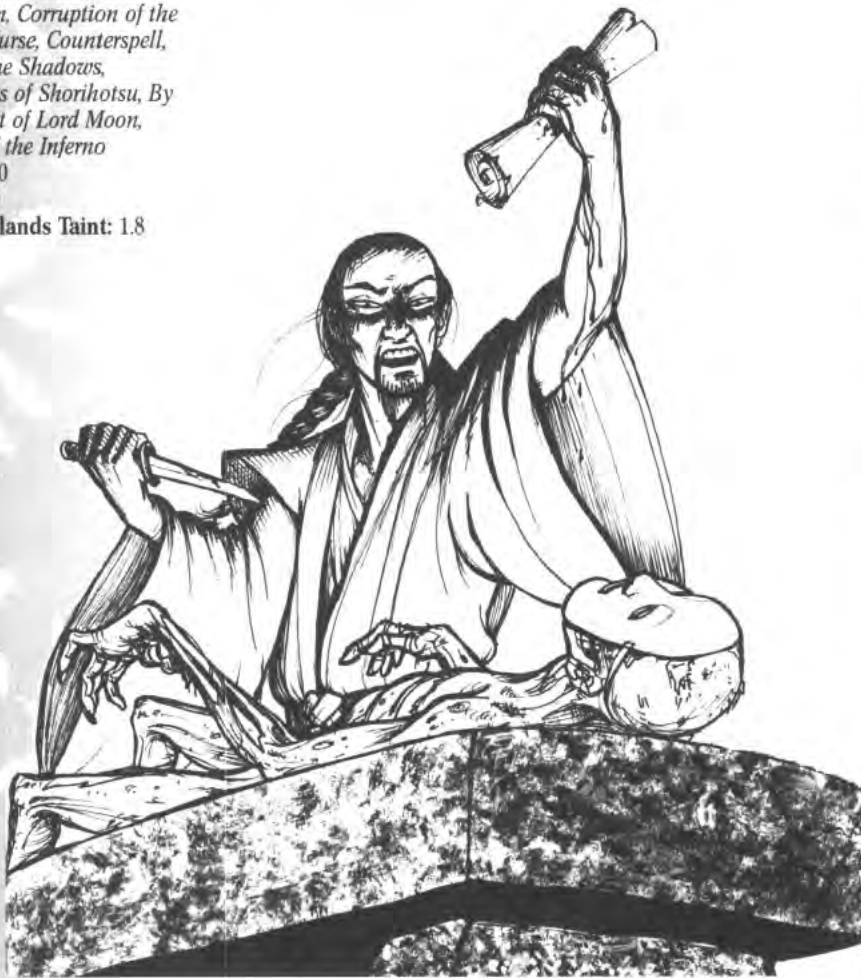
Any shugenja who makes an Awareness roll against a TN of 10, or any player with Lore: Shugenja against a TN of 15 can tell that this wound was inflicted with magic. With a raise, they can even determine the spell: *Inflame*.

### STRIKE

If the cultists are captured, or as a dying yell, they will curse and scream, raving about the Moon, and how their plan will destroy Ryoko Owari.

"There's nothing you can do!" The Moon Cultist howls. "It's over! Over, and we've won! Ryoko Owari will be forever severed from the Sun Goddess - curse her name - and eternal darkness will reign! We will destroy the Temple, shatter the Dragon Globe, and invoke the first year of the reign of Lord Moon!" The cultist is a fanatic, and shrieks of glee and anger echo from the roars of the river.

"Even now, O-sama awakens the bodies of the dead to march upon the Temple of the Sun! Enjoy the darkness, Magistrates, for this glorious night will never end!"



Oruku frowns, "That's insane. Even if they could raise enough bodies in the *eta* graveyard, how could anyone march an army of zombies through the city without raising the alarm?"

Over the river behind Oruku, you see the torches of the Parade of the Dead moving slowly across the Dragon Bridge, into the heart of Ryoko Owari."



Even now, an army of zombies are entering the city with the parade. The zombies are not hurting anyone yet, but they move with purposeful strides. Because of the amount of people dressed as zombies and ghosts, the crowd will not notice the real zombies as anything other than particularly splendid costumes.

### CHALLENGE

Ahead of you as you race for the Temple of the Sun, you see the end of the Parade of the Dead. Huge Dragons with snapping jaws chase screaming, laughing children, and pitiful ghosts wander aimlessly, faces covered under elaborate masks. Zombies move in packs, chasing spectators through the street and carrying brightly colored banners.

Then you notice him.

To the side, one zombie shuffles, his pace a bit slower than the others. His tattered clothing and porcelain mask cover his grey skin, and one leg slides behind him at an angle as he walks.

But the skin doesn't seem painted, like the others.

And the clothing is covered in dirt, but not the predictable smears which are on the costumes of the other men.

And the smell ...

If the characters attack and kill the zombie, there will be chaos. People scream, the Thunder Guard detain the characters until they realize that the zombie was not an actor, and the characters may be kept here until the big battle at the Sun Temple is well underway.

### Focus

If the characters leave the solitary zombie alone, and head directly to the Temple of the Sun Goddess (location 14), the PCs will arrive in time to see the parade gathering beneath the high pillar which supports the Dragon Globe.

The Temple of the Sun Goddess is an immense structure, with graceful walls carved of white limestone - unique in the city. The Temple grounds are expansive, and the compound is an oasis of space in the cramped city.

The back courtyard is large enough to hold several hundred people, and has manicured Zen gardens filled with rocks and raked sand. Right now, the courtyard is filled to capacity with celebrants, ancestors, and many, many zombies.

The Dragon Globe is a tremendous ball of gold, nearly as large as a man with his arms outspread, resting at the top of a 70-foot pillar of white limestone. During the majority of the year, the orb shines over the city with a luminescence glow, but during the Festival of the Dead, it is dark and dull.

People are everywhere. Zombies, both real and costumed, lurch through the crowd with a shuffling gait. Celebrants ignite fireworks from the main patio, launching bursts of red and green flame into the air for the cheering throng. The Dragon Globe, at the top of the pedestal, remains dark and silent as it has been throughout the festival, awaiting the ritual at the end of the parade to ignite its brilliant glow, and welcome the dawn.

As you push your way through the crowd to the front, near the tremendous white pillar of stone and the great Orb at its summit, you see Meiyo, the Sun Priestess of Ryoko Owari, come out and salute the crowd with raised hands.

"My friends," she says, "I greet you in the name of Lady Sun. May your ancestors smile in the light of this new day. Join me in prayer as we awaken the Dragon Globe, and let the Dawn return to break the power of the night!"

As she speaks, you see a spark flicker in the heart of the tremendous Dragon Globe.

### MOON CULT BUSHI

EARTH: 3

Willpower: 3

WATER: 2

FIRE: 2

AIR: 2

Awareness: 3

VOID: 2

Skills: Archery or Kenjutsu

2, Athletics 1, Defense 1,

Craft (Varies) 2, Stealth 1

Honor: 0.5 - 1.5

Glory: 1 - 2

School: Varies, Rank 2

Weapons: Varies, usually katana (3k2)

Those that flunk out of the "Moon Cult Shugenja" school are taught how to fight - any way they can. Primarily, the bushi of the current Moon Cult in Ryoko Owari are turned into the bodyguards of the *mahotsukai* shugenja.

All Moon Cultists carry on private lives when they are not sneaking off to "Moon Cult" meetings. All have some craft skill, representing their 'day job'.

The stats above should also be used for the two bodyguards which defend Orimono at the Temple of the Sun Goddess, in the 'Dragon Globe' scenario, with these modifications:

WATER: 3

FIRE: 3

Skills: Iaijutsu 3, Kenjutsu

3, Athletics 3, Defense 4

School: Bayushi Bushi 3



Night of a Thousand Screams







## ISAWA ORIMONO

**EARTH:** 3  
**WATER:** 1  
**Intelligence:** 3  
**FIRE:** 3  
**AIR:** 2 **Awareness:** 4  
**VOID:** 1

**Skills:** Calligraphy 2, Courtier 2, Craft (Cook) 1, Etiquette 2, Intimidation 3, Kenjutsu 1, Lore (Shadowlands, *Maho*, Shugenja) 3, Meditation 2, Oratory/Rhetoric 4, Shintao 4, Sincerity 4

**Honor:** 0.7  
**Glory:** 2.6  
**School:** Shugenja Rank 2  
**Spells:** *Sense*, *Commune*, *Summon*, *Summon Oni*, *Earthquake*, *Inflame*  
**Shadowlands Taint:** 1  
**Advantages:** Benten's Blessing, Social Advantage (Daimyo's Cousin)  
**Disadvantages:** Curse of the Kami (New)

Isawa Orimono, as a spellcaster, is hopeless. He can manage a minor spell effect every so often, and accomplish more with the help of his Moon Cultists.

He now uses his ability to further the Cult's goals. Oh, yeah ... he's also a cook. We told you all the Moon Cultists had day jobs.

The TN to hit Orimono is a 15, once you get past his two bodyguards. Characters can locate him during the fight by spending an entire round scanning the crowd, and making a Perception roll against a TN of 20.

## STRIKE

Isawa Orimono, the Phoenix from Yasuki Nobuko's shop, and the enigmatic 'O-sama' of the Moon Cult, will stand in the crowd, dressed as a ghost for camouflage. Two strong bushi bodyguards, dressed as zombies, stand near him, ready to defend him to the death.

As the zombies attack the priests and helpless bystanders, he will begin the spell *Earthquake*. Orimono is not very competent, and it will take him ten rounds to complete the spell. By round five, the earth starts to rumble, and small cracks will appear in the ground. By round seven, the earth is shaking, and the pillar sways. At the beginning of round seven, the TN for all physical actions is increased by 5. Every round thereafter, the TN is further increased by 5. So, in round 8, Target Numbers are increased by 10, and in round 9, they are increased by 15.

The zombies have been ordered to cause as much trouble as possible, killing *heimin* and samurai alike. Very few of the celebrants here have weapons, and those that do are going to cause as much trouble as the zombies: hacking costumed peasants apart and swinging broadly at anything that looks dangerous.

Both Oruku and Nisei will assist the party in any way they can. If the players haven't been looking for Isawa Orimono, on round 5 Nisei will say to the nearest PC:

"Where's the Phoenix?" pants Nisei. "I can't believe he would set all this into motion and not be here for the finale ..."



If Orimono is successful, the Globe will fall to the ground and shatter. Destroying the Sun Globe (described in greater detail as the "Dragon Globe"

from the *City of Lies* boxed set) is a perilous thing for the city. Its brilliant flame, actually part of the essence of the Dragon of Fire, will explode in a fiery blast, engulfing an entire city block in flame. The city of Ryoko Owari will be able to put out the fires before they destroy the city, but a significant portion of the Temple Quarter will be destroyed, and hundreds will die.

Even worse, destroying the globe will have magical effects as well. The kami in the area will begin to shun the city, making all spells more difficult to cast (+15 to the TN the first 6 months, +10 for up to a year thereafter) within the city walls until some reparation has been made.

If they have been successful in saving the city, defeating the zombies, capturing or killing Orimono, they will be invited to remain at the Temple of the Sun Goddess for the night, where the shugenja can care for their wounds and ease their pain.

Orimono is carrying three spell scrolls as well as a single, huge Porcelain Mask in a woven bag at his side. The Mask is indestructible, and can survive crushing blows, fire, katana strikes, and nearly anything else. The Mask is roughly the size of an ogre's head - far too large for a human - and is carefully wrapped in linen and cotton padding. On the outside, the features are bland and emotionless, but the interior face has been fashioned into a twisted expression of madness.

At some point, Nisei will step forward, and say:

"The Mask ... the large one." He points at the tremendous mask from the shugenja's satchel. "If you don't mind, I want to take it back to the Lion lands, and show it to the *daimyo* of those provinces. I am sure they will have more information about it than we do here in Ryoko Owari."

Nisei smiles. "It was a valiant fight, my friends, and I am honored to have been a part of it. But I must return to the Akodo lands, and discover more about this mystery."

If the players let him have the mask, he will return 'to the Lion lands' with it, and leave the city as soon as possible without attracting attention. If they have a reason not to give the mask to Nisei, then he will keep an eye on it and steal it as soon as possible (even if it means killing someone in the party, or a member of the



### PARADE ZOMBIES

EARTH: 0 Stamina: 3  
WATER: 1 Strength: 3  
FIRE: 1  
AIR: 0 Reflexes: 1

Rolls When Attacking: 1k1  
Rolls For Damage: 4k2  
(Claws) or by weapon type  
TN to be Hit: 5  
Armor: 9  
Wounds: 60: Dead

**Immune to Pain:** Slashing damage: 1/2; Crushing: 1/4  
**Invulnerable:** When a Zombie loses a Wound level, it loses a random limb.

These are (mostly) like the zombies presented in the *Book of the Shadowlands*, but with two differences. First, they are more aggressive and more sturdy. Secondly, they retain traits of the souls that once inhabited them. As a result, each zombie is an individual. They retain the most important skills from life (as determined by the GM). A devious GM may be able to turn a couple incongruent skills into a effective package for either lethal or comedic value.

If the porcelain mask is ever taken off the zombie or destroyed, the zombie collapses and dissolves.

Thunder Guard). Then, he will sneak out of the city with his prize.

If Nisei is caught stealing the mask, or if he is killed attacking the player (he will defeat any of the Thunder Guard), the players can keep the mask. It radiates magic fairly heavily, and is a maho item. Carrying it for a week gives a person 2 points of the Shadowlands Taint.

One other thing. If you haven't guessed it by now, Nisei is an infiltrator. Meishozo Nisei, as you might have noticed, loosely translates into "False Name." But we can't tell you exactly who Nisei really is, where he's gone or what he wants with the huge mask he's convinced the party to give him. We can't even tell you what the mask *does*.

Yet.

### OTHER ADVENTURE HOOKS

The *City of Lies* is a rich background for adventures in Rokugan, and *Night of a Thousand Screams* can easily be turned into a longer campaign for your players. Some of the unresolved questions in this adventure could be expanded upon, and turned into adventures of their own.

In order to give you a few ideas on where to begin after you've finished *Night of a Thousand Screams*, we suggest working with some of the

questions below, and elaborating on the information we've already given throughout this adventure.

What if the players find out Nisei's true identity after he's gone? Will they attempt to discover where he has truly gone with the huge mask?

Who sold Chizaro the third-rate Oni-summoning spell? Are there more *maho-tsukai* in the city?

Did Oni no Chizaro live through the night? If so, what will happen when an Oni Lord rampages through Scorpion lands?

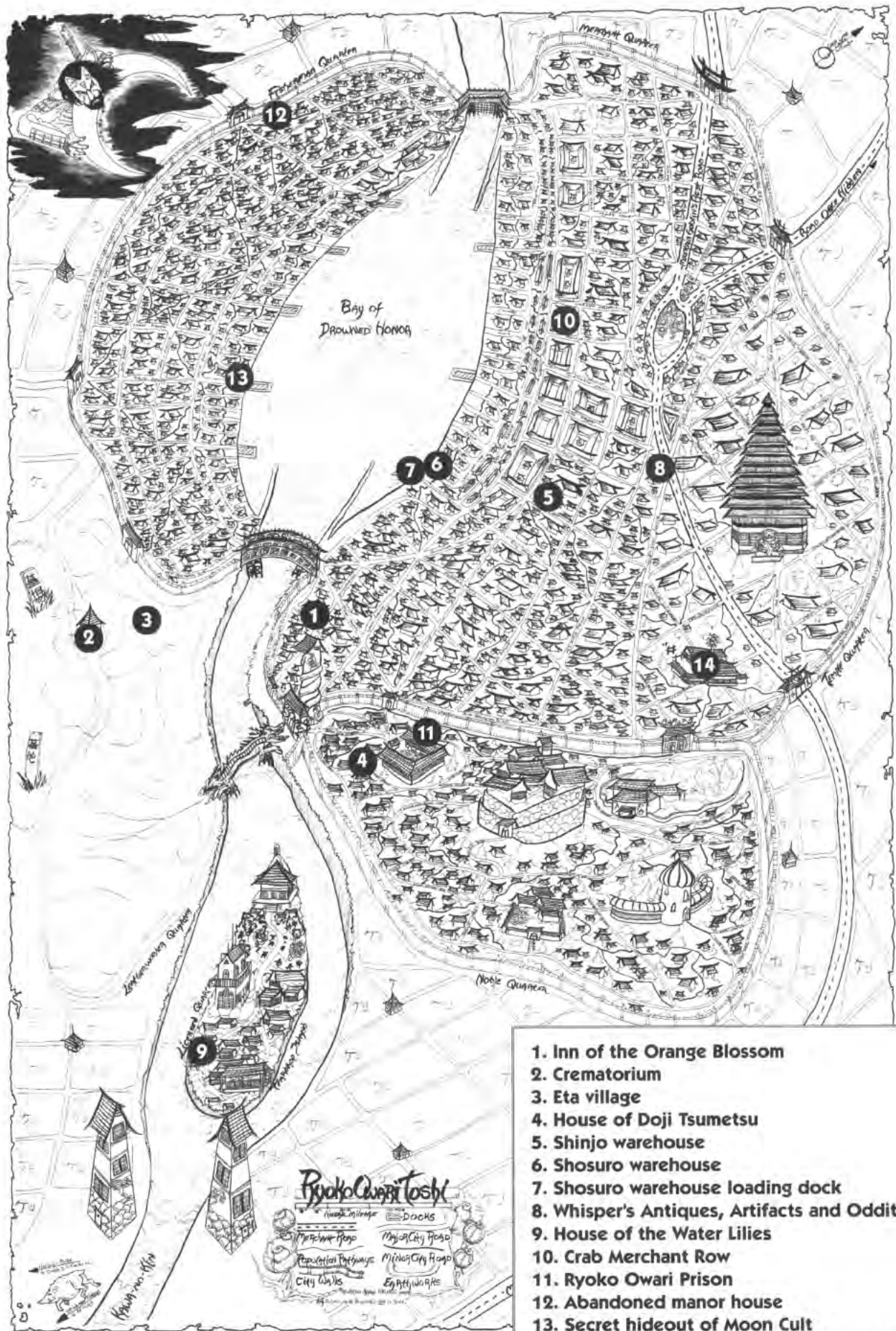
Did Kuni Ryo have any other connections to the Moon Cult? What if he wants revenge against the players?

Are the NPCs in the sidebars - Togashi Ikyoto, the Ronin from the Unicorn lands - going to stay in Ryoko Owari?

Did the Moon Cult have any other supporters in the Phoenix lands? Perhaps among Isawa Orimono's friends in his cousin (the Isawa daimyo)'s court?

What's up with the original cult, and who were the people in the Lion lands? Why were the masks going to in the Unicorn provinces on the original caravan?

Answers to some of these questions will be in the forthcoming *Tomb of Iuchiban* boxed set.



1. Inn of the Orange Blossom
2. Crematorium
3. Eta village
4. House of Doji Tsumetsu
5. Shinjo warehouse
6. Shosuro warehouse
7. Shosuro warehouse loading dock
8. Whisper's Antiques, Artifacts and Oddities
9. House of the Water Lilies
10. Crab Merchant Row
11. Ryoko Owari Prison
12. Abandoned manor house
13. Secret hideout of Moon Cult
14. Temple of Amaterasu & Dragon Globe

**Ryoko Owari Toshi**  
 a hand-drawn map of a city  
 Major City Roads  
 Minor City Roads  
 City Walls  
 Docks  
 Major City Roads  
 Minor City Roads  
 City Walls  
 Docks

# Night of a Thousand Screams

*"...Then you will hear a thousand screams, and some of them...will be your own."*

*– Shosuro Hodei*

*The streets of Ryoko Owari teem with ghosts and zombies - masked revelers venerating their ancestors and the spirits of the dead. The Bon Festival is a night of celebration and reflection, but this year, danger stalks the City of Lies.*

*An inhuman creature leaves murder and destruction in its wake. A mysterious sword is stolen. A shipment of festival goods goes horribly awry, and a sinister cult plots to plunge the city into eternal darkness.*

*Can the Emerald Empire's protectors unravel this web of mysteries and avert danger, or will Ryoko Owari echo with the sound of a thousand screams?*

- **Suitable for low to mid level player characters.**
- **Fast-paced and action-oriented, packed with combat and unexpected plot twists. Can be used independently or as part of an ongoing campaign.**
- **Requires a copy of the Legend of the Five Rings basic rules. City of Lies boxed set optional.**



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