

**MUTANT
CHRONICLES**

MISHIMA™



DEATH BEFORE DISHONOR

For ages, Mishima has been the most enigmatic of all the Megacorporations. Its ruling class, the Samurai, are not affected at all by the Brotherhood, who influences almost all the other megacorporations. The Samurai are a breed apart; ruthless, savage and totally dedicated to their own warrior code. Mishiman workers are an underclass which is born to serve their corporate masters. They are kept in line by a system of propaganda, philosophy and near-Heretical teachings. To outsiders, it seems that the Brotherhood has no influence over the Mishimans, and this alone is enough to make the corporation unique, since the power of the Cardinal's word is felt in almost every level of all the ancient corporations. The Cardinal's advisors are everywhere, making sure the power of the faith is felt by all human beings. Except within Mishima.

It was not always so. Like all the great Merchant Corporations, Mishima once was dedicated to the way of the Cardinal, and looked to him for protection against the forces of Darkness. To trace the beginnings of Mishiman deviation, we must look back to the dark days of the Neronian Heresy and the Age of Six Cardinals, a terrible time when multiple claimants fought for the Cardinal's throne, and the entire human system was ripped apart by devastating wars. During this savage period of fratricidal strife, when Brother fought against Brother, when the power of the Art faded, the Mishimans began to chart their own course through history, free from the influence of the Cardinal's teachings.

It was during this age of schism, the first of Mishima's Seven Sages arose to spread the word of a new way. Sickened by the corruption and the fanatical slaughter of their enemies by the claimants to the Cardinal's throne, the Sages



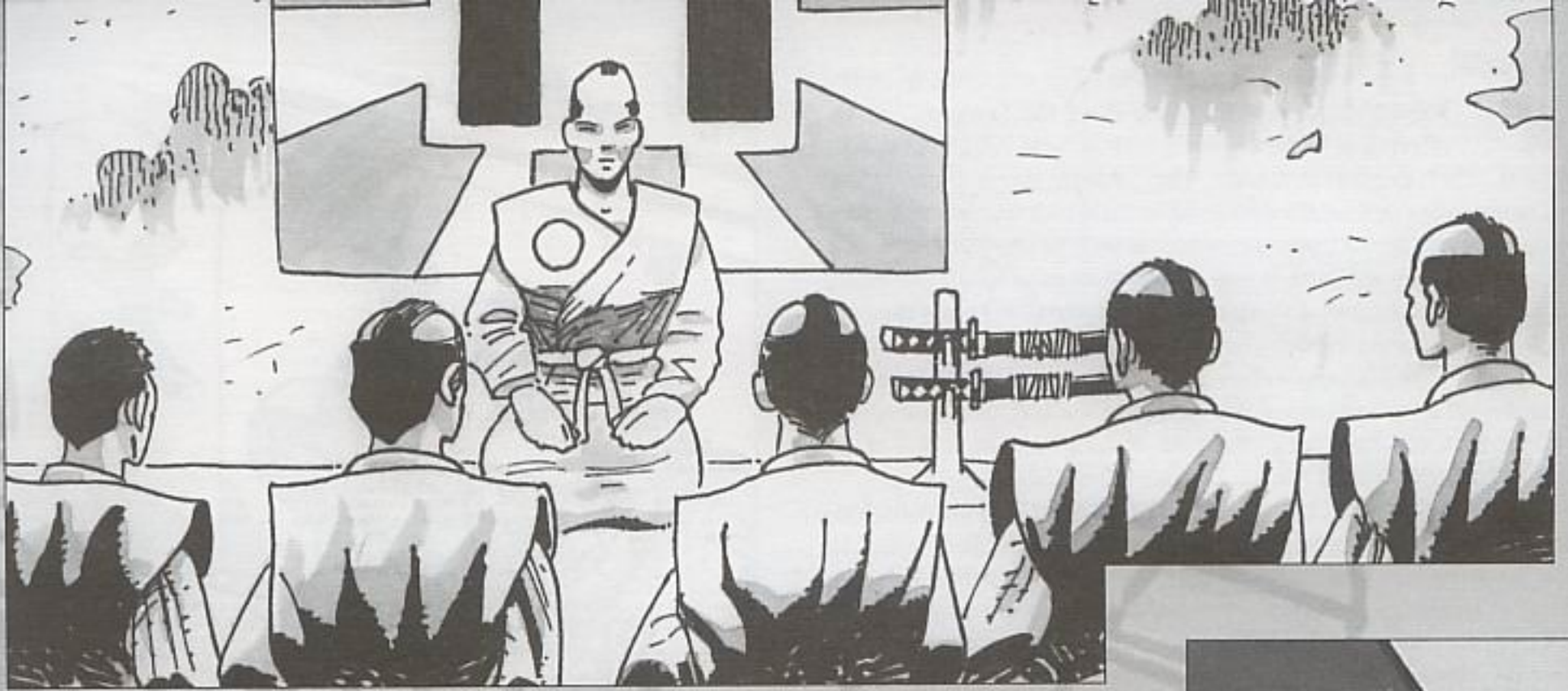
guided Mishima away from the Brotherhood teachings. Some say they were renegade Mystics of the First Directorate, others that they were Heretics sent to lead Mishima into error and blasphemy. No one knows the truth.

Whatever they were, they found a willing audience in the Samurai of the time. The Sages claimed that the Brotherhood had no monopoly on wisdom and that anyone with sufficient training

could be taught to use the powers of the Art. They founded secret schools where they taught their arts to any who had the talent to learn. They gave birth to a whole new philosophy of honor and obligation, that bound the Mishima corporation together in this great age of strife.

They claimed that they were merely renewing Mishima's ancient heritage and bringing back the old true ways from before the Age of Catastrophe. When they mixed mysticism and ancient martial arts, Mishima birthed a new and savage method of total warfare. They revealed incredible secrets which allowed Mishiman warriors to tap into their own inner strength and wield powers unimaginable to other men. In that terrible time of war, this new power enabled the Mishimans to defeat all who claimed their ancestral holdings. To this day, these strange powers distinguish the true Mishiman warrior from all others.

Many renegades from within the Brotherhood flocked to Mishima where their most outrageous teachings found a sympathetic audience. During this period, heretics, sages and enlightened ones all found refuge in Mercury's fortified halls. Hundreds of new mystic schools were birthed. Several of the false Cardinals declared the corporation apostate and launched crusades against it, but none could muster the strength to break Mishima. All of these external attacks fostered in the Mishimans a deep suspicion of all outsiders.



The teachings of the Seven Sages appealed to the corporate elite, the Samurai warrior class, who saw in them a way of attaining superiority over their many foes. The teachings did little for the workers, who for the most part remained loyal to the Cardinal. A series of Brotherhood inspired rebellions led to savage repression of the workers by the Samurai and resulted in the almost complete loss of the Brotherhood's influence within Mishima. They also sowed the seeds of a distrust between Samurai and Brotherhood that was to last until the present day. After these rebellions the workers were disarmed and became little more than chattel of their employers. This laid the foundations of the terrible class distinctions that divide Mishiman society even today.

By the time the Schism ended, the new way was so deeply entrenched in Mishiman life that they could not be removed without the complete destruction of the Megacorporation, which is a task probably beyond even the power of the Brotherhood. On the other hand, the power of the reunified Brotherhood was too great for the Overlord of Mishima to ignore. So the Overlord and the Cardinal came to an uneasy accommodation. Mishima purged its obviously Heretical schools and allowed Brotherhood observers to watch over the corporation. The Overlord and each of his three Lord Heirs listened to the counsels of a Brotherhood appointed spiritual advisor. In return for this privilege, the unique Mishiman way of life was tolerated by the Brotherhood. Mishima has remained an outsider among the Megacorporations—too strange to be trusted, too powerful to be ignored.

THE SEVEN SAGES

The Seven Sages are the great thinkers who gave Mishima its unique way of life. They were philosophers, mystics and martial artists who came to prominence during the Neronian Heresy and helped shape the ideas of all those around them. Today their teachings are revered by the Samurai and many Commoners regard them as akin to gods. Their pictures and statues can be found in almost every Mishiman home, and it is not uncommon for less well-educated Mishimans to pray to them. The higher classes have many ideas about the Seven Sages. The most commonly held belief is that they were Enlightened Ones who helped to shape the corporation for their own unknowable purposes. Another group maintains that they were mortals, great men and women, but that is all. Those who hold closer to the Brotherhood's teachings, see them as renegades and Heretics sent by the Darkness to divide mankind. The sages were:





YUROJI, THE FIRST SAGE. Yuroji was the first of the Seven, a Mishiman born Brotherhood Mystic who was sickened by the endless violence of the Neronian Schism and resolved to find a new path. It was he who approached the Overlord of the day and offered to teach him and his warriors the secrets of combat. He lived for fifty years and helped formulate the basic doctrines of the Way. He taught that with sufficient restraint and discipline a person could achieve enlightenment. He helped the Overlord to rediscover much about ancient Mishiman culture and thus strengthened Mishima's corporate identity. He is commonly represented as a gaunt ascetic man, in long black brotherhood robes. He has a halo of light round his head.

KANJI, SAGE OF UNLIMITED GOOD FORTUNE. Kanji was one of Yuroji's first disciples, another Brotherhood Mystic who defected to follow the Way. It is said that everyone who crossed his path was lucky. He was a great teacher who helped spread word of the Way to everyone he met. It was impossible to listen to him and not be moved. He is even said to have talked an Inquisitor into becoming his disciple. This sage is commonly represented as a smiling fat man with a glowing halo round his head.

YORAMA, SAGE OF BATTLE. Yorama was Yuroji's first Samurai disciple to achieve enlightenment. In his lifetime he was a great warrior who perfected the combat techniques which are common techniques today. In battle, he was invincible. He more than any saw to it that the Samurai became devotees of the way. He is regarded as a living exemplar of all Samurai virtues. He is always portrayed as a gigantic Samurai surrounded by a ruddy red halo.

NOMURA, SAGE OF PROSPERITY. Nomura was a merchant for the Nomura Kieretsu who used his mastery of meditation into the Way and built his Keiretsu into the wealthiest on Mercury. After he renounced the quest for material goods, he gave it all to the Overlord. It was he who formulated the basic trading strategies that Mishima follows to this day. Administrators and merchants regard him as something of a patron, as do gamblers. He is usually portrayed as a bearded man with a scale in one hand, and a jewel in the other.

YIZO, SAGE OF WISDOM. Yizo was a great philosopher who after the Great Rebellion formulated the Four Concepts. She preached the doctrine of total loyalty and obedience to your liege Lord. It was her tea-



chings that enabled Mishima to survive the great rebellion. She is commonly represented as a high browed woman garbed in traditional Samurai dress. Her head is shaved and surrounded by a double halo.

MARAMA, SAGE OF HARMONY. Marama was the sage who laid down the rules for harmony within the home, who taught that children should revere their parents, and that family was the most important of things. She was a great peacemaker who brought harmony wherever she went. She is depicted as a tranquilly smiling woman of middle years. Her dress is green.

TORONAGA, SAGE OF JUSTICE. Toronaga is the sage of Justice. She was the first Demon Hunter, a renegade Inquisitor, who exposed nests of Heretics within the Mishiman realms while she ruthlessly avenged her family who were wiped out by followers of the Dark Apostles. She founded the Order of Demon Hunters and formulated many of the techniques they use to this day. She is depicted as a towering woman in black Demon Hunter armour.

Of course, the Seven Sages did not give birth to the Way fully formed. Over the long centuries since the Neronian schism, their teachings have been codified and argued over by scholars and sages. They have been given many different interpretations. They have come to permeate every aspect of Mishima's ritual bound culture and shaped an entire way of life for countless billions.

THE WAY

The Seven Sages gave Mishima the Way, an understanding of which is central to any understanding of Mishiman culture. The Way provides the code of honor that binds Lord to vassal, superior to subordinates. Its teachings are simple. The first and greatest virtue is loyalty; first to your feudal overlord then to your corporation. In a universe where death is sudden and treachery endemic, this bond of loyalty is of crucial importance.

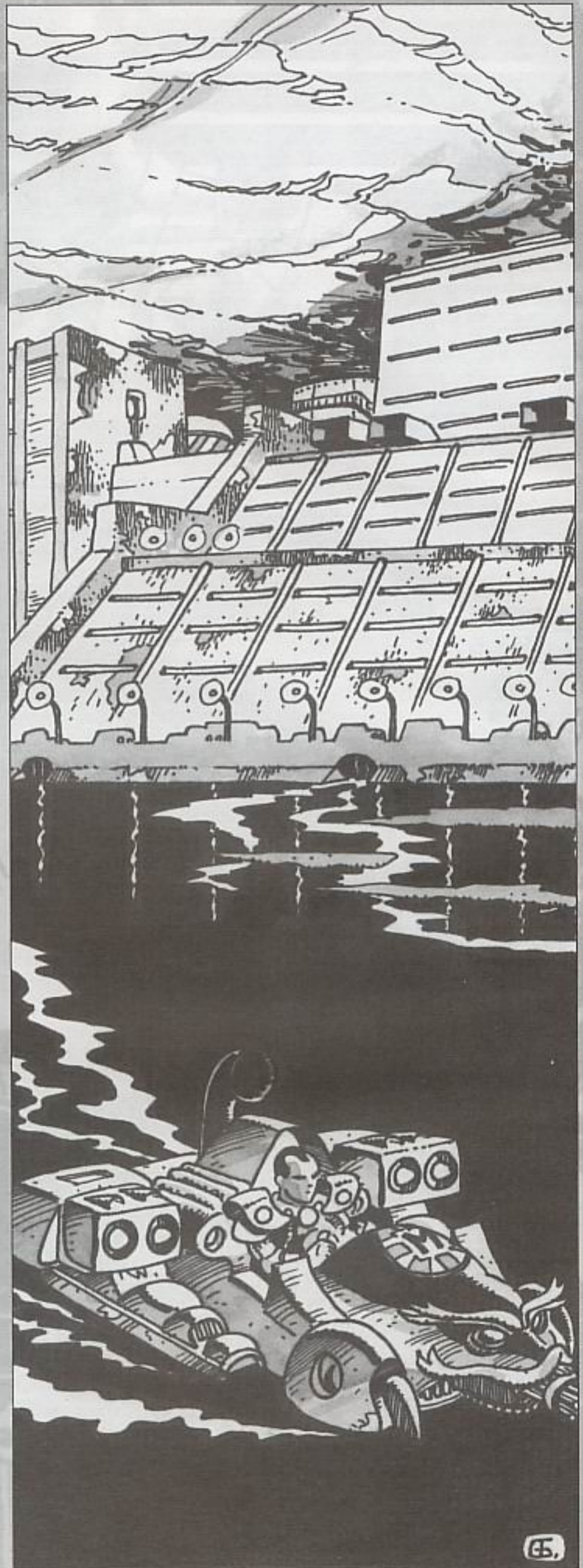
The second virtue is honor. Honor means preserving the good name of yourself, your Lord and your family. It means repaying blows with blows and violence with violence. It means tolerating no slight to your good name, or to your family. It means obliterating your enemies and those of your Lord without mercy. No Mishiman warrior is afraid to die well, for this will mean his family's honor is increased. The greatest shame is to die a coward, which dishonors your ancestors and lowers your family's prestige. This is a fate to be avoided at all costs.

The third virtue is obedience. You must obey instantly any command given by your overlord. If you consider the command dishonorable or if it would bring shame on you or your family, you may ask permission to commit ritual suicide rather than carry it out. This permission may, or may not be forthcoming. The greatest shame that can befall you is to fail in your duty to your master.

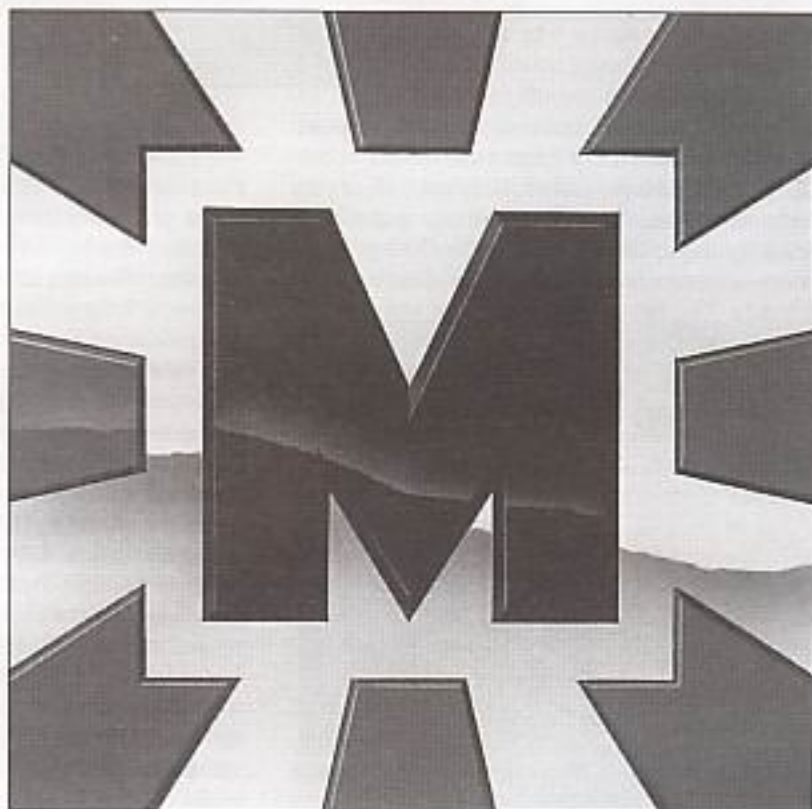
The Way also teaches that you should honor those who have gone before you. This primarily refers to your ancestors, to whom you are supposed to pay proper respect, but it also applies to all the great heroes, saints and spiritual figures of the past, and to the ancients who reshaped the worlds of mankind and made possible life as we know it.

Because these teachings are the glue which binds Mishiman society together more than anything else, they are constantly reinforced by the megacorporations mighty propaganda machine.

The Way also teaches its adherents how to gain Ki, spiritual strength, and how to utilize it in many strange and potent ways. The core of the Way is discipline, in many shapes and forms. It may be that this total dedication to the Way explains why Mishiman Samurai contain fewer heretics than almost any other social caste in the slar system. Or it may be true, as some within the Second Directorate claim, that the Mishiman hierarchy has simply been clever at covering up their penetration by followers of the Great Darkness.



MISHIMA™



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THE MISHIMAN CORPORATE STRUCTURE

Mishima is not really a single corporation. It is a huge mass of sub-corporations, called Keiretsu, all owing allegiance to the single core megacorporation owned by the Mishima dynasty. In theory, all of Mishima's assets are owned by the Overlord and his family. The heads of the Keiretsu merely hold them in trust. The revenues they gain are, in theory, a stipend for managing their fiefdoms.

Every Keiretsu is an industrial fiefdom, ruled by a Samurai family. Each Keiretsu has many sub-divisions which are held in fief by lower status Samurai families. Each of these sub-divisions will be subdivided in turn and given to Samurai families of still lower rank. The smallest and lowest status corporate families owe allegiance to larger and more powerful ones. Eventually this chain of allegiance can be traced all the way up to the Lord Heirs and the Overlord himself.

Within the Mishiman corporation, Keiretsu compete with Keiretsu and lesser fiefdoms compete with lesser fiefdoms. Some outside observers claim that it also encourages wasteful duplication of effort. There would be a lot of waste if Mishima spent a lot of money on research and development, but it does not. It prefers stealing and refining other corporations' best ideas rather than developing its own.

Many of the oldest and most powerful Samurai clans have held their Keiretsu since the founding of the Corporation and are as well entrenched in their status as the Overlord and his heirs. The lesser fiefdoms within Keiretsu are not quite so stable. The lowest tier of Samurai can be stripped of their status and have their fiefs reassigned to others at the whim of their liege Lord. This happens often—as the liege rewards and/or punishes his vassals. It is quite common for an unsuccessful retainer to have his fiefdom taken away and given to a more favoured subject.

The great corporate lords who rule are Keiretsu are known as Daimyos. Within their Keiretsu, they can assign fiefs to their chosen retainers. These fiefdoms provide the Samurai with the revenues to equip his army of retainers and maintain his network of spies and informers. The larger the fiefdom the more powerful the armies an overlord can maintain and the greater his influence is within corporate politics.

In ancient days, the Overlord was the supreme head of the corporation. His word was law, his decisions were unchallengeable. After him the

most powerful of all the Corporations rulers were the Lord Heirs, of whom one will succeed the present Overlord.

As with all Mishiman families, if an Overlord had no heirs he can adopt an outsider, usually a favoured retainer, into his family, and the adopted child will be granted all the privileges, rights and obligations of a child of the blood.

Traditionally, each Lord Heir was given overall responsibility for Mishiman operations on the three major worlds where the corporation had holdings (Mercury, Venus and Mars) while the Overlord oversaw the ruling of the corporation from his palace on Luna. In the past, the Overlord chose the ablest Lord Heir to succeed him on his death. The new Overlord would appoint his own successor to inherit his own fiefdom.

Recently this inherently unstable political system has at last brought Mishima to the verge of disaster. The Overlord's power has eroded as the power of the Lord Heirs has grown. The Overlord has been reduced to being a symbolic head of the corporation while the real power rests with the Lord Heirs. The present Overlord, Nagoya, is a powerless old man partially crippled and slightly weak of mind. He is surrounded by a court of scheming advisors many of whom are in the pay of one or the other of the Lord Heirs. No one knows who he will pick as his successor, or whether he might even do the unthinkable and not chose any successor at all.

The three current Lord Heirs hate each other passionately. This enmity has expressed itself in countless, intrigues, skirmishes and assassination attempts and has brought the proud Mishima corporation to the verge of civil war. The Lord Heirs openly despise their father, and ignore his pleas for unity. The rest of the megacorporations do their best to foment this rivalry and secretly interfere in Mishima's internal affairs, backing their own claimants to the throne of the Overlord. Each corporation hopes that the time has come when this mighty corporation can be broken up. Only Mishima's traditions of loyalty and unity in the face of outside aggression have so far prevented civil war from happening. How much longer this will continue is anybody's guess.

When the present Overlord dies, his chosen successor will endeavor to retain both the powers and privileges (not to mention armies) of his fiefdom as well as all the prerogatives of the Overlord. It is quite conceivable that this will lead to open civil war with the other two Lord Heirs.



THE LORD HEIRS

The three Lord Heirs are the most powerful of all the great lords of Mishima. Their power and influence is felt all over the human system. Each is immeasurably wealthy. Each is served by hundreds of thousands of fanatical warriors. Each hates the other with a poisonous, undying hatred. The three Lord Heirs are all the children of Overlord Nagoya but they are children of different mothers, since the Overlord followed Mishiman tradition and had many consorts and concubines as well as his one legal wife.

LORD HEIR MOYA

Lord Heir Moya, Prince of the Soil, Supreme Master of Mercury, is currently the most powerful of the three. He rules Mercury, which is the true heartland of the corporation with a rod of iron. Only on Mercury is Mishima's power unchallenged. The world's incredible mineral resources provide the corporation with much of its wealth. Moya is the eldest of the three Lord Heirs, a brilliant and ruthless administrator with a rapacious appetite for power and wealth. Until recently, Moya guided his section of the Mishiman industrial empire with a firm hand, but two years ago, after his three sons were killed in combat with the Dark Legion, he retired to the Garden of Celestial Delights and is seen only occasionally by his most trusted hatamoto. Rumor now has it that he has gone mad and surrounded himself with all sorts of fawning lackeys and courtly parasites, leaving the running of his domain to his shadow, the evil vizier Lord Nozaki. Nozaki rules Mercury with an iron fist from his headquarters, the Ebon Palace. Some say that Nozaki wields power because he feeds the Overlord a diet of drugs that is driving him mad. Others claim he may be a wizard in the service of the Apostles. These rumors are only whispered because Nozaki's arm is long and his enemies tend to vanish. His allies have advanced ever higher within the Mercurian hierarchy. Rumor has it that the cults of the Dark Apostles are less actively suppressed than they could be by Nozaki.

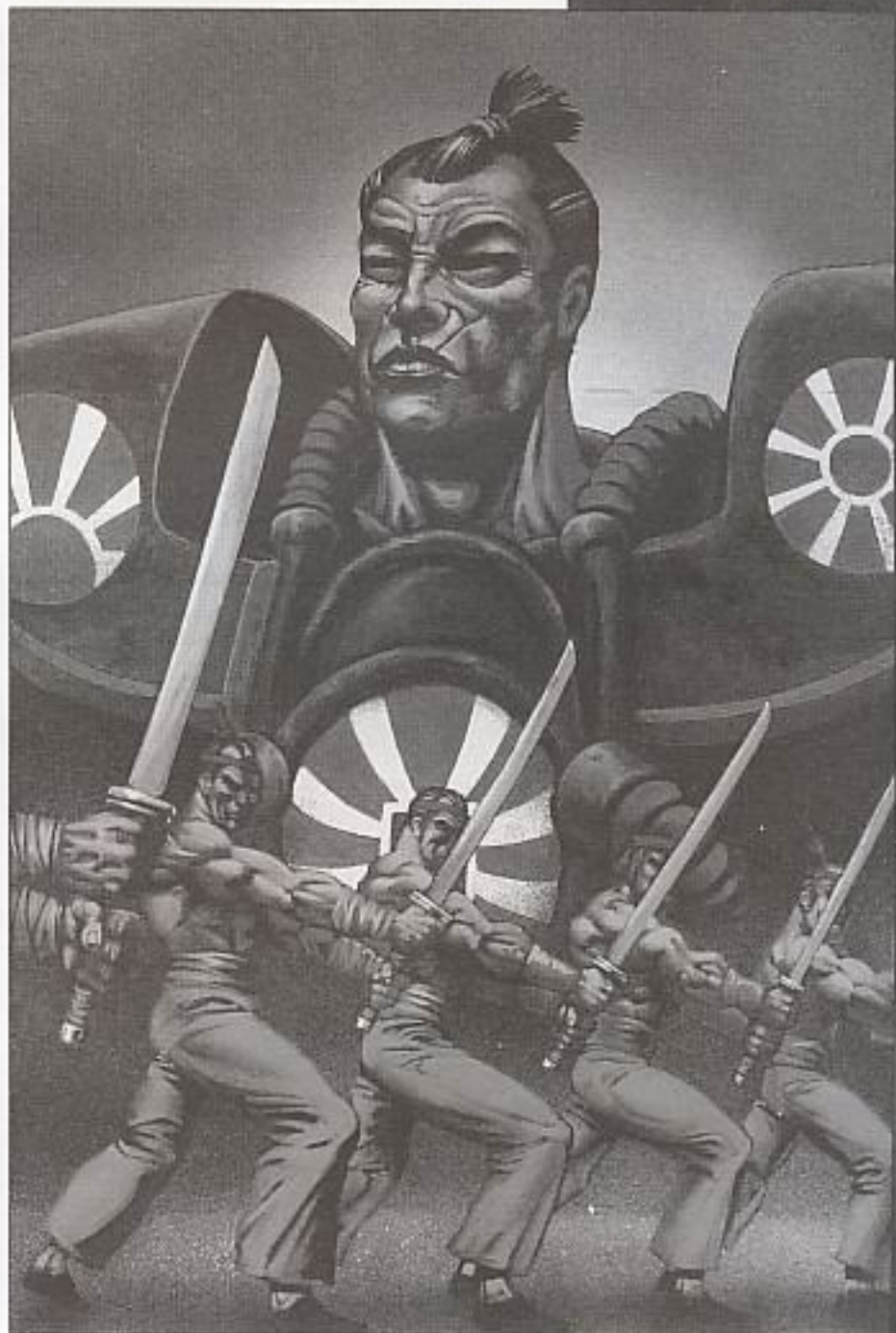
LORD HEIR MARU

Lord Heir Maru, Prince of the Oceans, is the ruler of all Mishiman Venus. He is the youngest of the Lord Heirs, a military genius who came to power on the untimely death of his elder brother. Until that time, he had been the leader of his brother's armies and had seen much frontline action in the warzones of Venus. Maru is a dour, driven man, a paragon of Samurai virtues. He is brave and inspires total loyalty among his subordinates. His fiefdom on Venus is incredibly wealthy but Maru's power suffers from his need to constantly participate in the wars that wrack that strife-torn world. Maru has little time for intriguing against his siblings but he knows that one of them was responsible for his brother's death, and one day, he will inevitably take his vengeance.

LORD HEIRESS MARIKO

Lord Heiress Mariko, Princess of the Skies, is a beautiful, independent young woman. In the Mishi-

man way she is ruthless and deadly to all who oppose her but she is also surprisingly warm and charming to her friends. Unlike her brothers, she actually listens to her Brotherhood spiritual advisors and has filled her court with Brothers and people sympathetic to them. In return for her support of the Brotherhood, she enjoys considerable influence with, and support from, the Cardinal. She balances this by paying careful attention to the cultural traditions of her corporation. Some outsiders speculate that she is trying to reconcile the ancient split between Mishima and the Brotherhood. Others think that she is simply cultivating the Brotherhood in return for their support in the final struggle for power with her siblings. Only she knows what the truth is.





Mishima is the most feudal of all the megacorporations. Its owners and rulers are the Samurai. Each Samurai knows his place in the scheme of Mishiman society. Every Samurai swears allegiance to a liege Lord who will be his master. Unless he is of the lowest tier of Samurai, he will have vassals who have sworn allegiance to him. The Samurai are the soldiers, police and administrators of the corporation. Only they can own property, only they can bear the ceremonial swords, only they may don the mighty battlesuits of the true Mishiman warrior.

It is the duty of every Samurai to obey his liege-lord even unto death. It is the right of every liege Lord to expect instant unquestioning obedience. In return for his loyalty, the Samurai is provided for by his liege Lord. For the lowest ranks, this may simply mean that his liege provides him with food, weapons, a place to live and a salary. For the more highly placed, it means that the liege will reward him with a portion of his own industrial estate. This can range from a small factory complex to a vast territory complete with several installations. A Samurai's holdings are called Keiretsu. All Samurai know that these gifts are entirely dependant on their master's good offices. An overlord can take away what he has granted without any explanation or reason.

While a Samurai has possession of his fief, he can use its revenues as he sees fit. These are usually invested in the business itself or in the provision of yet more warriors to serve the Samurai and his liege, because it is a mark of status among Samurai to provide as many soldiers as possible to serve his Lord. A Samurai is expected to be an expert at his business but his primary task is to fight and to rule. Because most Samurai are constantly training themselves for success on the battlefield, they usually possess someone who can act as their aide de camp in business affairs. In Mishiman society, this person is called a shadow. This shadow is a trusted retainer, usually a Samurai too old or too crippled to serve in battle, sometimes a privileged Commoner. The shadow is responsible for overseeing the day to day running of the business which leaves the Samurai free to practise his arts, serve his master and engage in the unending political intrigues of the Mishiman ruling class. In many Keiretsu, the administrators wield vast powers in their lord's name, yet they are still, at least in theory subject to the lord's will.

RANKS

According to tradition, Overlord Nagoya is the highest ranking of all Mishimans. He is paid every outward form of respect and revered as the symbolic head of the corporation. Currently, however, the Overlord has no real power, only the trappings of power. Treaties are signed in his name. War is declared in his name. The corporation does everything in his name. Yet this is all a sham. The real power is held by the Lord Heirs.

The Lord Heirs are responsible for the control of Mishima's interests on their respective worlds. Lord Heir Moya controls Mercury. Lord Heir Maru con-

trols Venus. Lord Heir Mariko controls Mars. Theoretically, each is the final and ultimate master of all Mishima's holdings on his world but recently Mishima's Martian subsidiaries have been opening branches on Venus and vice versa. There has even been open warfare between the vassals of the Lord Heirs on all three planets.

Beneath the Lord Heirs are the Daimyos, the great warlords who control huge Keiretsu. In theory all Daimyos are of equal rank but in fact their status varies quite a bit depending on the wealth their Keiretsu controls and the number of troops they can field. Other more intangible factors such as their success as generals or their skills at politics and intrigue can affect their status. The mark of the Daimyo is that he swears his loyalty directly to the Lord Heirs rather than to the Overlord. Outsiders usually translate the title of Daimyo as Great Lord, Warlord or Lord Commander.

Beneath the Daimyos are lesser rulers known as lords. Each Lord swears allegiance to their Daimyo and rules a part of his industrial domain in their master's name. Any variations of rank or status between lords depend on the power of the Lord (military or economic).

All Daimyos and lords have hatamoto. Originally this title was reserved for the personal bodyguard of the Overlord himself but it has spread into general usage. A hatamoto is a trusted personal retainer of his master, trusted enough to be allowed to wear weapons in his master's presence and act as his bodyguard on the battlefield. Within Mishiman realms hatamoto are assumed to speak with their master's voice and can give orders to any lesser retainers. Hatamoto form a valuable executive class within the corporation. To be made hatamoto is one of the greatest honors a Samurai can be granted. On the battlefield, the hatamoto form an elite honor guard for their master.

Below the hatamoto are the common Samurai. Samurai make up a vast majority of Mishima's warriors and administrators. By law, only Samurai are allowed to carry ceremonial swords and own battlesuits. By law, only Samurai have the privilege of going armed in public. They need tolerate no slur on their honor from a Commoner. They can slay any Commoner for any insult, real or imagined, and there will be no retaliation. Within Mishiman realms, Samurai also perform the function of police by enforcing their master's law and ensuring civil order is kept.

A man can be born Samurai or he can be promoted into the class at the decision of his master. This is the ultimate reward that a Commoner can aspire to and is granted very rarely.

COMMONERS

Below the Samurai are the Commoners. The Commoners are divided into two distinct social classes. The elite of the Commoners are the Guildsmen, who are the professional and technical class



which provides skilled labour for the Keiretsu. They have their own guilds which teach their skills and regulate their professions. They usually have their own local guildhouses where members can meet. They are quite well off, and are usually literate. Virtually every profession has its own guild, from courtesans to technicians. Even the mighty Lord Heirs must cater to the Guilds because the Guilds are the vital cog around which all of Mishiman industry is built.

Below the Guildsmen are the vast herd of workers who do the brute labour of the Mishima corporation. They are provided for by their Keiretsu and they are indoctrinated in the proud and ancient traditions of their corporation. These Commoners possess a meager standard of living, but most of their needs are satisfied by the corporation. They are regarded as the property of the Keiretsu they work for, and any Samurai can kill them for any reason at all. A Samurai can even kill any Commoner simply to test his weapons. But if that Commoner gave no insult and belonged to another Samurai, the owner might challenge that Samurai to a duel of honor.

Despite this treatment, the Commoners are surprisingly loyal to the Samurai. In the past, many have sought to incite rebellion against Mishima. A few have succeeded, but such revolts are less common among Mishimans than among the well-cared for Commoners of Bauhaus. Experts consider that there are several possible explanations for this. The first is that the Commoners are cowed by the sheer brutality and violence of the Samurai. They are trained from birth to look up to their feudal masters and see themselves as inferior. Another reason is that Mishimans are completely isolated from the other Corporations and the Brotherhood. None of these organizations have established any permanent contacts in the Mishiman realms. Mishimans work for Mishima, buy Mishima, read Mishima, sleep Mishima. There is no way that any outside ideas can enter Mishiman society. What a Mishiman knows of the outside worlds is culled from the Mishiman media. Films, books and television all paint anything that is not Mishiman as evil and treacherous. As a result of this xenophobia, nearly every Mishiman believes wholeheartedly in his society's values.

A LESSON IN GOVERNMENT

Suritomo Kim glanced down from the roof of the skyscraper with a mounting sense of excitement. For a moment, looking down at all those tiny lights far below, he felt like a god. Exaltation filled him. He was alone with his uncle save for Yukio, the courtesan. There were no bodyguards present. No witnesses except the girl. He was his uncle's declared heir. There was nothing to stop him from killing the old monster and taking the fiefdom. Briefly he allowed himself to savour the thought.

At twenty one he would be Daimyo, ultimate ruler of one of Mishima's largest Keiretsu, an industrial kingdom, a power who could make or break the Lord Heirs themselves. Briefly he allowed himself to taste the dream. Very briefly. His uncle did nothing without a reason, including inviting him here this evening. There would be safeguards against just such an attempt on his uncle's life as he was contemplating.

Traffic noise rose from the streets to assault his ears. Overhead the running lights of a rocketcopter blazed like a meteor across the dome of heaven. Gigantic flares of vented gas lit the whole vast underworld, sending huge shadows flickering across the stone sky. In the distance, beyond the city, the shifting dunes of toxic waste glittered like the eyes of dragons. Irritatedly Kim swatted a nightbiter with his gauntleted hand. The insect blotched the hardened ceramic of his battlesuit. He glanced over his shoulder, sneaking a look at where his uncle squatted on a tatami mat.

Suritomo Omi was a huge man. His armour was almost twice as large around the chest and waist as a normal battlesuit. Rumor had it that it had been custom designed by Suritomo's best engineers to support his uncle's bloated bulk. The hydraulic systems had been specially reinforced to move those hundreds of extra kilograms. Kim was not deceived by all that fat. He had seen his uncle wield his ancient Mushashi blades in battle. That gross form concealed a cat-like quickness, and an enormous strength and resilience, as well as a demonically clever mind. Omi slurped cha from a tiny porcelain cup. The flower girl, Yukio mopped the sweat from his shaven head with a handkerchief of purest silk, then returned to cooling his uncle's brow with a delicate rice-poper fan.

Kim smiled at her and his smile was returned. As always her beauty took his breath away. She was his favorite of all the courtesans. He felt something like love for her, or so he thought. He had spent many nights with her, when she was not engaged by his uncle. Occasionally when moments of wild madness took him he had considered making her his official consort.

Omi caught Kim's look, and smiled, triple jowls of fat folding under his chin, making him look more than ever like an enormous bloated toad. Only the coldness of the eyes and the serpent-like evil of his smile stopped Omi from looking like the caricature of a jolly, fat man. He looked like an evil parody of Kanji, the Sage of Unlimited Good Fortune.

"What are you thinking, nephew," Omi rumbled in his deep, beautiful voice. Kim heard the note of mockery there. Even though he was his uncle's appointed heir, Omi had left him in no doubt that he still had much to learn, before he would inherit the family business.

"I am wondering why you brought me here, sire."

Gaspng laughter bubbled from Omi's blubbery lips. "You are wondering why am I keeping you from your gambling and your flower girls to stand on this heaven-forsaken rooftop."

"No, sire, I live to obey you."

"That goes without saying, nephew. All my Samurai do."

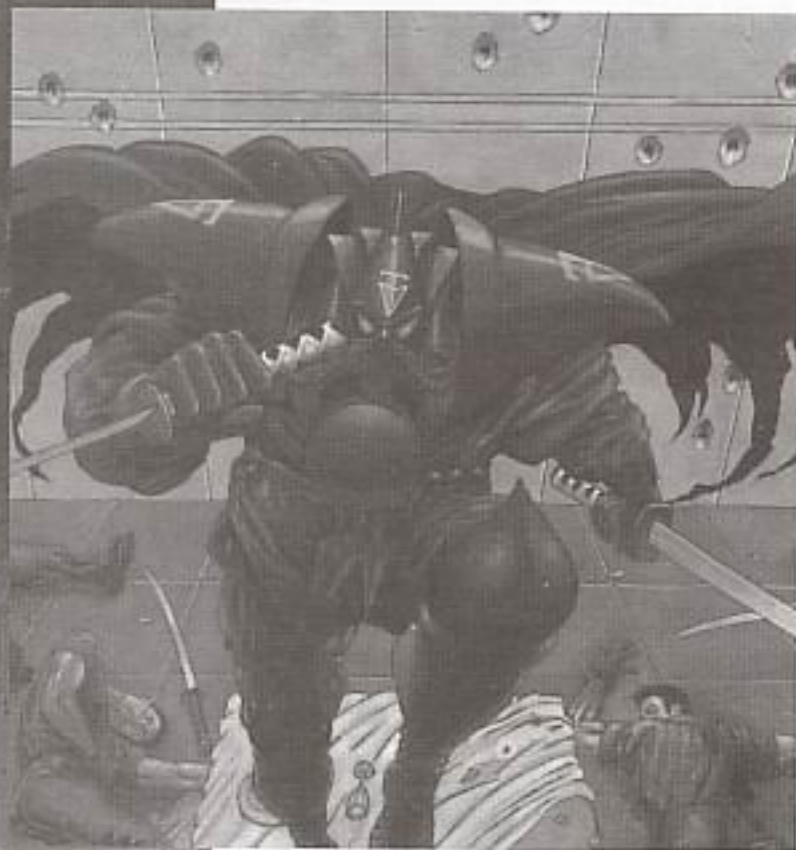
Once again Kim saw he was being mocked. "May I ask, with all humility, why you have brought me here, sire?"

Omi rubbed his fat nose. There was a whine of servo-motors as his fingers flexed within his gauntlets. He raised his hand and beckoned for Kim to approach him. Warily Kim moved within sword distance of his uncle. He did not know why he was being so cautious. If Omi wanted him dead he could simply order him to commit seppuku. Perhaps it was the strange feverish glitter in his uncle's eyes. When the mood

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THE SECRET SOCIETIES

Mishiman society is riddled with secret societies. These range from the Triads, criminal organizations of great power, to the feared Shadow Walker Cult, a sinister society of sorcerous power. These societies provide an alternative power to that of the Samurai and their vassals. Their origins are lost in the mists of antiquity. Even though all of them are feared and outlawed by the Samurai, all of them are used by the Samurai in their endless intrigues against one another.



The Triads is a term which describes a vast number of criminal families which engage in extortion, gambling, smuggling and other illegal activities. On the body of any Triad member, a tattoo will be found that indicates their allegiance. If the criminal is a member of the Black Dragon society, their tattoo will be of a black dragon. If they belong to the Crimson Lotus society then their tattoo will be of a crimson lotus, and so on. These Triads often act as

unofficial intelligence gathering agencies for the Daimyos, other great Keiretsu lords, and often help regulate unlicensed crime in their territories. Thus they are tolerated by the Samurai in return for a cut of their profits and a display of loyalty. A Triad's members are often seen as a kind of unofficial police force. Indeed some of the societies have gone all the way to respectability and become arms of the government. The most famous of these is probably the Crimson Lotus society, which became the intelligence society of the Martian Lord Heir.

Much more dangerous and secretive than the Triads are the Cults. These are extremely powerful organizations with their roots in the ancient rebellions of the Commoners against the Samurai. In those days only Samurai were allowed to study the mystic arts although many Commoners had the strength of will to wield them. The rebel sage Izogi founded his secret schools in defiance of the Samurai and began to teach. Izogi was later captured and killed by the other sages but his teachings spread like wildfire among those who wanted to learn. Although not one of the Seven Sages, he is still revered by Commoners, rebels and criminals.

Because the Overlord is desperate to avoid another Commoner rebellion, particularly one spearheaded by Art wielding cultists, he laid down a ban on Izogi's teachings. Any found studying them would suffer a long and painful death by torture. The edict only drove the cults deeper underground and forced them to be ever more careful in their choice of members, for now there were spies everywhere. These cults became hotbeds of rebellious, strong-willed Commoners who despised the rigid traditions of Mishiman society.

Needless to say, this made cults perfect recruiting grounds for the servants of the Dark Apostles. But not all of the cults became corrupted by the Darkness. Some beat their own paths down through history, teaching their students, perfecting their philosophies and techniques. Sometimes the cults were smashed and their knowledge lost. Sometimes the survivors taught their techniques to the Samurai and a new mystic art was absorbed into mainstream society. Some of the cults went on to become powers in Mishiman politics like the infamous Shadow Walkers about whom more will be said later.

THE FACELESS

Mishimans refer to all outsiders their society as the Faceless, whom they at once fear and despise. To a Mishiman all outsiders are potential enemies who do not understand the proud and ancient traditions that make Mishima separate and great. To a Mishiman, an outsider is less than nothing. Usually, Mishiman officials hide their distaste of foreigners in front of visiting dignitaries or businessmen. But no Mishiman actually feels that an outsider is their equal in any way.

A Mishiman can fall to the level of the Faceless if

he commits some grave sin or dishonors himself. It is the worst nightmare of any Mishiman to join the Faceless, to be expelled from his corporation, to be disowned by his family. Most would prefer death rather than become a Faceless. If a Mishiman is made Faceless, his features are disfigured with ritual scarring, his name is deleted from all records and his family forgets he ever existed except as a source of unending shame. If any family or friends encounter him on the street, they simply pretend not see him. If he speaks to them, they will not hear.

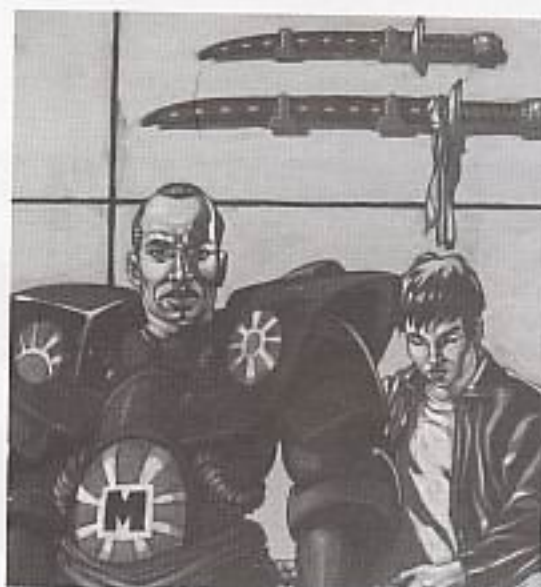
The Faceless usually seek out areas where there are few Mishimans and try to eke out a precarious living. In Iama there is a Faceless Quarter, which is a zone where these sad lost individuals gather among others of their kind. It is quite common for the Faceless to wear featureless masks to hide their shame. Many such masked beggars can be found seeking alms in Mishiman cities. Few but foreigners give them money or food.

Recently, shadowy figures have been organizing the Faceless in the depths of Mishiman cities. The Crimson Lotus Society has reported that some Faceless have been meeting regularly in nearly every Mishiman territory. Currently, the Overlord and the Lord Heirs consider the Faceless unworthy of attention. A few Samurai lords are concerned that the Apostles might be using the Faceless as new ammunition for their war against humanity.



RONIN

Sometimes, a Lord and his entire fief is wiped out by a rival Lord, another corporation or the Dark Legion. Sometimes, a Lord will dismiss a Samurai from his service without allowing him the honorable option of ritual suicide. These masterless Samurai are known as Ronin. They are still Samurai and have all a Samurai's privileges. They can own battlesuits, carry ceremonial swords and treat Commons as they will. They must be treated with courtesy by other Samurai or those other Samurai can be punished for their lack of manners. However, Ronin are also different. Because they have no masters they have lesser status within the corporation. They cannot claim an overlord's protection and they have no revenues or salaries. Because Ronin barely earn enough money to survive, their weapons, armour and wargear are rarely the best.



Many Ronin turn to banditry or mercenary work in order to survive. Some lose all honor and become spies. Because of such behavior, Ronin are looked upon with suspicion by the authorities. There is little dignity to be found in being a Ronin. While most Ronin are still honorable, and loyal to their corporation but others become mercenaries hiring

out to any who will pay them. Even if a Ronin is a mighty warrior, he is regarded with contempt by most Samurai.

DEMON HUNTERS

Mishima's rulers have as little to do with the Brotherhood as they can. This does not mean that they are defenseless against the Darkness. Mishiman society has developed an organization which stands firmly against the tide of Darkness. The Order of Demon Hunters dates from the time of the Neronian schism. Although founded by the renegade Inquisitor Toranaga, it has gone on to develop its own traditions, methods and goals separate from the Brotherhood. Demon Hunters are sworn to root out the servants of the Darkness within Mishima by any and all means necessary. They are at least as fanatical, brutal and successful as Brotherhood Inquisitors.

Demon Hunters are sworn to oppose the Darkness. They take their oaths of allegiance directly to the head of the order, who takes his oath from the Overlord. Most are chosen young and trained from an early age to the fanatical pursuit of their task. Others come to the order later when they have lost friends or liege lords to the Darkness. All of these people make their way to the Forbidden Isle on Mercury. Very few are accepted and even these must pass many tests which prove fatal if failed. The successful candidates are taught many secret arts and an undying hatred of the Darkness by the

monks of the Isle. This process takes many years and transforms them into some of the best warriors in the human worlds. Once a Demon Hunter completes his training on the Forbidden Isle, he is free to wander the worlds of mankind as they see fit, hunting down the spawn of the Great Darkness, and slaying them.

Some ally themselves with Mishima's lords and become trusted advisors, while others drift from place to place going wherever their services are most needed. By special dispensation, all Demon Hunters are allowed to possess a suit of powered combat armour, a right normally reserved to Samurai. By tradition, each also conceals his features behind a scowling terrifying mask. There is little love lost between Demon Hunters and Inquisitors but each has a wary respect for the others prowess. By nature, most Demon Hunters tend to be aloof loners but a few acquire small retinues of trusted retainers in order to aid them in their quest against the dark.

By ancient tradition, a Demon Hunter may demand an audience with any ruler up to the rank of Lord Heir. Usually a Demon Hunter will be heard with respect and their advice will be acted upon.



SAGES

Sages hold a position of considerable honor within Mishiman society. They are usually portrayed as wizened ancients who speak words of tempered wisdom. Some sages are like this. Others are not. In fact almost anybody could be a sage. Sages are simply those who possess great understanding of the use of personal energy, or Ki. They can wield these arts in the service of mankind or they can simply stand apart from the struggle and devote their lives to meditation and the perfection of their techniques. In either case, they possess sufficient understanding of their subjects to be great tea-

chers and innovators. Sages can create devices charged with their powers and often show great understanding of the world around them. Their wisdom and council is sought out by those who need them.

Very rarely, sages acquire such wisdom and mastery over their Ki that they achieve a higher form of consciousness. Such individuals are called Enlightened Ones. Some say that these men and women have become one with the universe. Even the Lord Heirs heed their words. But Enlightened Ones do not usually involve themselves in terrestrial matters.

MISHIMANS AND OUTSIDERS

Most outsiders tend to look on Mishimans with suspicion. To an outsider, Mishimans do not follow the same code of ethics to which other corporations adhere. Mishimans view outsiders as little better than honorless beasts, though they gene-

rally hide their disgust with a polite exterior. Mishimans tolerate non-Mishimans because it goes against the Way to actively destroy another sentient being without due cause. But Mishimans are very adept at finding a due cause.

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was on him Suritomo Omi would kill for no reason at all. He could sense his uncle's barely suppressed excitement. A little voice in his mind whispered that he should be very careful indeed.

"I have brought you here to learn a valuable lesson. Sit."

Kim squatted.

"Name the three most important tools of statecraft."

"The sage Moriama claims they are military strength, industrial capacity and superior intelligence. Tsun Li says they are good government, sound finance and respect for..."

"No," said Omi softly. "They are naked power, limitless wealth and the capacity to inspire terror."

Kim looked at his uncle questioningly.

"Tonight I will show you one of those tools. Turn around."

Slowly Kim turned around and fear filled his heart. It took all his self-control to keep from flinching. The stranger had appeared from nowhere, so swiftly and silently that Kim had not even known he was there until he turned.

He looked up into the masked and cowed features of a red-garbed giant. The giant's eyes glowed with a strange internal light. Twin blades were scabbarded over his shoulders. Micro-grenades covered his waistband and chest-straps. Holstered guns hung from his sides.

The man's appearance was enough to inspire fear in anyone but it was not that which filled Kim with terror. Kim knew he stood face to face with one of the legendary Deathbringers of the Shadow Walker cult. He felt the giant's burning gaze rest upon him. He knew that his features had been memorized and filed away forever in the master assassin's mind. Kim suppressed a shiver. By ancient edict, the Shadow Walkers were a forbidden cult. Just being in the Deathbringers' presence would condemn him to death if a Demon Hunter ever found out. Dealing with the Shadow Walkers was against all the laws of the Overlord and the Brotherhood.

Kim rose and placed himself between his uncle and the Deathbringer as a good retainer should, although he doubted there was anything he could do to stop the assassin if he decided to attack. The power of a Shadow Walker was legendary.

His uncle's approving chuckle broke the spell. "There is no need for that, nephew. He will not harm either you or me. Step back over here."

Not taking his eyes off the Deathbringer, Kim obeyed. The assassin kept his distance and bowed deeply and formally to Omi, and then only a shade less deeply to Kim. Kim returned the bow.

"What do you desire of us?" The Deathbringer asked. His voice was eerily resonant. If a shark could speak it would have had a voice like that, Kim thought.

"The Bata industrial clan. Dead. All of them. To the last generation."

Kim felt an appalled thrill. The Bata were a small wealthy family. They owned many factories whose products more than matched Suritomo's on quality and undercut them on price. They were proud

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independent folk of ancient bloodline. They had refused his uncle's offer of protection, in return for swearing allegiance to him. Now they were about to pay the price.

The Deathbringer nodded. He named a sum. It was astronomical. His uncle merely nodded agreement. No haggling. No debate. The whole exchange had taken on a slightly unreal air. Kim had just watched his uncle spend one month's profit for an entire industrial division.

"It shall be so," said the Shadow Walker. He bowed and began to back away. Kim never took his eyes of the assassin but there was a strange shimmering, and the man stepped into a pool of darkness and vanished.

"Sire, we could be killed for what you have done this night," said Kim. Fear had shaken his control. He forgot even normal politeness. His uncle raised an eyebrow.

"Why? There are no witnesses save you and me. You are my heir..."

Kim let his gaze slide to the girl then back to his uncle. The message he saw there was clear. The girl must die. She opened her mouth to scream. Before she could make a sound, Kim had removed her head with one sweep of his blade.

"Why?" He asked, wiping his katana on his silken sash. "You did not need to bring her here."

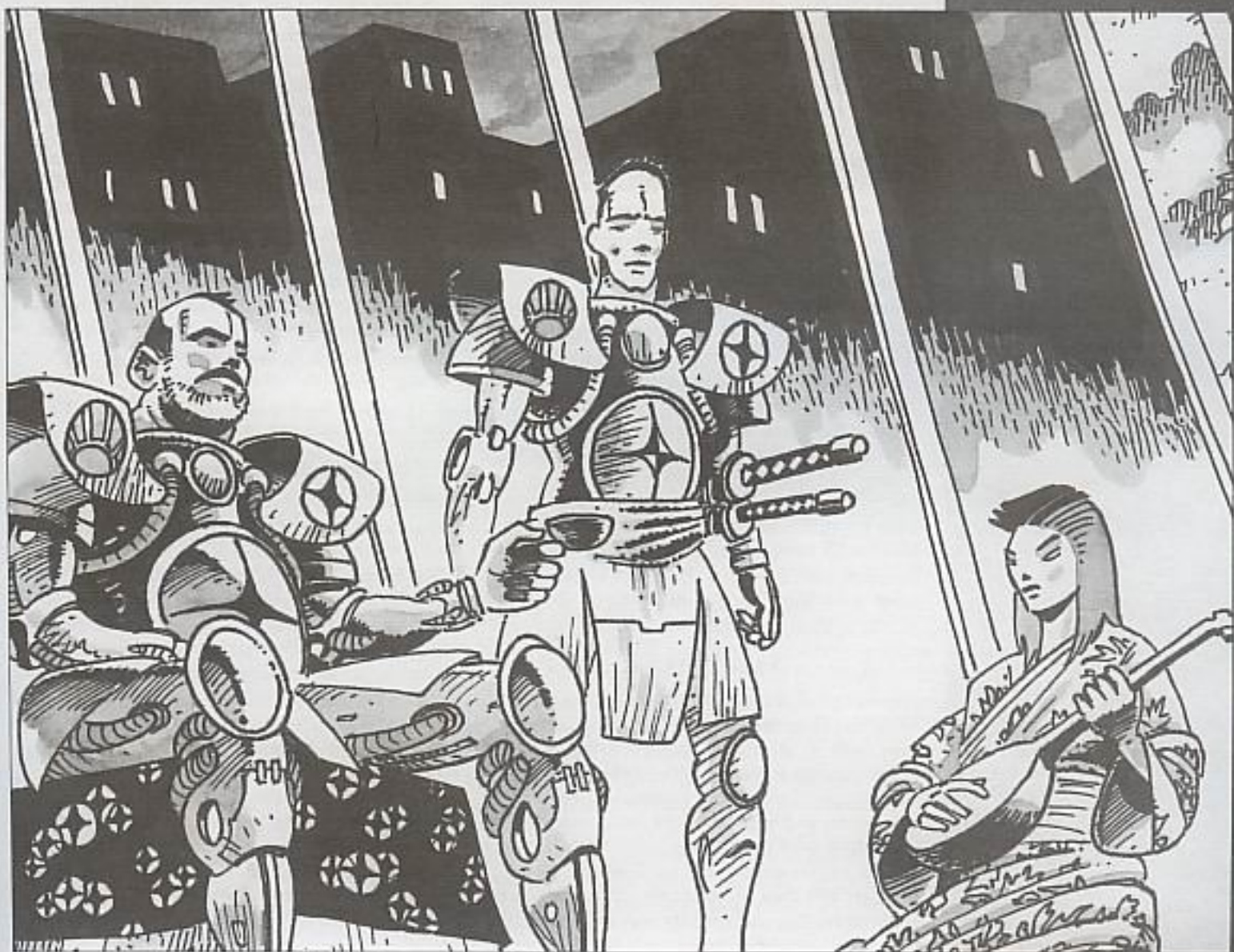
Omi laughed. "She was a Bata spy."

Kim continued to study his uncle. "That was not the real reason."

"At last you show wisdom, nephew. You had grown too fond of the girl. A ruler cannot afford such affection, such weakness."

Kim bowed his head. "I have learned my lesson, uncle."

In his secret heart he swore that Omi's days were numbered. His uncle's gasping mocking laughter rang out, almost as if he could read Kim's mind.





RELATIONS WITH OTHER MEGACORPORATIONS

CAPITOL

Relations are as good as might be expected between Mishima and Capitol; namely there is a lot of treachery, intrigue, backbiting and double-dealing. Capitol favours dealings with Lord Heir Moya, probably because it has no real conflict of interest with him. Capitol's forces have fought over the Graveton Archipelago on Venus against Maru's forces, and are constantly embroiled in territorial struggles with Mariko's forces on South Mars.

Mishima is still Capitol's biggest trading partner but there are many points of stress. The Capitolians particularly hate Mishima's unlicensed use of Capitolian designs and the difficulty they have in selling into Mercury's huge but closed markets. The Mishimans see the Capitolians as lacking in honor, discipline, courage and ruthlessness. Lord Heirs Mariko and Maru resent the way Capitol favours Lord Heir Moya and meddles in their domains. They have responded with force, increased espionage and industrial piracy.

BAUHAUS

The Mishimans have more respect for the Homebuilders than for the Capitolians. Samurai understand the martial spirit, the sense of honor and the determined leadership that the Bauhaus aristocracy gives to their corporation. However, they do not understand the Homebuilder nobility's concern for their people's welfare, which they see as simple weakness. They also covet the Homebuilders technical superiority. Bauhaus suffers more than any other corporation from the efforts of Mishima's industrial espionage cadres. Protests about this through Cartel channels have done the Homebuilders no good. The Lord Heirs simply point out the fact that each of their vassals has his own spy network and that these networks often act without the knowledge and approval of their superiors. They will of course have their vassals commit ritual suicide if they are caught as much as a punishment for their incompetence as to appease the Homebuilders. The Homebuilders favour Lord Heir Mariko simply because they lack any real territories on Mars and consequently have no real conflict of interest with her. They also favour her because the Brotherhood favours her more than her rivals. The Elector Dukes really loath Lord Heir Maru because he is constantly attacking their Venusian domains.

IMPERIAL

Imperial performs a difficult balancing act with Mishima. They are the only other megacorporation with a significant presence on Mercury, thanks to their licensing of the free city of Fukido. Fukido generates a lot of revenue for Her Serenity's coffers and exists only on sufferance of Lord Heir Moya who could wipe it out with his huge armies. On the other hand the lease only runs for 99 years and then the territory can be reclaimed. On Mercury Imperial tries its best to placate Lord

Heir Moya while letting him know that they will defend Fukido to the last man if he tries to take it. Moya has too much respect for the prowess of Imperial's military to jump into an armed conflict with them. On Mars and Venus, Imperial raids the settlements of the other Lord Heirs as a favour to Lord Moya. Lord Moya favours Imperial and encourages it to strike at his rivals. Mariko and Maru would cheerfully eradicate all the holdings of Imperials within their spheres of influence.

CYBERTRONIC

Mishima and Cybertronic are natural allies. Both have earned the enmity of the Brotherhood and both have deviated far from the Cardinal's teachings. Mishima has access to the natural resources that Cybertronic needs. Cybertronic manufactures the high tech components that make both Mishima's high tech consumer goods and the Samurai's battlesuits possible. This ensures that the two corporations are on relatively good terms. On the other hand, Cybertronic and its high tech secrets are tempting targets for Mishima's huge system of intelligence networks. If only Mishima could get its hands on Cybertronic's designs, there would be no more need to do business with the smaller corporation. However Cybertronic has proven remarkably resistant to Mishiman penetration so relations must be amicably maintained.

The only real fly in the ointment is that individual Daimyos often take it into their heads to raid Cybertronic installations for themselves. Cybertronic is starting to suspect that these attacks might just be a cloak for Lord Heir's own schemes. Cybertronic is totally neutral in its position to the three competing Lord Heirs. The Lord Heirs return the favor, except for Lord Moya, who opposes Cybertronic and forbids its presence on Mercury. Because Moya needs Cybertronic components to compete with the other Lord Heirs, he purchases them through intermediaries on Luna, Venus and Mars.

THE BROTHERHOOD

Officially the Brotherhood respects Mishima's customs and heritage and acknowledges its status as one of the great powers of the Solar System. Unofficially the Brotherhood hates Mishima which it sees as a hotbed of heretics, schismatics and deviants dating back to the best-forgotten Neronian Heresy. It also hates the way all high ranking Mishimans pay lip-service to their Brotherhood advisors while completely ignoring the Brotherhood's suggestions. The Brotherhood fears and hates how some Mishimans utilize psychic powers outside Brotherhood control.

In return, Mishimans resent what they see as the Brotherhood's unwarranted interference in their internal affairs. It is unofficial policy that all Brotherhood observers are cut out of the decision making loop when anything important is under consideration. The Lord Heirs believe, perhaps

wrongly, that the Brotherhood might be feeding sensitive information to their business rivals.

The Brotherhood supports Lady Mariko's claim to the throne since she is the only Lord Heir who appears devout and devoted the Cardinal's way.

THE CARTEL

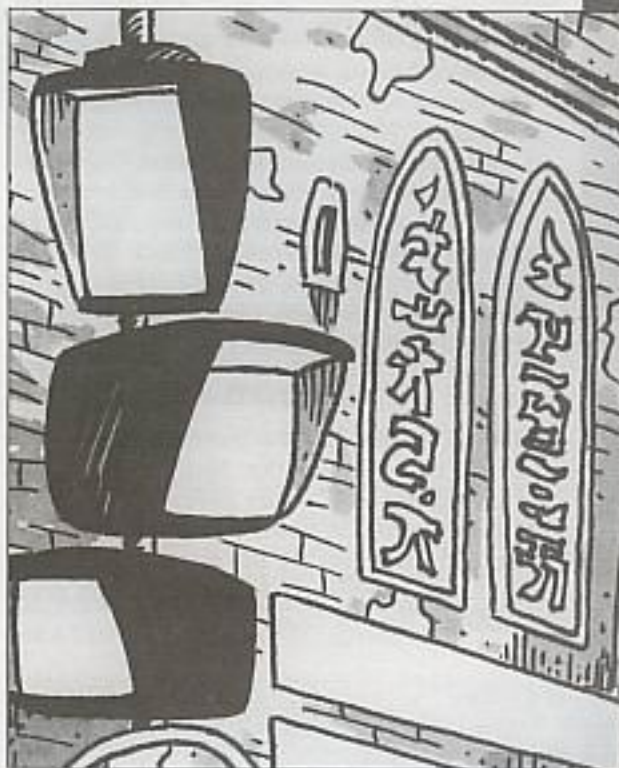
Mishima despises the Cartel and all its works. It was not always so. Once Mishima was nearly as enthusiastic about the organization as Capitol but with the decline of the Overlord's influence and the rise of the Lord Heirs, Mishima's involvement with the Cartel has become something of a joke. The Overlord has sole authority to negotiate treaties with the other corporations through Cartel channels but the Lord Heirs flagrantly break such treaties with impunity. Only unofficial deals negotiated behind closed doors with each separate Lord Heir will see that a treaty is honored within his or her domains.

Mishima is perfectly willing to support cartel military operations when it sees that they are in its own interests. This is particularly true of operations against the Dark Legion.

DARK LEGION

Until quite recently, Mishima had suffered little at the hands of the Dark Legion. Mercury escaped the Legion's depredations almost unscathed until the attacks on the Lost Provinces. On Venus, Mishima has not been as lucky as on other worlds. Lord Heir Maru's forces have had to fight constantly against the Legion's incursions. At first these battles went badly and Maru had to suffer

the humiliation of seeing Capitol come to his assistance. It was perhaps this more than anything else that caused Maru to set about the task of modernizing his forces. Never again will he suffer such a loss of face. Other than Maru, only Lady Mariko's forces have had some experience of fighting against the Legion.



NIGHT OF THE SHADOW WALKERS

The sound of screaming woke Tanaka Ken, chief blademaker of the Bata. He rose immediately from the futon, his hand sliding his katana from the scabbard. What was happening? Who would have the temerity to attack the Bata here in their own stronghold in Longshore? He heard shouted warnings and the stutter of a machine pistol. Screams rang out. Reeling footsteps rushed towards his chamber. He saw a shadowy outline through the ricepaper screens of his chamber's walls then an armored figure crashed through the wooden latticework and sprawled on the tatami mats. He recognized the man. It was Isogi, the head of his bodyguard.

"Assassins," Isogi croaked and died. Ken could see that half the back of his head had been chopped away, cooling fluid leaked from the hydraulics of his battlesuit, mingling with blood and mucous to stain the matted floor. Ken risked a glance at his own battlesuit. It stood like a statue in the corner of his chamber, illuminated by the soft light of a glowglobe. He knew that he could not spare the minutes it would take to don it.

He breathed deeply, focused his Ki powers and let himself become one with the night. His senses expanded, became keener. His breathing was a gale, his heartbeat thunder. He could feel the tension in every muscle. He heard the distant pounding of padded feet, sensed the eddy and swirl of strange mystical currents. His hair rose on the back of his neck, as he recognized the flow of the currents of power.

Shadow Walkers!

They could have only one target. His master, the Lord Bata. Ken rushed out into the corridor, already aware that there were two Shadow Walkers there. He threw himself flat, as their silenced pistols stuttered and rolled across the floor towards the assassins. They were quick. A normal man would have died at their attack, but Ken was a blademaker. He lashed out with his sword, severing the first assassin's arm at the wrist. He ducked below the second assassin's kick and put his blade through her heart. Even as he ripped the blade clear, he caught the pistol that fell from her hand and beheaded the first Shadow Walker with a sweep of his blade.

As the Shadow Walker fell, his body already starting to decompose, with a poisonous toxic stench belching forth. The skin bubbled and cracked, the eyeballs melted. Soon Ken knew only a puddle of protoplasmic slime would mark the floors. He raced on towards the sounds of combat, his razor keen senses probing the night ahead of him.

He leapt over the fallen bodies of two of Bata's hatamoto. The men had been on night watch, their full heavy armour had not protected them from the assassin's poisoned blades. From the corner of his eye, Ken caught a flicker of movement. The silenced gun kicked in his hand as he sent a bullet through the forehead of one black garbed figure then put a neat cluster around the heart of the second.

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THE MEDIA

Like all megacorporations Mishima controls a vast media industry. Mishiman martial arts films are very popular throughout the solar system. Mishiman animated cartoons also enjoy a wide audience. All of these are used to push Mishiman products, goods and services which all extol the superiority of the Mishiman way of life. This has led to them being banned by certain rival corporations.

Mishiman newspapers are only read by Mishiman nobility. This is because the corporation uses its own alphabet known as katakana. This extremely beautiful script differs from that commonly used by the other megacorporations in that each character represents a word. There are many thousands of characters. Commoners tend to get their news from the radio which is tightly controlled within Mishiman territory.

FOOD

Mishiman cuisine is notoriously distinctive. It is primarily based around rice. Mushrooms and fish are commonly used as are piquant sauces. It is commonly served in bowls and eaten with chopsticks. Sake and beer are the primary drinks available. Sake, served warm, is most commonly drunk by Samurai, beer by Commoners.

STORES

Mishima maintains a few large department stores but favours huge trading halls where individual stallholders and booth owners can sell their wares to the public. Distribution of goods is a complex business within Mishiman territory since permission to trade must be granted by the local ruler and he must be given a cut of all trade within his realm. Normally the local Triad boss must be paid off as well.

ARCHITECTURE

Like all Megacorporations Mishima builds big. Buildings are built in a distinctive pagoda style. Mishimans favour thick walls and fortress style buildings. The most unusual thing about Mishiman buildings is their internal design. Mostly, they consist of a single large chamber with rooms formed by varying arrangements of screens and mats. Thus, the internal layout of a Mishiman building can be changed within minutes depending on requirements. Mishimans are also famed for their use of landscaped gardens. Within all important Mishiman buildings, space will be set aside for gardens.

TRANSPORT

After Capitol, Mishima is the largest producer of automobiles in the system. Its cars are extremely cheap and fairly unreliable. Its motorbikes, on the other hand, are among the best in the human system. They are often favoured in the narrow winding streets of Mishiman cities. Mishima is the system's leading producer of humanoid walkers powered by complex hydraulic systems. Huge workmeks are common sights in Mishiman cities. Mishima is also a leader in rocket technologies. Its aircraft are distinctly second rate and only cheap mass produced copies of old Capitolian designs.

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Not bad shooting, considering he was using his left hand. His old teacher's would be proud of him. He raced on, out into a courtyard where a horde of Shadow Walkers fought with a mass of Samurai.

By the Seven Sages, he thought, looking into the swirling melee. There must be a whole clan of Shadow Walkers present. Briefly he wondered who could afford to command such an attack then Ken dismissed the question as unimportant.

What was important was that he reach Lord Bata's chambers as quickly as he could. Once more he focused his Ki powers, letting all his psychic energies surge to his legs. With a mighty leap he somersaulted clear across the courtyard and twenty feet up to the head of the stairs. A Shadow Walker aimed his pistol. Tanaka concentrated, emptied his mind and allowed his sword to sweep forward as if with a will of its own. He felt the blade twist as he deflected the assassins bullet. The ricochet took the Shadow Walker in the eye. The assassin tumbled backwards from the battlements, his fast dissolving body raining poison on the melee below.

Ken raced indoors, feeling the chill air catch him as he moved out of the night. He was close now. Behind him he heard the roar of an explosion, all the lights died. They have taken out the generators, he thought. The smell of burning filled his nostrils. Soon he knew the flames would spread through the entire mansion. This night had cost the Bata family dearly.

There were presences in the chambers ahead. He knew death awaited on the other side of the screen door. He did not take the usual entrance. Instead he sliced through the screens with his blade and entered the chamber rolling. Two swift strokes caught the Shadow Walkers behind their knees, sent them tumbling to the floor. His last two bullets shattered their skulls and pulped their brains. Ken flipped himself to his feet, and surveyed the room, knowing already he was too late.

The huge red-garbed form of a Deathbringer loomed over Lord Bata's futon. Ken fought to retain control as he saw his lord's head dangle from the assassins belt along with the heads of his wife and all his children. The whole family, whom Ken had loved and served all his life, were gone.

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CREATING A MISHIMAN CHARACTER



Mishiman characters are created in a very similar way to those in the Mutant Chronicles RPG. The major differences are that you can acquire certain new special abilities during character creation, and that you use the new Mishiman Adolescence and Special Events Tables. Your choice of career is totally dominated by your social standing. Mishiman characters can only follow careers outlined in this sourcebook.

THE BASICS

Basic capabilities, social standing and adolescence skills are all determined as described in the Mutant Chronicles RPG. You should however use the new Adolescence Events Table given here.

SOCIAL STANDING

Social Standing works slightly differently in Mishiman society. It not only determines your starting wealth but your rank (see below). Mishiman society is incredibly rigid. Once your place is fixed in the world it cannot be changed except by your liege Lord. This means that your SS will only change due to a Special Event. You need never make a Social Status roll when following your career. Your possessions and available wealth will be the same as given in the RPG with the following few modifications.

0-3 COMMONER. You are a Commoner, one of the underdogs of Mishiman society. You may be dirt poor or relatively wealthy but you are as dust beneath a Samurai's feet. You are not allowed to own weapons or armour unless you are a mercenary, called an Ashigaru, in which case you will be issued with them by your liege Lord, and they will be taken away when your military service is done. Otherwise your wealth and starting equipment is as given in the RPG.

4-5 GUILD COMMONER. You belong to the class of trained and skilled Commoners who supervise Mishiman production, build machines and possess some technical skills. You belong to a Guild whose masters have taught you your skills. You may be an engineer, a courtesan or builder and you have the protection of your guild.

6-8 SAMURAI. You belong to the lowest grade of Samurai. Your family has a small fiefdom which brings in revenues. You are entitled to your share of it. You own standard ceremonial

swords and a basic battlesuit (explained later).

9 NOBLE. Your family belong to the upper strata of Mishiman society. You are wealthy and will know the movers and shakers of your kieretsu. As well as your normal possessions you have a 50% chance of owning an heirloom weapon (roll 1d6; 1-4 Sword, 4-6 Gun). You will have a powersuit (explained later), as well as a normal one.

10 HIGH NOBLE. Your family belong to the upper corporate aristocracy. They may even head their own industrial division. (50% chance.). You are one of the future leaders of the corporation. You will own d3 heirloom weapons and a Shoa Ace battlesuit (explained later).



CHOOSING CAREERS

Your rank, Commoner or Samurai, affects your choice of careers. You may choose to follow any of the new careers given here, but there are some restrictions. Certain careers are restricted to those of Commoner birth. Certain careers are restricted to Samurai. If you are a worker, you are taught the skills you need on the job. If you are a Samurai, either you had private tuition or went to one of the exclusive schools provided by your kieretsu where you were given exactly the education your corporation intended you to have. You do not need to roll to be accepted into any of these careers. You are born into them.

MISHIMAN CAREERS

Continued from p.16

The Deathbringer turned its blazing gaze on him. "Greetings, Tanaka Ken—it pleases me to see you here. You are every bit as deadly as your reputation suggests. I had bet my brothers that you would reach this chamber before I left. Your services were wasted serving this fool and his family."

Cold rage filled Tanaka Ken. There was only one thing left for him to do in this life—avenge his fallen master then commit ritual suicide to atone for the shame of his failure to protect his Lord. He turned his mind inward, focusing every last scrap of his Ki power into his blade, readying himself for his last, perfect stroke.

The Deathbringer took a step back into the shadows, and began to fade, even as Ken began his leap. His blade hissed through cold air, and a trace of something as diaphanous as cobwebs. The Shadow Walker's malevolent hissing laughter faded, leaving Ken in the apartment of his dead master, alone with his grief and rage. ☒



SAMURAI



NOBLE



COMMONER



GUILDSMAN

SAMURAI

You are one of the vast Mishiman warrior class. It is your job to fight for your liege in whatever manner he deems best. You divide your life between training for battle and performing your duty in his service.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: SS 6+

COMBAT:	2
FIREARMS:	2
COMMUNICATION:	1
MOVEMENT:	2
TECHNICAL:	1
FREE:	2

BENEFITS: If you have MST 14+ you may automatically join the Blademaster Martial Arts School. Your Lord will provide a tutor for your training.

NOBLE

You are one of Mishima's warrior-administrators, one of the elite who run the corporation, a high ranking Samurai. While you spend as much time practising with your weapons as any other Samurai, you spend far more time overseeing your fiefdom than in the performance of military duties.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: SS 9+

COMBAT:	2
FIREARMS:	1
COMMUNICATION:	2
MOVEMENT:	1
TECHNICAL:	2
FREE:	2

BENEFITS: If you have MST 14+ you may automatically join the Blademaster Martial Arts School. Your Lord will provide a tutor for your training.

COMMONER

You are one of the brute laborers of Mishima, one of the most oppressed classes in the human system. You are little more than a human drone in Mishima's vast industrial machine. Your life consists of periods of grinding poverty interspersed with brute labour. Yet the Samurai often require Commoners to further their complicated schemes for honor. While the Samurais rule through tradition, the Commoners run Mishiman society through their vast numbers.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: SS 3 or less.

COMBAT:	2
FIREARMS:	—
COMMUNICATION:	1
MOVEMENT:	2
TECHNICAL:	—
FREE:	2

BENEFITS: None.

GUILDSMAN

You are one of Mishima's wealthier Commoners. You belong to a guild which provides you with technical skills and a career. You may be a doctor or an engineer or a trader or a courtesan. Whatever guild you choose, you should spend your skill picks only on the appropriate technical or communication skills.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: SS 4 OR 5

COMBAT:	1
FIREARMS:	—
COMMUNICATION:	2
MOVEMENT:	2
TECHNICAL:	3
FREE:	2

BENEFITS: NONE.



ASHIGARU



TRIAD MEMBER



MARTIAL ARTIST



RONIN



ASHIGARU

You are one of the new class of Commoner warriors. You live to fight and to prove yourself in your liege's service. Your life may well be short since you will always be where fighting is heaviest. **MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS:** SS 5 or less. STR 9, PHY 9, COR 9.

COMBAT:	2
FIREARMS:	1
COMMUNICATION:	—
MOVEMENT:	2
TECHNICAL:	—
FREE:	2
BENEFITS:	NONE.

TRIAD MEMBER

You are one of Mishima's enormous semi-legitimate caste of gangsters. You spend your life in the service of your boss. Frequently, you run gambling, smuggling and extortion rackets. Your career often brings you into contact with all levels of Mishiman society.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: SS 5 or less. MUST MAKE INT/PER ROLL to convince boss to take you. STR 9, INT 9, PHY 9. Must have spent one term working as a Commoner in order to get the boss' attention.

COMBAT:	2
FIREARMS:	1
COMMUNICATION:	1
MOVEMENT:	2
TECHNICAL:	—
FREE:	2

BENEFITS: If you have MST 14+ you may automatically join the Tattooed Man school of martial arts.

MARTIAL ARTIST

You are a student of one of the great martial arts schools. If you are a Commoner or a member of a secret school you should check for Persecution (see below.)

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: MST 14+

COMBAT:	2
FIREARMS:	—
COMMUNICATION:	1
MOVEMENT:	2
TECHNICAL:	—
FREE:	3

BENEFITS: Membership of the martial arts school of your choice.

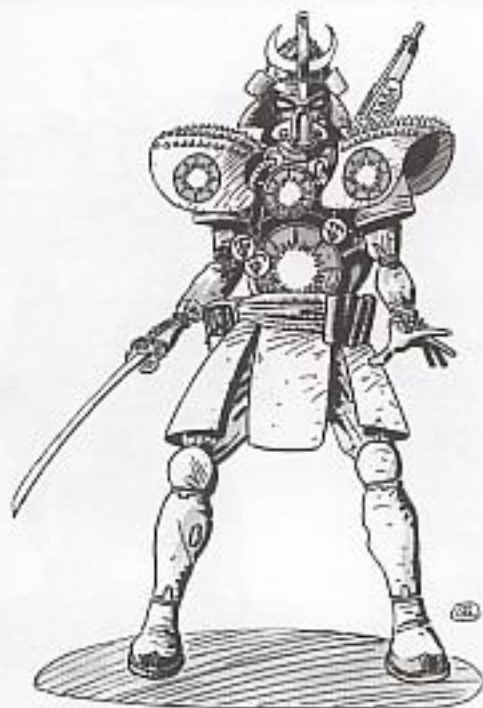
RONIN

You are one of that vast legion of masterless Samurai who wander the Mishiman realms and make their living as mercenaries, enforcers or bandits. Ronin are subject to Persecution (see below).

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: SS 6+. If you are a Samurai, you can choose to become a Ronin any time, if you are a Samurai. Most Samurai become a Ronin only as result of a special event, such as dishonor or the destruction of a Samurai's Lord.

COMBAT:	2
FIREARMS:	2
COMMUNICATION:	1
MOVEMENT:	2
TECHNICAL:	—
FREE:	2

BENEFITS: None.



DEMON HUNTER

DEMON HUNTER

You have joined the great order of Demon Hunters. You must study for 5 career repetitions on the Forbidden Isle before you may travel in the outside world. At the end of each career repetition make an INT/MST roll. If you succeed, continue with your background. If you fail, you are now a guildsman in the service of the Order. When you are a Demon Hunter, you can never change careers. Whether you complete your training and become a Demon Hunter or become a guildsman for the Demon Hunters, the Forbidden Isle will assign you your first mission. After that, the Isle tends to give Demon Hunters more freedom than their guildsman brethren.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: MST 14+, STR 9, PH 9 INT 9. No stigmata or taint of darkness.

COMBAT:	2
FIREARMS:	2
COMMUNICATION:	1
MOVEMENT:	2
TECHNICAL:	1
FREE:	3

BENEFITS: Each career repetition adds +2 to your MST. You automatically gain admission to the Demon Hunter Martial Arts school.



SHADOW WALKER

SHADOW WALKER

You are an active member of the dreaded Shadow Walker Cult, the feared assassin's guild. You have been trained to be a lethal killing machine. Once you are part of the cult, you can never join another career.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: STR 9, PH 9 INT 9. COR 9. You must join the Shadow Walkers as an adolescent event. Otherwise you can never join.

COMBAT:	2
FIREARMS:	2
COMMUNICATION:	1
MOVEMENT:	2
TECHNICAL:	1
FREE:	2

BENEFITS: If you have MST 14+ you gain automatic admission to the Deathbringer school of Martial Arts. Shadow Walkers are all subject to Persecution (see below). If you have the Algoth supplement, Shadow Walkers may gain 1 Bio-Technological Gift per career repetition. They are subject to stigmata and degeneration.



ADOLESCENCE EVENTS

2 DISABLED*. You have had a terrible accident which almost cripples you. Your movement allowance values should always be read from the line above the normal in the Combat statistics table.

3 WIMP*. In pressing situations you tend to dither and dawdle because of stress. Your Actions/ Round Value should always be read from the line above the normal one in the CST.

4 WEAK BONES*. Subtract 5 from your total body points.

5 KI NEGATIVE*. You have no talent with or understanding of Ki whatsoever. You will never be able to use Ki Powers. If you ever get an event that enables you to acquire one, re-roll it.

6 FAMILY OBLITERATED. Your family displeased your liege lord and was wiped out. You are the only survivor. If you are a Commoner, you are now Faceless. If you are a Samurai you are now a Ronin. You have acquired a powerful fanatic enemy in your former master. You may join the Shadow Walkers.

7 OVERLORD DISPLEASED. Your family displeased your Overlord. Reduce your Social Standing by 2. If this takes it below 5 and you were a Samurai, you are now Ronin. If it takes it below 1, you are now Faceless.

8 ACCURSED LINE*. Your family labours under an ancient curse. You suffer from all the disadvantages of a Bad Reputation, an Ancient Feud and Impoverished (see below for these effects). You may choose to join the Shadow Walkers.

9 BAD REPUTATION*. Your family has acquired a bad reputation. This may lead other Samurai to insult you and throw in your face the events that led to your family's

loss of its good name. Perhaps your father was a coward. Perhaps your uncle was a traitor. This event is generally known and held against you, until you can atone for it.

10 ANCIENT FEUD. Your family has a long-standing, bitter feud with another family of equal or greater status. They will stop at nothing to settle this feud and you have acquired a powerful fanatic enemy through no fault of your own.

11 IMPOVERISHED*. If you are a Samurai then your family has fallen on hard times. Even though you keep your Samurai status, your personal wealth is calculated as if your SS was 5 and now you may own only a basic battlesuit and two ceremonial swords. If you are a Commoner, reduce your SS by 1.

12 WANDERING MASTER*. In your youth you were taught by a wandering master of Ki powers. If you have MST 14+ choose any Ki ability save the restricted ones. If your MST is less than 14 increase it by 2. Alternatively the master may be a recruiter for the Shadow Walkers. You can choose to join the Shadow Walkers.

13 BLOODLINE OF POWER*. You come from a family famed for its possession of Ki powers. Increase your MST by 3.

14 HEIRLOOM SWORD*. You have inherited a valuable Heirloom Blade. If you are a Samurai, this is a Mushashi weapon (explained later). If you are a Commoner it means your family has been promoted to Samurai, and you now hold Samurai rank (SS 6).

15 WISE UNCLE*. You have a wise uncle who is an old student of a famous master. You may enter any martial arts school of your choice without rolling for acceptance. This includes the dreaded Shadow walkers.



FUKIDO

I hate this place, thought McBride, staring out the vast window of the Palace of Government, down into the teeming streets of Fukido. Always have. Always will.

Fukido—all the worst aspects of Mishiman and Imperial culture, packed into an area smaller than a Luna Quarter and more polluted than an effluent tank. Fukido—where life is cheap and death is cheaper, where vice, sin and treachery are as easy to find as lice on a Missionary and honesty, honor and decency as rare as devilcat feathers. Fukido—where I met Aki Katsumi a short lifetime ago. I shouldn't have come back here.

He laughed bitterly to himself. As if I had any choice in the matter. And be honest with yourself, McBride, isn't the real reason you hate this place because it brings back all those memories of a woman you would rather forget. Behind him Sterling cleared his throat.

"You find something amusing, McBride? Perhaps you'd like to share it with me."

Something about the man's cultivated accent grated on McBride's nerves like fingers being drawn down a blackboard. He turned on his heel and glared at the slender, elegantly garbed man. McBride didn't bother to conceal his dislike or his contempt.

"I was wondering why ISC 4 had me brought all the way to Mercury at such vast expense to Her Serenity's Treasury. Surely it wasn't so I could admire the fine view of the sinhouses from your window. And I can bet it wasn't for my health."

Sterling sat down in his padded leather chair, and steepled his long narrow fingers. He studied the painted portraits of his predecessors that covered the wood panelling of the room, before letting his eyes come to rest on McBride. He let out his breath in a long sigh, like a man who knows he must patiently explain something to a willful child.

"We need a man who knows the territory. We need a man who knows Mishimans. We need a man who can be relied on. Unfortunately you were all we had available."

"What you really mean is that you need a man who is expendable," said McBride. "A Freelancer with no remaining connection with Imperial. A man whose actions can be disclaimed."

"That to," agreed Sterling, pursing his thin lips. McBride didn't like the way his glasses caught the light, and turned his eyes into circles of fire. Be careful, he told himself. Sterling is a dangerous man. He wouldn't be head of Four's Fukido bureau otherwise.

"What makes you think I'm in a hurry to be expendable? Or that I'll go along with whatever crack-brained scheme your bureaucratic masters in the Reading Palace have thought up?"

"You're here, aren't you? You could have refused."

"The men who invited me were exceedingly well-armed. It wouldn't have been polite, or healthy, to refuse."

Continued on p.22



- 16 ANCIENT DEBT***. Your liege Lord owes your family an ancient debt. This can be used to negate one bad roll on the Adolescence or Special Events tables.
- 17 PROPHECY OF GLORY***. On your birth an ancient diviner prophesied that you would achieve great things. This prophecy may or may not be true, but it affects the way people treat you. Increase PER by 4.
- 18 RICH FIEF***. Your family belongs to a rich fief. Calculate your starting wealth as if your SS was 1 greater than it is.
- 19 SPECIAL TECHNIQUE***. You have studied with the master of a special technique. If you are a Commoner this will be in Mishiman Close Combat. If you are a Samurai, the master will have taught you iajitsu.
- 20 FEROCIOUS REPUTATION***. As a youth, you personally acquired such a ferocious reputation that people think twice about crossing you. Add +1 to your Per and MST. This negates the effect of your family having a bad reputation.
- 21 TRIAD CONNECTIONS***. You have a connection with your local Triad boss. This can be a very useful connection to have since they know a lot about what occurs in their territory.
- 22 OWED A DEBT OF HONOUR**. Someone in high places owes your family a debt of honor. You can call this debt in once, for almost any purpose. It may get you a job, let you ignore a bad Special Event or keep friends out of trouble. If you do not use it during character creation, you may save it for a later time in play.
- 23 COMMANDING VOICE**. You get +1 on all Communications Svs.
- 24 NATURAL TECHNICIAN**. You get +1 on all Technical Svs.
- 25 SUPPLE BODY**. You get +1 on all Movement Svs.
- 26 GUN FANATIC**. You get +1 on all Firearms Svs and +1 on Weapons Systems Svs.
- 27 MARTIAL ARTS TRAINING**. You get +1 on all Combat Svs and may make one Free Pick from the Combat Field of Expertise. Add +2 to PER.
- 28 ANATOMICAL SIXTH SENSE***. Somehow you always seem to hit people where it hurts. Add +1 to your OB.
- 29 SUPERB SENSES**. You get +1 to your Perception and Avoid Svs.
- 30 STRONG WILL**. Add +1 to MST and +3 to your Interrogation SV.
- 31 CHARISMATIC VOICE**. Raise your PER and all Communications Svs by 2.
- 32 GOOD BODY CONTROL**. Raise COR by 1 and all Movement Svs by 2.
- 33 CONTACT WITH MEGACORP**. You have a contact within one of the other Megacorporations. (Roll 1d6. 1 Bauhaus, 2 Capitol, 3 Cybertronic, 4 Imperial, 5 the Cartel, 6, the Brotherhood. The GM decides exactly how this contact works but it should be a considerable advantage whenever the character wants information about that organization. Some favors might be if the character wants to get an entrance pass to one of the organizations official buildings, if he wants bailed out when arrested by one of the Corporation's security agents etc.
- 34 EXCEL IN YOUR LORDS SERVICE**. Even this early in your career you have shown outstanding qualities. Your liege has marked you out for great things. Add +1 to your SS. If this takes it above 5 you are now a Samurai.
- 35 FAVOURED RETAINER***. For whatever reason you are one of your liege's favorites. You can ignore any event that would result in you being disgraced or invited onward (see below).
- 36 RESISTANT TO PAIN**. Add +1 to your BP's in each body part.
- 37 GIFTED STUDENT**. You may repeat your elementary education.
- 38 NATURAL KI POWER**. You have an intuitive understanding of any one Ki power of your choice, even the restricted ones (see below).
- 39 PHYSICALLY GIFTED**. You may add +3 to any Basic Capability.
- 40 NATURAL KI MASTER***. You may increase your MST by 4 and have an instinctive understanding of the first 4 techniques of any Ki School of your choice. If your MST is still less than 14 increase it to 14. You may add +3 to your Ki skill.

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Sterling opened a buff-coloured folder stamped with an Imperial crest. He held it out. McBride crossed the room to snatch it from his hand. The thick woolen carpet absorbed the sound of his steps. McBride studied the contents of the folder. The first thing he came across was an Imperial banker's draft made out in his name, to the sum of one hundred thousand Cardinal's crowns.

"That's for your trouble. We will pay you ten times that if you successfully complete this mission." McBride felt the inside of his mouth go dry. He was being offered more money than most people saw in a lifetime. Part of him argued for extreme caution. ISC 4 were not known for their generosity towards former employees.

"What do you want me to do?"

"There's something big happening in the Mishiman realms. Two days ago the Bata industrial clan were wiped out. Their holdings were acquired at a knockdown price by Suritomo Corporation. It looks like that old monster Omi is consolidating his position. Our analysts say he might be ready to make a bid for power. If he does, he will tear Mishima apart. If that's a big if. We need more information. We need you to go to Longshore, and make contact with one of our agents there. We need to see more parts of this puzzle. Our agent has inside knowledge."

"Why me? Why not use the normal channels? You must have a hundred folk on site who could do this."

"Our agent asked for you personally. She won't deal with anyone else." McBride knew what was coming. He knew it must show on his face.

"Yes," said Sterling. "We want you to contact Aki Katsumi. Your job is to bring her in alive."

McBride looked at the dossier below the banker's draft. There was a picture, of a woman, strikingly beautiful. A face and a body far too familiar. Suddenly memories of love, hatred and betrayal surged through McBride. He knew he would take the job. And he didn't know whether it was because he wanted the money or because he wanted to kill the woman himself. He knew there was only one way to find out.

"I'll do it," he said.

"I rather thought you would."



SPECIAL EVENTS

- 2 DISABLED***. You have been involved in a terrible accident which almost cripples you. Your movement allowance values are always read from the line above the normal one on the CST. An operation to put things right will cost about 100,000 Crowns.
- 3 BONE DISEASE***. You have picked up an extremely nasty wasting disease. Subtract 5 from your total body points. Treatment will cost about 50,000 Crowns.
- 4 SEVERE CONCUSSION***. You will never quite be yourself again after that last blow to the head. Your Defensive and Perception Bonuses should always be read from the line above the normal one on the CST.
- 5 LIEGE LORD DESTROYED***. Your liege Lord has been destroyed with all his family. You should behave exactly as if invited onward (see below). Alternatively you could become a Ronin with a Bad Reputation and an Ancient Feud (see Adolescence Event Table) Begin your adventuring career at once. If you are a Commoner, you may re-roll this.
- 6 INVITED ONWARDS***. You have performed an action which so displeased your master that you have been invited to commit seppuku. Your whole family is obliterated. You may choose to honorably commit suicide and start another character or you may become a Ronin with a Bad Reputation and a Powerful Fanatic Enemy (your old Liege Lord. See above for descriptions Bad Reputation. See below for Powerful Fanatic Enemy). Begin your adventuring career at once. If you are a Commoner you can re-roll this.
- 7 POWERFUL FANATIC ENEMY***. Somehow, you managed to gain yourself a deadly enemy who, unfortunately, happens to be quite powerful. It might be your former liege Lord, an assassin you thwarted, an ex-girlfriend or an enemy of your liege Lord.
- 8 BAD REPUTATION***. You have acquired a bad reputation. This may lead other Samurai to insult you and cast up the events that led to your loss of its good name. Rightly or wrongly you are believed to be a coward, a fool or a traitor. This event is known about and held against you, until you can atone for it.
- 9 DISGRACED***. You have disgraced yourself. Begin your adventuring career immediately. If you are a Samurai, you are now a Ronin. If you are a Commoner, you are Faceless.
- 10 INTENSE PERIOD OF STUDY**. Due to your focus on your studies you acquire 2 extra free skill picks.
- 11 MEET WANDERING MASTER**. You encounter a wandering master of Ki powers. Gain the first Ki power of any school of your choice except the restricted ones. Alternatively add 2 to your MST.
- 12 UNEARTH HEIRLOOM**. During your adventures you find an heirloom weapon. (1-4: Sword. 5-6: Gun.) If you are a Commoner, you keep your treasure quite secret. Alternatively you could give the heirloom it to your liege and increase your SS by 1. If this takes it above 5, you will become a Samurai.





13 UNDER THE GAZE OF YOUR LIEGE. You are working directly under the supervision of your liege lord. This gives you a great chance to impress. Roll 1d10. If the result is greater than your current SS then increase your SS by 1. If you are a Commoner and if this increase puts you above SS 5, you are now a Samurai.

14 CONTACT WITH A MEGACORPORATION. You have a contact within one of the other Megacorporations. (Roll 1d6. 1 Bauhaus. 2 Capitol. 3 Cybertronic. 4 Imperial. 5. the Cartel or 6 the Brotherhood). The GM decides exactly how this contact works but the contact should be a considerable advantage whenever the character wants information about that organization. A contact should also be able to provide favors, such as if he wants to get an entrance pass to one of the organizations official buildings, if he wants bailed out when arrested by one of the Corporation's security agents etc.

15 SELF-DEFENSE TRAINING. You can have one free pick in the Firearms and Combat Fields of Expertise.

16 TECHNICAL CRASH COURSE. You may have two free picks from the Technical Field Of Expertise.

17 ADMINISTRATION COURSE. You may make two free picks from the Communications Field Of Expertise.

18 GYMNASTICS CLASSES. You may make two free picks from the Movement Field Of Expertise.

19 SPARE TIME STUDY. You may make one free Skill pick from any Field Of Expertise.

20 INTERESTING CHARACTER. Your experiences always seem to fascinate people. Add +1 to your PER value.

21 INTENSE PHYSICAL TRAINING. Through rigorous physical exercise you have added +1 to your STR value.

22 STRONG WILL. Because you have constantly overcome challenges, you have toughened your mind. Add +1 to your MST value.

23 HEALTH CARE. A healthy diet and lifestyle is paying off. Add +1 to your PHY value.

24 HOBBY GYMNAST. Add +1 to your COR value.

25 GOOD IMMUNE DEFENCE. Your body is extremely resistant to alien organic substances. Add 5 to PHY every time you have to make a roll against disease, parasites etc.

26-27 EXTRAORDINARY CHEMICAL RESISTANCE. Your body is extremely resistant to artificial substances. Add 5 to your PHY every time you have to roll to resist poisons, drugs or gas.

28 RESISTED THE DARKNESS. You have encountered evil heretics and survived. Increase your MST by 2 and any time you resist the Dark Symmetry, add another 2 to your MST.

29 INTENSE PHYSICAL TRAINING. Add 2 to your STR and PHY. If your Social Standing ever drop beneath 4 (or its current value if that is less than 4) then you must remove these bonuses.

30 HIGH LEVEL CONTACT. You have made a high level contact at one of the 4 great Mishiman courts. This contact can provide you with useful information but may also be trying to use you or recruit you. This contact can be very much a two edged sword. Roll 1d4. Contact is with a retainer of 1) Lord heir Moya 2) Lord Heir Maru 3) Lord Heir Mariko 4) Overlord Nagoya.

31 INTENSE SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE. Add 2 to your MST and PER.

32 ACQUIRE BIONICS. You lose part of your body and have it replaced with a bionic system. See the equipment section on Bionics.

33 INVITED TO JOIN THE SCHOOL OF YOUR CHOICE. If you wish you may join a new martial arts school. You may change now, even if you are already part of a school, or if you belong to a rival school. If your MST is less than 14, ignore this result and rerole on this table.

34 REWARDED. Your services to your overlord have been recognized. Increase your SS by 1. If you are a Commoner and this takes you above 5 then you are now a Samurai.

35 GREATLY REWARDED. You have performed extra-ordinary service to your Lord. If you are a Commoner, you are made Samurai. If you are a Samurai, you are made hatamoto.

36 HONOUR BLADE. Your liege grants you one of his own heirloom blades in recognition of your services. As a result of this honor, your PER raises by 2.

37 SUBJECT TO EXPERIMENTS. You volunteer to take part in a secret medical experiment which succeeds. Roll 1d6 and add +5 to your 1) STR; 2) PHY; 3) COR; 4) INT; 5) MST; 6) CHOOSE.

38 INTENSIVE STUDY WITH YOUR MASTER. You learn an additional Ki power from your school list. If you do not belong to a school, you may add 2 to your MST. See below on Ki powers.

39 VERY INTENSE STUDY WITH YOUR MASTER. You learn two additional Ki powers from your schools list. If you do not belong to a school, you may add 3 to your MST. See below on Ki powers.

40 BREAKTHROUGH. Sudden total insight floods into you. You master all the Ki powers on your school's list in this period. If you are already a master, you can choose any five powers or you may become an Enlightened One. (While this makes you incredibly powerful, it also makes you an NPC so only choose this option if you want to roll a new character.) Alternatively, you may add 5 to your MST. See below on Ki powers.



KI POWERS



Over the long centuries, the Mishimans have developed powers strange to the other corporations and the the Brotherhood. These have made Mishiman warriors feared wherever they have fought and caused the inquisitors of the Second Directorate many sleepless nights of wondering whether some new and terrible manifestation of the Darkness was taking place within Mishima. Most Samurai who use Ki powers show no trace of the Darkness and some are more resistant to it than ordinary people.

There are many forms of Ki power practised by the Mishimans. All are based around the teachings of Mishima's Seven Sages and their disciples. Most of the the forms tap into the personal spiritual energy of their user, enabling them to concentrate and focus their inner strength in a manner that seems superhuman to those who have no experience of such things. These special abilities reflect the spiritual strength of their user. Most of these abilities require huge amounts of mental strength to use but they grant enormous benefits.

Because the study of Ki powers is attributed to the Seven Sages, most martial arts schools have taken to naming the powers after the Sages. Some teachers believe that the Ki powers actually tap into a power to which the Seven Sages have now ascended and that every Ki power taps directly into the Seven Sages. Other Ki powers are named after strange creatures which are described only in the books of the Ancients. Mishima uses these archaic animal names to remember their proud ancestry.

ACQUIRING KI POWERS

Ki powers must normally be learned from a tutor. There are very few people to whom the use of these superhuman abilities comes without teaching. Ki powers are not taught to any non-Mishiman and seem to be virtually impossible for a non-Mishiman to learn without decades of study.

Bauhaus genetic scientists have speculated that the use of these powers represents some new form of mutation and that their usage is becoming more common within the Mishiman corporation as the mutation is passed from generation to generation. The Brotherhood thinks that the powers can only be learned by someone possessing the unique Mishiman mindset and that they are simply incomprehensible to anyone not brought up within the corporation with its strange and alien traditions.

You acquire Ki powers during character creation. You must either roll them on the adolescen-

ce events table or the special events table or find a school to tutor you. Once in play you can only acquire new Ki powers by finding a master and spending many months learning the new ability. To do this you must spend 3 hero points, one month of uninterrupted training with your master and then roll beneath your Ki SV to understand the new power. If the roll is made then you have acquired the power. If the roll is failed, you must spend another month with the master, and roll again. You do not need to spend more hero points. You can keep studying and making the roll for as long as you wish. However, if your studies are interrupted you must begin again, from the start. It is not possible to learn a new Ki power until you have completed learning the old one.



RESTRICTIONS ON MASTERS

No one can study with more than one master at a time. Certain masters will only teach Commoners. Certain masters will only teach Samurai. Some masters and schools are at war with others. By joining certain schools you automatically gain a powerful fanatical enemy. All masters belong to a particular martial arts School and will teach only its techniques.

LEAVING A MASTER

You can choose to leave a school at any time. This frees you to join another school. You may never join a school that was an enemy of any previous school to which you belong. Once you have learned all the abilities taught by a school you are a master and may teach them yourself. Once you are a master, you may choose an individual course of study and seek to learn new abilities. You can choose to learn one new ability that is not restricted to certain cults or organizations for each two year repetition you spend as a master.

BENEFITS

All schools and masters teach one ability per career repetition. Since each lesson builds on what has been learned before, these are always taught in the order given. Sometimes a pupil is granted swift insight into his masters teachings. If you roll additional special ability as a special event, you may choose to learn the next ability your master teaches. Some schools teach skill in addition to Ki powers. If you already possess the skill, you may learn the next available power.

SCHOOLS OF MARTIAL ARTS

Martial arts schools are not physical places (the term for the physical location where the martial arts are taught is dojo). They are bodies of knowledge and technique acquired over centuries and passed down from generation to generation. Each martial arts school represents not merely a way of fighting but a manner of living. All have their own philosophies and codes. A school's masters teach these along with its Ki powers. Within the Mishiman realms there are many Martial Arts schools. The most common are listed below:

BLADEMASTER

This school was founded during the Great Rebellion by the Samurai Narita. It has spread to become the most common and popular martial arts school among the ruling class.

This school teaches the standard repertoire of special abilities a Samurai can expect to learn. Every Lord employs a Blademaster and all Samurai of MST 14 or greater can choose to join this school automatically.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: SAMURAI, MST 14+
POWERS: KENJITSU, NOMURA'S QUICKENED STEP, IAJITSU, YORAMA'S DEFLECTING HANDS, THE TOAD'S GREAT LEAP, YIZO'S PRESCIENCE

CELESTIAL PATH

The Celestial Path teaches its followers self-restraint, self-control and pacifism. Its followers are meant only to fight in self-defense and then only when attacked. This makes it a favoured technique among more law abiding Commoners who probably don't want to draw attention to themselves anyway.

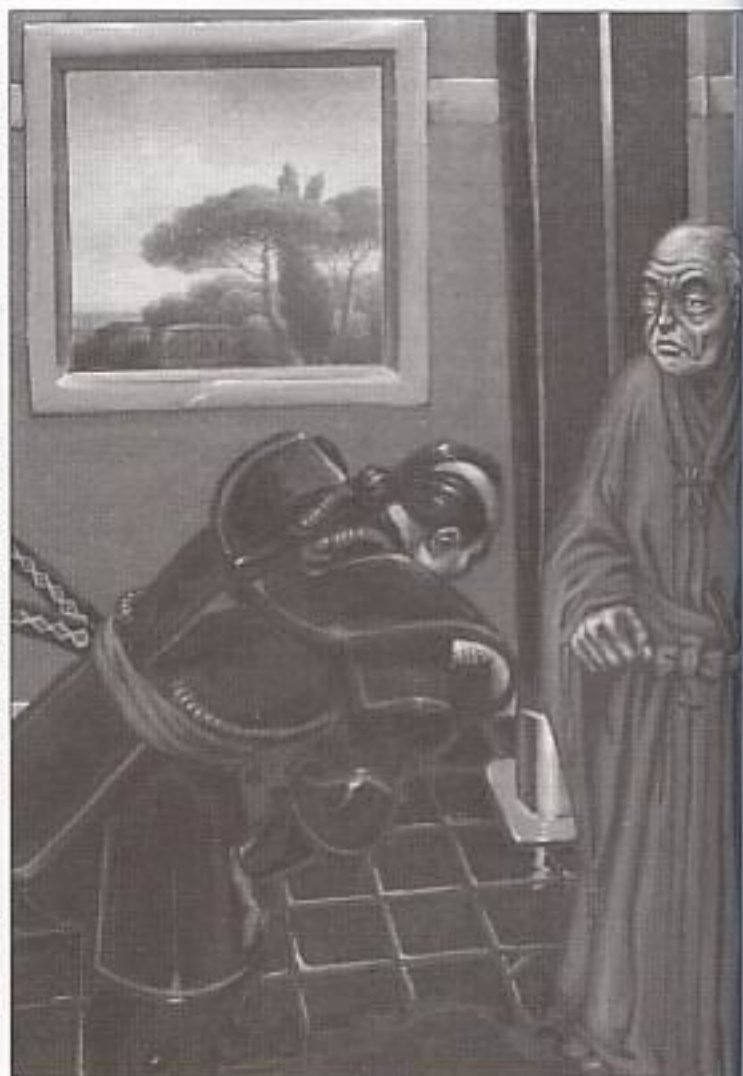
MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: MST 14+. SS 5 or less.
POWERS: MISHIMAN CLOSE COMBAT, HANDS OF STONE, THE MONGOOSE'S ARTFUL DODGE, NOMURA'S QUICKENED STEP, KI-SELF HEALING, DRAGON SPIRIT, YIZO'S PRESCIENCE.

DARK MYSTICS

Dark Mystics are Heretics. They are no more popular within Mishima than they are anywhere else. Many are drawn believing that they are entering a secret school

Most people who learn to use these special abilities do so by finding a master who can teach them. These masters can be individuals who dwell alone and take on only select and determined individuals, or they can be teachers at one of the great dojos (the Mishiman term for where the martial arts are taught). Finding a master is not easy if you are a Commoner, because Commoners are banned from learning all Ki based special abilities on pain of death.

This does not mean that you cannot find a master. Only that it will be difficult. All Samurai lords employ a Blademaster, who can instruct worthy retainers in that school of martial arts. Thus all Samurai can automatically choose to belong to that school. Anyone seeking to join another school must roll under INT/PER as if seeking a job to find the master of their choice. Commoners are at a -5 penalty here. You can only make one attempt to join a school per career repetition.



which will teach them unusual Ki powers. By the time they learn differently they are full-fledged heretics.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: NONE.

POWERS: DARK GIFTS. FOR MORE DETAILS ON HERETICS SEE THE MUTANT CHRONICLES RPG OR ALGEROTH SOURCEBOOK FOR DETAILS.

DEATHBRINGER

The Deathbringer school is taught only to Shadow Walkers. It teaches stealth, swift killing and evasion.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: MST 14+. SHADOW WALKER

POWERS: CATSIGHT, THE CHAMELEON'S CAMOUFLAGE, DEATHBLOW, THE CROW'S PIERCING GLANCE, THE MONGOOSE'S ARTFUL DODGE, THE BAT'S SONAR SENSE, TELEPORT, STRIKE FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE.

DEMON HUNTER

This school teaches the ancient and mysterious art of Demon Hunting to the select few who are accepted on the Forbidden Isle.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: MST 16+. DEMON HUNTER

POWERS: LIGHTSLEEP, AURA OF MYSTICAL RESISTANCE, YUROIJI'S TRUE SIGHT, ADAMANTIUM WILL, THE BAT'S SONAR SENSE, FLYING VIPER STYLE, TELEPORT.

DRAGON BOXER

The Dragon Boxers are the most famous of all the Martial Arts schools. They meet in secret dojos within the Mishiman realms under the patronage of the Black Dragon Triad. They have a fearsome reputation as brawlers and fist fighters. They teach only Commoners. Many of their members go on to become enforcers for the Triads. They are the sworn enemies of the Storm Warrior school.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: SS 5 OR LESS. MST 14+

POWERS: HOODED VIPER STYLE, MISHIMAN CLOSE COMBAT, HANDS OF STONE, THE MONKEY'S FOOT, TORONAGA'S RAGING MIGHT, MORAMA'S PERFECT BALANCE, DRAGON SPIRIT, THE TOAD'S GREAT LEAP.

GRAY MYSTICS

Gray Mystics study the more esoteric uses of Ki Powers. They are famed as scholars and sages. They will teach anybody, Commoner or Samurai, and are one of the few schools where Commoners will not be subject to persecution. Instead they must swear allegiance to their local liege Lord. Gray mystics have a great reputation as sages and scholars.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: MST 16+

POWERS: YIZO'S PRESCIENCE, YUROIJI'S TRUE SIGHT, KI SELF HEALING, CLEANSE POISON, AURA OF MYSTICAL RESISTANCE, TELEPORT, SUPREME CONCENTRATION.

HUNTING TIGER

The way of the Hunting Tiger teaches its followers to attack swiftly, stealthily and only when necessary. It relies on swift movement, great agility and fast strikes.

This is a school whose techniques are commonly taught by wandering masters. It can be studied by both Samurai and Commoners. Samurai learn the version which involves the sword. Commoners learn the version which uses Mishiman Close Combat. Only Commoners are subject to Persecution.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: MST 14+.

POWERS: MISHIMAN CLOSE COMBAT / KENJITSU, MARAMA'S PERFECT BALANCE, CATSIGHT, THE MONKEY'S FOOT, THE CHAMELEON'S CAMOUFLAGE, THE TOAD'S GREAT LEAP, THE RHINO'S IMPREGNABLE SKIN.

STORM WARRIOR

The Storm Warrior school concentrates on pure combat. It teaches that the best form of defense is attack and that only the strong survive. Its followers are renowned for their brutality in warfare. Masters of this school teach both Commoners and Samurai. Only Commoners are subject to persecution. This school is the bitter enemy of the Dragon Boxers.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: MST 14+

POWERS: MISHIMAN CLOSE COMBAT, HOODED VIPER STYLE, DEATHBLOW, THE CROW'S PIERCING GLANCE, THE COBRA'S VENOMOUS STRIKE, ADAMANTIUM WILL, WEAPON LINK, THE RHINO'S IMPREGNABLE SKIN.

TATTOOED MAN

The Tattooed Man school is open only to members of the Triads. It teaches its followers how to stalk and slay their victims with all manner of weapons. Its members are famous for their use of psychoactive tattoos which they can make visible when they are dispatching their victims.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: MST 14+. TRIAD MEMBER.

POWERS: MISHIMAN CLOSE COMBAT, HOODED VIPER STYLE, FLYING VIPER STYLE, CATSIGHT, KANJI'S LUCKY SENSE, DEATHBLOW, STRIKE FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE, THE RHINO'S IMPREGNABLE SKIN.

WHITE MYSTICS

The White Mystics are a truly unusual Mishiman school dating back to the time of the Neronian Heresy. They were a group of renegade Brotherhood Mystics who taught the Art to any who qualified. Students of this school do not learn Ki powers but learn to use the Art exactly as if they were mystics of the Brotherhood. They are taught this by their masters and then left free to wander the world as holy men. Naturally the Brotherhood regards them as Heretics and the Inquisition persecutes them whenever they find them. White Mystics are good decent people who do their best to help the poor, the suffering and the innocent. This does not make them any too popular with the Samurai either. White Mystics are subject to Persecution (see below).

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: MST 14+.

POWERS: MAY LEARN THE ART AS A BROTHERHOOD MYSTIC WOULD. (SEE MUTANT CHRONICLES RPG OR BROTHERHOOD SOURCEBOOK FOR DETAILS.)



OTHER SCHOOLS

There are of course hundreds of other schools of Martial arts, far too many to cover in any detail in this sourcebook. Feel free to invent your own, using the ones given here as examples. If you let your players invent their own schools its probably best to check and make sure they are not going completely overboard. Its best that all schools start teaching less powerful techniques and progress to the more powerful ones.



PERSECUTION

Because the rulers of Mishima long ago banned Commoners from learning anything which might prove threatening to the lords, they banned the Commoners from studying Ki powers. This has not stopped Commoners from studying the martial arts or Ki powers or from acquiring forbidden weapons. It does mean that they are persecuted by the authorities. If you belong to a group which suffers persecution (i.e. Ronin, heretics, Commoners studying the martial arts, heretics, white mystics, etc.) then at the end of each career repetition roll 1d20.

Heretics must roll over their level with the Dark

Symmetry plus the number of stigmata they possess. White Mystics must roll over their level with the Art, Commoners studying the Martial Arts, Shadow Walkers, etc. must roll over the number of Ki powers they possess.

If the number is less than the number needed then you have been discovered. You are now on the run. Begin your adventuring career at once. You are disgraced, with a powerful fanatic enemy. Heretics may move on to a temple career (see *Algeroth* sourcebook.) All others must begin their adventuring career at once.

KI SKILL

All Ki powers are controlled through one skill: Ki. This is Special SV based on your MST Basic Capability (see *Mutant Chronicles RPG* pg. 134 for the Base Skill Value Table). It belongs to the same group as avoid and perception. Ki skill can only be increased by spending free skill picks. Ki power skill differs from other skills in that the Ki skill may be increased more than six above your Base Skill value. Every free skill pick you spend after reaching +6 in Ki enables you to increase your Ki SV by +1.

USING KI POWERS

For some powers, you roll to use Ki powers just like most skills. You must roll beneath your SV for the power to take effect. In many powers, there is cost in MST which you must pay to use the power. This will be covered in the description.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS. Because Ki powers tap your inner strength only those of powerful and resilience spirit can learn their use. To acquire Ki powers, you must have a minimum MST of 14 or more. For some Ki powers, the minimum requirements are even greater.

ABILITIES AND TECHNIQUES. Some special abilities, such as catvision, are considered to be permanently active. You don't need to make any roll to see whether they work. Simply note them down on your character sheet. Other Ki powers, called techniques, require that you make a skill roll in order to activate that power.

KI ABILITIES. Ki abilities are always "on". Ki abilities do not need to be activated unless it says differently in their description and they sometimes do not cost any MST. If the ability works under certain circumstances then the onset of that circumstance will always trigger them. For instance, someone with catvision automatically can see in the dark.

KI TECHNIQUES. Ki techniques are different. These work just like ordinary skills. You must roll under your SV to use them. Normally they take an action to invoke. Sometimes this action will be combined with other actions.

LIST OF POWERS

ADAMANTIUM WILL

TYPE: Technique

DESCRIPTION: This technique enables you to block the pain receptors in your brain and overcome pain. Using this technique you costs no actions. If, at the start of each combat round you successfully make your Ki skill roll, you may ignore the effects of wounds for the rest of the round.

NOTE: You still receive damage as normal. Adamantium Will only allows you to ignore the effects of damage.

COST: 1 MST to use per round.

AURA OF MYSTICAL RESISTANCE

TYPE: Technique.

DESCRIPTION: You have been trained to resist all external mystical influences. If you make your Ki SV with this power you can resist the effects of the Art or the Dark Symmetry used upon you.

COST: You must spend MST equal to the level of the Spell or Gift you are resisting.

THE BAT'S SONAR SENSE

TYPE: Ability.

DESCRIPTION: You have trained until your senses are so keen that you do not need to see your target to hit it. You can shoot at a target in pitch blackness and still hit it. You always ignore all penalties for range, conditions, weather etc when using a missile weapon. You cannot be distracted from your target.

COST: None.

CATSIGHT

TYPE: ABILITY

DESCRIPTION: You can see in the dim light even better than a cat. If there is any light at all, you won't suffer any penalties. If you wish to move around or fight in total darkness without penalty, you must roll under your Ki power SV.

COST: None.

All Ki powers are described in the following format.

TYPE: This tells you whether it is an ability or a technique.

DESCRIPTION: This tells you about the ability and how it works.

COST: This tells you how many MST points, if any, it costs to invoke and maintain the power.

THE CHAMELEON'S SKIN

TYPE: Technique

DESCRIPTION: This Ki technique enables you to freeze on a spot and become virtually invisible as long as you do not move your opponents must make a perception roll to see you. Only the Shadow Walker cult and certain secret societies teach this technique.

COST: This technique costs 3 MST to invoke and 1 MST per combat round to maintain.

CLEANSE POISON

TYPE: Ability

DESCRIPTION: You have such great control over your bodies internal Ki flows that you can alter your biological balance to neutralise any poison or disease. You may invoke this power automatically whenever you feel the effects of a poison or disease.

COST: 3 point of MST per usage.

THE COBRA'S VENOMOUS STRIKE

TYPE: Technique.

DESCRIPTION: You focus all your power into your fist until it seethes and boils with energy. This enables you to strike with incredible force. It takes an action to invoke the Venomous Strike. The effect lasts until your next action (which must be a punch).

COST: For every 2 points of MST you expend, add an extra d6 to the damage of your next punch. If the punch misses then the MST is wasted.



THE CROW'S PIERCING GLANCE

TYPE: Technique.

DESCRIPTION: Using this technique enables you to use your Ki to guide you to any weak spots in any foe's armour. You can reduce his armour by 1 for every point of MST you spend. This armor reduction only works for you, and only for your next blow. Piercing Glance can only be used if you are able to study an opponent in close range (i.e. hand to hand combat, telescopic sight, etc.).

COST: 1 MST per point of armor reduction.

DEATHBLOW

TYPE: Technique

DESCRIPTION: You focus your Ki into making your next blow a fatal one. When you use this technique decide how much MST you wish to expend before rolling the dice. You can increase your OB by 1 per point of mental strength expended for the rest of the combat round. Your MST is wasted if you fail your Ki power roll. It takes one action to invoke this power. The effect lasts for the rest of the combat round.

COST: 1 per addition to your OB.

DRAGON SPIRIT

TYPE: Ability.

DESCRIPTION: You can ignore heat and cold damage of all sorts. Flame-throwers incendiaries, mystical flames and ordinary fire have no effect on you as long as you pay 1 MST per combat round.

COST: 1 MST per attack resisted or per turn of you are moving through ordinary flames.

FLYING VIPER STYLE

TYPE: Ability.

DESCRIPTION: You have been trained to use a pistol or sub-machine gun in each hand. With a single action, you may attack with the weapon in each hand.

COST: None.

HANDS OF STONE

TYPE: Ability.

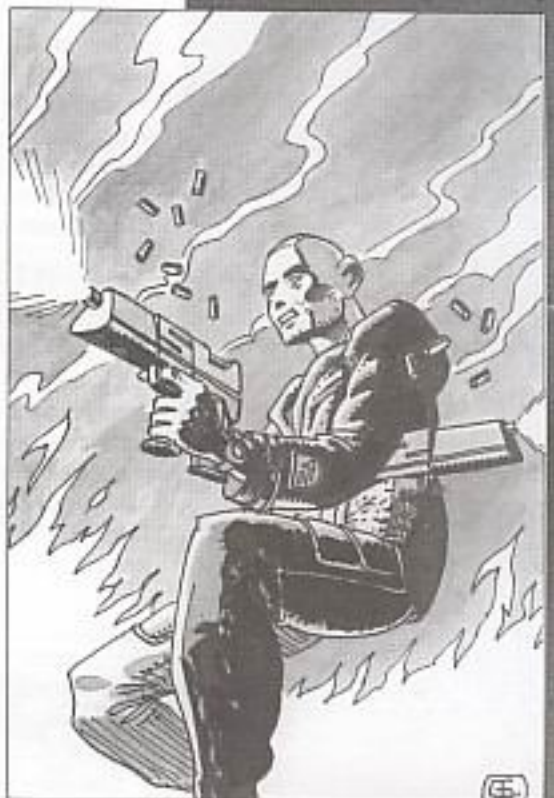
DESCRIPTION: Using your bare hands you can use this Ki skill to parry incoming close combat attacks at no penalty. To parry the blow you must roll under your Ki SV. You can use this skill against any incoming close combat attack (not missile weapons!). If you succeed in the roll, you have negated the attack. You don't need a saved action.

COST: 1 MST point per parry.

HOODED VIPER STYLE

TYPE: Ability

DESCRIPTION: You have been trained to use two weapons or two fists simultaneously in close combat. You are even capable of lashing out at two





foes at the same time should you so choose. The weapons you use must be capable of being used one handed. When using such weapons you get two close combat attacks for every action spent.
COST: None.

KANJI'S LUCKY SENSE

TYPE: ABILITY

DESCRIPTION: You are preternaturally alert. Whenever danger threatens, your GM should roll beneath your Ki SV. If the roll is made, he should inform you that something is about to happen. It will allow you to parry or avoid a surprise attack. When a character has Kanji's Lucky Sense, the power usually manifests itself to the character in some peculiar way. For instance, one character's hackles might rise every time he is about to enter a dangerous situation. Another character might get an upset stomach if danger approaches. Use your imagination to add detail to your character.
COST: None.

KI SELF HEALING

TYPE: Technique

DESCRIPTION: You radiate waves of healing energy throughout your body which heals wounds, re-knits broken flesh and negates any pain. It takes an action to invoke this technique. By using this Ki technique you may heal any wound your body has taken in a single location.
COST: 1 MST per point of damage healed in a location.



LIGHTSLEEP

TYPE: ABILITY

DESCRIPTION: This power enables you to sleep and yet still be aware of what is going on around you. When you are asleep, you cannot be surprised and will know if anyone moves within 5 squares of you. You invoke lightsleep whenever you go to sleep.
COST: 1 MST to invoke and costs nothing to maintain until you wake again.

MARAMA'S PERFECT BALANCE

TYPE: Ability

DESCRIPTION: This Ki power gives you perfect control over your balance. You can run along tightropes, telephone wires or narrow ledges at full speed without falling. If you fall from a height you can use the power to land on your feet and reduce any fall damage you may have taken.
COST: None to use when moving. 1 MST to negate 3 meters of falling damage.

THE MONGOOSE'S DODGE

TYPE: Ability

DESCRIPTION: You have trained to the point that your reflexively dodge in incoming attack you are aware of. You can use this power on any fire attack you are aware of.
COST: By spending 2 points of MST you may use an avoid action using your normal avoid SV on any incoming fire attack.

THE MONGOOSE'S ARTFUL DODGE

TYPE: Ability

DESCRIPTION: You can double your normal chance of evasion. You are using your Ki to move with eye blurring swiftness, making yourself much harder to hit.
COST: 1 MST whenever you use this power when evading.

THE MONKEY'S FOOT

TYPE: Technique

DESCRIPTION: This Ki power enables you to perform incredible acrobatic feats simply making your SV roll. You can perform handsprings, cartwheels and amazing feats of dexterity. You can use this power whenever you are attacked by a foe you are aware of. Any foe attempting to hit you will be at -4 on all his attacks. You can also use this power to take half damage from any fall you make.
COST: 1 MST per usage.

NOMURA'S QUICKENED STEP

TYPE: Technique

DESCRIPTION: You focus all your inner strength on enhancing your quickness which enables you to move at eye-blurring speed and increases your number of actions. You use this technique at the start of your combat round. Nomura's Quickened Step does not require actions to invoke.
COST: For every 3 MST points you spend, you get one extra action this round.

THE RHINO'S IMPREGNABLE SKIN

TYPE: Ability.

DESCRIPTION: You have toughened your body with special training to the point where it seems almost impervious to pain. You gain an extra point of armour in every location. You can ignore the effects of all except disabling wounds or fatal wounds.

COST: None.

SHADOW WALK

TYPE: Technique.

DESCRIPTION: By stepping into any patch of darkness you may teleport and emerge into any other area of darkness or shadow. One patch of shadow must be in line of sight of the other line of shadow in order to Shadow Walk between them. Only the Shadow Walker Cult teaches this technique.

COST: 1 MST per 10 squares traveled.



STRIKE FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE

TYPE: Ability

DESCRIPTION: You have performed a weird arcane ritual which seals your spirit to your body for a short time after death. When you learn Strike from Beyond the Grave, you have trained your spirit to remain in your body for a short time after death. When you die, your spirit will animate the body and ruthlessly pursue its killers. Although your corpse still possesses your spirit, your body will lack any personality. You will be little else than a killing machine dedicated to vengeance. As long as you keep making your SV roll and spen-

ding a point of MST you may continue to take actions. You can keep taking actions until either you fail your SV roll or you run out of MST. If either occurs, you fall down dead.

COST: 1 MST per additional action.

SUPREME CONCENTRATION

TYPE: Technique.

DESCRIPTION: When using this technique you may add +1 to any one skill of your choice until the end of the turn per point of MST expended. You are using your Ki to focus your entire mind on it. This can greatly augment your skills. However you cannot increase your skill by more than the number of skill picks you have expended on it. So; if you have expended 3 skill picks you can spend 3 MST and increase your SV by 3. If you have not expended a skill pick on a skill then you cannot use Supreme Concentration to enhance it. This technique takes an action to invoke.

COST: 1 MST per +1 SV.

SUSPENDED ANIMATION

TYPE: Ability

DESCRIPTION: This power enables you to shut down all your normal bodily functions. Your heart rate slows. Your breathing becomes that it is imperceptible. You require far less oxygen and sustenance. In suspended animation you can survive for up to one hour without air and one month without food or water. If you are poisoned, you drop suspended animation with slow the spread of poison through your blood stream for up to an hour. While in suspended animation you are effectively asleep. You will not be aware of anything unless you have the lightsleep power. When you drop into the suspended animation trance, decide how long it will be before you wake up. It takes an action and a Ki Sv roll to invoke this power.

COST: 1 MST to invoke.

TELEPORT

TYPE: Technique.

DESCRIPTION: This technique enables you to teleport up to 5 squares per point of MST spent. You simply disappear from one spot and re-appear in another. You must be able to see where you are going either by sight or by using Yizo's Prescience. MST 20 is a minimum requirement for this power. Only the Shadow Walker cult and certain secret societies teach this technique.

COST: 1 MST per 5 squares teleported.

THE TOAD'S GREAT LEAP

TYPE: Technique

DESCRIPTION: By using this Ki technique you focus all your energies into a mighty spring. On that same action you leap up to twenty squares distant or ten squares in height. You count as charging into combat when you use this power. It takes an action to invoke this technique.

COST: 1 MST





TORONAGA'S RAGING MIGHT

TYPE: Technique

DESCRIPTION: You focus all your Ki into augmenting your strength to almost superhuman levels. You gain 5 points of STR for every point of MST you spend. This lasts to the end of the combat round and will allow you to lift enormous weights, use weapons for which you would not normally have the minimum ST, do more damage in hand to hand combat, etc.

COST: 1 MST per 5 STR per combat round.

WEAPON LINK

TYPE: Ability.

DESCRIPTION: You have forged a special bond with a chosen close combat weapon. In close combat with one chosen weapon get an extra 1d4 added to your damage because of your mastery of a this ability. Note that you may also chose to specialize in punch or kick, as well as normal close combat weapons.

COST: None.

YIZO'S PRESCIENCE

TYPE: Technique.

DESCRIPTION: You are able to be aware of all that is going on around you in the whirl of combat. When this you invoke this technique, you will be aware of everything happening within a 2 square radius per point of MST you expend. You can sense the use of Ki powers, the Art or Dark Symmetry. You will be aware of all presences, even hidden or invisible ones. Combat awareness extends through walls and other obstacles.

COST: 1 MST per 2 square radius.

YORAMA'S DEFLECTING HANDS

TYPE: Technique

DESCRIPTION: You focus your mind so that you can knock aside missiles fired at you. Deflecting Hands works on everything from arrows to bullets. However, it cannot work against energy weapons, such as flamethrowers or lasers. Deflecting Hands is also not effective against large shells or rockets. You can use this power whenever you are fired upon. If you roll under your Ki SV and spend 1 MST point you can use your sword or other close combat weapons to parry incoming bullets. You must make a separate roll and spend the MST for every successful hit your enemy makes.

COST: 1 MST per use.

YUROJI'S TRUE SIGHT

TYPE: Technique.

DESCRIPTION: If you roll under your Ki skill rating, your mystically attuned senses always see things as they are. Disguises will not fool you. Invisible and hidden people will appear in plain sight. Anyone using the Art or the Dark Symmetry to change their appearance will be obvious to you. Hidden doors are not hidden for you. The use of the Art, Dark Symmetry and Ki powers are apparent to you. The GM should make this roll for you whenever it is appropriate.

You can sense the presence of stigmata and corruption. If you are in the presence of Heretic the GM should roll 1d20. If this is less than the Heretic's level plus the number of his stigmata, you will feel distinctly uneasy about that person.

COST: None.



MISHIMAN SKILLS



COMBAT

IAJITSU

BASIC CAPABILITY: COR

This is the skill of drawing a scabbarded or holstered weapon and using it in a single action. If you make your iajitsu roll you may attack with your sword or gun on the same action as you draw with it. A fumble means you have dropped the weapon. If you possess the the Hooded Viper style or the Flying Viper style, you must make two separate iajitsu rolls, one for each weapon.

KENJITSU

BASIC CAPABILITY: STR + COR/2

This is the deadly Mishiman Art of sword fighting. You use this skill when wielding blades in close combat. It gives you +2 to your OB with your sword.

MISHIMAN CLOSE COMBAT

BASIC CAPABILITY: STR + COR/2

These are the basic hand to hand fighting techniques perfected by Mishiman Commoners after the Great Rebellion and since adopted by the Samurai. This skill allows you to do 1d4 + OB with your bare hands and 1d6 + OB with your feet.

MOVEMENT

MEKA

BASIC CAPABILITY: COR

This skill enables you to pilot the huge meka and gigameka battlemachines. It is an essential for their use.

SPECIAL

KI

BASIC CAPABILITY: MST

This is the skill of focusing your inner strength, enabling you to utilize the awesome Ki powers that characterize the mightiest Mishiman warriors.

RONIN

Tanaka Ken closed the door of the flophouse room. Outside the window the Undercity roared. The vibrations of a passing train made the walls quiver shaking the cheap icons of the Seven Sages on the wall. He studied the place. The bare floor. The shoddy futon. The thin internal screen walls through which he could hear the sounds of a lovers quarrel in the other room.

An appropriate place to die, he thought. Appropriate for one who has failed his master, who has lost all honor, who was grossly derelict in his duties. I should have prevented it. If only I had been quicker. If only I had placed more sentries on duty that night. If only.

He squatted cross-legged in the middle of the floor and laid his scabbarded sword in front of him. His battlesuit lay on the futon. The shoulderpads were plain. The Bata crest had been overpainted. He had no master now. He was Ronin.

All morning Ken had walked across the city, his mind whirling. His master was dead. The Bata holdings had been acquired through some devious financial sleight by his lord's old enemy, Suritomo Omi. The surviving Bata Samurai had been given a choice. Swear allegiance to Suritomo or become Ronin. For Tanaka Ken there could be no choice. In this life he would acknowledge only one master. He would never bow before that master's bitterest enemy. Now he was Ronin, if only briefly, before he took his life and joined his master in the Great Void.

He reviewed his life. It had been good—aside from the ignominious failure at the end. He had been trained by the best to be the best. He had slain his master's foes in open honest battle. He had saved his master from assassination a dozen times. He had taught his lord's children to wield blade and gun as well as any warrior could. He had been strong. He knew, without false modesty, that he had been numbered among the greatest warriors of the Mishiman realms. Had not Omi sent his slimy nephew Kim to plead with him to enter Suritomo service? I would rather serve the spawn of Semai, he had said, and watched Kim swallow the insult, not man enough to call him out.

He had known many women and fought in many great battles. He had got drunk on sake and on the far sweeter wine of victory. He had seen conflict in every corner of the Solar System from the steaming jungles of Venus to the Polar Wastes of Mars. Always, he had done his duty. What more could any man say? Always—except at the end. The bitterness of his failure galled him. It was not something he wanted to take into the Great Void with him but he had no choice.

Now, it was time for an ending. It was time to put aside this life and plunge into the Void, ending all pain and all suffering forever. Ken breathed deeply and began to compose his mind. His senses quickened with the approach of death. He saw everything keenly and looked around the room for the final time with something approaching joy. He saw dust motes glitter in the slanted columns of light from the window. He smelled the boiling fat from the gas woks in the street below. He felt the rumbling vibration of a departing rocket train through the floor. He heard the roar of the traffic, the screaming voices of hawkers and the sounds of stealthy footsteps on the stairs.

It was time. He drew his blade and laid it naked across his knees then began to compose his death poem, although he had no pen and paper to write it, and no heirs to pass it on to. The day fades, night approaches...

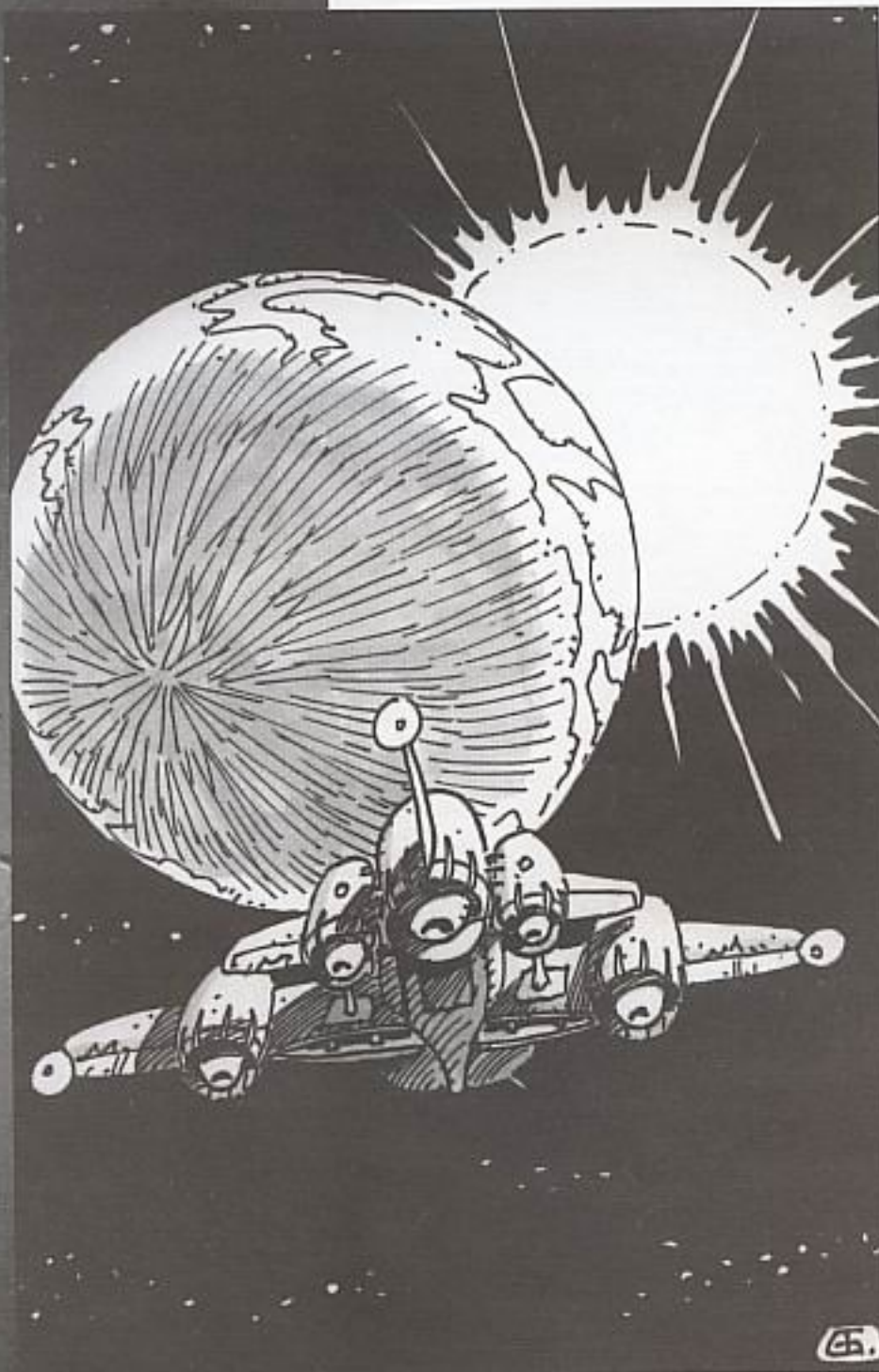
Stealthy footsteps stopped outside his door. The screen slid open. Despite him

Continued on p.38



THE MISHIMA REALMS

MERCURY



Mercury is the homeworld of Mishima. No other world in the Solar System is so completely dominated by one corporation, and no other corporation has so secure a powerbase. On Mercury, Lord Heir Moya has total control of all Mishima property and business transactions. For centuries after the Great Rebellion, Mercury was sealed off from any contact with the rest of the solar system and traders were allowed to land only at the freeport of Longshore. During this time, Mishima jealously protected its heritage and customs from outside influence. Because Mercury was closed even to the Brotherhood, strange sects and cults flourished far from the Light of the Inquisition. To this day, the only areas of the world where outsiders are only allowed to rent land are in Longshore and in the Imperial controlled city of Fukido. To most outsiders, Mercury remains a place of great mystery.

THE FORTRESS PLANET

All of Mercury is one vast fortress peopled with warriors ready to die at the Lord Heir's command. Only Imperial has any significant presence in its freeport at Fukido which has been described as a village of paper houses on the edge of a volcano. Few doubt that if the Lord Heir desired, the Imperial holding would be wiped out in a matter of months.

Mercury itself is unique among all the human worlds. The Ancients' attempts at terraforming were only partially successful. Mercury's surface is a bleak desert scorched by the nearness of the huge burning sun. Mankind survives only in the great underworld cities excavated by the Ancients. Mishima constantly expands these vast networks to accommodate a booming populace. These underworlds are strange exotic places and few indeed are those who have been privileged to see all of them.

Some of the underworlds are vast caverns, hundreds of miles long which contain entire nations and city states beneath their huge vaulted roofs. Others are simply webworks of endless tunnels filled with teeming hordes of humanity who fight for every scrap of space and breath of air. All bear the hallmark of the Ancients' marvellous engineering and Mishima's skilled tunneling. All are linked by the webways, a vast network of tunnels through which all trade, commerce and transport passes.

Life is precarious on Mercury where every living thing relies on ancient mechanisms for continued life. Air is constantly recycled by gigantic fans. Light is piped in through fibreoptic trunk cables. All these systems require constant maintenance and surveillance so that systems failure does not wipe out a city. Total instant obedience is needed to ensure that all emergencies are met promptly.

Access to the underworlds is controlled through a few fortified cities. These mighty structures exist partially buried beneath the surface of Mercury's Terminator, the dividing line between the face of the world which the sun scorches with fire, and the half of the world exists always in darkness. These port cities give access to the great webwork of tunnels that links the underworlds and the fiefs of Mercury's great Daimyos. Some of these tunnels lead now to cities long abandoned and others lead down to places excavated by the ancients and never colonized. There are persistent rumors that there are mighty underworlds buried tens of miles beneath the surface where the Ancients recreated all the environments of timelost earth. Many indeed are the explorers who seek these out. Usually Samurai patrol the webways and prevent any unauthorized exploration.

The webways and the underworld cities are the source of much of Mishima's revenue, since they provided access to huge mines from which Mishima pulls vast amounts of mineral wealth. The cavern cities are also the homes of huge factory complexes where these raw materials are turned into consumer goods. Huge solar-powered energy plants on Mercury's sunlit surface provide power for all of Mishima's industrial needs. Mishima's production costs for manufactured goods are among the lowest in the solar system. This gives them a huge competitive advantage in their home market.

Mercury is the home of the vast majority of Mishima's citizens. Its unique nature goes a long way to explaining why the Commoners are so docile. Where can they go? There is no way off planet save through the spaceports controlled by the corporation and the underworlds are well-regulated by the Samurai. No one can pass through a Daimyo's domain without authorization. Samurai patrols are common and well-armed. Even if a Commoner thought of traitorously fleeing his master's domain, his only refuge would be the Imperial city of Fukido. But Mishiman propaganda has painted Fukido as the most anarchic place on Mercury.

The world of Mercury is organized into hundreds of Provinces. Each Province is an administrative unit in Lord Moya's well organized fiefdom. Each Province is a single underworld, usually controlled by a feudal Lord. Some lords control more than one province, some provinces are split between rulers. A few Provinces are ruled directly by vassals of Lord Heir Maru. Others are occupied by the Keiretsu.

THE WEBWAYS

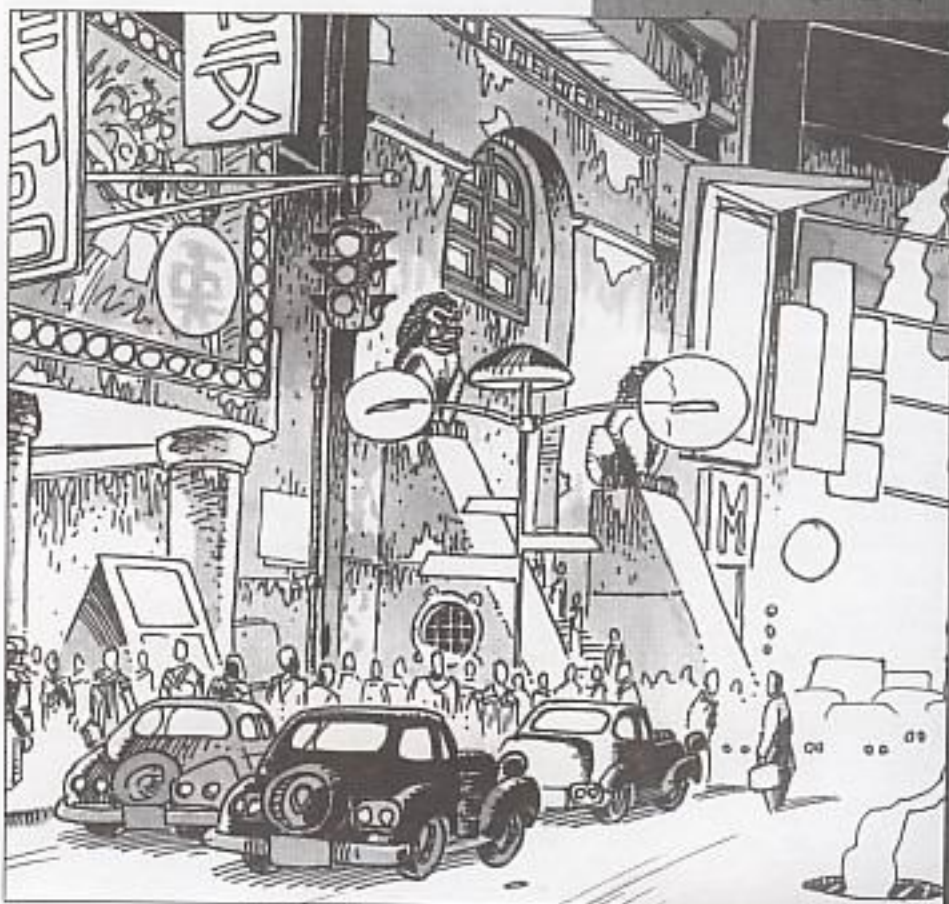
The webways run everywhere beneath the surface of Mercury and link the greatest underworlds and the smallest outposts. Webways are massive tunnels built to a unique Mishiman design.

Through the central core of the webway runs a massive elevated railway, on which rocket trains thunder at hundreds of miles an hour. These are used exclusively by the military, the greatest of nobles and the Lord Heir's personal couriers. Mail rockets carry urgent dispatches, contracts and treaties throughout the webways. Sometimes troop trains rush Samurai reinforcements to a rebellious province or an area of Dark Legion incursion.

Beneath the massive arched stanchions of the rocket-railways are the roads along which a constant stream of motorized carts, pedestrians and pilgrims pass. Enormous roadtrains carry hundreds of tons of goods. Peddlars limp along carrying only sacks. The motorcycle escorts of nobles and personal roadsters force their way through the masses. Here and there lights sputter as the massive humanoid walkers of the engineering teams weld shut seams or drive new supports into place. Enormous caterpillar tracked transporters rumble along bearing huge drilling engines to new sites. At every ten miles of road all traffic is stopped at checkpoints. Samurai guards collect passes and travel permits are checked and tariffs. Sometimes there is a brief outburst of violence as Samurai clashes with Samurai or some criminal tries to escape justice.

LONGSHORE

Longshore is the greatest of all Mishima's Mercurian holdings. It sits at the bottom of an enormous crater on the Terminator line. Far above, a plastic shield, called the Celestial Shield, revol-





THE TUBEWAY

The tubeway runs everywhere beneath Longshore. It has hundreds of lines covering the central city and spur lines which run off to most of the islands. Most of these spurs are only accessible to the military, and to the few nobles important enough to know the access codes. In times of civil emergency the tubeway provides a rapid secret way of moving soldiers all around the city. The tubeway feeds into the Undercity elevators which provide access to the Undercity and the rocket-railroad. During the Kimoya rebellion two centuries ago, possession of the Tubeway system allowed the Lord Heir to transport troops quickly and to put down the Kimoya forces. The rebellion was the cause of the edict which states no Daimyo may enter the city with a retinue of more than a thousand Samurai without express permission from the Lord Heir himself, on pain of immediate and painful death.

ves around Longshore. This miracle of ancient technology holds air in while letting spacecraft pass through, reknitting itself behind them.

The city itself lies on an island within a great underground ocean, built by a miracle of ancient engineering. Longshore is the largest of all Mercury's underworlds, stretching almost two hundred miles in every direction with a ceiling almost two miles high. The whole cavern is lit by great polarized filter-windows which dim and brighten on a twenty four hour cycle, simulating night and day. The whole cavern is carpeted by a shallow sea some 30 feet deep out of which rise thousands of sculpted islands lined by thousands of rice terraces. Cranes and flamingoes rise from the multi-colored shallow waters around each island. Teeming shoals of fish shimmer in the sea. Longshore's climate and temperature is rigorously controlled. The sea is always filled with fishing boats and kelp-collecting ships. Huge carpets of edible algae form green mats on the water's surface and are collected by monstrous factory ships. The seeming harmony of the place is only disturbed when spacecraft arrive at the great landing strip at Longshore.

Such tranquility is deceptive. Since the coming of the Dark Legion weird mutations have overtaken much of the wildlife. It industrial pollution that gives the sea its strange color. Great marshes of toxic sludge have collected in many areas. The whole underworld is slowly drowning in its own wastes.



Each island houses a hidden fortress, and many mighty war-machines and rocket launchers. Hundreds of thousands of troops are on constant standby to repel any threat to the Lord Heir. Thousands of rocketplanes lie at rest on their launchers ready to take to the skies against any foe.

Longshore proper is on the largest island, and is a true megacity. It rises like a great termite mound out of the sea, crowned at its pinnacle by the Palace of Lord Heir Moya and the mighty spire of Longshore Cathedral. This is a city given over entirely to trade and politics. All the great lords have palaces here. All the other megacorporations have embassies and trading enclaves. It is home to hundreds of thousands of administrators and Samurai as well as millions of Commoners. The palace gates are flanked by two mighty gigameks kept constantly crewed and in readiness. The palace itself is an enormous fortress manned and guarded by one hundred thousand Samurai all ready to lay down their lives for the Lord Heir.

At the central core of Longshore is the great elevator a complex of mighty lifts, each capable of lifting a dozen spacecraft or ten thousand warriors. These drop down into the Undercity a dark industrial netherworld where millions of the Commoners dwell, and work. Many stay virtually chained to their machines. It is from the Undercity that the webway spreads out to all other points on Mercury.

THE FORBIDDEN ISLE

From a dark and gloomy part of the Underground Ocean, perpetually shrouded by mist, rises a great black peak. High atop this peak is the forbidding Monastery of the feared Demon Hunters. No-one who sets foot on this island may leave again unless permitted by the Isle's masters.

Within this enormous spire, thousands are trained and tested through incredible ordeals, since they seek to become part of the Order. On the Isle, desperate, bitter men and women are taught all the secret arts of demon hunting, and then sent forth to face the Darkness. Within the vast Forbidden Library, thousands of scholars toil through ancient books which were preserved from the burning of the Inquisition in ancient days. These scholars seek the secrets that may save mankind from the Dark Apostles. In huge dojos, hundreds of neophytes hone their martial arts skills to levels that seem impossible to less driven mortals. In darkened tutorial rooms, wizened sages teach the magical secrets of their arts to the dozens who have worked their way through the training process. In the mighty armories, hundreds of technological adepts work at the great forges and lovingly prepare the Demon Hunter battlesuits which will be the proudest possession of the graduates.

No-one who sets foot on this island ever leaves except as a Demon Hunter or on the business of a Master of the Order. Those who fail the tests may commit ritual suicide or may choose to remain and be trained as guards, technological adepts, scholars, scribes or monks. A few will be allowed to join the retinue of a Demon Hunter and guard

them with their lives. Most will spend all their remaining days incarcerated on the island, since the Isle's secrets are taught here, and it would be dangerous for the rest of mankind to know them. Newcomers are subjected to endless tests to prove they are not worshippers of the Dark. Those who follow the Dark suffer a terrible fate, for they will be interrogated and studied at great length by ruthless scholars whose lives are spent seeking greater knowledge of the Dark.

Because joining the Demon Hunters is considered a great honor, many of the younger children of Samurai families are sent here to see if they can gain acceptance. If they fail they are kept on the island and the eldest son has removed a potential source of rebellion. If they succeed, they may choose to return to their family and protect it against the Darkness. The services of Demon Hunters are often required, and many Keiretsu will pay a small fortune for their services.

THE SHRINE OF KANJI

This island is a place of constant pilgrimage for Mishimans. It marks the last resting place of Kanji, most venerated of all the Seven Sages. Kanji was an enlightened one who is said to have brought good fortune to all who crossed his path. There are rumors that the Sage's spirit appears on certain holy nights, but it may be that these are simply rumors to keep the pilgrims coming. The shrine itself is an enormous pagoda nearly five hundred feet high. By night, the monks floodlight the pagoda so that it is visible from many miles away.

Kanji himself is venerated as the patron of the martial arts. The Island of the Shrine is home to over five thousand martial arts schools where the children of Samurai study Ki powers. Often the harmony of the island is disturbed by brawls between followers of different teachers. Sometimes these disturbances escalate into huge riots which result in armies of Samurai being dispatched to quell the revolts. There are many rumors that the Shadow Walkers maintain a dojo on the island, and it is certainly true that this is one of the best places to make contact with the assassins.

TIGER PARK

Tiger Park is a huge island near Longshore which is given over entirely to pleasure. It is a giant combination of amusement park, sinhouse, and sports arena. Here can be found every type of amusement Mishiman culture has to offer, from chana parlours to gambling dens to massage houses. Here too can be found flower girls and casinos. The island is full of luxurious hotels and hostelryes. It has been described by the Cardinal of Longshore as the greatest sink of sin and iniquity on Mercury. He was not wrong. Wealthy rakes, wastrels, and the simply curious come here from all over the solar system to experience its forbidden delights. The whole island is said to be directly controlled by the Black Dragon Triad who use the previously impoverished Onoshi clan of Samurai as a front. Lord Heir Moya must have his own reasons for allowing the place to thrive for his Samurai never interfere with Tiger Park.

THE EBON PALACE

The Ebon Palace is the residence of Lord Heir Moya's most trusted hatamoto, Nozaki. Just naming this island is guaranteed to get you a thinly disguised shudder from almost any resident of Longshore. Nozaki is a lean saturnine man of utter ruthlessness and complete loyalty to his master. He needs to be for he is the head of Lord Heir Moya's dreaded secret police, the Black Rose society. Here a whole island has been carved into one gigantic building which is both a fortress and a dungeon where political prisoners are kept waiting torture and interrogation. Here too are enormous training barracks where young Samurai are trained in the Mishiman way of espionage and assassination, and equipped with all the latest technology that Mishima's spymasters can provide. The palace itself is a sinister building which seems to rise from the sea like the head of an enormous dragon. Security around this place is almost as tight as around Lord Heir Moya's residence. Since Nozaki has taken over the reins of power Longshore has become an evil place, folk disappear in the night. Even the rich and powerful fear for their safety. Some say all this is Nozaki's doing. Others whisper that the Lord Heir knows off and approves his henchman's deeds, and is simply letting blame fall on his shoulders.





SURITOMO

Suritomo is the second largest of all Mishima's underworlds and is the base of the giant Suritomo industrial Keiretsu which makes everything from rocket trains to Meka to the most common Samurai battle-suits. Suritomo is an enormous cavern filled with lurid multi-colored toxic ash produced from the hundreds of giant factories. The cavern is illuminated by the flames vented from thousands of enormous chimneys. The Commoners here are little better than slave labour and are watched over by tens of thousands of brutal Samurai overseers. Suritomo is one of the oldest and most powerful of the Keiretsu and its Daimyo, Omi is one of the most feared men on Mercury. He is a grossly obese man, of disgusting physical habits who inspires terror in all his enemies because of his cunning and ferocity. He controls the vast Suritomo armies with an iron will, and is said to have extensive connections with the Triads and the Shadow Walkers. His patience and wicked wisdom or legendary. He is one of Nozaki's most trusted supporters, his spy network is famed throughout the system. The entrance to Suritomo underworld is guarded by a huge fortress with seven gates and each gate is guarded by a thousand warriors. No one passes in or out without their papers in order and the permission of Suritomo security.

THE UNDERCITY

Below the caverns of the Underground Ocean, the Undercity connects to the Longshore spire by the great Elevator. This is a dark, cheerless, near lightless place; home to Longshore's millions of Commoners. Like all Mishiman undercities it is a multi-levelled warren of tunnels and chambers, filled with people and machines. Great pipes run along the walls, sometimes leaking scalding steam, sometimes dripping corrosive chemicals. Here and there rickety elevators and rusting steel ladders drop beneath levels. The deeper you progress in the Undercity the nastier things get, since the tunnels at the lowest levels are the newest and have the least facilities. Life down in the Undercity is short. Cave-ins, oxygen cutoffs and powercuts are common. The lowest levels are the home of the Faceless, the lowest of the low in Mishiman society.

Dim piped sunlight is augmented by the light from thousands of flickering gas burners. The air is filled with the constant rumble of great factory machines and the roar of rocket trains. This is the dark underbelly of Mishiman society, where millions of Commoners toil endlessly to provide the goods and services upon which the wealth of the Samurai rests. There is no landscaping here, just a warren of endless tunnels where people fight for a meter of space to sleep in, and entire families can spend their lives without going a mile from the machines on which they work. Life here is short and hard. Weary from endless labour the folk subsist on the edge of starvation and watch enviously as palanquins bear fat merchants to their showrooms. Only the constant presence of patrolling Samurai keeps the peace, for all know that the Samurai will extract instant lethal vengeance for the slightest infraction of the rules.

In the Undercity you can see the true nature of the huge industrial fiefdoms which produce Mishima's vast wealth. Here the brute toil and oppression of the majority is most obvious. Still people labour away for the honor of their ancestors, and hope that life can get better for their children.

The air is filled with choking, eye-burning

industrial pollution. The streets ring with the heli-cacophony of unsleeping factory machines. Those who can afford it wear filter masks to save their lungs from corruption. Those who don't wear masks can expect nasty, short lives. Condensation drips endlessly from above. The droplets are so saturated by pollution that they are slowly eroding the stonework.

THE DARKWAYS AND THE LOST PROVINCES

The Darkways are the part of Mercury that has fallen under control of the Dark Legion. Within the Darkways, huge half buried Citadels thrust their spires out into the Mercurian sky. No-one knows how the Dark Legion got in to the Mercurian underworld. Some suspect that their vanguard was smuggled in through the Imperial freeport at Fukido. Others think that they came by hidden pathways of the Ancients from the surface. Still others think that they used the powers of the Dark Symmetry to open gates to the Mishiman hinterlands. No one really knows how they got there but everyone knows the results.

They descended on the under-populated provinces of Sotoni and Zata and slaughtered the inhabitants before the provincial overlords could send for help. The bodies of the dead were carted off to the newly erected citadels and turned into Undead Legionnaires. The few survivors who did not have time to commit ritual suicide were taken to the distortion chambers and transformed into Necromutants, which is a fate far worse than death to most Samurai. Since then the Dark Legion has used the Lost Provinces as a base to launch raids into Mishiman territory, countless thousands have been dragged screaming back to its slave-pits.

The Lord Heir has ordered the construction of a great ring of fortresses, which block the webways into the area but so far the servants of the Dark Apostles have been able to slip in and out with

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self, he felt his eyes lift and he looked upon the strange visage of three tattooed men. Their heads were shaved. Their faces glowed with luminescent inks patterned in swirls and vortices. Each held a long curved killing blade in his left hand, and a silenced pistol in his right. For a moment the grotesque humor of the situation filled Ken. They had come to kill him! If they had arrived moments later he would have been dead, with his belly slit in the traditional manner. Laughter bubbled from the blademaster's lips. The three killers stood frozen in the doorway, puzzled by his mirth.

Ki had never been stronger within Ken. The nearness of death had brought his mind to new levels of clarity and mastery. He reached down into the well of his being and touched the power within him. Everything slowed. One raised his pistol. Another drew back his knife to throw. Ken erupted from his sitting position. His blade was a blur. Nothing human could match his speed.

One sweep of his blade beheaded the first killer. A kick caved in the ribs of the second. A swirling flood of blows disarmed the third.

"Who sent you?" He asked. "Why could you not let me die in peace?"

The man opened his mouth as if to speak. Had it not been for Ken's preternaturally keen senses there would have been no warning. He saw the blackened tooth at the back of the man's mouth and the strange workings of the killer's jaw muscles as he bit down on the tooth. Ken had just enough time to throw himself back as a cloud of choking poisonous gas erupted from the man's mouth. Ken held

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relative ease. What once were beautiful places have become corrupt landscapes marred by forests of spectrally glowing fungi, and lakes of foul industrial sludge. Huge citadels dominate the underworld. Despite the best efforts of Lord Heir Moya, word of the Dark Legion invasion has leaked out and caused the Brotherhood to exert huge diplomatic pressure for more access to the Mercurian Underworlds. This has had the further effect of opening up Mercury to outsiders for the first time in centuries.

AKIRENKO

Akirenko is another giant underworld, home base to the mighty Akirenko electronics combine. This underworld was once beautifully landscaped, but over the centuries its single city, Akirenko, has spread like a great fungus to cover the entire floor of the underworld. Its nobles have divide the city into two sections, the Hanging Palaces and the City Below (usually referred to simply as Below).

From the underworld's ceiling depends the Hanging Palaces, which are huge platforms suspended on monstrous cables on which sit the Dai-myō's palace and the dwellings of Lord Akirenko's retainers. The nobles cast their rubbish down onto the city below so that Commoners are often killed by falling garbage and the streets are filled with ordure and trash. There is a caste of the Faceless within the city who make a living by scavenging among the huge garbage heaps.

Each palace is anchored to the floor by great hawsers. Sometimes thieves and Commoners attempt to reach the hanging Palace by climbing up these huge cables. No one knows what happens to those who do. Akirenko has recently been conducting experiments attempting to replicate Cybertronic designed bionics. These experiments have met with some success, and you will see more Samurai with such electronic prosthesis here than in any other city in Mercury. Akirenko is a place of pilgrimage for many crippled Samurai, who drag themselves on their stumps to the city seeking replacement limbs. Such warriors often fall victim to Ronin

and robbers and con men. Many lose all their money and eke out a pitiful existence as beggars and scavengers in the City Below.

The city is filled with thousands of small workshops and giant factories where Commoners labour night and day to produce the electronic goods for which Akirenko is famous. Here you can find some of the greatest electronics experts in the human systems, including some Black Adepts who have delved into the ancient and forbidden art of Cybermancy, the dreaded study of Thinking Engines.



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his breath and vaulted for the windows, knowing that nothing was going to survive in the room.

The glass gave way. Shards erupted all around him. He briefly caught sight of the street a long way below him, and a nearby washing line which drooped under the weight of clothes spread between buildings. He twisted and reached for the narrow line. As his hand closed, the line gave way beneath his weight and he began to drop. One side of the line remained anchored and he swung towards into the inn's wall. He fought to control vertigo since he had only one chance to live. He twisted his body so that it angled in through a window. Glass gave way and he landed in a bedroom where a fat businessman lay with three naked flower girls.

The man rose reaching for the gun beside the futon. The girls shrieked and rose from the bed like startled birds. Ken rolled across the floor to absorb the impact of his fall. Then reversed direction abruptly to kick the gun from the man's hands.

He heard the door begin to open and two huge bodyguards entered with sub-machine pistols clutched in their fists. Ken put his blade to the man's throat.

"Tell them to put their guns down. I mean you no harm."

Sweat beaded the man's forehead. Ken knew the fat man was struggling to decide whether to obey.

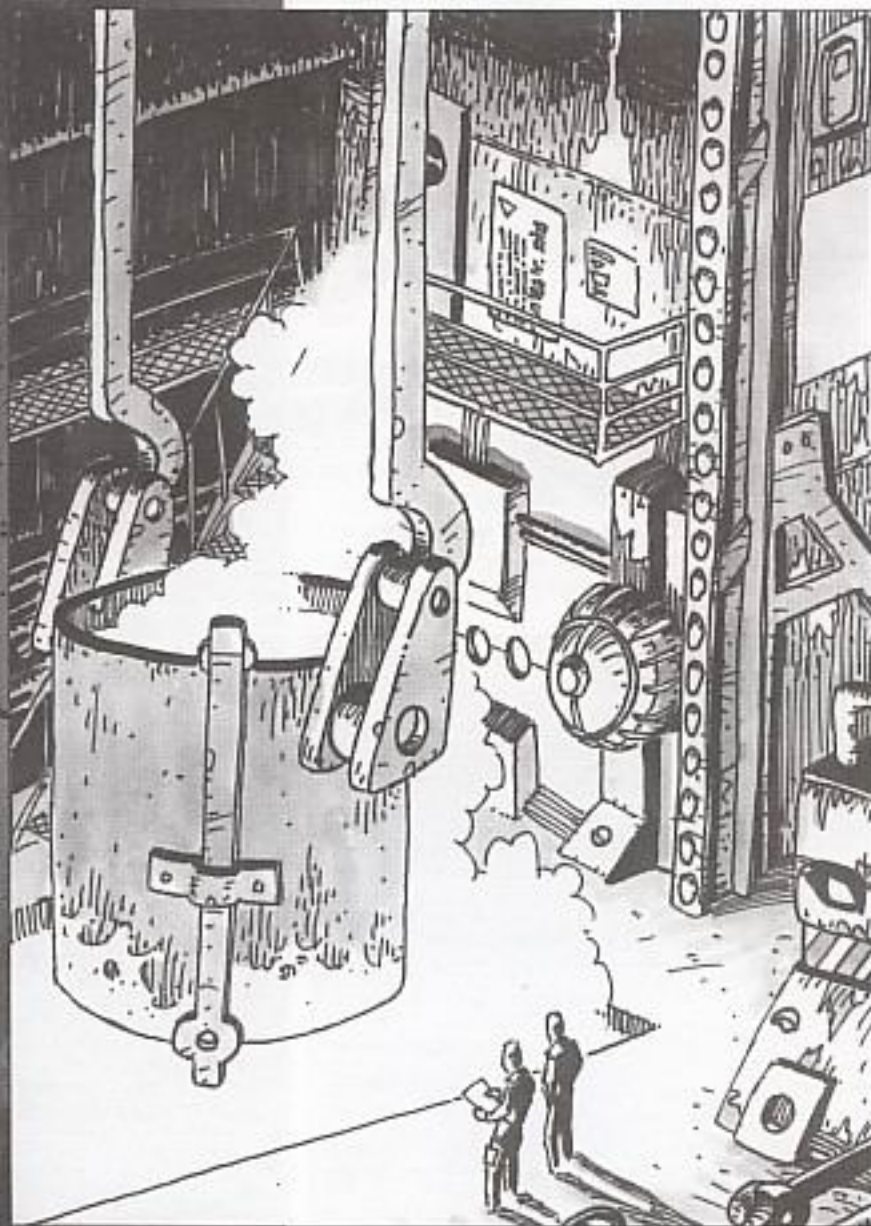
"Do it," he croaked.

Ken smiled nastily. Someone had something to hide. Someone had paid those Tattooed Men to come for him. Someone wanted him very dead. It was a good enough reason to go on living for a while.



TAMBU

The gigantic Tambu underworld is home to the massive and war-like Tambu combine. This is Mishima's largest producer of weapons, meka and other weapons. It has the largest standing army of any Mercurian Keiretsu and the arguably the most effective defense force on all Mercury. It has rushed to embrace the concept of Ashigaru, seeing these gigantic armies as another market for its products. The ruthlessness of the Tambu Daimyos is legendary. The Tambu will buy, eliminate, or destroy any rival arms conglomerate by any means possible. They have a virtual monopoly on the manufacture of mass market weapons in the Mishiman realms. The Tambu family are powerful enough to stand aloof from the struggles of the Lord Heirs. Some folk claim the Tambu's are the power behind the throne of Mishima, and that it was Tambu's refusal to back the present Overlord that led to his dramatic fall from influence. Certainly no Overlord has ever held power without at least the tacit support of the Tambu Keiretsu.



Tambu province is a huge dark underworld, full of enormous factories and smelters. Lakes of red-hot metal congeal outside the factories which are later mined by scavengers. The cavern is constantly being expanded as gigantic mining machines strip the far walls of their ores and new galleries are constantly being occupied by the hordes of Commoners who come here in search of work. The city is dominated by the massive, rivetted walls of the Ironkeep, a gigantic fortress whose walls are sheathed in multiple layers of steel armour, and whose battlements are patrolled by over a thousand meka.

THE THREE LANDS

In ancient times this was actually three provinces ruled over by three separate Keiretsu; Nagoya Industrial, Issan Steel and the Kazan Minerals Group. Due to an ancient geological fault which exposed a rich seam of minerals these three Underworlds were built much closer together than was normal. Down through the years all of the Underworlds slowly grew until the excavations ran into each other. First mines ran into each other, but later streets and factories and cities ran into each other. For years there was peace but slowly tension mounted in disputes over mineral rights, land ownership, and utility maintenance. These disputes escalated until war erupted between Nagoya and Issan. At first Kazan remained neutral, hoping to pick up the pieces when one of its rivals destroyed the other. However Kazan was drawn into the chaos and forced to deploy its troops and fight. The conflict escalated. Buildings and mine workings were destroyed. The Commoners were subjected to terror attacks. Battles were fought for weeks over a hundred yards of corridor. In other parts of the Mishiman realms the three Keiretsu managed to keep their subsidiaries from open warfare. The war has raged on since that day in each of the Keiretsu's properties across the solar system.

Now the three Keiretsu fight constant skirmishes which try to expand their territories. Because of the war, the buildings and infrastructure are crumbling from neglect and lack of investment. None of the competitors wants to spend money on maintaining the place for fear that the areas they renovate may fall into the hands of other corporations. This has left the three provinces a ruined wasteland of inter-locking tunnels and buildings where bands of Ronin, corporate Samurai and scavengers fight a complex multi-sided struggle against each other. The Three Provinces is where alliances can be made and broken within hours and where little work gets done. The constant war has drained the resources of the three Keiretsu fighting it. If it wasn't for the profits coming in from their non-Mercurian subsidiaries they would probably collapse. Almost all profit is used to purchase mercenaries, freelancers, weapons, spies and assassins. Pride is involved now and all three Keiretsu have spent so much money fighting this futile war that they know the only way to recoup their losses is to gain complete control of the Three Provinces. Because each Keiretsu have been exhausted by long conflict, it does not seem likely that any side will win soon.

MAYAMA

Mayama is the fastest growing of all the underworlds, because it is the home of the Mayama heavy engineering group, who are responsible for the excavation and maintenance of most of the webways and new underworlds. Mayama has the largest earthborer works in the human system. Its enormous plants assemble more of these gigantic drilling machines than all its competitors combined. Mayama also has an important sideline in bulldozers, cranes, construction meka and all other sorts of heavy building machinery. Its construction subsidiary erects starscrapers on Venus, Mars and Luna and its architects are famous throughout the system for the construction of fortified palaces, keeps and protective bunker complexes. Mayama underworld is an advert for such things. It is dominated by the huge bulk of Mayama keep, a monstrous fortress surrounded by a ring of nine lesser but still mighty fortresses. Between each fortress there are tubeway systems along which troops can be rushed to any part of the perimeter. The city itself is built within the walls. Mayama is a famously stable group rivaling Suritomo in power and influence. It is also famous for building and maintaining the Free City of Kosaki which neighbors Longshore.

FUKIDO

Fukido was a brilliant idea that went wrong. Overlord Kayi great-grandfather of the current overlord wanted a port opened that would rival Longshore and undercut the power of his son Nakamura, then Lord Heir of Mercury. The underworld was built halfway round the world from Longshore and space was offered to all who could afford it, even to outsiders. For the first time in history non-Mishimans were being offered a chance to rent space on Mercury albeit at fairly inflated prices. Imperial leapt at the opportunity and through a series of

front companies and agents purchased 98 per cent of all the leases. Corruption, bribery and intimidation were all used to ensure Imperial got what it wanted. The Mishimans awoke one morning to find a rival megacorporation had at long last got a foothold on their Mercurian homeworld. Mishima made protests and prepared for war but the leases were legal under Cartel law, and the Imperials appealed to the Cardinal for support. The Brotherhood mediated between the two parties and war was avoided. Mishima eventually accepted Imperial's presence because the leases only ran for ninety nine years. If the Mishimans wanted rid of the Imperials, they have only to wait for the contract's duration to elapse and then they could evict them legally. The Imperials know their days are numbered and have implemented a system as close to anarchic free market capitalism as has been seen anywhere. The Imperials hope that Fukido's capitalism will frighten Mishima from trying to reclaim the city at the end of the lease. There is no law within Fukido save what can be enforced by the companies sub-letting space and the individuals themselves. Of course the corporate policed sections are relatively safe but there are parts of Fukido that only the very foolish would go unless exceedingly competent and exceedingly heavily armed. Despite the danger, outsiders clamor for space here, for Fukido is a gateway to the previously untapped markets of Mercury and there are no port taxes or duties. Fortunes can be won or lost in the space of days by the bold and the brave. Fukido now rivals Longshore for legal entries into the Mishiman realm and far exceeds Longshore in the number of illegal entries that start here.

For more details on Fukido see the Imperial sourcebook.

VENUS

Venus is the second most important of the Mishiman realms, the domain of Lord Heir Maru, Prince of the Oceans. Although it produces less than a quarter of Mishima's output, Venus is militarily very important, for Lord Heir Maru has the strongest of all the Mishiman armies, and is the greatest strategic innovator Mishima has seen in centuries. Maru needs to be a brilliant military leader. His realm is surrounded by rival megacorporations and menaced by the terrible threat of the Dark Legion.

Venus itself is the richest of all the human worlds and consequently the most fought over. Venus' dominant power is the ancient and aristocratic Bauhaus corporation but huge areas are also controlled by democratic Capitol. On Venus, Mishima rivals Capitol in power thanks mainly to the aggressive strategies pursued by Lord Heir Maru and his staff. Now, of course, the overwhelming threat of the Dark Legion has affected the balance of power and all the great human powers must take the Legion's presence into account.

Maru's realm is divided into seven provinces. The first of these was seized by Mishima long ages ago during the First Corporate War, when a huge

Mishiman invasion force took the island of Quan after a massive spacedrop. Since Quan has become the hub of Mishiman Venus, it is now a hugely fortified island base from which Mishima's armies have set forth to conquer new lands. The other six provinces are Shan, Shoa, Yamashiro, Musashi, Ozumi and Suriga.

LIFE ON VENUS

Mishiman life on Venus is noticeably different from life on Mercury, and many cultural differences can be found throughout Lord Heir Maru's realm. The first and most obvious difference is that life is much more free and easy in some ways. The danger of systems failure so omnipresent on Mercury simply does not exist on Venus. Life is less cramped, and there is more space available. Maru and his Samurai do not oppress the Commoners as much as on Mercury because people can always flee from his realms to Capitol's Graveton Archipelago strongholds or the Bauhaus domains. That is not to say that the ancient difference between Commoners and Samurai does not exist. It merely means that the Venusian Samurai are much less brutal and the



KIRIN

Kirin underworld lies within Kirin mountain. The whole base of the peak has been excavated. Huge armourglass windows half a mile high look out onto Mercury's dark side. Within this underworld is the industrial heartland of the Kirin conglomerate, who are Mishima's major motor vehicle manufacturer. In particular, Kirin is famous for its motorcycles which are among the best and fastest in the human system. Unfortunately, the underworld has seen better days. A generation ago the Commoners rebelled against Kirin's then notoriously brutal Daimyo and began to sabotage the factories. Kirin moved production off planet to Venus and Luna where it already had extensive factories. Cars and bikes are still produced at Kirin Mountain within enormous fortified complexes but production is only a quarter of what it once was. The rest of the city is an urban wasteland, fought over by motorcycle gangs and armed bands of Ronin and mutated humans. Several efforts have been made to annex the province but they have been driven by Kirin's military and the heavily armed gangs. The so-called Mutant Zones of Kirin are famous throughout Mercury as a haven for criminals and Ronin of all types. It is said that all the scum of Mercury will find their way here eventually.



use of propaganda techniques far more common.

The second factor that affects Mishiman life on Venus is the omnipresence of war. While border skirmishes between Daimyos are common on Mercury, there is nothing like the massive, drawn clashes between the corporations that one finds on Venus. Because the threat of war is always present, Lord Maru's domain is far more militarized and his armed forces far better organized than Lord Heir Moya's. The constant attrition of Samurai and the better treatment of Commoners has led to the introduction of a new military class of Commoners, the Ashigaru. These men and women are fiercely loyal because they know they can achieve Samurai status within their lifetime if they serve their lords boldly and well. All of this means that the Samurai who serve Lord Heir Maru tend to be more flexible, less conservative and slightly less class conscious than those who serve Lord Heir Moya.

QUAN

Quan is a huge island on the southern edge of Venus's Ring of Fire close to the tenth parallel. Although very mountainous, Quan is rich in natural resources and minerals. Huge forests cover much of the available landmass and provides a rich source of timber for building houses in Mishima's traditional style. The mountains contain the fief castles of many of Lord Heir Maru's most trusted vassals. As the oldest and most developed of all of Mishima's Venusian provinces, Quan has an extensive network

of roads, railways and defensive missile emplacements. Its huge jungle hinterlands are used to train Mishiman troops in jungle warfare.

Quan is densely populated along its coastal strips. Industrial city blurs into industrial city all along the coastline. Huge railroads rush people and goods to the deep water harbor at Quanto. Artificial fortress islands rise from the sea and their turrets constantly scan the horizon for foes. Quan itself is forbidden to all foreigners save Brotherhood observers and even they must have their official travel permits triple signed before they can move beyond Quanto.

Only the Dark Legion have the temerity to break this rule, and they have built a huge citadel within the crater of Mount Quan, an extinct volcano, which was once sacred to Lord Heir Maru's family. From here the Nepharite Queeg directs operations against the Lord Heir's forces. Queeg has remained in place despite all the best efforts of the Samurai to dislodge him. The whole mountain is riddled with bunkers, lesser citadels, tunnels and death-traps. Its sides are studded with the black spires of citadel towers. The whole complex is descending down the mountain slopes at the rate of about one hundred meters per year, despite the best efforts of the Mishiman Hostes to contain it.

QUANTO

This is the capital of the Lord Heir Maru, Prince of Water, Governor of Mishiman Venus. It is the base for Mishima's Venusian Fleet, which is not as large as either Bauhaus or Capitol's, but it does contain several of the dreaded megacruisers, the largest warships ever built. The city is guarded by Lord Maru's armies which are spearheaded by his Shogun Guard, an elite group of warriors all equipped with the towering Shogun meka, huge armored exoskeletons almost as large as tanks.

Quanto itself is a beautiful city, built on the sides of an extinct volcano. Its deep water harbor is famous. The Lord Heir's Golden Palace, carved from volcanic rock and entirely covered in gilded gold leaf, is one of the Seven Wonders of the System. It is a city in itself with thousands of chambers and buildings within its walls. Quanto spaceport is set on a specially constructed island in the harbor, and is the scene of dozens of landings per week. From here zeppelins, ships and flying boats carry passengers to the furthest reaches of Mishiman Venus.

The city is dominated by two institutions; the Red Palace of War, and the Lord Heir's shipyards. The Red Palace of War is a relatively new institution set up by Lord Heir Maru to oversee his transformation of the Mishiman Hostes into something like a professional army. Within its towering walls, the best, bravest and brightest of young Samurai are



schooled in modern methods of warfare by the most successful Mishiman generals and mercenary military theorists. These scholars will in turn be expected to pass their knowledge along to the troops under their command and slowly turn the unruly Samurai forces into a modern army. Also within the walls of the red Palace is lords Maru's Supreme Command Bunker where he and his leading Daimyos meet to plan out their campaigns against rebels, the Dark Legion and other megacorporations.

The huge new dockyards at Quanto are Maru's other pride and joy. He has spent billions creating them and he hopes that eventually they will give birth to the most powerful navy on Venus. Here at

any given moment at least one giant megacruiser or rocketcraft carrier will be under construction. In a separate section of the yards skilled engineers are constantly at work on a dozen or more giant war machines. By night or day the clang of hammer on metal, the hissing of pneumatic riveters and the echoing tread of huge workmeka echoes through the city. A special corps of Samurai guards the yards round the clock to prevent sabotage by Heretics and the minions of other megacorporations.

The streets of Quanto resemble a huge armed camp. Tens of thousands of Samurai walk about on the Lord Heir's business. Every major Keiretsu has



FAST TRAIN

The warning gong sounded. McBride eased himself into the padded seat of the Rocket Train and fastened the safety belt. He looked up and smiled at the Bauhaus blonde strapped into the seat beside him. She gave him a coldly disdainful look but held his gaze for an extra moment before looking down into her magazine.

Diplomat, McBride guessed, judging from the elegance of her Favoricci dress and her tastefully understated jewelry. Her skin exuded the subtle fragrance of Noir, a perfume favoured by the Bauhaus aristocracy. She crossed her legs and revealed a tanned expanse of golden thigh. Her face was a mask of painted perfection.

A Mishiman hostess in elegant silk kimono moved down the aisle checking that all the passengers were strapped in. She didn't have much work to do. There were very few people in the foreigner's car. By long tradition it was reserved for high ranking non-Mishiman dignitaries travelling between Fukido and Longshore. The second gong sounded and the hostess strapped herself in to the chair at the front of the car.

McBride felt a surge of fear and anticipation like he used to get before air-drops back when he was in the Imperial military. He couldn't help it. He kept wondering what would happen if one of the train's rockets misfired and carried it straight into a cavern wall. It didn't help that the Rocket train had no windows. He understood why. What was

there to see shooting through a thousand miles of tunnel? The enclosed train made even the experienced McBride feel claustrophobic.

He closed his eyes, leaned back in his seat and took three deep breaths, dispelling the tension in the way he had been taught long ago. It helped a little.

At the third bell, the lights dimmed and the huge pressure of acceleration pushed McBride back into the padded seat as the rocket train moved out of the station. Almost as bad as space travel, he thought. As suddenly as it had started the pressure eased. McBride knew the train was now moving at close to 500 miles per hour.

"Next stop, Longshore," he murmured, turning to look at the blonde. She ostentatiously took out a gold cigarette case, flipped it open to reveal Unicorn-monogrammed cigarettes. McBride fumbled in his



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a headquarters here, and sends representatives to the Lord Heir's court seeking favours and concessions. The ambassadors of the other megacorporations supervise networks of agents and analysts, constantly seeking to divine the intentions of this, the most dangerous of the Lord Heirs.

SHOA

Shoa is an island city-state less than twenty miles of the coast of the Bauhaus dominated mainland. Shoa is in fact linked to the Bauhaus coastal city of Tromberg by a gigantic causeway which carries both road and rail links. This causeway has occasionally been the scene of bitter fighting between the forces of Lord Commander Shoa and the Homebuilder military. The causeway ends at the great black basalt wall which surrounds the island. Within the wall is the crowded domain of Lord Shoa, who is one of the most powerful of the Venusian Daimyos.

Shoa's fortune rests on the presence of diamond mines below the island and recently on Lord Shoa's decision to allow Cybertronic to build an advanced production facility within his domain. The presence of the Cybertronic complex has enabled his Keiretsu to take a lead in the production of many complex electronic systems, and the manufacturing of the system's best battlesuits, battlemechs and gigamechs. Shoa city has always been a trading center and seaport but it is fast becoming the chief trader in Cybertronic sourced components in northern Venus. Lord Shoa signed an exclusive licensing agreement with Cybertronic



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packet for his lighter, leaned forward and lit her cigarette. McBride wandered what she would say if she knew he had just held a small bomb under her nose. The lighter concealed a powerful explosive charge, another of the wonderful little gadgets dreamed up by the demented boffins of ISC-19. How did they think of these things, McBride wondered.

"Thank you," she murmured in a low husky voice. "Mr...?"

"McBride. Michael McBride. Her Serenity's Diplomatic Corps." McBride smiled again. The job description was what it said on the documents Sterling had given him. He had an official diplomatic corps passport too.

"You don't look very much like a diplomat, Mister McBride. You have a very sinister smile. Where did you get those interesting scars?"

"Venus. I was with the First Attack Regiment when they assaulted Alakhai's Citadel. Things got quite nasty."

Interest flickered in her cold blue eyes. "You were a Blood Beret?"

"Yes."

"And now you're a diplomat?" A small grimace marred her perfect features. He couldn't tell whether it was of distaste or disbelief.

"Yes."

"I'd forgotten the nasty sort of work Imperial diplomats do." She lapsed into silence, becoming suddenly withdrawn.

I wish I could, thought McBride, remembering the first time he had been on Mercury.

He had been bodyguarding an Imperial trader called Thomas, an edgy nervous man who claimed that the Triad's were out to get him, only the Light knew why. Thomas had business in Fukido. Some sort of deal with a Keiretsu that he claimed was going to make him millions. McBride hadn't liked Thomas, but it had been his job to look after the scumball even if he had to follow Thomas through every bar and sinhouse on Mercury. Which was pretty much what he had to do. Thomas obviously had a lot of things to forget, and he came up with some pretty inventive ways of forgetting them.

Three months of boredom, really. Thomas jumped at shadows and not a sign of any threat. McBride had met Aki Katsumi in the traders market in Fukido. He had bumped into her, knocked a huge package of delicately wrapped parcels from her arms. The packages had scattered into the gravel and puddles at her feet.

A basic Mishiman approach, of course, but he had been young then and naive, a soldier just detached from active service, senses dulled by months of inactivity. She was just another beautiful young woman, smiling, innocent looking, polite, pliant, eager to please. He had picked up the parcels, talked, asked her for a date. She had refused, politely, as if he were making a joke. He never gave the incident a second thought.

He had run into her two days later, as if by accident. He was hailing a taxi to take Thomas back to his hotel. She was walking down the street to the agency where she had worked, she said. He had asked her for a date again. This time she had accepted. They met for a drink.

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which allows him sole rights to trade in weapons in return for the use of his land and the protection of his military. This has reversed the fortunes of his fast declining city-state and caused a tidal wave of wealth to surge through the streets of Shoa. Indeed, Lord Heir Moya maintains a huge holding company here which buys almost fifty per cent of Shoa-Cybertronic's output at premium prices since the Lord Heir will not allow Cybertronic to set up any facilities on Mercury.

Naturally all this wealth has made Shoa a prime target for Imperial freebooters, and many Imperial attempts to take the city have been driven back with huge casualties to both sides. Indeed there is still a unit of Imperial Regulars holed up in the Southern Bastion which they captured in the last raid. They refuse to emerge and spend a considerable amount of time sniping at the Samurai in the streets. So far all attempts to eliminate these determined warriors have failed.

Because Shoa is a relatively small island, land prices here are at a premium. The cost of real estate rivals that in downtown Luna. Mishiman engineers have performed their usual trick of excavating large tunnels under the island where millions of Commoners can dwell but most of the foreigners pay high prices for relatively small apartments in the towering starcrapers.

Shoa's well-organized military act primarily as a defense force for the island. They can also be found in other Shoa owned holdings around Venus, guarding Shoa's electronics and battlesuit dealerships. Their distinctive customized black and silver armour makes them instantly recognizable wherever they are.

MUSHASHI

Mushashi controls a huge band of territory from the northern circle of Ice through the Ring of Strife to the shores of the ring of Fire. It exploits the rich mineral wealth of the northern mountains and the

oil and gasfields of the polar wastes. Its territories are comparatively thinly populated and controlled from enormous fortress cities. The Mushashi capital is named after the Keiretsu and is situated in an enormous cavern excavated beneath Mount Ryana. From here Lord Commander Mushashi oversees his corporate empire and plans strikes against Bauhaus northern gasfields. Mushashi is famed for its superb swordsmiths whose expertise almost rivals that of Imperial's Clan Gallagher. A Mushashi blade is a priceless heirloom for a Samurai family to possess. Mushashi is also feared throughout the north for the size of its mechanized armies. It has over a hundred Tatsu war-machines and many thousands of battlemechs.

OZUMI

Ozumi is another huge province. It stretches from the jungles of the Ring of Fire to the Romburg Mountains. Ozumi Keiretsu exploits all the huge natural resources of the area, and produces a huge range of medicines natural and synthetic based on the plants of the rainforest. It is also Mishima's single largest producer of industrial chemicals and pharmaceuticals. Its wealth springs from these sources but it is best known for the ruthless prosecution of its wars against Bauhaus Romanov dynasty of Electors. It was Ozumi troops who reduced Romburg to rubble and almost succeeded in seizing the huge weapons installations there. Recently the Ozumi Keiretsu has paid for its temerity by being on the receiving end of Operation Steel Fist, a massive Bauhaus offensive that seized almost half the Ozumi lands and many irreplaceable manufacturing installations. Lord Commander Ozumi has petitioned Lord Heir Maru many times for his support in a counter-offensive but so far Maru has resisted all calls for aid. He is not yet ready to send his realm into total war with the Homebuilders.

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Things spiralled. Two weeks of passion and a lifetime of regret.

He had fallen hard for Aki. Understandable really. His life had been an endless battle up that point and he had never met anyone like her. He wondered why none of the others had pointed out his folly to him then but Sterling had given him the answer yesterday. She was an agent, of course, in the pay of Imperial. It made sense of what followed. Imperial had wanted Thomas dead.

He remembered the night of the attack vividly. While McBride was lying in the bed with her in the suite next to Thomas's, the other bodyguards played cards in the next room. He remembered the shock as he felt the scratch of her fingers, and swift paralysis moving through him. Her nail polish had carried poison, and he had fully expected to die. She had stood over him for a long moment, holding a letter opener in her hand. He had waited for her to put it through his eye. She had not killed him, but instead she had just shook her head, dressed and went next door. The memory of what she had done there still filled him with horror. There had not been much blood left in Thomas or the other two bodyguards when she had finished with them.

McBride had spent nearly half a lifetime wondering what had really happened. Why had Thomas been killed? Why had she spared him? How had someone so innocent seeming been capable of such an atrocity?

The woman beside him gasped. McBride pulled himself from his reverie and looked at her balefully. She looked away as if she could see his rage written on his face.

Why now? Why was he, of all people, being sent to contact Aki now? Wheels within wheels he thought, plots within plots. He was caught between the Imperial Security Command and Mishima, the two most deadly, scheming and treacherous organizations in the entire Solar System.

Still he had sworn to himself he was going to get answers. Or die trying.





SURIGA

Suriga is an anomaly, a massive Keiretsu independent of Maru within the Venusian realm. Its Lord Commander has mounted the only currently successful rebellion against Lord Heir Maru and sworn his allegiance to Lord Heir Moya. Suriga has received a huge infusion of troops from Mercury and is quite possibly the most heavily militarized of all Mishima's provinces. The Suriga base is on the island of Suriga at the southern edges of the ring of fire, but its subdivisions can be found all over Venus. Suriga imports massive quantities of goods from Mercury onto Venus and sells them everywhere except in the other six provinces. Because of its allegiance to Lord Heir Moya and Imperial's good relations with Moya, Suriga has been spared Imperial raids. Suriga enjoys good relations with Capitol and Bauhaus who see it as a potential ally against Lord Heir Maru. There are some rumors that the cults of the Dark Apostles are strong within this realm.

The capital city Surigato is a bleak forbidding place, a massive city built on the side of a black basalt mountain around a great natural harbor. As with many Mishiman cities, the bulk of the population live underground in an underworld excavated below the mountain. The spaceport here is huge, with regular departures for Mercury, Mars and Luna.

MARS

Mars is the realm of Lord Heir Mariko, who is probably the weakest of the three Lord Heirs in strictly military and economic terms but one of the strongest diplomatically. Mariko has turned her realm's weakness into a strength. Mariko encourages the other megacorporations to see her as less of a threat than her half-brothers and has cultivated excellent relations with the Brotherhood, whose support has been of incalculable value. She has fewer Keiretsu under her control than her rivals but she has access to all the major non-Mishiman markets of the solar system; Luna, San Dorado, Volksburg, Burroughs, Fukido.

Her armed forces have been honed by constant struggle in the South Martian Wars, and her armies are only marginally less efficient than those of Lord Heir Maru. She has copied Maru's innovations by founding her own college of strategy and by recruiting her own Ashigaru. She has even begun making diplomatic overtures to Imperial's monarch, the Imperial Serenity, although most people doubt whether these will bear fruit.

Because South Mars is thinly populated and bitterly contested she has followed a new strategy of her own. She has made plots of land available in South Mars to any Ronin who care to come to her domain and swear allegiance to her. These territories are often occupied by the followers of other megacorporations but the Ronin relish the chance to test their skill at arms, and to establish their own domains.

These fiefdoms in South Mars are invariably small but they are numerous and are perfectly suited to the treacherous, constant warfare of the Martian deserts. Huge armies have no place in the desert and most wars are fought in a series of skirmishes. The deserts of Mars, any large scale force is immediately picked up on scanners and becomes an easy target for aerial attacks or artillery bombardment. While none of these so-called Ronin lords in South Mars has an army of more than a thousand men, there are thousands of them and they are all fanatically loyal to Mariko, who gave them a chance to reclaim their honor.

Mariko's capital is the fortress city of Hosokawa, right on the Martian canals and only a thousand miles from the icecap. She claims formal possession of all land around her city for a thousand miles. This claim is bitterly contested by Capitol and Imperial. For more information on Hosokawa and Mars in general, see the Capitol Sourcebook.

Mariko has only four first grade Keiretsu under her direct control but she has an unwritten alliance with the mighty Tambu combine. Unlike on Venus or Mercury, Mariko's Keiretsu all have their headquarters within her capital city of Hosokawa, with the result that Mariko is able to maintain constant contact with her valuable Keiretsu and make sure that they do not develop any independent thinking. Mariko's secret police, the Crimson Lotus Society, enforces her will in Hosokawa through fear and espionage. The Crimson Lotus Society informs Mariko of things almost as they happen.

RED SUN

Red Sun is Mishima's largest media combine. It publishes papers, magazines, books and comics in both katakana and brotherhood script. It owns chains of radio stations and movie houses in most major cities throughout the solar system (Mercury excepted.) Red Sun licenses martial arts films and Mishiman cartoons to Capitol and Imperial. It also merchandises toys and games based on its products. Its line of plastic Tatsu and battlemeka are particularly popular. Because Red Sun's entertainment connections stretch through the solar system, Red Sun is extremely influential in both Mishiman society and in Mariko's court. Of course Red Sun maintains its own fleet, called the Red Sun guard, the largest in the Solar System. The Red Sun Guard is one of the most formidable fighting forces in the human worlds.

SHINWA

Shinwa is a giant conglomerate with interests in everything from sandmining to steel smelting to construction to battlesuit and Tatsu production. It is controlled by Lady Mariko's cousin Lord Commander Shinwa Akabe who is fanatically devoted to his mistress. Some say that Shinwa is Mishima's largest Keiretsu with greater sales and revenues than even Suritomo. Shinwa also fields Mishima's largest standing army. Shinwa is the financial and military support on which Lady Mariko depends heavily.



AMIDA

Amida is Mishima's largest aerospace Keiretsu. It owes its position of dominance within Mishima because it spies upon Capitol's system leading aerospace industry and because the large Keiretsu on Mercury have not entered the aerospace field. Amida manufactures everything from autogyros to zeppelins to rocketplanes to spacecraft. Amida also has its own line of rather effective ground-to-air missiles. It has a finger in the electronics pie, too, manufacturing military radar and air-traffic control systems. Amida sells its products to anyo-

ne who will buy including the rival Lord Heirs. It does this with Mariko's complete blessing. She appreciates the revenue these big ticket items garner. Because of its pre-eminence in the aerospace field, Amida owns the strongest airforce in Mishima. Many of its Samurai are trained as pilots. All of the others are trained as aircaiv. Amida is most famous for its Aeromeka, rocket-propelled meka battlesuits which can fly over the battlefield unleashing potent rockets from their shoulder mounts.



LUNA

Because Luna is an open city, Mishima maintains a very strong presence here. All of the Lord Heirs and their subsidiary Keiretsu are represented although Lady Mariko's supporters enjoy the greatest market penetration. Many Keiretsu own factories and apartment buildings here.

The Overlord has his formal residence on Luna near the Cartel building. While the Overlord is surrounded by his concubines and his hatamoto, he lives a life of opulent, meaningless luxury. The Overlord negotiates treaties and issues hollow edicts which are ignored. The Overlord conducts

many traditional, empty rituals which harken back to a time when the Overlord controlled Mishima with an iron fist. Once a year, on his birthday, the three Lord Heirs are obliged to visit him, and hear his words and give him gifts. Recently Lord Heir Moya has taken to pleading ill health and sending his shadow, Nozaki, to wish his father well. This calculated insult has set the old man's teeth on edge but there is little he can do. Once per year the Overlord has a formal audience with the Cardinal and the two reiterate the ancient meaningless pledges of friendship between the Brotherhood and Mishima.

THE TRIAD

Tanaka Ken studied the men carefully. It was hard to tell which one of them was more dangerous. Chan Li certainly looked like the leader, a tall young man in a neat black business suit, white shirt, black tie, eyes obscured by dark sunglasses. A leader, yes. Dangerous? Not obviously. He carried no visible weapons, but there was something about the casual ease with which he leaned back in his chair that said here was a man to be reckoned with. Ken did not doubt that within this elegant office building there were a hundred armed men on call.

The huge Ronin who stood behind Chan's chair certainly looked deadliest. He was as out of place in this opulently furnished chamber as a devilcat in a cathedral. His armour was battered yet serviceable. He held a naked katana in one hand and a Tambu Windrider SMG in the other. Scars marked his impassive face. His nose was broken. Here was a man who had seen many fights and survived them all. In a fight he would be deadly, yet he represented a sort of danger Ken knew he could handle.

The old man who squatted cross-legged at Chan's feet did not look dangerous at all. His eyes were glazed from the narcotic devilweed he sucked through the pipe of his hookah. His green silk ceremonial kimono was blotched with stains. He looked tiny and frail. His cheekbones stuck out prominently. His eyes were huge and dark as a lemur's. No, he did not look dangerous. Yet appearances here was deceptive. The man was some kind of mystic, Ken guessed, he would have great powers or he would not be an advisor to so powerful a gang Lord as Chan Li.

He discounted the two muscular young men who flanked the door. Each bore an SMG in either hand, each showed the hard musculature of constant martial arts training but neither of them represented a threat compared to the other three.

Tanaka Ken finally came to a conclusion. Chan Li was most dangerous, he decided. The young man had not risen to become area boss of the Black Dragon Triad by being a fool or a weakling. He had about him an air of command, of a man who could summon hidden resources at will. He was dangerous as a poison serpent, clever as a demon of the Darkness.

"You have not answered my question!"

The gangboss looked up as if startled by the sound of Ken's voice. He smiled, as if he understood that Ken's rudeness was caused by dealing with more grief than any man should endure.

"I was thinking, old friend. I was trying to imagine who would be foolish enough to send three Tattooed Men to slay my honored ally on my territory without my permission."

Tanaka Ken heard the anger glittering in the younger man's voice. It was well controlled but it was there. If Chan Li was an actor then he was a good one. Ken could easily believe that he was furious about the whole business.

Of course, there were other factors that confirmed what the gangster was saying. The first and most obvious was that he would not even be speaking to Ken if he had ordered the attack. The second was that he and Chan Li had had many dealings over the years. There was an old alliance between the Bata and the Black Dragon Triad in this area. The Triad had occasionally acted as the eyes and ears of the Bata in return for having their activities left alone.

The old man looked up at Chan Li with the sad weary eyes of the devilweed addict. Chan Li leaned forward and the old man whispered something in his ear. The gangster nodded twice and then stood up. He moved across the room, opened the screens and stepped out onto the balcony, then he gestured for Ken to follow.

Ken stepped out onto the balcony unafraid.

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From here he could see right over the tumbling torrent of houses running down the hill all the way to Longshore harbor and the open sea beyond. A zeppelin drifted across the clouds, its reflection visible in the sea's oily surface. The contrail of a spacecraft making its final approach run wrote a calligrapher's stroke on the sky.

"I can remember when the sea was clear and blue. I was a boy then. Longshore was so beautiful." Chan Li's voice sounded wistful.

Ken nodded, wondering why the gangster was telling him this. He said so.

"Many things change, old friend. Once this sea was untainted by pollution. Once our corporation was unstained by the Darkness. No more. Things change."

Ken kept silent, thinking times were bad when you heard a gangster waxing nostalgic about the good old days.

"I believe the men who tried to kill you were of the Black Poppy Society. You should know that we are at war with them now and we are losing. They are backed by many old and powerful Keiretsu. Lord Nozaki himself is said to favour them."

"Why did they try to kill me?"

"I would guess because you insulted Suritomo Kim. Word of that is all over Longshore. I would imagine that he prepared a dishonorable death for you in revenge. Just as I believe his uncle prepared a dishonorable death for your master."

"You can prove this?"

"I can prove nothing. Even if I could, it would mean nothing. Who could I bring charges against? Who would believe me? The old times are ending, my friend. New powers stir. The Lord Heirs themselves may not be able to withstand them."

"How do you know this?"

"We have our eyes and we have our ears. Few words are spoken in the halls of the powerful that do not reach me, one way or another."

"You say Lord Suritomo was responsible for my master's death."

The gangster nodded.

"I will kill him."

"How? Will you storm his fortress single handed? He commands fifty thousand Samurai. Will you hire assassins? That is not your way. What will you do?"

"There must be something." Chan Li smiled.

"If you would hurt your master's murderer, there is a thing you can do."

Ken studied him closely. He knew now he was getting close to the reason why Chan Li was telling him all this. He knew there was something the gangster wanted him to do.

"What?"

"There is a woman. Suritomo Oni wants her dead. You must see that she stays alive."

"Her name?"

"Aki Katsumi."

MISHIMAN LAW



The Mishima corporation does not have any written laws which everyone must obey. Instead of a written code, Mishiman tradition demands that everyone obey their superiors. Commoners obey the Samurai, the Samurai obey their lords, the lords obey the Daimyos, and the Daimyos obey the Lord Heirs.

Typically, each of the Lord Heirs sets down general guidelines as to how he or she wishes his domains to be ruled. Maru, for instance, dislikes any sort of abuse against Commoners. On

the other extreme, Lord Moya encourages the Samurai to keep the Commoners under strict control. But the Lord Heirs do not interfere too much with the internal management of the Keiretsu. Most Daimyos and lords are free to set whatever rules they wish within the limits of their territory. Whenever a new Heir or Daimyo takes command, he usually publishes an edict which roughly defines how he will enforce his will throughout his domain.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Law enforcement within a lord's fiefdom's is a matter entirely up to the Lord. Most lords rely on Samurai patrols to keep civil order within a given area. The investigation of murders and other crimes is the job of Samurai magistrates appointed by the liege. Occasionally non-Samurai experts will be called in to give advice on forensics. In all cases, the magistrates judgement is always final. Because law enforcement jobs are regarded with no great enthusiasm by most Samurai, the quality of law enforcement in some Mishiman areas can be very poor.

Since Samurai relish the chance to use their blades, violent crime is relatively rare. Samurai just love slaying bankrobbers, muggers and other criminals on the spot. On the other hand, corruption, fraud and other such crimes are offer little interest to Samurai law enforcers who would much rather be out fighting with violent criminals. Non-violent crimes can flourish in Mishiman areas, at least until the time when some high ranking Lord decrees an anti-corruption purge.

Some lords go further than simply letting their Samurai keep the peace. They organize actual police forces complete with uniforms and codes of discipline. Police forces are much more common in the Mishiman areas of great cities such as Luna and San Dorado, which are places where the Mishimans cannot afford any diplomatic incidents. In such areas, sometimes there may even be formal courts presided over by magistrates. These courts often take the form of other corporation's courts, but many times they are simply a show for outsiders.

Another tool of Mishiman law enforcement is the huge web of informers, agents provocateur and stool pigeons who infest every fiefdom and

carry word of all developments to their lord's spy-master. These spies can be very dangerous because they often use their connections to pay off old scores and gather undue amounts of power. Such informers are often in the pay of criminals.

Officials often turn a blind eye to the efforts of organized crime in an area, just so long as the Triads discourage freelancers and pay a tribute to the local rulers. These gangsters too often form a potent part of the local rulers intelligence gathering network. All of these factors make Mishiman areas comparatively safe, even if outsiders often see Mishiman areas as breeding grounds for vice and crime. The Triads often use Mishima territories as safe havens from which they can run their criminal operations in other corporations' territories. If the Triad tried to operate within Capitol's territory, for instance, Capitol's security forces would immediately destroy the Triad. In the neighboring Mishiman territory, a Triad is able to operate in relative safety while they conduct operations in Capitol's territory.



While a ruler is responsible for the maintenance of law and order within his domains boundaries, he is also responsible for protecting his own borders. There are often bitter territorial disputes among Mishiman rulers which result in skirmishes, and small battles. These skirmishes rarely come to all out war, since most rulers prefer diplomacy and assassination to actually committing troops against their fellow Mishimans. Because most lords do not want to appeal for help from their lieges, most conflicts remain localized and in small scale. Most overlords respect their vassals' rights and will only interfere if a dispute threatens the stability of the Keiretsu.

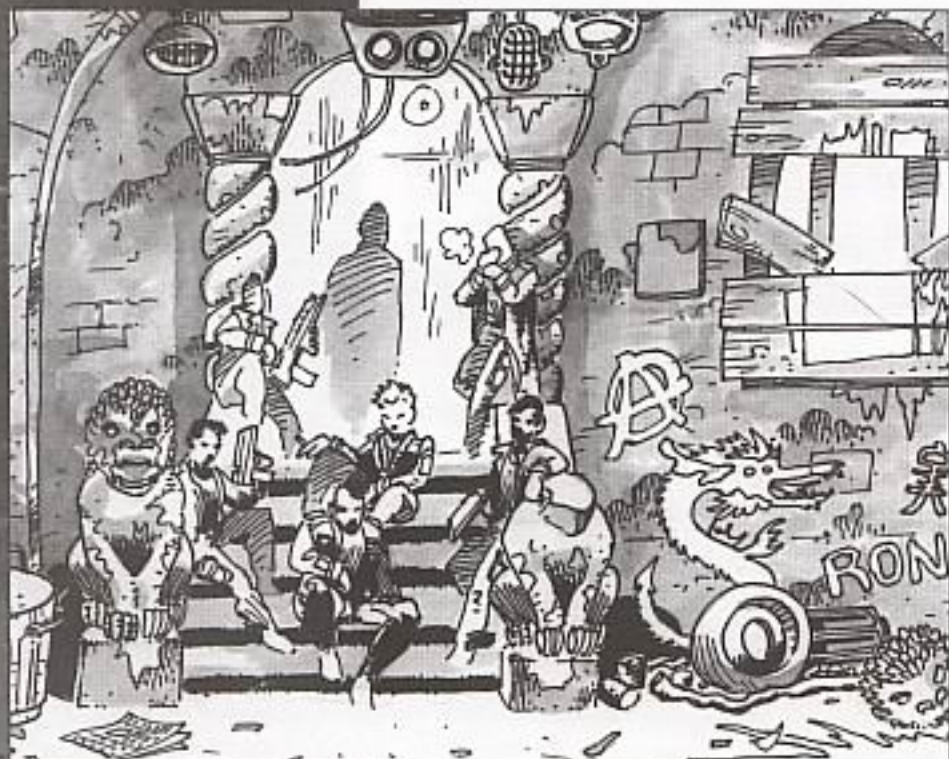
Every Triad is completely unique. Each Triad has its own area of expertise in which it trades. The Black Dragon deals almost entirely in arms and industrial secrets. The Golden Eye owns sinhouses. The Black Poppy controls drugs and gambling. Each Triad is controlled in a different manner. The Black Dragon is ruled by one man, who is only ever referred to by his title, Black Dragon. The Golden Eye is run by a council of its supreme bosses. The Black Poppy is controlled by a hereditary family. In addition to the major Triads, there are many smaller ones operating in more limited geographical areas.

Each Triad has many sub-divisions. These are organized into territories each with its own boss. This boss sub-divides his territories into many smaller fiefdoms which are divided up among his henchmen. Within these territories, the bosses attempt to monopolize whichever particular area of crime their Triad specializes in. In any geographical area you can thus have representatives of all three major Triads. Divisions between the Triads are by no means clear cut and often one Triad will attempt to muscle in on another Triad's specialized area. When one Triad encroaches on another, terrible gang wars ensue until both sides are exhausted or one side is destroyed. If one side is wiped out then its Triad will eventually send a new and ambitious boss into the area to attempt to claim back its turf. Then the war will pick up again.

What makes the Triads so successful is the way they operate hand in glove with the Mishiman authorities, often acting as unofficial intelligence agencies for the local rulers. Triads often perform tasks for rulers who would rather not dirty their hands; such as, robbery, murder, sabotage, industrial espionage.

The other thing that makes the Triads so successful is the total loyalty their members show. Joining a Triad is being adopted into a family. You put our old allegiances aside and you swear total loyalty to your Triad by the most binding of oaths. Breaking these oaths will result in you being hunted down by the Triad's feared assassins, the Tattooed men. These individuals have their entire bodies covered in the most ornate and intricate tattoos and are among the best-trained killers in all the worlds of mankind. The Triads are also skilled in the ancient techniques of brainwashing so that members are conditioned not to give away their secrets except under any circumstances. This conditioning will hold up against all but the most extreme forms of torture or mind-probe.

Triads teach their members all sorts of secret martial arts, and expect all their members to be proficient at dealing in violence. Triad taught fighters are among the best unarmed combatants known to humanity. Because Triads are so involved with the darker side of Mishiman society, Triads make the perfect front for the cults of the Dark Apostles. Since the Brotherhood has sensed the Dark Symmetry within some Triads, the Second Directorate of the Brotherhood has a whole department assigned to monitoring and eradicating them.



THE TRIADS

Triads are found everywhere in the Mishiman system. Each Triad has its own territories and its own secret signs and codes. They are criminal conspiracies of terrifying power and immense wealth. Triads are perhaps the oldest and most successful organizations of their type in the Solar System. Triads control their interests through thousands of agents scattered all over the universe. They are legendary for their viciousness and rapacious greed.

Each Triad has a distinguishing symbol. For example, this symbol could be a Black Dragon, a Golden Eye or a Crimson Lotus. A member of the Triad will have this tattoo inscribed somewhere on his person in psychoactive inks. These inks render the tattoo invisible until the wearer wills it and then it serves as an identifying mark to other members of the Triad. The Brotherhood has perfected a chemical bath technique which renders all such tattoos visible when the subject is immersed but this intricate process doesn't help until the criminal is caught first.

THE SHADOW WALKER CULT

In the office chambers of Mishima one often hears rumors of the dreaded Shadow Walker cult. Many believe these assassins to be only a legend. Few know the terrible truth—they exist.

Even for the knowledgeable few, there is little certain information about the Cult. Some claim the cult is an agency of the Mishiman government. Others say it is a remnant of an ancient religion. Some claim that the Shadow Walkers are part of a powerful conspiracy active on every level of Mishiman society. Others say the Shadow Walkers are divided into many warring sects; some of which follow the light, some of which follow the Darkness. Some say that, beneath their black battle-garb and masks, the Shadow Walkers are terrible deformed mutants. No Shadow Walker has ever been taken alive, and no body has ever been found for examination. When the Shadow Walkers are slain or captured, mortuary enzymes dissolve their bodies into pools of protoplasmic slime.

Rumor has it that the Cult steals infants from their parents and trains them in the mysterious ways of the cult from the moment they are old enough to walk. It is said that the infants receive drugs to increase muscle growth and aggression in the remote fortress monasteries of the Cult. These chemicals also condition the infants to resist pain and poison. By learning ancient forbidden techniques, the pupils reconstruct their nervous systems until their reflexes are cat-quick. From the age of three they are schooled in the martial arts. From the age of five, they begin to learn all the ancient ways of dealing death. They are also thoroughly indoctrinated in the philosophies of the Cult until their loyalty is beyond question. The very finest pupils are subjected to even more arcane rites to become the elite of the Shadow Walker cult, the Deathbringers.

Of course, this means that no Mishiman noble will publicly have any dealings with the Shadow Walkers but it is surprising how often they turn up on the battlefields when Mishiman armies are fighting.

Frightening as the rumors are about the Shadow Walkers, the truth is even more sinister. The Shadow Walkers were founded during the Neronian Schism by a renegade Technomancer of Algeroth known only as the First Master. This Technomancer belonged to an ancient Samurai family, whose holdings were wiped out by his enemy, the Naga family, in one of Mishima's bloodiest internal wars. Because Algeroth had failed to save his family from destruction, The First Master turned against Algeroth and mounted a coup within his own Temple Of Destruction. He stole its equipment and fled to the remainder of his family in the Mercurian under-worlds. His family were now Ronin, and already great martial artists. They had lost everything to their arch-rivals, the Naga clan. The First Master added his knowledge of bio-technology to their already considerable knowledge of Ki powers in

order to make his family truly formidable. The First Master renamed his family the Shadow Walkers, which hinted at their dark origins and designs. The Shadow Walkers began a campaign of assassination and terror which wiped out the Naga clan and thus satisfied their honor. After the Naga clan was exterminated, they were at a loss as to what to do next. By their use of the Dark Technology they had put themselves beyond the pale of Mishiman society. They were being hunted by the agents of Algeroth and by the Brotherhood. What could they do?

They hid in the remote wilds and began to plan. Over the next few generations they perfected their techniques of silent killing and swift movement. The First Master developed new bio-technological artifacts such as the mortuary enzymes that ensured that any slain Shadow walkers body dissolved into a pool of poisonous, protoplasmic slime. They stole the secrets of brainwashing from the Black Dragon Triad and acquired an unparalleled arsenal of forbidden martial arts techniques. They hired out their services to any who could afford them, and made secret pacts with the Lord Heirs to ensure their protection within the Mishiman Realms. In many ways the Shadow Walkers have become an important tool of Mishiman statecraft, a terrible and ultimate sanction to be invoked against the corporations enemies.





THE DARKNESS BELOW

The door of the elevator swished open. The smell of formaldehyde seared his nostrils. Suritomo Kim peered out into the shadowy darkness of his Uncle's secret sanctuary. Here in the deepest levels below Suritomo Keep, Omi kept his most beloved treasures. Kim shivered, and not with the cold. There was a feeling of terrible evil here which chilled even his hardened heart.

Kim walked forward down a corridor lined with glass jars, each of which contained a preserved human head. There were too many of them to count. Some of the heads belonged to men, some to women, some to children. Many wore expressions of fear or terror. A few looked strangely peaceful, as if they knew their fate and accepted it. Some wore looks of undying hatred, of surprise, of contempt. All now floated in a clear preservative liquid. Kim shivered knowing that he looked upon the heads of all the enemies Suritomo had killed or caused to be killed. He knew that the head of his own father was there among them.



His uncle sat at a small work table in the center of the bunker. Before him were five jars. In them were the heads of a man, a woman and three young children. Suritomo looked down at the heads of Lord Bata, his wife and children with something like affection written on his face. He looked for all the world like a miser contemplating his horde. Behind him, in a distant corner was a deep patch of shadow. It seemed to contain a terrible presence worse even than that of the Deathbringer. Kim found he could not look at it, though his eyes were unwillingly drawn there, before he managed to tear them fearfully away.

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THE MISHIMAN MILITARY



The Mishiman military is unique among all the corporations in that it possesses almost no formal, organized structure. Each Lord has his retinue of Samurai who obey his commands implicitly. Each Keiretsu provides its own force of warriors to the corporations' service. So Mishima had no formal system of command other than the personal oaths of loyalty given by each Samurai to his superior. Mishiman lords can field forces ranging in size from a hundred warriors fielded by the smallest industrial ruler to tens of thousands of highly trained soldiers fielded by the Lord of a Keiretsu. The level of training, equipment, and discipline can vary enormously depending on the resources of the Daimyo.

Because no Mishiman warlord can be everywhere at once, the Mishiman military has developed into a structure which can easily be run by a minimum of subordinates.

The basic unit is a force of five to ten is called a Strike Team. This is led by a Strike Leader. A unit of five to ten Strike Teams is called a Force and is

led by a Force Leader. A unit of five to ten Forces is called a Strike Force and is led by a Strike Force Commander. A unit of five to ten Strike Forces is called a Hoste. An army can be made up of any number of Hostes and its commander is called either Supreme Hoste Leader or Supreme Force Commander.

Each warrior in a Strike Team is sworn to obey his Strike Leader implicitly. Each Force Leader expects his subordinate Strike Leaders to obey without question. Promotion can come very swiftly. A superior can reward a man for bravery by promoting him on the spot. Conversely, a man can be demoted at a moment's notice. This is the strength and the weakness of the Mishiman system. If a commander quickly promotes his efficient soldiers, the rank and file will trust their commander's judgement. On the other hand, if a commander surrounds himself with toadies, his unit will disrespect his leadership and follow orders only reluctantly. Everything in Mishima depends on the ability of the commander of the unit.

BANNERMEN

An important member of any Mishiman unit is its bannerman. This individual is usually the strongest, fiercest and deadliest warrior of the unit because he carries its honor on his back. A bannerpole is affixed to his armour which holds its

unit's symbol. These fluttering flags usually bear the sign of the unit's liegeland, the unit's size and number. It is a great dishonor for a unit to lose its banner so warriors usually fight fiercely in the banner's defence.

EQUIPMENT

The equipment carried by a Samurai is entirely dependant on his status and wealth. All Samurai except those of the lowest level are expected to provide their own weapons and armour. The lowest level of Samurai have their equipment provided for them by their liege Lord. Because each Samurai purchases his own equipment, there is a vast disparity of equipment between Mishiman forces even those of Keiretsu of similar size.

Some Keiretsu believe in fielding smaller units of highly trained and very well equipped forces, while others field huge hordes of poorly armed and armored warriors. One thing is certain, namely that liege lords will always have arms and armour that are at least as good as their vassals. The lords of a Keiretsu will have

often be equipped with awesomely effective custom weapons which far exceed the power of any equipment possessed by their retainers. The Hatamoto of a Lord is usually much better equipped than the standard Samurai. In any case there are certain types of equipment that distinguish the Mishiman warrior from those of any other corporation.

Tradition demands that every Samurai carry two blades: the katana (the long sword) and the wazishaki (the short sword). Every Samurai is trained to use these weapons from birth. Because these blades have such meaning to the Samurai, they view sword combat as the most honorable form of fighting. To a Samurai, the sword duel allows you to gaze into your opponent's



eyes at the moment of victory or defeat. These swords are a physical symbol of a Samurai's status—his honor, even. When a Samurai is dishonored, he uses the short sword to disembowel himself in the ritual of seppuku. The Samurai are not proficient in sword play alone. All Samurai are also trained in the use of modern weaponry (guns, flamethrowers, etc.). Down deep, every Samurai finds these weapons distasteful.

All Samurai are also required to wear a battlesuit in combat. Some of these battlesuits are simple, lightweight affairs which offer little real protection in combat. Other battlesuits are extensively mechanized in order to provide its wearers with increased mobility and strength. Nearly every battlesuit is personalized to demonstrate the Samurai's family and his allegiance. The Shoa Keiretsu, with the help of Cybertronic, has recently begun producing a very advanced form of battlesuit which provides its wearers with the ultimate in augmentation and protection.

Mishima's truly unique military weapon among the corporation is the meka—giant robots piloted by either a single Samurai or by a crew. While these resemble great humanoid suits of powered armor, they are in fact much closer to tanks and other war-machines. These huge behemoths are capable of crushing tanks with a single foot. Of course, Meka are incredibly expensive

to create. Only the greatest of the Keiretsu can afford to field them. And because of their cost, meka are kept in use for generations. Many of these Meka have even acquired names and quite a lot of fame. The mighty Slayer of Dark Beasts halted the Dark Legion offensive against Quanto province almost single-handedly and toppled the towers of the Nephrite Halek's Citadel with its might powerclaw. The Render of Faceless Outlanders is immortalised in a huge life sized statue in the city state of Shoa because it destroyed two hundred and ninety six Bauhaus battletanks during the Siege of Shoa.

For centuries, only the Samurai took part in combat. But the corporate wars nearly decimated the pride of Mishima's aristocratic families. Lord Maru realized that he needed to find a new source of soldiers in order to repel both the other corporations and the Dark Legion. Because of Maru's need, he started fielding Commoners on the field and named them Ashigaru. Many traditionalists within Mishima rebelled at the fact that Commoners were being given weapons. But both Lord Moya and Lady Mariko have seen that Mishima will survive only if it starts fielding Ashigaru in battle. Most of these Ashigaru are incredibly loyal because they have been given the opportunity to gain honor in combat. A select few even become Samurai because of their bravery.

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"Good evening, nephew," said Suritomo Omi, mockery permeated every word. "I am truly glad you could join me."

"I have not yet found the woman but we have the name of her Imperial contact, McBride. I am having him watched. I live to obey, sire."

"Do you? Really? Then why do you do your best to anger me?"

"Anger you, sire?"

"Yes!" Omi roared, standing up. His arm lashed out sending the glass jars flying. They smashed on the floor. The heads rolled free, preservative dripping from their eyes and nostrils. His uncle towered over him. Instinctively Kim reached for his sword.

"Do not even consider it, nephew," Omi warned. The power of his voice held Kim frozen to the spot with fear.

"How have I angered you, sire? If I have then I beg leave to commit seppuku and atone."

"I am almost tempted to grant your request, nephew. If I did not think you the best of the weaklings who might inherit from me, I would."

Omi shook his head. "You are a fool. It is not bad enough that you allow Tanaka Kim to insult you where all might hear. You have to go and try to organize an attempt on his life. That would not have been so bad but you have to compound your original error by failing. Vengeance is understandable but incompetence is unforgivable."

Kim did not even bother wondering how his uncle had found out he had paid off the Black Poppy, despite all his precautions. The efficiency of Omi's spy network was legendary. What he needed to do now was to concentrate. He knew his uncle was trying to teach him something here, in his own cruel way. If he wanted Kim dead, then Kim would already be dead.

This was all Tanaka Ken's fault. He cursed the man. Why could the stiff-necked fool not have accepted his uncle's offer of service? Why did he have to insult me? Kim felt himself flush with the anger and shame of it. Almost he wished that he had drawn on the man but that would have done no good. Tanaka was legendary as a Blademaster. He would have killed Kim where he stood and Kim was not yet ready to enter the Great Void. Instead Kim had swallowed the shame of being insulted in front of his own men and arranged the most dishonorable death he could imagine for the Bata Blademaster. Somehow Ken had survived even that. The thought made Kim want to grind his teeth with rage.

"Tanaka Ken has the luck of a demon," he said finally.

"You think so, nephew? If you do then you are a fool."

"What do you mean, sire?"

"Tanaka Ken is a great warrior but do you think he could have survived an encounter with the Deathbringer?"

Kim considered his uncle's words. What was he trying to say?

"Perhaps, sire."

"I do not think so."

"You are saying that the Deathbringer spared him for its own reasons. But why?"

"Ah... at last you begin to use your brain for something other than thoughts of girls and gambling. Because it wanted him alive. To use as a weapon."

"Against who, sire?"

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MISHIMAN MILITARY DOCTRINE

Samurai live for individual combat. They know that only swirling melees where man fights against man are true tests of a warrior. The discipline and planning of more professional Corporate armies does not come easy to them. Samurai believe in the frontal assault and in preserving their personal honor at all costs. They would rather fight a duel with a respected foe than cut him down from a distance. Rivalries between individual warlords makes it difficult to operate according to any long range plans. Each warlord has a tendency to lead his armies to where he believes he can acquire the greatest glory and slaughter the most enemies at the moment.

In the small battles and skirmishes before the Second Corporate Wars, these traits were perfectly acceptable. But now the megacorporations have returned to a period of total war. The other corporations field highly organized, large scale units on the battlefield. These forces have easily handled the less-organized, highly individualistic Mishimans. While man for man the Samurai are among the best troops in the human system, when fighting as armies they have until recently proved to be markedly inferior to those of other corporations.

It was in the Warzones of Venus, the most fought over world of the Solar System, that the basic Mishiman manner of warfare began to change. Lord Heir Maru, Prince of the Oceans, introdu-

ced many innovations in the face of the relentless assaults of the other megacorporations, and the all-consuming encroachment of the Dark Legion. Faced by the well-organized attacks of Bauhaus and Capitol and the superlative special forces of Imperial he has introduced an element of professionalism and discipline to his unruly Samurai armies. Generals are executed who try to satisfy their personal need for glory and deviate from battle plans. A special school has been set up in Quanto where the sons of Maru's most powerful retainers are taught the most modern techniques of warfare by mercenary tutors.

On the battlefield Mishiman soldiers are still influenced by their ancient doctrines. Defend or die is still a favoured Mishiman slogan. Its warriors would rather give their lives than yield an inch of their corporation's sacred soil. Death in battle is still considered the most honorable way of dying which covers both the soldier and his family in glory. Each warlord's propaganda machine makes sure that the heroism of his Samurai is well known and that everyone would want to die with honor. The cities of Mishima are dotted with great shrines to its heroic warriors. These are places of pilgrimage and holiness where people come to invoke the spirits of their ancestors and pay their respects to Mishima's honored dead.

THE MISHIMAN NAVY

Mishima possesses a traditional navy only on Venus. Huge fleets of megacruisers plough through the tropical seas, guarding troop transports and rocketcraft carriers. Each Keiretsu provides its own fleet. Lord Maru's is the largest. His flagship, Prince of Dragons, is the mightiest warship ever to float in Venus's seas. It displaces a quarter of a million tons and bristles with weapons. The Prince's armored hull can withstand a strike from the mightiest ship-killing missiles. Its enormous 40 inch naval guns can reduce the largest of fortresses to rubble.

While anyone rich enough might own his own

fleet in the water, the three Lord Heirs have a monopoly on spacefleets. No-one else in the megacorporation is allowed to own spacecraft except the Overlord. Each Heir has his own fleet of merchant and war vessels. The largest is Lord Heir Moya's but Maru's warfleet approaches Moya's forces in size. Lady Mariko's fleet does not even come close to half the size of her rivals but she enjoys the best trading links with the other megacorporations. The Overlord has a golden spacebarge which is used to make ceremonial visits on the rare occasions when he leaves Luna.

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"Against me, of course. Such a man is a terrible weapon if pointed in the right direction. He will stop at nothing to avenge his master."

"But why would the Shadow Walkers do that? They have no reason to oppose you, sire." Kim sincerely hoped not. The thought of a Shadow Walker vendetta against his family made him want to run screaming into the night.

"Why, indeed, nephew? Why indeed? That is the question to which we must find an answer."

"You propose to go against the Cult, sire. That is suicide."

"I think not. They have supernatural powers to aid them but then so have I."

"You do, sire?"

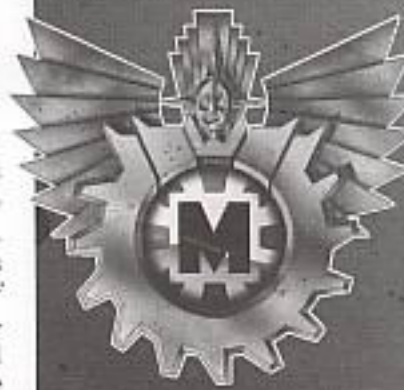
"Yes, Omi. I would like you to meet Ishmayel."

The patch of darkness contracted and seemed to take on humanoid form. Slowly it coalesced into a towering three-horned figure, twice as tall as any human being. It strode forward, its every movement speaking of power and perfect poise. Its red eyes burned like molten lava. It bared its fangs in a snarl that was supposed to look like a smile.

Kim felt like screaming. He struggled to keep his bowels under control. He knew now the source of the chill that permeated the bunker. He stood in the presence of a Nephrite, greatest and most majestic of all the servants of the Dark Apostles, a creature all true men were sworn to oppose with their lives.

There was only one thing he could do under the circumstances. He abased himself as to a superior. His uncle's mocking laughter flayed Kim's soul.

"For once, you show true wisdom, little Kim."





KATSUMI

Katsumi stared out through the tinted windows of the Kirin limousine and struggled to control her terror. She breathed deeply and tried to concentrate on focusing her Ki, as she had been taught to so long ago. It didn't help. She was tired, strung out. She knew she had walked too close to the edge for too long. So many good people had died so suddenly. It was almost as if Suritomo Omi had been playing with them all this time. She tried not to dwell on that thought.

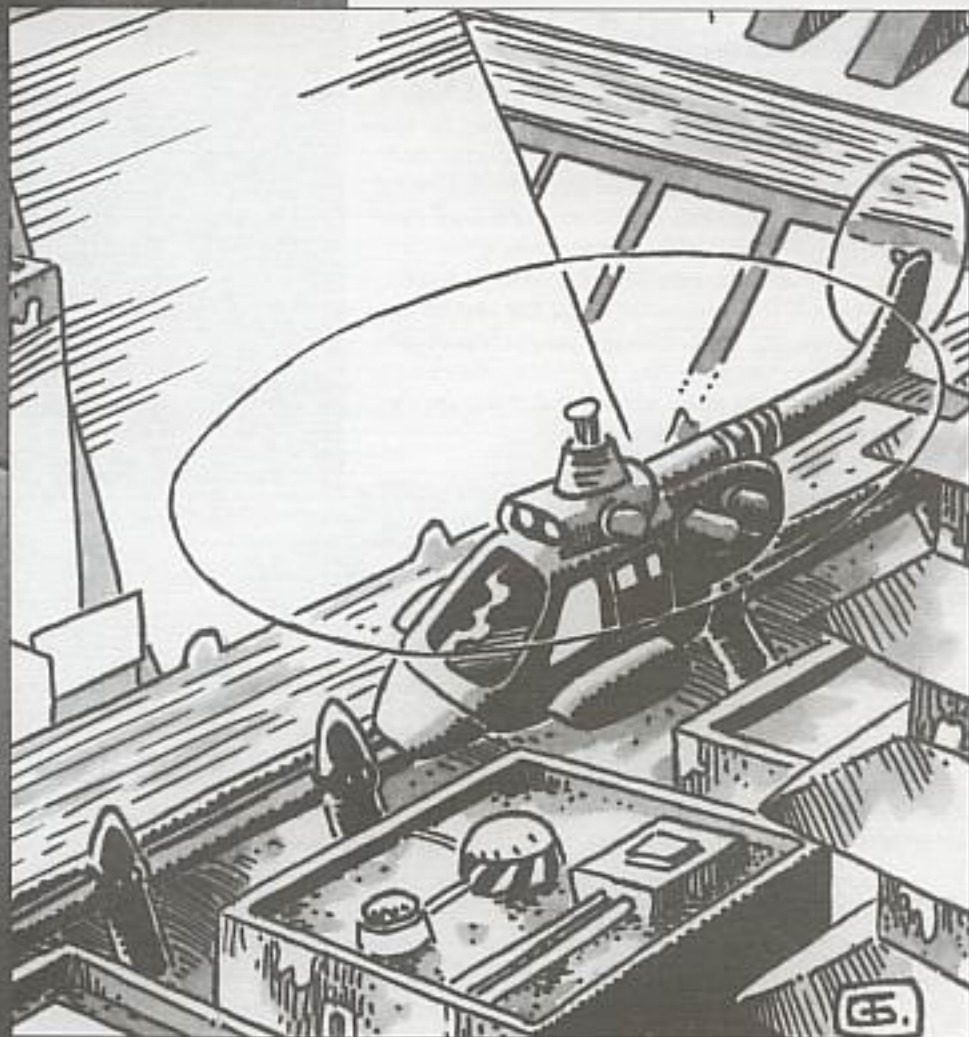
Omi was not omnipotent. He was just very old, very evil, very cunning and and very rich. If she could just hold out a bit longer she could elude him yet. Even so she could not help but stare at the crowds thronging through the streets of Longshore, and wish that she could change places with anyone of them, even the poorest, most Faceless beggar.

She envied the man sitting beside her, the new bodyguard that Chan Li had found for her. The man sat as immobile and emotionless as a statue. Only his eyes seemed alive. They had the fierce predatory fearlessness of a hawk. His hands never moved but they were never far from a weapon either. She did not let his deceptive calm fool her. She had seen his type before, men who could from absolute stillness to deadly motion on the blink of an eye. McBride had been like that.

She shook her head. She had considered letting him live to be her greatest mistake. An act of weakness. A forbidden moment when she had let her emotions blot out long years of training. Leave no witnesses, that was what Mara had always told her. She wondered what Mara would have said about letting McBride live. Folly, girl, that's what she would have said. Don't be swayed by the fact that you like a target or respect them or that they touch your heart. They are all just victims in the end. But then, aren't we all? She wondered what she would say when they met.

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THE MISHIMAN AIRFORCE



Mishima has not exactly been a system-leader in aerospace. On Mercury, Mishimans use zeppelins and helicopters in its cavernous under-worlds. On Venus, Lord Heir Maru is doing his best to build a modern airforce but he has so far concentrated on reforming his army and fleet. Because Lady Mariko's domain lies in the open deserts of Mars and borders next to mighty Capitol, she has been forced to build a large and efficient airforce. For Mariko's airforce strategy, consult how Capitol uses its forces in the Capitol Handbook. Helicopters are often used to ferry troops around her sprawling sparsely populated domain.

Mishiman airforces are part of a feudal lord's retinue. Because of the expense of aircraft, only the wealthiest of lords and Daimyos can afford to have their own airfleets. Even the greatest usually have at most a dozen planes, and maybe 50 helicopters. The exceptions are the personal airfleets of the Lord Heirs, which can have hundreds of vehicles.

Because their warrior code emphasizes individual dueling and contests of skill, most Samurai prefer to be fighter pilots, where they have the greatest chance of combat with worthy foes. They tend to regard bombers and bombing missions as dishonorable since they are basically just dumping high explosive on foes they cannot see. Because Samurai favor the more heroic dog-fighting, Mishiman airfleets tend to have disproportionately more fighters than bombers.

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I think I spared you McBride because you were young and cynical and brave and had seen too much of war. I think I spared you because you were just like me. You did your fighting in the jungles of Venus. I did mine in the underworld's of Mercury. You were a soldier fighting for some distant general, while I was a courtesan-assassin caught up in the endless skirmishes of the Keiretsu.

Maybe it was more than weakness she thought, maybe it was fate. Maybe I always knew this day would come, and that I would need someone I knew I could trust not to have given in to the Darkness. Someone who had been taught to oppose it through years of pain and hardship, just as I was taught to kill.

She shuddered. There were so few left she could trust. The extent of Omi's reach had grown frightening. She tried not to think about the information locked in her head. Information that folk had died



for. She was not even sure now that she could fully trust Chan Li though she had worked for him on and off for over twenty years. She was certainly sure she could not trust the Imperial people in the city. So many had been bought. She hoped Michael remembered that. Twice she had tried to contact Imperial through the usual channels. Twice she had barely escaped with her life.

She wondered whether he had forgiven her. Probably not. He was not the type. She wondered whether he had ever found out what sort of man Thomas had been, a drug-smuggler, a murderer, a double agent who had betrayed both Imperial and his Mishiman masters to the Darkness. She wondered whether he had ever worked out that the whole thing was a set-up.

She let out her breath in a long sigh. Soon it would be all over, one way or another. Foolish to let it all trouble her. She was just tired. If it was her fate to die soon, then it would be so. Why waste time worrying about it? She made herself smile then studied her watch. Time. She could not help but feel that she had little of it left.

Beside her, the new bodyguard Tanaka Ken swivelled his head, the better to study her tears.





NEW EQUIPMENT

DEMONHUNTER ARMOUR

On the Forbidden Isle, sorcerous craftsmen build armor for their fanatical Demon Hunters. These armored suits have frightening demon-faced masks, and spikes sticking from their shoulder pads and gauntlets. Many extrude razor-sharp fins from their forearm guards. For statistics, consult the Shoa Ace Battlesuit. In addition to those abilities, Demon Hunter armor has been blessed and anointed in special rituals which adds +4 to the wearers attempts to resist the Dark Symmetry. Most have 1d10 Mystic Talismans dangling from various parts of the armor. Demon Hunter suits cannot be bought. They are specially constructed only on the Forbidden Isle.

ARMOUR

Mishimans use very distinctive armour. It is built from ultra-light weight ceramics reinforced with metal plates and thickly padded to absorb impact. Until recently armor was reserved exclusively for the use of Samurai, but with the coming of Ashigaru, Commoners have been seen wearing it on the battlefield. There are several different types of armour available. All Mishiman armour is designed to enable its user to use his Ki powers to the fullest.

On the left shoulder pad is usually the emblem of your Lord. On the right are any rank badges or honor markings you may have. Ronin paint out both shoulder pads or replace the insignia of their lords with inscriptions in Katakana. In keeping with their individualistic nature all Samurai customize their armour to a greater or lesser extent so there are many minor variations in appearance between battlesuits.

Only Mishimans wear this armor, but outsiders can generally purchase Mishiman armour for triple the listed price through the black market.

ASHIGARU

This lightweight armour is used exclusively by Ashigaru. No Samurai would be seen dead in it. It consists of a light ceramic breastplate, forearm greaves and leg-greaves. The greaves are AR 3. The Chestplate is AR 4. Ashigaru leaders wear pot helmets of AR 4. Most Ashigaru go helmetless, instead they tie a scarf around their forehead. COST: 10,000 Crowns.

BATTLESUIT

This is the basic Samurai armour, ultra light yet resistant to damage, designed to keep its wearer safe from harm. Its use is slowly being superseded by the new powered designs, at least among richer Samurai. It is most common with lower ranking Samurai and Ronin. A battlesuit consists of breastplate, arm and leg greaves and shoulder pads. This armour is usually AR 6. COST: 35,000 Crowns.

POWERSUIT

Powersuits were the first of the new generation of Mishiman armour. The idea was to create a smaller version

of the Meka warmachines. A powersuit uses Cybertronic sourced control systems to monitor a complex, heavily armored hydraulic exo-skeleton. This enormously increases its users strength and mobility in addition to giving him a formidable and intimidating bulk. Warriors in powered armour stand up to 8 feet tall and weigh nearly half a ton. Their huge metal fists are capable of crushing rock. All powered armour is designed to individual specification. Many suits incorporate frightening face masks, elongated shoulder pad designs, and built in weapons. Almost all have a backbanner pole so that the wearer can proclaim his allegiance for all to see.

In the original designs for these battlesuits, there was a flaw which caused the powerplant to explode if hit at a certain point on the chestplate. This has been rectified in most models. When using powered battlesuits, use the suits' capabilities and Combat statistics instead of your own where appropriate.

AR: 10. If you are wearing the old style armour any perfect hit to the chest will cause the powerplant to explode instantly, doing an additional 1d10+1d6 damage to you. You don't get the benefits of armour against this.

COST: Older version: 150,000 crowns; Newer version: 200,000 Crowns

MOVEMENT ALLOWANCE: 4

OB: +4

STR: 50

SHOA ACE CUSTOM BATTLESUIT

This is the very latest generation of custom battlesuits, using Shoa distributed Cybertronic sourced monitoring systems to regulate their hydraulics. They are favoured by all of Mishima's highest nobility. In appearance, they resemble slightly larger and more formidable versions of powersuits. The real difference between a powersuit and the Shoa Ace is in the speed, power and additional protection they grant their wearers. Shoa's new armor is currently superior to all other Mishiman armor and is the absolute top of the line Mishiman battlesuit of the moment.

AR: 12

COST: 300,000 crowns

MOVEMENT ALLOWANCE: 5

OB: +5

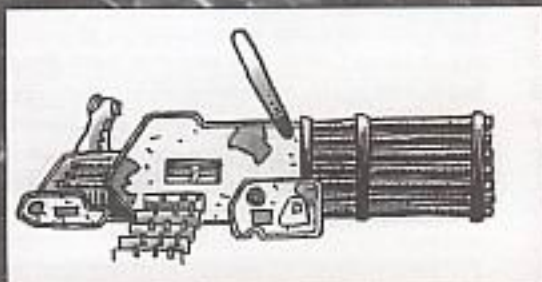
STR: 70

Shoa Ace custom battlesuit



NEW WEAPONS

DRAGONSTORM TURBOCANNON

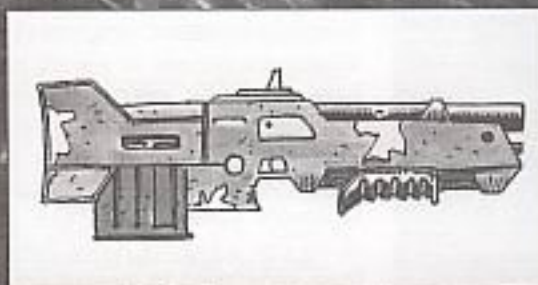


This awesome machine gun was designed to be used in the thick jungles of Venus. It can function as a squad support weapon, or it can be mounted on either an AFV or a custom battlesuit. It is a huge machine gun with 25 rotating barrels with a belt fed by a magazine under the weapon. It uses the latest cryogen cooling systems and can fire a thousand super-heavy armour piercing slugs a minute. This short-barreled weapon is notoriously inaccurate at long ranges but most of its users don't care: they love its sheer firepower.

W	L	MC	FUNC	RANGE	STR
40	90	—	A	600	40

RT	JF	DAM	COST
3	5	1d6+10	45,000

DEMONFANG ROCKETGUN



This unique weapon fires rocket assisted explosive bullets from its huge barrel. This weapon was designed to be used primarily against heavily armored targets. Using it on ordinary targets is overkill.

W	L	MC	FUNC	RANGE	STR
40	120	50	S	2000	40

RT	JF	DAM	COST
3	6	1d10+10	55,000

DEATHSHRIEKER SCREECHGUN

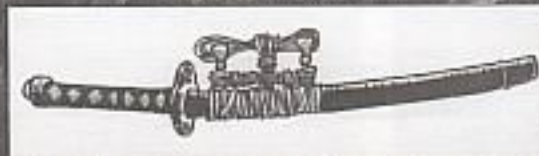


This terrible experimental weapon takes its name from the awful howling screeching sound it emits when used. Its sheer noise is capable of making unprotected ears bleed but that is not its most dangerous effect. A screechgun beams a wave of resonant vibration at its target, bypassing armour, liquifying flesh and destroying delicate internal mechanisms. Screechguns ignore armour.

W	L	MC	FUNC	RANGE	STR
40	100	—	S	100	40

RT	JF	DAM	COST
3	2	1d10	50,000

KATANA



These are the long killing blades favoured by Samurai. They are the most common Mishiman close combat weapon.

W	L	STR	DAM (1H)	DAM (2H)	COST
3.4	119	12	1d4	1d6	9700

WAKIZASHI



These are the short-bladed weapons most normally used for committing seppuku. Some Samurai who have mastered the two hand technique use them as an additional combat blade.

W	L	STR	DAM (1H)	DAM (2H)	COST
2	80	10	1d4	1d4+2	7700

HEIRLOOM WEAPONS

SPECIAL BONUSES

The most common property of an heirloom weapon is a special bonus. For close combat weapons this is added to the users OB when inflicting damage. For ranged weapons it is added to the users weapon skill when making a shot. Any special bonus is also added to the weapons jam factor, making it less likely the weapon will jam. If the Jam Factor goes above 10 then the weapon is so finely made that it will never jam. Each special bonus also adds 10 per cent its range.

If you roll an heirloom weapon on one of the events tables roll a d20. If the result is 1-10 you have a +1 weapon, if the result is 11-15 You have a +2 weapon. If the result is 16-20 you have a +3 weapon. For Guns a Special Bonus of +1 adds 20% to the price, +2 adds 50% to the price, +3 adds 100% to the price.

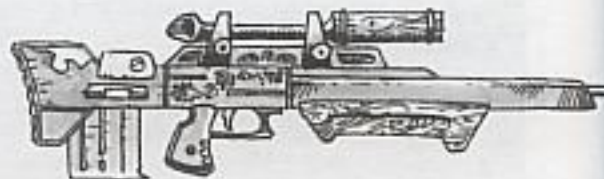
With the exception of swords, Mishima is infamous for producing shoddy weaponry. This is not because Mishimans are incapable of manufacturing excellent weapons. It is because most Mishimans believe in paying premium prices to have their fine weapons personally made and customized. Cheap mass produced weapons are for Ronin and paupers. Most Samurai believe in paying as much for their weapons as possible. Heirloom Weapons are the generic name for those fine weapons, since they are often passed from generation to generation and acquire their own names and histories.

MUSHASHI BLADES

If you have an heirloom sword it is most likely a Mushashi blade.

The best blades in the Solar System were made by Imperial's Clan Gallagher whose Smiths used many mystical techniques to create their awesome runeweapons. Many generations ago a renegade Gallagher smith betrayed his clan and passed on his secrets to the Mishiman Mushashi clan. Since then Mushashi blades have become famous throughout the Solar System. The Mushashi smiths have never equalled the skill of the Gallaghers but they have come close. They use a modified version of the Gallagher runeforging techniques to imbue their blades with special powers and a life of their own.

It is said that anyone who picks up a Mushashi blade can feel the life in it. For each special bonus a blade gives, roll once on the table below, Roll 1d20 and note the Blades special abilities. If the result has a * next to it and you have already rolled it, roll again, otherwise all bonuses are cumulative. You only get the benefits of a blades special powers when it is drawn and held in your hand. (Note; although Mishiman Blades only go up to +3 OB, Clan Gallagher Blades can go up to +5. Such



blades are never found in the hands of any except Imperial Highlander and Wolfbane clan warriors).

COST: Mushashi blades are almost never for sale. Should one come onto the market, the minimum price for a +1 blade would be 50,000 Crowns, +2 would be 125,000 Crowns, +3 would be 250,000 Crowns.

BIG TROUBLE

McBride moved through the Night Market making final checks. Everything looked calm since he'd lost his shadow en route here. The flames of gas woks flared, giant prawns sizzled. Here and there sat little groups of men, arriving late from the docks, playing stones or drinking Tiger beer at the wooden tables. Street girls drifted from table to table looking for custom. People spooned noodles from bowls with chopsticks. The radio played weird atonal Mishiman music. Over by the vendors stalls a group of Samurai stood in conversation, with a leather-garbed youth, probably the local Triad representative.

He bought a beer from a stallholder and took his seat again on the small wooden bench by a table. He let his eyes drift round to see if his men were in position. Toshio lounged arrogantly nearby and ignored the ardent stares of the streetgirls. He looked like a typical Ronin, drunk and spoiling for a fight, people tread warily round him. Only McBride knew that he was stone-cold sober and covering the back exit to the market.

Yuma flirted with a group of drunken laborers, her asking price to high for their meagre pockets. She looked like the tough street girl she once had been. McBride knew she could probably beat the whole gang of laborers, and half those Samurai too with her bare hands. She was one of the toughest women he had ever met.

Both of them were Freelancers of course. He would not have touched the list of names Sterling had given him with a bargepole. Those contacts would be known to half of Mishiman intelligence. They were the A-list, the easy to find, obvious agents meant to distract the opposition. The real agents, the B-list, would be under cover so deep you'd need a shovel to dig them out. Sterling would be handing any of their names out to a man like him. McBride felt better about using Toshio and Yuma. He's worked with them before, knew them to be reliable and trustworthy. At least he hoped they still were.

The rest of the place looked safe, just a mass of stalls selling food, beer and devilweed. The only people were the usual group of night people you'd expect to find in a Longshore market at three in the morning. Some slumming Bauhaus aristocrats looking for local talent. A tall Sunset Striker in full Capitolian armour escorted his petite Mishiman girlfriend to a nearby table, his manner a too-studied imitation of the Samurai swagger. McBride snorted with contempt; a Capitolian pretending to be Mishi man. He couldn't imagine anything worse.

Continued on p.66

SPECIAL ABILITIES

1 DARKSLAYER. This blade doubles its special bonus OB versus Dark Legion creatures and Heretics. It also adds its special bonus to any attempt to resist Dark Symmetry.

2 HATING BLADE*. This blade was forged for use against a specific foe. It gives +5 OB versus that particularly foe. Roll 1d6. Foe is 1: Imperial. 2: Bauhaus 3: Capitol. 4: Cybertronic. 5: Dark Legion. 6: Specific Mishiman family (your choice.)

3 FIREBLADE. When used in battle this blade burns white hot and is surrounded by a blazing nimbus of flame. Add +1d4 to its damage. Wounds inflicted by it cannot be regenerated.

4 BANEBLADE*. On a roll of 1 any foe hit by this weapon is slain if he is hit in the chest, head or stomach.

5 HEADTAKER*. This blade always strikes the foes head, if there is one on your target.

6 BONEBREAKER*. This blade causes an enormous shockwave when it hits, adding 1d4 damage. This 1d4 ignores any armour.

7 ACCURATE BLADE*. This blade allows you to modify your hit location roll by plus or minus 5.

8 DEFENDER*. This blade allows you to make a parry roll against any close combat attack. You do not need to have a saved action to parry.

9 SHIELDING BLADE*. This blade allows you to parry bullets at half your parry skill. You do not need to have a saved action to do this. You can parry any incoming bullet or grenade but not rockets or flamethrowers.

10 SPIRIT BLADE*. This blade contains the spirit of its previous wielder. The spirits of the blade's previous owner will sometimes give information or advice to its owner. Whether the blade is helpful or harmful is up to the GM. The GM roles up a character who possessed the blade previously. The current owner of the spirit blade may use any of the skills of the previous owner instead of his own. The blade allows you to use the previous owner's MST for use with the Art or KI powers. Note: Spirit Blades are notoriously difficult to handle. A spirit may not be freed from the blade until the current owner dies and takes its place. Needless to say, most spirits are anxious to see the current owner die as quickly as possible. On the other hand, spirit blades give its possessors more abilities.

If you are killed carrying this blade then your spirit will be stored within it.

11 POWER BLADE*. This blade is matrixed with the knowledge of certain Ki power techniques. For each special bonus, you get one of a specific martial arts schools Ki powers. So if you have a plus 3 Blade of the Demon Hunter School, you will have the first three powers of that school. Your GM should decide to which school the Blade belongs.

12 RENDER. This blade doubles the OB bonus the blade has. If you re-roll it it triples it. And so on.

13 TRUESILVER BLADE. This blade has a core of truesilver, which is a rare and potent material. Truesilver blades render its wearer completely immune to all effects of the Art and Dark Symmetry. You cannot be harmed or healed by the Art or the Dark Symmetry, nor can use either while carrying this weapon.

14 LIFESTEALER. This blade sucks the life-force from wounded enemies and passes it to you. For every three wounds it inflicts on a foe you may heal 1 point of damage on a specific location. A lifestealer cannot take life-force from anything which is already dead (i.e. undead legionnaires). They have no life force to steal.

15 LIVING BLADE. This blade fights with a life of its own. For each special bonus you get an extra close combat attack per combat round. Thus a +3 blade will let you hit an extra three times in close combat.

16 WARNING BLADE. This blade grants its wielder perfect Kuroji's True Sight as per the Ki power of that name. It behaves as if the wielder has a Ki skill of 19 when using this sight even if the wielder has no Ki skill at all. This Ki skill can not be used for anything else.

17 FOCUS. This blade enables you to add its special bonus to your Ki skill whenever you are wielding it. The blade must be drawn in order for you to get this bonus.

18 HEARTBREAKER*. This blade inflicts triple damage whenever it strikes to the chest.

19 SEEKER*. This blade automatically seeks out weak spots in armour. Treat an opponents armour value as halved, round down.

20 BONDED BLADE*. When this blade is forged, the sword maker has mixed some of the blood of its intended owner with the steel. As a result of this arcane practice, the blade is bonded to its owner. While the original owner is alive this blade's powers or damage bonus will not work for anyone else. The owner can call the blade to his hand from up to ten meters away and it will fly to his hand. The blade is resistant to being used by others so much that it will turn against them. If someone besides the owner of the blade uses a bonded blade, subtract its special bonus from the user's weapon skill during close combat. This blade can only be passed on by its original owner to his chosen heir or to the person he chooses. The original owner must perform a special ritual in which he mingles his blood with his heir's blood. Otherwise, the sword will not work for anyone else except a descendant of the original owner's bloodline.



MORTUARY ENZYMES

These strange bio-technological implants were designed by the first master of the Shadow Walker Cult to ensure that none of the cults members would ever be captured and thus expose the secrets of their bio-technological implants. The enzymes are injected into a Shadow walker at the beginning of his training and are activated under three circumstances; when the Shadow Walker dies, when he is fed or injected with a mind controlling substance or when the Shadow Walker wills it. The result is always the same, the body dissolves into a pool of poisonous protoplasmic slime. The DL of this poison is 15. The enzymes usually discourage people from investigating Shadow Walker remains.

GAS TOOTH

This device is favoured by the Tattooed Men. The gas tooth is used if a Tattooed Man is captured. When the Tattooed Man bites down on a hollow ceramic tooth, the tooth frees a chemical agent which reacts when exposed to air. This substance is so virulent that it will kill the tooth's owner instantly. It billows forth from his mouth and affects an area 3 squares by 3 squares directly in front of the user. If he is in a room with this area or smaller then the gas fills the room. Anyone else in the room must roll their PHY vs. the gas' DL of 13 to avoid being killed by the gas. COST: 10,000 crowns. This includes fitting.

BIONICS AND CYBERNETICS

Brotherhood black propaganda has caused many warriors to be reluctant to adopt bionics and cybernetics. Rumor has it that using such technology puts a man's soul at risk. This has acted to slow the spread of this technology considerably among freelancers and the followers of most megacorporations. The Mishimans have ignored the Brotherhood's words and enthusiastically embrace the new technology. Mishima is now among the biggest manufacturer and consumer of mechanical prosthetic systems in human space. While inferior to Cybernetic manufactured components, Mishiman bio-electrical limbs are still quite effective.

Cybernetic and bionic systems can be used to replace limbs that have become useless after taking damage in combat. The lowest level of bionics simply replaces a limb although it will provide the user an additional point of armour in that location. A prosthetic's increased hardness and weight will add +1 to the users OB when punching or kicking with that limb.

If your character acquires cybernetics during character creation you should roll on the hit location chart and see where he was modified. Cost is given for those who wish to purchase implants during play.

HEAD. Roll 1d6

1 **TARGETER EYE.** This looks like a black eyeball with a crosshair where the pupil should be. It acts as a laser sight. See Mutant Chronicles

RPG pg. 157 for effects. COST: 3000

2 **TELESCOPIC EYE.** This looks like a blank silver eyeball except that a telephoto lense protrudes from the socket. When used it extrudes just like a camera's telephoto lense. This acts just like a telescopic sight. See Mutant Chronicles RPG p.157 for effects. COST: 3000

3 **INFRARED EYE.** This looks like a red eyeball. It allows the user to see in the dark like a night-sight. See Mutant Chronicles RPG pg.157 for effects. COST: 2000

4. **RADIO RECIEVER.** This implant is fixed in the skull just behind the earlobe. It allows the user to monitor local radio channels and broadcast through an implanted throatmike. COST: 5000

5 **VOCAL DIGTISER.** Favoured by those who have had their vocal chords wrecked by injury, this allows its user to speak in a harsh and intimidating mechanical voice. More skilled users can use it to imitate the voices of others over the phone. Add +2 to any roll which requires the use of your voice (conning, intimidation, etc.). COST: 5000

6 **COMBINATION SYSTEM.** Roll again twice ignoring this result.

CHEST. ARMoured RIBCAGE. Your chest has been wrapped with an external metal ribcage which gives you 3 points of additional armour round the chest. COST: 15,000

STOMACH. INTERNAL MONITORS. These complex bio-electrical systems monitor your bloodstream for traces of poison. They neutralise any toxins that have entered your system on a roll of 10 or less. COST: 20,000

ARMS. You have the basic bionic arm with a single modification. Roll 1d6.

1-2 **INCREASED STRENGTH.** This arm allows you to do an additional 1d4 damage when you hit with your fist or a close combat weapon. COST: 10,000

3-4 **ADAMANTINE CLAWS.** You can extrude claws from your fingers or the back of your hand. These allow you to do 1d6 damage in close combat. COST: 11,000

5-6 **BUILT-IN WEAPON.** This arm has a built in gun which fires from your wrist when you drop your hand forward. It simulates the action of a Punisher Handgun (see Mutant Chronicles RPG pg.181). COST: 10,000 plus cost of weapon.

LEGS. You have had both legs replaced with these bio-electrical systems. They grant you one additional special power. Roll 1d6;

1-2 **LEAP.** You can jump up to 8 squares in length or 4 squares high in a single action. COST: 15,000

3-4 **RUN.** These legs let you run with great speed. Add 2 to your basic Movement Allowance. COST: 20,000

5-6 **STRENGTH.** These legs allow you to add +1d4+1 to your basic damage when you kick someone. COST: 10,000

MYSTIC TALISMAN

These amulets are manufactured by the White Mystics and Demon Hunter Artificers. They come in various strengths but are very useful for those who have to face the Darkness. They add +1 to +3 to any attempt the user makes to resist the Dark Symmetry. If the user fails the attempt, the symbol will negate the affect of the Dark Symmetry anyway but will melt and be useless forever afterwards. You can wear multiple Mystic Talismans but the protection bonus is not cumulative. Demon Hunters carry many talismans on their body so that they have a talisman ready even if one is destroyed after a failed attempt. When you wear multiple Talismans of different protective value, always use the one with the greatest value first. COST: (20+1d6) x 1000 crowns per +1.



NEW VEHICLES

DRAGONBIKE

The Dragonbike has been specially adapted for warfare in the polluted, waterfilled caverns of Longshore and in the swamps and jungles of Venus. It is normally customized to have an ornate dragon head. Because it is powered by a mighty Kirin Type 4 Hydrojet propulsion system, it can mount a heavy autocannon in the head and twin rocket-launchers in the rear weapons pods. Over water, quicksand and swamp it is capable of speeds in excess of 60 knots.



DRAGONBIKE

DIMENSIONS (L/H/W): 6/2/3
CREW: 2 (1 rider, 1 passenger)
ARMAMENT: 1 LMG, 2 Rocket Launchers
SPEED: 70 mph
AMMO CAPACITY: LMG: 1000;
 Rocket Launchers: 20
MODE: LMG: A; Rocket Launchers: S
RANGE: LMG: 1000/1500;
 Rocket Launchers: 1000/1500
DAMAGE: LMG: 1d6+6; Rocket Launcher: 1d10+6
ARMOUR: front: 8; rear: 6; top: 4; sides: 4

DRAGONFISH

DIMENSIONS (L/H/W): 9/2.7/4.8
CREW: 2 (1 driver, 1 weapons operator)
ARMAMENT: 9 x Light Guided Anti-Ship Missiles,
 3 x Heavy Guided Anti-Ship Missiles
SPEED: 57 knots
AMMO CAPACITY: —
MODE: S
RANGE: LGASM's: 18 miles; HGASM's: 65 miles
DAMAGE: LGASM's: 1d10+6; HGASM's: 1d10+12
ARMOUR: front: 4; rear: 4; top: 4; sides: 4

MEKA

Meka are the huge armored battlesuits for which the Mishimans are justly feared. They stalk across the battlefield with earthshaking tread. In the age before Cybertronic components made powersuits possible, these giant hydraulic walkers were the ultimate war-machines. They look like huge metal Samurai weighing many tons.

In this new age, new technology has made them even deadlier. Meka are still piloted by a man strapped into the command module. His lower body is encased in the machines chest. His head and shoulders are located in the machines head. The pilot's controls the machine through twin joysticks and footpedals which allow him to steer and utilize the machines weapon systems. Meka are enormous and heavily armed. Meka can be armed with a variety of weapons depending on what role they are intended to play. Some are heavily armored in order to support infantry maneuvers. Other Meka are lightly armored in order to strike an opponent quickly. Most have at least one shoulder mounted rocket launcher, and a weapon in each hand.



MEKA

DIMENSIONS (L/H/W): 2/4/3
WEIGHT: 8 tons
CREW: 1
ARMAMENT: varies
STRENGTH: 95
SPEED: 30 mph
AMMO CAPACITY: varies
MODE: varies
RANGE: varies
ARMOUR: front: 12; rear: 12; top: 10; sides: 10



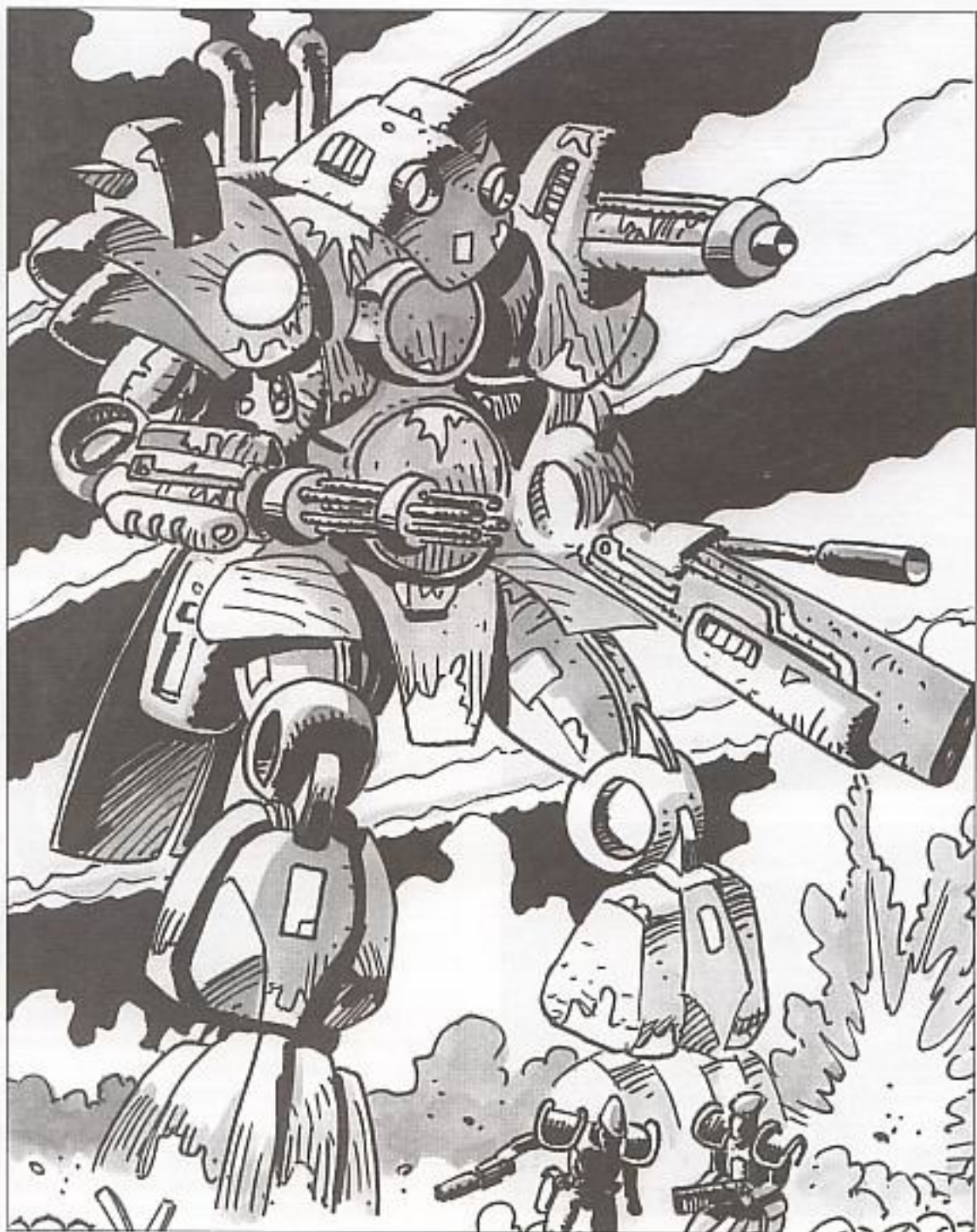


TATSU GIGAMEK

The Tatsu Gigamek is the ultimate Mishiman warmachine, a huge mechanical walker that stalks across the battlefield demolishing everything in its path. All Tatsu are different. All are custom built. Some resemble squat giants, others look like tall proud warriors. They all belch smoke from their mighty diesel engines. Many are currently out of service because their old valve-based electronics are being replaced with new Cybertronic sourced components. Other Tatsu still use their old systems which relied on their incredibly thick armour, their mighty weapons and the skill of their crews to preserve them on the field of battle. The statistics given here are for the Smiter of Foes. Use them as guidelines for your own gigameks. The Smiter of Foes has recently been re-fitted to launch Firebird cruise missiles.

TATSU GIGAMEK

WEIGHT: 100 tons
CREW: 8 (1 pilot, 3 gunners, 4 engineers)
ARMAMENT: LEFT HAND: 14 inch Megacannon; RIGHT HAND: Giant Chainsword; LEFT SHOULDER: Cruise Missile Cluster Turret
STRENGTH: 150
SPEED: 50 mph
AMMO CAPACITY: Gun: 100; Missile: 8
MODE: Gun: S; Missile: S
RANGE: Gun: to the horizon; Missiles: 50 miles.
DAMAGE: Megacannon 1d20+1d10; Missile: 2d20; Chainsword: 1d20+6
ARMOUR: front: 18; rear: 18; top: 15; sides: 15



HARD TIMES IN UNDERCITY





This adventure takes place directly after the events described in the fiction section of this sourcebook. It refers to characters and situations already described there, and as GM you should study the fiction section closely, both to give you more details about what's going on, and to help set the tone of the adventure.

WHAT IS REALLY GOING ON?

This is a brief overview about what each of the major characters in the story knows or has guessed about the events that have taken place. It also gives you some idea of their plans and aims.

KATSUMI

Katsumi has spent a lifetime seeking vengeance on Suritomo Omi for the destruction of her family. She disguised herself as a courtesan and entered Suritomo Keep where she became mistress of one of Omi's guard captains. The courtesan Yukio was her agent there, and Yukio on passed a lot of good information before her death (see *A Lesson In Government*). (Omi talks in his sleep.)

During the meeting between Omi and the Heretic Stewart (see below), Yukio recognized Stewart as a former Imperial agent, and she photographed the meeting with a belt-buckle mini-camera concealed in her tunic. Unfortunately for Yukio, Omi had long suspected her of being a spy, and he executed her just after she passed along her tape and notes to Katsumi. Katsumi fled Suritomo using passes wheedled out of her lover.

It did not take long for Omi to work out that his guard captain's mistress had departed, and further investigations by his spy network revealed who she was. He suspects Katsumi knows about him and Stewart. Since then, he has devoted every effort to killing or capturing her. He has used Imperial traitors and even Heretics from Ishmayel's cult, which has alerted Katsumi to the fact that Omi has some connection with the Darkness.

Katsumi is unaware who Alexander Stewart is. She only knows his name and the fact that he

appears to be an Imperial and a Heretic. McBride knows a little about him and his history (see the character description for McBride below).

Katsumi has the photographs and documents sewn into the lining of her leather jacket. To the right people, these could be worth a lot. She also knows all about Omi's destruction of Bata, which is what Sterling at ISC-4 is interested in at the moment. (If he knew Omi was involved with a renegade Imperial Heretic like Stewart Sterling, he would do everything in his considerable power to stop Omi.)

At this point in time, all Katsumi really wants to do is stay out of the clutches of Omi and deliver the information she has collected to someone she can trust. In order to escape, she is quite prepared to sacrifice the lives of all who are involved with her, with the possible exception of McBride, with whom she still has some sort of emotional involvement.

SURITOMO OMI

For years, Omi has put up with Katsumi spying on him. He has tried to catch her or have her killed, but she has always been too clever or too quick, and he has never really put any serious effort or resources behind getting her. It's been a game of cat-and-mouse which Omi has enjoyed the way other men enjoy playing chess. All this has just changed recently.

Through the mediation of a former Imperial Heretic, Alexander Stewart, Omi at last made contact with the Dark Legion and the Nephrite Ishmayel. He has made a nightmare pact with the

Continued from p.60

Three burly men played hookjack at a corner table, while their eyes unobtrusively scanned for trouble. Local Triad enforcers, McBride guessed. He caught the unobtrusive glance from Toshio. He turned to study the entrance arch to the market hall.

It was her, still beautiful. Dressed like an expensive streetgirl accompanied by a tough looking Ronin bodyguard. The Bauhaus boys all turned their heads. Her eyes widened when she saw McBride and she came and sat down opposite him. The Ronin stood by her shoulder, his hands never far from the hilt of his katana or the butt of his pistol.

"Michael—how are you? Its been a long time." He kept his eyes cold and did not return her smile. For a moment, he felt like taking the shotgun and blowing her away. The moment passed. He was a professional. This was a job.

"I have a car out back. We're going to the docks." He was proud of himself, his voice was level even though his mouth felt dry. He had kept it strictly professional. He'd take her to a safe house then they could talk.

Tanaka Ken studied McBride. The man had the hard-faced look of all Imperial's elite troops. He was wearing a long trenchcoat. There were weapons concealed there, and body armour too. He was taking no chances—good. Ken looked around, trying to pick out McBride's backup. The Ronin pretending to be drunk was certainly one. Ken had caught the guarded look that flashed between him and McBride. Were there others?

Wait—over there—something was wrong. The Samurai talking to the punk kid. They were moving this way, fanning out like men who meant violence. Simple policemen doing their job? Ken didn't think so. McBride had seen them too. He was rising to his feet. Ken focused his Ki powers. All around them he sensed stealthy movement, warriors taking up position, something big coming this way. They were caught in the jaws of a well-oiled trap, he wondered who had betrayed them; the driver, Chan Li, someone he would never even know? It didn't matter.

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Nepharite, for Omi wants nothing less than to supplant Lord Heir Maru himself. This is an extremely dangerous plan which will throw all of Mercury into civil war.

In that factional strife, Omi-backed by his allies will emerge as the most powerful Daimyo and will take over running of Mercury using Lord Heir Maru as a figurehead. He will be aided in secret by Dark Legion troops, who will also show up on the side of his enemies, but never in such numbers as to do them any real good, only enough to discredit them. To achieve his mad ambitions, Omi is quite prepared to sell his soul to the Darkness.

ISHMAYEL

Ishmayel is a Nepharite in the service of Algeroth. He was one of the leaders in the attack on the Lost Provinces, and he has a huge hatred of the Mishima corporation and all it stands for. It is his task to undermine Mishima and prepare Mercury for the coming of his Lord.

He seeks to use Omi as a tool for this. Whatever happens, Omi's plan is likely to cause civil war on Mercury and thus weaken mankind. Better yet, if Omi wins, then the Dark Legion has a willing tool ruling Mercury, a tool that can be supplanted at a later date. At this point, Ishmayel is perfectly willing to let Omi believe he is in charge, and he will do anything to advance Omi's plans.

DEATHBRINGER KAO

There is no love lost between the Shadow Walkers and the followers of the Dark Apostles. The Heretics see the Shadow Walkers as renegades. The Shadow Walkers see the Heretics for the deadly enemies they are. During his visit to Suritomo Keep, Kao did some investigating and uncovered Omi's connection to the Darkness.

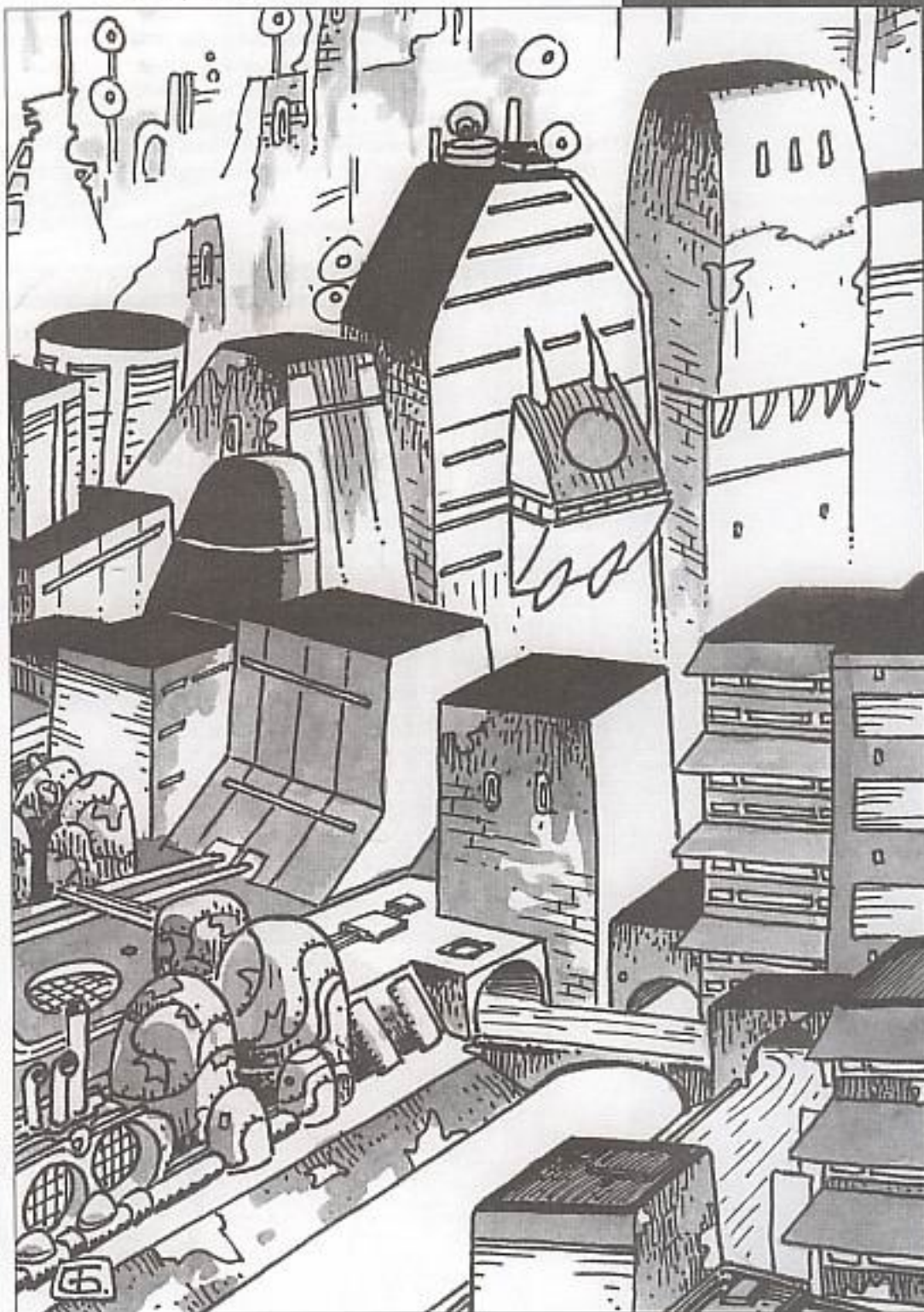
The Shadow Walkers are still loyal to Mishima in their own twisted sort of way, so Kao has taken it upon himself to reveal Omi's plot to the world and slay Ishmayel if he can. To this end, he has preserved Tanaka Ken's life and intends to ensure he stays alive to discover Omi's plot. He is even using his influence with the Black Dragon Triad to steer Tanaka in the right direction.

Kao knows no one would believe a Shadow Walker if he was to accuse Omi or was even to produce evidence accusing him. The Shadow Walkers are infamous for manufacturing such things. However, everyone would believe a man as upright, honorable and respected as Tanaka Ken.

Kao knows also that they want Katsumi dead and her documents recovered. Kao hopes to use Katsumi as bait for a trap that will eventually lure Ish-

mayel into a place where he can be destroyed with the Soultaker. He figures if he just keeps thwarting Omi's attempts to get her, eventually the Nepharite will take a hand personally, and then Kao will destroy him. To this end, he must play a dangerous game, keeping Katsumi where Omi's pawns can get at her, yet keeping her safe. He must do this without anyone suspecting his intervention until Ishmayel is lured into the open.

The Soultaker is a weapon of awesome and ancient evil. It traps the spirits of those slain within it and allows its wielder access to their knowledge. Kao reckons that with the knowledge of a Nepharite at his disposal, he will become still more powerful.





In this scenario, Deathbringer Kao is something of a *deus ex machina*. He can be used if the heroes find themselves overmatched in the final battle with Ishmayel. Otherwise, he should simply be a sinister shadowy presence hovering in the background.

MCBRIDE

As is usual in his life, McBride is pretty much in the dark. He does know that Stewart is a former Imperial agent turned Heretic, and rumor has it that he was involved in some nasty business in San Dorado about six months back. (See the Capitol sourcebook for details.) He can identify Stewart from the picture if he is shown it. He served with the man in the Blood Berets.

McBride wants to get Katsumi away. He now also feels responsible for Tanaka Ken and Yuma, since they have been dragged into the whole mess. He wants to deliver Katsumi to Sterling, ISC-4's representative in Fukido. He is only now starting to get some idea of the real magnitude of the forces arranged against them.

YUMA

Yuma is not what she seems. Once she was indeed a straightforward Freelancer, but recently her great hatred for the Samurai has led her to dabble with the Cult of the Dark Sun, one of many Algethian cults on Mercury. Through the cult network, she became aware of who Ishmayel is seeking. She plans on capturing Katsumi and handing her over to the Nephrite herself, thus gaining some great rewards.

During the big fight at the Night Market, she did her best to be of no help at all to McBride. She only broke the faceplate of the powered-armored Ronin's suit when she could have killed him, and she only took part in the melee with the other Ronin after Katsumi intervened and looked like routing the Ronin on her own.

Now she plans on drugging McBride and the others and taking Katsumi to the abandoned temple on Akumi Island, where she knows Ishmayel will meet her. She has nothing against McBride and won't kill him unless forced. On the other hand, given a chance she would cheerfully murder Tanaka Ken and any other samurai who cross her path.

GETTING THE HEROES INVOLVED

There are many different ways to get your heroes involved in this adventure. You can select one or many of them, depending on the types of characters your heroes have.

ASSOCIATES OF MCBRIDE

If your heroes are non-Mishiman Freelancers or employees of other corporations, then this is probably the best way of getting them involved. The heroes are all former friends or associates of McBride's, and they are currently based in Longshore. He will request their aid as a favor or by offering them a job.

RONIN

If your heroes are Samurai, then they can all have formerly served the Bata clan and (like Tanaka Ken) refused service with Suritomo, preferring instead to become Ronin. This means Ken trusts them, and they will know and trust each other.

ASSOCIATES OF CHAN LI

Alternatively, the heroes might be a few criminal types associated with the gang boss Chan Li. He can assign them to protecting Katsumi because he is fond of her. He wants to keep her alive because he knows Suritomo Omi is his enemy and because Deathbringer Kao has requested it.

ASSOCIATES OF KATSUMI

The heroes may be long-term associates of Katsumi, in which case they all probably have a grudge against Suritomo and are part of Katsumi's freelance spy network. They are all also scheduled for termination now that Omi has decided to put his weight behind the effort to capture her. This option puts the heroes in for a really hard time, since they are being directly hunted by the one of the most powerful and evil of all keiretsu overlords.

THE PRINCIPLES

If a player character is killed, you should let its player take over running one of the NPC's, such as McBride or Tanaka Ken.



OVERVIEW

The heroes have to contact the forger Mako and acquire the false documents he has prepared for McBride. Meanwhile, Yuma succeeds in kidnapping Katsumi and dragging her off to Akumi Island. The heroes eventually follow and have a climactic battle with Yuma, Ishmayel and possibly the Shadow Walkers in an abandoned temple complex far below the islands surface.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

While running this adventure, you want to generate as much of a sense of paranoia as possible during the early stages. Keep asking the heroes their Perception scores and rolling the dice as if you were making Perception checks. Not only will this worry them, but you can slip in a few real Perception checks while you're at it.

Whatever happens, you want to give the heroes the sense that they are dealing with a deadly conspiracy, and no one, no matter how innocent seeming, should be above suspicion. They will have some grounds for their suspicion because Deathbringer Kao or his agents will be watching them. However, they are too competent to ever be spotted.

THE SAFE HOUSE

McBride has taken the precaution of renting all the rooms in a small inn by the docks. It is owned by Tai, an associate from McBride's time freelancing on Luna. Tai has recently moved back to his native Longshore, retired and opened this business. As far as McBride knows, no one is aware of his connection with Tai, so the place is safe.

The inn has been cleared of other patrons, and the wall screens have

been re-arranged in a new pattern so that no outsider who comes in will know the floorplan. The safe house is where McBride and the others have fled to after the firefight at the Nightmarket (see the fiction section Big Trouble). They are now getting ready to implement the second part of McBride's escape plan.





EMERGENCY

However the heroes get involved in all this, you should get them to the safe house. There they will meet all the principle characters, and McBride will explain their mission to them.

"Right. Here it is. I won't lie to you. We're in big trouble, and we need your help. Some very powerful people are after us, and they are spending a lot of money to find us. All of our faces are known to their people, and our mission has been compromised.

"That's why we've brought you in. Hopefully our enemies don't know who you are, and if you keep your mouths shut and play according to the rules, then they need never find out. Play this out, and you'll be well rewarded. Betray us and, well...

"What we need you to do is contact a forger, a man called Mako. He has travel papers and false documents already prepared for Katsumi and I. We'll need more papers for Tanaka Ken and Yuma, since we're all going to have to leave town fast. Go to Mako and give him these." At this point McBride brandishes a manila folder with photos, specimen signatures and descriptions of Yuma and Ken.

"Stand over the guy while he makes up the papers. Whatever he tells you, he can do this in a couple of hours. If you make him. If you have to

put a gun to his head, do it. But get those papers. Bring them back here-and make sure you're not followed. Simple, eh? Any questions?"

McBride will answer any questions that his limited knowledge will allow, within reason. The others may offer bits of what they know, if it is relevant. Under no circumstances will Katsumi reveal why she is wanted by Omi, unless these are trusted associates of hers. McBride gives the heroes a cap with the Imperial Armed Forces insignia on it to show to Mako. He also gives them a briefcase containing 85,000 Cardinal's Crowns: 25,000 for the documents he has already made a payment on and 50,000 for the new documents, with an extra 10,000 for the old man's trouble.

PAYMENT

McBride has considerable financial resources and can get lines of credit running back all the way to ISC-4 and the mighty Imperial Corporation. He can offer the heroes whatever it takes to get them involved. Since only you know how greedy your heroes are, we leave this up to you. What he can't do is pay them huge sums up front.

THE FORGER

How the heroes get to Mako's place is up to them. It is in the Undercity, so any trip there will involve a journey down the Elevators. They will then have to cross the Undercity. The quickest way is by tuk-tuk, a strange converted-motorcycle rickshaw common in the Undercity. These run on electric power and are quick, quiet and maneuverable.

Now is a good time to impress on the heroes the teeming strangeness of the Undercity, the endless noise and dripping water, the huge flickering signs advertising Mishiman products in Kata-

kana script, etc. (See the description of the Undercity for more details.)

The address they have been given is in the lower warren, one of the deepest and nastiest areas of the Undercity, a hotbed of crime where the Samurai rarely go and the sight of masked faceless ones is common. The tuk-tuk driver will drop them on the edge of the warrens. They will have to walk through the crowded shadowy tunnels to find the address McBride has given them.

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Ken moved closer to McBride. "Trouble," he said. "Big trouble."

McBride moved between Katsumi and the approaching Samurai. His hand fumbled deep into his trenchcoat pocket and found the butt of the sawn-off shotgun. He began to back away, pushing Kat with him. He didn't want to let the Samurai get within katana reach of him. They were too damn quick with those killing blades. He was pleased to see the Ronin bodyguard stand his ground, blocking their advance.

"Out of the way, Ronin," grunted one. "I want to check the outlander's papers."

It was a reasonable request. McBride felt trapped. If these men were the law, he had to show the papers. If they weren't the police, he would be within killing distance. He stood frozen for a moment. Kat's Ronin bodyguard saved him.

"My name is Tanaka Ken, dog! And I don't like your tone of voice."

The Samurai's hand flashed for his blade. Ken was quicker. His blade was a blur, he took the man's hand off at the wrist. A continuation of the stroke parted another Samurai's head from his shoulders. What the hell, thought McBride, and pointed the shotgun. Its blast took the head of the last Samurai and reduced the lining of McBride's coat to rags.

Suddenly everything was happening at once. The night was filled with violence. From between the stalls a crowd of armed men rushed. Ronin, by their looks. They brandished swords and Windrider SMG's as if they knew how to use them. McBride tipped the metal topped table, sending food and beer bottles spinning. He made a grab for Kat but she wasn't there. She was already ahead of him. A Punisher handgun had appeared miraculously in her hands. McBride dreamed he had a Charger while he blasted into the crowd of Ronin with his shotgun and ducked down behind the table just in time to avoid the return fire.

Tanaka Ken knew that time was running out. These Ronin were just a distraction, the real threat was coming ever closer. He could hear it. Well, he had sworn to protect the girl so now he must do his best. Focusing his Ki he somersaulted towards the attackers. Before he landed, he Ken had decapitated one of the Ronin. He caught the dead man's katana as it fell and lashed about him with both blades. Every stroke was another dead.

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OPTION

If your heroes are the sort who like lots of mindless violence, this is a good chance to get them into a battle with some Ronin. These Ronin are simply robbers who demand money from all who cross their territory. Since the heroes are carrying a considerable sum in cash, they have good reason to fight. Use the Ronin profile given below. There should be one Ronin per hero. If the heroes are really tough, use one Ronin per hero plus a D3.

MAKO

When they get to Mako's workshop they will find it simply a small shop-front burrowed right into the Undercity wall. In the window it says; photographer. If the heroes go into the back they will find a small circular stairwell that leads into a low dark cave. In here sits the old man, surrounded by piles of scrolls, partially dismembered passports of all the corporations and all sorts of official and semi-official documents.

Mako is a wizened old man in a faded gray kimono. His head is bald, and he has long, drooping mustaches and a goatee. His eyes are bright with curiosity and ancient greed. When he speaks, he does so quickly in an old man's cracked, high-pitched voice. He will ask the heroes if they have any proof they came from McBride. If they show him the cap with the Imperial insignia, all is then well.

Mako has the documents that McBride wanted, and he seems surprised that he did not come to pick them up himself. He is obviously just fishing for more information. When they ask for the new documents, he categorically refuses, stating such excuses as he has other commitments, these things take time, the money isn't right, etc. If the heroes are persistent and/or threaten violence, he eventually agrees to what they ask.

It takes Mako a couple of hours of clipping, stamping and aging the papers with chemicals to produce papers that look right. Anyone who knows anything about forgery will know that these documents are very good indeed. If they hadn't seen them forged before their own eyes, they would not be able to tell them from the real thing.

OPTION

Unfortunately for the heroes, old Mako has not been keeping up with his protection money to the local Black Poppy Society Gangboss. That being so, they have sent some of the

boys round to collect. They will tell the heroes to get lost and don't come back. They have business with the old man.

They are large threatening looking men, packing obvious weapons. Use the Ronin profile given below, except the men do not carry samurai swords, but large handguns. If the heroes intervene and the thugs are obviously overmatched (i.e., are wearing powered armor), the crooks will leave, making huge threats of reprisal.





BETRAYED!

When the heroes return to the safe house, they discover the situation has changed. Tanaka Ken is waiting for them. He tells the heroes they have been betrayed. McBride is unconscious. Ken will tersely explain that Kat and Yuma have gone. As the heroes wait, McBride wakes up and begins to speak.

"Drugged...urgh! The sake was drugged. Kat and I were drinking it. Then I felt dizzy. Last thing I remember is both of us collapsing to the floor and Yuma standing over us... Give me some water."

Given a few minutes to recover, McBride rummages through his gear and produces what looks like a Personal Digital Assistant: a small hand held unit with a green flickering LED screen. He touches a button on it, and the heroes see a small map of Longshore with a pulsing green dot on it. The dot is leaving Longshore harbor and heading out to sea.

McBride explains that he got the device from ISC-19. It's the master controller for an ISC-19 homing tracer. He managed to plant the tracer on Katsumi when they were in the limo. Now it will let him find her again, he hopes. Before he does so, he rummages around in his gear and produces a large package wrapped in brown paper. It is a Mega-Charger heavy machine gun. He is not going to be caught unprepared this time. He will unwrap the parcel when the heroes are safely away on the boat.

Now the heroes (including McBride and Tanaka Ken) race down to the docks and get a boat. The chase is on. Fortunately Tai has a cousin who owns a fast boat. It's for hire.

The docks are a massive complex lined with huge cranes. The runway of the spaceport leads right out into the sea, and as our heroes watch, huge spacecraft make their final approach and

thunder down overhead so close that the wind of their passing ruffles the heroes' hair and clothing.

When the heroes arrive at the harbor, they discover Tai's cousin's bright-red jet-turbine powerboat. They can head out to sea immediately in hot pursuit. Soon the towering city is behind them. They pass the huge, imposing peak of the Forbidden Island and make for the Underworld wall. Within two hours, they race along beside the huge cliffs that mark the boundaries of the Underworld.

The cliffs are sculpted from tumbling, lichen-encrusted rocks. Gaarled trees clutch at cracked boulders with twisted roots. Giant waterfalls roar down from somewhere out of sight. The cavern sky looms more than a mile above them. Multi-colored clouds drift across the huge rooftop mirrors, cutting off the sun. Mighty airships move between the islands. Here at the Underworld's edge, their captain must navigate warily through many small islands, fangs of rock and bars of silt.

After two more hours things change for the worse. The great matted blooms of eerily glowing algae become thicker. Mist vents through broken pipes in the walls. The air is colder and danker. A smell of corruption assails the heroes' nostrils. The waters below them are filled with huge black fish, their sides blotched with unhealthy growths.

McBride continues to study the tracer throughout the whole journey. At first it looks like the heroes are slowly gaining on Yuma. Then the signal abruptly vanishes. McBride curses and punches a button on the tracer and the words "COORDINATE LOCK, FINAL POSITION: AY-17, GH-5" appear on the screen.

"Damnation, lost the signal," mutters McBride just as the island hoves into view.

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McBride looked up as the firing ceased. By the Light, Tanaka Ken could fight. It had been a long time since McBride had seen such carnage. Ken was holding off nearly twenty of the bandits all by himself. A stall seemed to explode and something massive came out of it. Damnation, thought McBride. That's all we need.

It was a warrior in a huge custom battlesuit complete with turbocannon. Somebody somewhere wasn't taking any chances. Kat had already opened fire but the bullets from her Punisher pinged off the massive armored exo-skeleton. With a huge roar, the Turbocannon erupted into life, hosing the market with brightly colored tracers. Stalls shredded, tables collapsed, people screamed. McBride saw Katsumi spring into the air, and the line of fire passed below her. He threw himself flat just before it could cut him in two.

Toshio produced a Windrider and sent a string of bullets ping-ponging off the giant battlesuit. Its owner refused to be distracted. It kept firing at Kat. The heavy caliber bullets tore holes out of the stone walls. She kept moving, a fraction of a second ahead of death. Toshio charged, his sword flashing towards the thing's chest. Of course, McBride remembered. Battlesuits sometimes had weak points there. The thing raised a huge chainblade and parried Toshio's stroke. The return cut the freelancer in two. McBride winced.

What was he going to do? The shotgun was useless, and he didn't have a Southpaw missile launcher. Of course, he had only one chance.

"Yuma! Distract that thing!" he shouted.

"Sure thing boss!" Yuma cartwheeled towards the battlesuit, her fist glowing incandescent red.

Tanaka Ken parried a thrust, ducked a second stroke and flipped himself over a third. He stood at the center of a whirling maelstrom of blades and he still lived. But not for long, he thought. He was tiring fast, his inner strength drained by the sheer concentration needed to keep himself alive in this huge melee. He had killed over half his foes but he doubted he could stop the rest. Still this would be a good way to die, he thought. In battle. As a Samurai should.

Yuma hit the giant warrior. Her punch drove right through the faceplate. McBride caught the sight of a stunned face within, as he rolled

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THE ISLAND OF AKUMI

The island is a bleak place, a huge lump of tree-encrusted stone rising from the foul, black sea. From the beach, the heroes can see that the trees are twisted and unhealthy looking, their sides blotched by fungus. Huge black roach-beetles flutter everywhere. An eerie silence hovers over the place. One large peak rises out of the jungle, the highest point of the island, overgrown by trees and vegetation.

The heroes will probably want to scout around. If they do, they find that there are certain well-

worn paths. Some of them have been beaten by things too large to be human.

As the heroes progress into the jungle, describe the eerie stillness and the sense they have of something watching them. Play on their fears. Tell them they are forever catching sight of something just out of the corner of their eye, but never let them see anything. Eventually the Maculator comes crashing out of the jungle and attacks them.



DEMON'S PEAK TEMPLE

Assuming the heroes survive the Maculator's attack, they can make their way to the last given location on McBride's locator: a cave mouth half-way up the side of the island's low mountain peak. Once inside the cave, they initially find nothing. A lot of close searching reveals a hidden doorway and a cunningly placed pressure switch in the wall. Pushing this switch causes the doorway to rotate open with a grinding of heavy stone. A foul, musty odor escapes through the ajar portal. A long, curving flight of stairs leading downward is visible before them.

The Demon's Peak Temple is consecrated to Algeroth. It has since been abandoned due to the fact that its Necromagus and all his people died when a captured servant of Demnogonis unleashed a vial of the Red Death in the temple. The pla-

gue swiftly slew all within the temple and burned itself out, but the temple has lain abandoned ever since, forgotten by all except Ishmayel, who gave the location to Yuma when she contacted him.

There are still a few Undead legionnaires who were unaffected by the plague. Mostly these have become dormant, waiting for intruders to activate them. When the heroes are inside, stress to them how foul and dank the air is; how dust covers everything; how it all seems quiet and long-abandoned.

Inside the temple, Yuma, Ishmayel and Katsumi await. The heroes can follow an obvious trail of footsteps in the dust. McBride has considerable knowledge about the Dark Legion and can answer any questions about the place if he rolls beneath his Knowledge of Dark Apostles (Algeroth) skill. So can any hero who possesses this skill.



1) THE ROBINING ROOMS

This is the place where the Cultists used to don their ceremonial masks and robes. There are racks and racks of mildewed black tunics encrusted with blotches of blue fungi. The right-hand wall is full of niches containing a selection of rusting iron masks designed to look like the face of the Dark Apostle Algoth. If any hero thinks to don a mask, then they will not be attacked by the Undead Legionnaires below. These have been programmed not to attack any human wearing such a mask.

2) THE SANCTUM

This is a huge circular chamber containing a towering statue of the Algoth. There is a flamepit at his feet which still gives out a slight flicker of light and heat. The brooding presence of the evil one fills this place, causing all to who look upon his visage to shudder. Anyone who enters this chamber is filled with the idea that the statue appears to watching him or her.

There are four archways which exit this chamber. A brass mask is inset over the north one. Over the east one is a carved-stone Centurion's head. Over the west one, there is a weird runic pattern. An iron mask is over the south one.

The floor in here is covered in dead bodies. The bodies have been dead a long time and are mummified and blotched with red fungus. They all wear masks of iron and bronze. They died here praying for Algoth to cure them. Two uniformed sentries are propped up against the walls. A few moments after the heroes enter, their evilly glowing eyes open, and the sentries spring into unlife.

TWO UNDEAD LEGIONNAIRES ARMED WITH KRATACHS AND BAYONETS. THEY WILL FIGHT UNTIL DESTROYED.

3) THE BARRACKS

This is where the cult soldiers used to sleep. There are twenty-four bunks and twenty-four lockers. On the walls are racks containing Kratachs ready to be used a moment's notice. On some of the beds are more corpses, all of whom died of the same plague as killed the others. There are 4 more Undead Legionnaires here. There is nothing of value in the lockers.

FOUR UNDEAD LEGIONNAIRES ARMED WITH KRATACHS AND BAYONETS. THEY WILL FIGHT UNTIL DESTROYED.

4) THE TRAINING AREA AND THE DESTROYERS' CELLS

This is the training area where the cult's Destroyers used to practice their skills. The center of the chamber contains a huge sunken pit with padded walls. A towering humanoid figure stands within the pit. This is a Dark Golem which was used by the Destroyers to train against. If any hero sets foot in the arena, the Dark Golem will spring to life and attack him or her. Age has affected the thing's necro-circuits, and it can only be shut down by being destroyed. Around the walls are the cells of the cult's destroyers: small chambers containing futons and spare robes.

DARK GOLEM.

5) KITCHENS

This is the place where the cooks prepared food. There are stoves ovens and freezer-lockers. All the food is long-spoiled.

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closer to his target. The lighter from ISC-19 was clutched in his hand. The Ronin stopped trying to shoot Kat and swung his blade at Yuma. She cartwheelled away, almost losing an arm.

McBride banged right into the thing. He pushed the detonator on the bottom of the lighter and lodged it behind the thing's combat coordinator. Then he dived for cover fast.

There was a huge explosion behind him. As the lighter detonated. Shrapnel howled passed his head. He looked around. The bottom half of the battlesuit was still there, standing up on two legs. The whole chest and upper body had blown away. McBride punched the air in triumph. Well what did you know? At long last one of Nineteen's little toys had come in useful. He snatched at his holstered Punisher. Now was not the time to get cocky.

Tanaka Ken moved a fraction too slowly. The blade caught him in the arm, pierced his armour and sent a surge of pain along his nerves. His return stroke disemboweled the man. Eight foes left and he did not even have enough Ki to heal his wound. It was down to naked skill. He knew wasn't going to make it.

Another cut bit into his leg. His foe parried his return stroke. Ken fainted and took her in the head. The cut sent blood into her eye. As she shook her head to clear her vision, Ken took off her head, solving her problem forever.

A leg sweep sent him sprawling. Two Ronin stood over him their blades held high. Ken tried to find the strength to move to parry. His arms responded weakly to his will, too slowly to make any difference. Ken watched the gleaming Katanas descend. He kept his eyes open, determined to see everything.

Suddenly the heads of both attackers explode. Ken looked back. Katsumi was there. She had a pistol in each hand and was blazing away, sending a hail of death into the Ronin, driving them backwards. Another woman had leap among them from the side, her martial arts technique was astonishing. She dropped men left and right with kicks and blows. McBride too joined in, scything the Ronin with fire, every shot

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6) NECROMAGUS'S CHAMBERS

This is the luxuriously appointed office of the Necromagus. It contains a huge wooden desk and racks of racks of moldy, tattered scrolls and leather-bound librams. There is a stone bust of Alge-roth on the desk. There are many papers which, if the heroes investigate them, can be found to all be written in incomprehensible runic code. Reading the books will begin a process of corrupting the hero's mind. (Corruption factor: 10 per half hour, but it increases their Knowledge of Alge-roth by one pick per hour.)

7) NECROCHAMBERS

This is a huge room filled with incomprehensible bio-machines, most of which look dead and mummified. Here and there are huge Symmetric ovens used for forging and repairing equipment. The whole place reeks of evil. Around the walls are distortion chambers. Each cell has a crystal wall

and a Symmetric node visible in the roof. The corpses of several prisoners who starved to death are within. No one came to feed them after the plague hit.

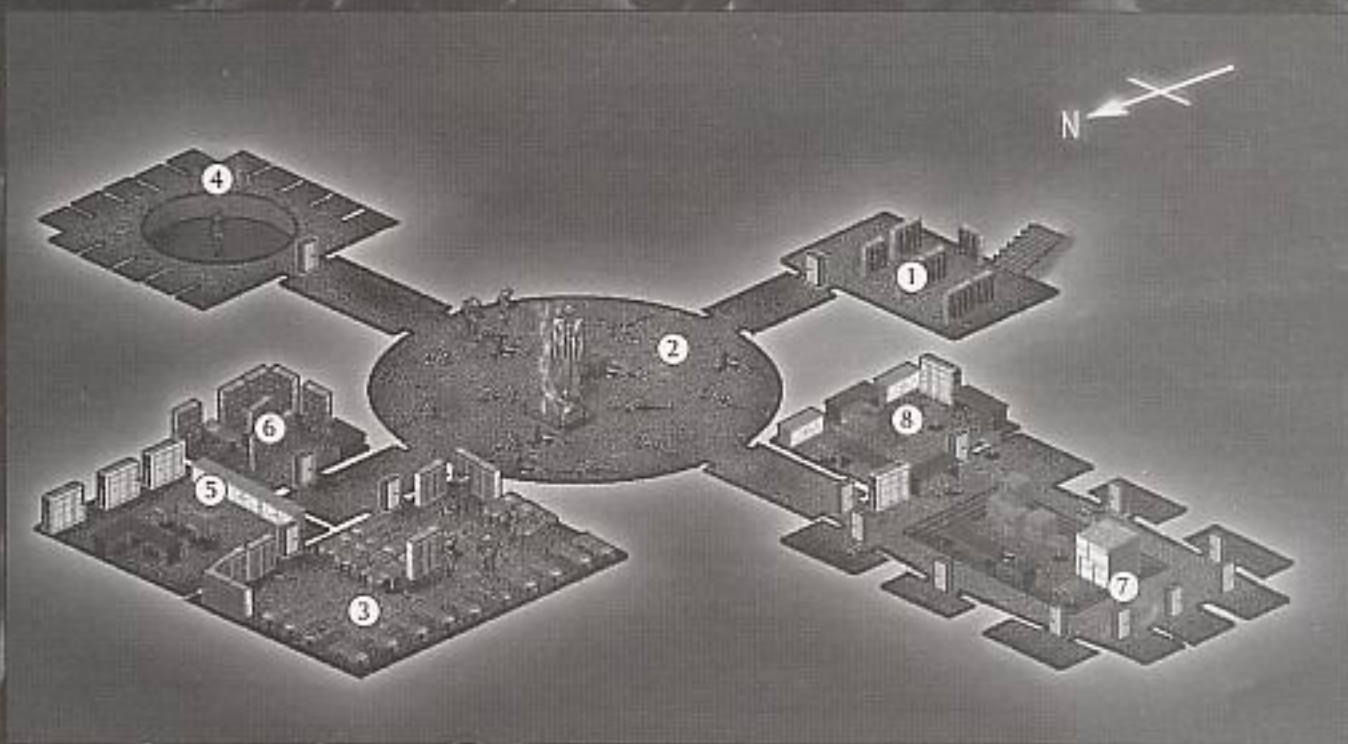
8) EXCRUTIATORIUM

Here in this soundproofed chamber, Ishmayel and Yuma have Katsumi. Katsumi has been strapped into the chair of the auto-excrutiator, a weird machine that looks like a cross between a chamber of horrors, a dentist's chair and a surgeon's operating table. Ishmayel is standing over her, and Yuma watches from nearby.

Since the chamber is sound-proofed, its occupants are unaware of the heroes' approach until the heroes open the doors. Ishmayel has been interrogating Katsumi to find out what she knows. It's time for the heroes to rush in and save the day. If things are going really badly and they need an out, Deathbringer Kao can intervene.



THE TEMPLE OF DESTRUCTION





AFTERWARD

Assuming the heroes survive this, they deserve three hero points and whatever reward McBride offered them. Of course, they still have to get clear

of Longshore and avoid the vengeance of Suritomo Omi, but that's another adventure.

CHARACTERS

MICHAEL MCBRIDE

McBride is a Freelancer and sometime agent of the Imperial megacorporation. He has served with the Blood Berets, Imperial's elite anti-Dark-Legion Special Force. Those who know about such things regard him as a top man in his field, that being investigation, assassination and body-guard work.

Height: 6'4"
Weight: 220 pounds
Hair: Black
Eyes: Blue
Age: 41

DISTINGUISHING MARKS. Extensive facial and body scarring.

APPEARANCE. McBride is very tall, very muscular and very fit. He looks at least ten years younger than his calendar age. If it was not for the scars, he would be good looking.

PERSONALITY. McBride is cynical, mercenary and opportunistic, but there is a surprising core of idealism and loyalty below his hardened surface. His indoctrination as a Blood Beret has given him a lasting hatred of the Dark Legion and all its works. On the job, he is thorough, professional and meticulous in his planning.

STATISTICS

STR: 18
INT: 15
COR: 20
PHY: 20
MST: 22
PER: 20
MOVEMENT: 4/275
OB: +2
ACT/CR: 5
AVOID/PARRY: 12

	BPS	ARMOR
HEAD	4	NONE (0)
ARM	8	CORPORATE (9)
STOMACH	8	CORPORATE(9)
LEG	9	CORPORATE(9)
CHEST	9	CORPORATE (9)

ATTACKS: By weapon. Punisher handgun and Mega-Charger.

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE: Combat 15, Firearms 17, Communication 14, Movement 14, Technical 14.

KI POWERS: None.

SPECIAL ABILITIES: McBride gets +2 on his resistance rolls to the Dark Symmetry. He wears a +3 Mishiman Talisman. He has Knowledge of Algeroth on 12 or less.



TANAKA KEN

Tanaka Ken is the former of Blademaster of the Bata Industrial clan, a small independent samurai family. Tanaka served them all his life and took over as Blademaster when their old master, Ho Tsien, retired from service into a monastery. Since Tanaka refused to enter Suritomo service when they took over the Bata fiefdom, he has been stripped of his powered armor and other insignia and has been reduced to wearing common, everyday armor.

Height: 6'
Weight: 160 pounds
Hair: Black
Eyes: Brown
Age: 35

DISTINGUISHING MARKS. None

APPEARANCE. Tanaka is a tall, lean man, quick and limber rather than muscular. He radiates a deadly stillness and calm.

PERSONALITY. Tanaka Ken is a paragon of samurai virtues. He is completely loyal, utterly fearless and incredibly ferocious when crossed. Normally, he appears to be calm, quiet and thoughtful, but he is a man of deep passions below his calm exterior. He hates the Suritomo family with a deep-rooted rage.

STATISTICS

STR: 14
INT: 13
COR: 17
PHY: 14
MST: 30
PER: 20
MOVEMENT: 3/225
OB: +1
ACT/CR: 5
AVOID/PARRY: 13

	BPS	ARMOR
HEAD	4	NONE (0)
ARM	8	BATTLESUIT (6)
STOMACH	8	BATTLESUIT (6)
LEG	9	BATTLESUIT (6)
CHEST	9	BATTLESUIT (6)

ATTACKS: Punisher handgun or (by preference) his Ceremonial Blades.

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE: Combat 17, Firearms 13, Communication 12, Movement 14, Technical 12.

KI POWERS: Special Technique (Katana), Nomura's Quickened Step, Yorama's Deflecting Hands, The Toad's Great Leap, Yizo's Prescience, 2H Technique (Katana), 2H Technique (Katana and Pistol), Deathblow, Ki Self Healing

SPECIAL ABILITIES: None.

YUMA

Yuma is a former streetgirl (indentured to the Black Poppy Society) turned Freelancer. She is a commoner with a natural gift for the Martial Arts, and she spent many years and all her savings finding a tutor who would teach her. During this period, she had many run-ins with the Black Poppy society.

Height: 5'4"
Weight: 120 pounds
Hair: Black
Eyes: Brown
Age: 29

DISTINGUISHING MARKS. Black Poppy ownership tattoo on her right shoulder.

APPEARANCE. Yuma is pretty rather than beautiful. She is quite chunky and muscular, but naturally graceful and precise in all her movements.

PERSONALITY. Yuma appears smiling, happy-go-lucky and wisecracking, but this is a front which conceals a smart, driven woman. As a commoner, she is keenly aware of the disadvantages she labors under in Mishiman society. These have eventually driven her into the Heretical cults. She hates the Black Poppy society passionately.

STATISTICS

STR: 14
INT: 13
COR: 15
PHY: 18
MST: 24
PER: 18
MOVEMENT: 3/225
OB: +1
ACT/CR: 4
AVOID/PARRY: 10

	BPS	ARMOR
HEAD	4	NONE (0)
ARM	8	BATTLESUIT (6)
STOMACH	8	BATTLESUIT (6)
LEG	9	BATTLESUIT (6)
CHEST	9	BATTLESUIT (6)

ATTACKS: Punisher handgun. Fist.

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE: Combat 15, Firearms 12, Communication 12, Movement 14, Technical 10.

KI POWERS: Special Technique (Fist), 2H Technique (Fist), Deathblow, The Crow's Piercing Glance, The Cobra's Venomous Strike, Adamantium Will.

SPECIAL ABILITIES: None.





KATSUMI

Since she was five years old, Katsumi has been trained to become one of the legendary Blood Rose school's courtesan-assassins. She comes from a samurai family, but she was orphaned as a child by the machinations of Suritomo Omi who wiped out her clan.

She was saved from death by Mistress Mara who saw in her a striking beauty and a great potential for using ki. For ten years, Mara taught her everything about granting death and pleasure in all its forms, before sending her out to work. Since Mara herself was killed by a Shadow Walker Deathbringer, Katsumi has been self-employed, working mostly for Imperial, Bata and the Black Dragon Triad. In her spare time, she has spent years plotting vengeance on Suritomo Omi, and she has amassed a huge file of data on him. The documents are currently sewn into the lining of Katsumi's black leather jacket.

Height: 5'6"

Weight: 110 pounds

Hair: Black

Eyes: Brown

Age: 35

DISTINGUISHING MARKS. None.

APPEARANCE. Katsumi is astonishingly beautiful in the classic Mishiman way: long, straight, black hair, huge eyes, golden skin. The most striking and unusual thing about her is her green eyes. These she normally conceals behind tinted contact lenses.

PERSONALITY. Katsumi is a consummate actress and can appear to be whatever she wants to be. Behind all her masks, she is a rather wistful and lonely woman who is starting to doubt the wisdom of what she has done with her life. She is also an incredibly ruthless and deadly killer.

STATISTICS

STR: 11

INT: 15

COR: 21

PHY: 14

MST: 28

PER: 21

MOVEMENT: 4/275

OB: +1

ACT/CR: 6

AVOID/PARRY: 13

	BPS	ARMOR
HEAD	4	NONE (0)
ARM	8	BATTLESUIT (6)
STOMACH	8	BATTLESUIT (6)
LEG	9	BATTLESUIT (6)
CHEST	9	BATTLESUIT (6)

ATTACKS: Two Punisher Handguns.

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE: Combat 16, Firearms 16, Communication 16, Movement 16, Technical 14.

KI POWERS: The Toad's Great Leap, Lightsleep, Special Technique (Fist), Flying Viper Style, Nomura's Quickened Step, The Chameleon's Skin, The Crow's Piercing Glance, Deathblow, The Monkey's Foot, Ki Self Healing.

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Katsumi is a mistress of disguise, and she is incredibly knowledgeable about poisons.

ISHMAYEL

Height: 10'6"

Weight: 1110 pounds

Hair: None

Eyes: Glowing red

Age: Unknown

DISTINGUISHING MARKS. Massive exoskeletal armored carapace grafted to his body and linked to his custom weapons by neural conduits. Three-horned head.

APPEARANCE. Ishmayel is a Nepharite.

PERSONALITY. Ishmayel is evil to the core, and he hates Mishima with an inhuman, undying hatred. He likes playing cat-and-mouse with humans. He is fearless and radiates icy calm. He knows he cannot be killed. If he is slain, his essence will simply be transferred to his clone body.

STATISTICS

STR: 72

INT: 19

COR: 18

PHY: 43

MST: 35

PER: 29

MA: 7/500

OB: +9

A/CR: 6

AVOID/PARRY: 12

	BPS	ARMOR
HEAD	7	NONE (8)
ARM	12	EXOSKELETAL ARMOR (10)
STOMACH	12	EXOSKELETAL ARMOR (10)
LEG	13	EXOSKELETAL ARMOR (10)
CHEST	13	EXOSKELETAL ARMOR (10)

ATTACKS: Ashrieketh Blade (D6), Nepharite Custom Gun (D10+D6, unlimited ammo, never jams, automatic fire, unlimited range).

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE: Combat 16, Firearms 16, Communications 16, Movement 16, Technical 16.

KI POWERS: None.

SPECIAL POWERS: 12 Dark Gifts. Many Biotechnological Gifts already figured into characteristics, plus Claws, Clone Body, Self Repair, Immunity to Poison, Exoskeletal Armor (effects already figured into characteristics).

DEATHBRINGER KAO

Deathbringer Kao is the head of the Longshore Shadow Walkers. He is a huge man, his body made enormously muscular by drug treatments and biotechnological implants. He is cunning, relentless and deadly. Few people can stand against him in open combat.

Height: 7'
Weight: 350 pounds
Hair: Unknown.
Eyes: Glowing red.
Age: Unknown.

DISTINGUISHING MARKS. Eerie, grating voice.

APPEARANCE. Deathbringer Kao is a huge, muscular man, who is actually even more massive than he looks because of the density of his biotechnological implants. He normally wears his red, cowled Deathbringer tunic and carries a selection of weaponry.

PERSONALITY. Deathbringer Kao is cold, calculating and mercenary. He respects only truly dangerous foes.

STATISTICS

STR: 30
INT: 15
COR: 20
PHY: 30
MST: 30
PER: 24

MOVEMENT: 5/325
OB: +4
ACT/CR: 5
AVOID/PARRY: 12

	BPS	ARMOR
HEAD	5	NONE (0)
ARM	9	BATTLESUIT (6)
STOMACH	9	BATTLESUIT (6)
LEG	10	BATTLESUIT (6)
CHEST	10	BATTLESUIT (6)

ATTACKS: Silenced Punisher handguns, Ceremonial Blades, Archer sniper rifle.

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE: Combat 17, Firearms 17, Communication 14, Movement 17, Technical 14.

KI POWERS: Catsight, The Chameleon's Skin, Deathblow, The Crow's Piercing Glance, Shadow Walk, The Mongoose's Dodge, The Bat's Sonar Sense, Teleport, Strike from Beyond the Grave.

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Kao's body is loaded with mortuary enzymes. He is armed with the Soutaker, an ancient and evil blade (DAM D10+5, +5 to hit). The Soutaker grants 3D10 extra Ki per day, and it lets the user draw on the knowledge and skills of anyone killed with it. Anyone who is killed with a blow from the Soutaker has his soul imprisoned within the blade. This will even work on a Nephrite with a clone body.

RONIN

STATISTICS

STR: 12
INT: 10
COR: 12
PHY: 12
MST: 11
PER: 11

MOVEMENT: 3/175
OB:-
ACT/CR: 3
AVOID/PARRY: 6

	BPS	ARMOR
HEAD	3	NONE (0)
ARM	6	BATTLESUIT (6)
STOMACH	6	BATTLESUIT (6)
LEG	7	BATTLESUIT (6)
CHEST	7	BATTLESUIT (6)

ATTACKS: Tambu Windrider SMG, Ceremonial Blade.

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE: Combat 14, Firearms 12, Communication 10, Movement 10, Technical 10.

KI POWERS: None.





Continued from p.74

taking a man in the head. Soon it was over. The last Ronin turned to flee. A bullet took him in the back. A good enough death for a coward, thought Ken flipping himself to his feet.

McBride studied the Night Market for a second. It looked like a warzone or the inside of a slaughterhouse. The dead lay everywhere. Wounded civilians moaned and prayed. White faced civilians gazed around with the glass eyed stare of people in shock. The sound of sirens came ever closer. It was time to go. They had a boat to catch.

"Come on," he said. "Taxi's waiting and the meter's running."

Wearily they limped out through the back exit. From the darkness overhead the Deathbringer watched. Good, he thought, he had not needed to intervene. He decided to follow them, stepped back into a pool of shadow and vanished.



UNDER THE OVERLORD'S ALL-SEEING EYES,
A DYNASTY FORMED, ROOTED IN LOYALTY
AND FOUNDED UPON THE ROCK OF KI.
BUT LIKE ALL HUMAN THINGS, THIS UNITY COULD
NOT LONG SURVIVE UNSCATHED.

EVENTUALLY, THE DARKNESS CREPT INTO MISHIMAN
HEARTS AND PLANTED THERE
THE SEEDS OF DISCORD.

SOON HEIRS BICKERED AMONGST THEMSELVES
AND PLOTTED AGAINST THEIR FATHER
AND OVERLORD.

EVEN ON THE MERCURY, THE FIRST STONE FROM THE
SUN AND THE BRIGHTEST OF ALL THE PLANETS,
THE DARKNESS CREPT INTO THE GREAT CAVERN-CITIES
AND DEEP INTO HUMAN HEARTS.

BUT EVEN IN THESE DOOMED DAYS, THERE ARE STILL
MEN AND WOMEN WITH HONOR,
STILL THOSE WHO RAIL AGAINST THE DARKNESS.

NOW IS THE TIME FOR HEROES.

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have access to «Mutant Chronicles™: The
Techno-Fantasy Roleplaying Game».



Front cover: A Mercurian Maculator surprises a Mitzaki Samurai. Back cover: A Hatamoto trooper with heirloom weapon and heavy combat armor.

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