



Legend of the Five Rings™

Lesser of Two Evils



S-3

*Shadowlands
Series*

The Darkest Choice



Written by Jim Pinto



Legend of the Five Rings

Lesser of Two Evils



"It is the duty of men of knowledge to live lives of higher morality than their contemporaries. To do otherwise is to live as a thief and a sinner."

- Kuni Harike



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This book is for John Zinser Sr, who has made the toughest choice of all.

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These adventures were written with the following parameters in mind. Parties comprised of other groups of PCs can still use these adventures, but the GM may need to make some slight modifications to adjust the level of the challenge appropriately.

As with any task that involves the Shadowlands, this adventure is very lethal. PCs who expect to do well (*i.e.* survive) should be properly skilled. It is strongly suggested that the characters have Shadowlands Lore and above average combat skills. The players should remember that there are all sorts of nasty creatures in the Shadowlands, some of which are immune to normal weapons. Although there are opportunities throughout the adventure to gain the means to combat oni and the like, players should carefully consider all actions before and during this adventure (if they can). With that in mind, the surprises this adventure holds are best not revealed as Shadowlands related at all. Unprepared PCs will have to think on their feet.

Suggested character School Ranks: 2 to 3

Suggested number of characters: 1 to 4 Bushi, 1 to 2 Shugenja, 6 Characters total and 1 NPC

Suggested References: L5R RPG, Book of the Shadowlands, GM's Survival Guide, The Way of the Clans



BOXED AND ITALICIZED TEXT

When you see boxed text in *Lesser of Two Evils*, that means that you are looking at text which should be read to the PCs. This information is for their benefit, detailing what they see, or how an NPC speaks or acts. Be sure to look it over before you read it to the players, so that you know exactly what is about to happen.

Italicized text, on the other hand, is information (usually speech) from an NPC which is only available if the NPC is pressed to speak on a specific issue. This text should be read to the players if a certain question is asked, or if they press further about an issue.

Introduction

You may notice that this adventure differs from previous L5R adventures. *Lesser of Two Evils* is predominantly problem-solving and conflict, with very little room for subterfuge, intrigue, and courtly double-talk. Designed primarily as a four-hour tournament module, there is very little room for deviation or interpretation. We recommend that you read the entire module through before running it. GMs should be intimately familiar with the NPCs and locations in the adventure.

This is a tournament module, and there will probably be PC deaths. The keys to defeating this adventure are caution, common sense and teamwork. Since these three ideals are the nominal cornerstones of samurai culture, GMs should have a great deal of fun watching the samurai work against one another's interpretation of the facts. As you will see, not everyone has the same perception of the events.

When this module is run as a demonstration or tournament, it is best when run for all groups in the same manner.

This book comes with seven samurai characters, one from each of the Great Clans. Ideally, six players will each take one character, with the extra character becoming an NPC. Although the adventure is solvable without the NPC samurai, having a seventh character allows the GM to do a few things with the adventure that could not otherwise be done.

The adventure itself will only consume a few days of the characters' lives. Where possible, GMs should skip over dead-time in order to get through the entire adventure. The players may not finish this module in the time allotted. If you are interested in playing beyond the time limit so that the players may see the results, go right ahead, but be sure to avoid scoring any points beyond the four-hour mark and score the game as "incomplete" on the record sheet found at the back of this book.

If you are not using the module for tournament play, there are many instances where you can take your time and fully develop the concepts in the adventure. In addition, the ideas under the "Variation" headers suggest possible alterations in the game's direction.

At the end of this book are two maps, seven PCs (we recommend you use six of them for the adventure), and a score sheet. Depending on how well the players handle themselves, each group will score differently. The sheet is self-explanatory and the points are listed in each category. There are even bonus points for finishing early.

Enjoy.

-jp



Gamemaster Notes

Background

KUNI HARIKE

The year was 634. A Kuni shugenja and witch hunter named Harike set off on a great quest: destroy the Oni with the name of Kusatte Iru. Fearing that the enormous Oni would destroy any less formidable than himself, Harike took only with him his loyal and honorable yojimbo.

Traveling beyond the Kaiu Wall, Harike found a small patch of miraculously untainted land near the present-day location of the Plains of Foul Tears. Here he would battle the great Oni. Harike sent powerful kami to summon the Oni to him, that they might contend on the blessed earth. Legend has it that, when the Oni came to Harike, they fought for eight days and eight nights.

Unable to subdue the great beast, Harike kept the terrible Oni at bay with wards and fetishes. The earth trembled and was stained by the savagery of the battle. The Plains of Foul Tears are supposed to have grown from their epic battle, swallowing a nearby swamp and shredding and tainting the earth.

Drawing upon his last resource, Harike drew forth a powerful obsidian sphere that he had never used before. A secret magic that he had hidden from his Kuni brothers, Harike knew that the taint of the stone would forever burn his soul. It was a sacrifice he was willing to make.

Cutting welts deep into his own flesh, and coating the sphere in his own blood, Harike summoned powerful magic putting the great beast to sleep. He then called upon the spirits of the earth to bury the oni miles under the rock and

soil. Harike died soon after binding and burying the beast, from wounds and from exhaustion.

Some time after the battle, monks discovered his scrolls and records, and built a temple and shrine to honor the great Kuni Harike. These monks blessed the temple and made it strong, connecting it to the kami of the earth. Although the temple was plagued with supernatural problems (smoky visions, strange sounds, a few unnatural fires), the monks endured in the name of Harike's sacrifice, considering the disruptions a part of Kusatte Iru's restless sleep deep under the earth.

For centuries the temple remained at the edge of Crab lands, without attracting notice.

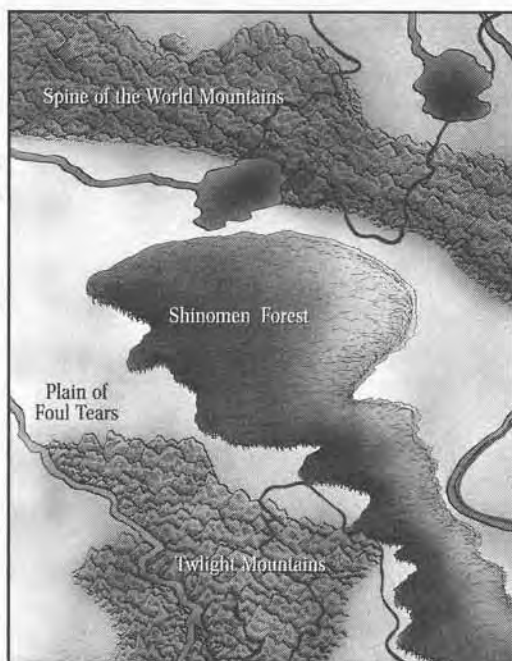
Unbeknownst to most of the world, a bog hag named Higashato found Harike's corpse soon after his battle. Removing his skin and taking his rarest scrolls and the forbidden obsidian stone, she scurried into the swamp in the Plains of Foul Tears, where she donned the skin and studied the Kuni's magic. Although unable to use his skin, Higashato spent many years studying the sphere and eventually learned its powerful and forbidden secret. When Higashato emerged from the swamp, she noticed that the world had changed. Monks dedicated to the service of Harike's memory had erected a temple to the fallen Kuni and began to study and worship in his name. Harike's skin would prove useful after all.

Possessing power beyond most bog hags, she preserved the skin's life beyond what scholars believed was possible. Years passed and Higashato, content with her power, haunted and beguiled the monks at her leisure, studying these holy men. From time to time she would shroud herself in mist and visit them in the form of Harike. She was amazed at the respect Harike's image afforded her, and realized what power she could command over the monks if she applied it properly.

As time went on, Higashato began to bend the monks to her will. Preying upon the powerful faith of the abbots, Higashato used them to influence the acolytes of the temple. Slowly, over time, their text was supplanted with study of the Shadowlands: "Only through understanding the Shadowlands," said the abbots, "can we begin to know what Harike knew." By 1050, Higashato had the temple reciting blasphemous text and carving idols of oni from obsidian stone.

Then the Crab came.





KYUDEN TOKETSU

Yasuki Toketsu, a rich merchant, wished to retire in the wealth and comfort to which he had grown accustomed. Annexing a piece of land near the Plains of Foul Tears, Toketsu built an estate and relocated peasants to the new frontier. It was not until 1060 that Toketsu discovered the temple, and the abbot made it very clear that they would keep their distance from the stronghold. There would be no trouble. Not being a religious or faithful man (and influenced by the overwhelming charisma of the abbot), Toketsu shrugged off the monastic presence in his lands and respected their space, leaving them to their gardening and painting.

Insidiously, the monks began to train and indoctrinate the peasants. Few visited the remote Kyuden Toketsu and the peasants, in need of spiritual guidance, clung to the teachings of the monks. It was only a matter of time until the entire valley belonged to the bog hag. When Nori became lord of the estate 35 years ago, Higashato made her move.

Higashato slowly eliminated members of Nori's household, taking their skins and disguising herself to fit into the house. She started with an eta, then a farmer, a stable-hand, and so on until she was a servant and then the geisha of lord Nori. Being complete and thorough, Higashato spent as much time as was necessary, wearing the skin of her last victim, learning what

she could of the house, and moving on only when it suited her.

When Higashato became Nori's concubine, she realized that he had powerful and influential friends, people that could be brought to her so she could fill out her skin wardrobe and possess powers from all corners of Rokugan.

THE PRESENT

For the past year, unexplained phenomena have troubled the house of Yasuki Nori, but it was not until the mysterious disappearance of his personal physician and shugenja that Nori asked his powerful friends for a favor. Magistrates were summoned to Kyuden Toketsu at the behest of Lord Nori due to his influential young geisha...

Overview

The adventure begins with the samurai being summoned to a remote stronghold on the edge of the Crab lands, near the Plains of Foul Tears. Once there, the samurai meet the castle's lord, Yasuki Nori, and learn that an evil is plaguing his home. Rumors abound of an evil in the swamp. The peasants fear the worst and the venerable lord is unable to quell his people's fears. Recently, minor earth tremors have begun to worry the populace. With rumors of a recent coup in the capital, the populace is paranoid and frantic.

The samurai are probably unfamiliar with the valley's history. Most of this information Nori keeps from the PCs for fear that he (or his family) will be suspect. His apprehension is due to the ministrations of his new councilor: his geisha Suko, who has become a great help to him of late. Her knowledge of the village and the temple have proven invaluable to him (and have cemented his fears). In his old and feeble state he accepts her advice as he would that of a sage.

In reality, Suko is the bog hag Higashato wearing the skin of a geisha. A few months back she murdered the geisha and claimed her skin, drawing closer to Yasuki Nori. Her plan is to draw powerful samurai to the valley so she may expand her collection of skins. The PCs are the first targets.

Nori prepares an elegant dinner for his guests and regales them with minor tales, eventually revealing the valley's woes. Suko does not attend, as it would be improper for a geisha to be



present. During her absence, the stable boy is murdered and the seneschal, Kyume, disappears.

In the middle of the night, Higashato kills one NPC samurai (if there are any), but leaves the skin. The body bears marks as if it had been mauled. It may or may not be obvious that someone tried to remove his skin. (In a variation, she wears his skin and becomes a samurai.)

By morning Kyume returns, with a story about being dragged away in the night by a formless evil. He awoke in a paddy, scarred and bloodied. The real Kyume is dead, of course, and the bog hag Higashato is wearing his skin. She is primed enough on samurai etiquette to know that Kyume is of higher glory than the PCs and it would be improper for them to try any magic on him without his permission. The players should now understand that the situation is dire.

If they have not yet learned of the stable-boy's death, Kyume informs them, leading them to the stables where they may see the horror for themselves. They also find all of their horses dead. If word gets back to Nori, he locks himself inside the castle with his yojimbo, asking the PCs to search for answers.

There are few buildings on Kyume's estate; the party may search them with mixed results. If they travel over the ridge, they find the small and nearly deserted village of Yoketsu. In the village, the PCs find peasants in the fields working slowly and nervously. They respond skittishly to the samurai and some may have already heard rumors about the dead stable-boy. Some huts and paddies have been abandoned. It is obvious that no one has been maintaining the land and that Kyume has been unable to get the peasants to work.

It will not be difficult to track down some clues here. Folklore points the samurai to the swamp where strange lights appear at night. Peasants complain of their livestock vanishing in the dead of night. Others say that similar terrors visited generations ago, but eventually they passed. Physical evidence in the form of idols points them to the temple to Harike, three miles northeast.

Either direction will bring them closer to the truth, but it will not be until the players have learned of Higashato's true intentions that the PCs will come to terms with the lesser of two evils.

GETTING STARTED

If you are using the attached characters, the PCs are simply summoned by their magistrate lord, Shinjo Kunaru. He orders the samurai to visit the keep of Yasuki Nori, a merchant of some acclaim, outside the boundaries of the Crab lands. Kunaru explains that the PCs are going as a personal favor to Seppun Meyori (see the *Otosan Uchi* boxed set for more details on Meyori), and this alone should be enough to pique the PCs interest. If you are not using the *Otosan Uchi* boxed set, explain that having an Imperial Governor owe you a favor is a good thing.

If the players are playing magistrates other than the attached characters, then direct them to the stronghold under the same constraints. Seppun Meyori still may serve as Nori's connection if you wish, and PCs owed a favor by this powerful governor can expect further allegiances and obligations in the Imperial city.

If the PCs are ronin, someone offers them work. Nori does not directly ask for help, but rather employs a mid-level governor or gokenin as his go-between. Depending on your campaign, you may already have an NPC in mind. If not, you should develop an important character that can procure the PCs' assistance while keeping his own hands clean. This way, when the adventure is over, you can use this NPC as a catalyst for further adventures as detailed in the epilogue.

If the PCs are not magistrates but are members of various clans, then getting them together may be difficult. Although a number of favors, from various samurai, daimyo, and/or minor nobles, could be owed to Yasuki Nori, it may also require a great deal of work on the GM's part to get a varied group to come together for such an adventure. The *GM's Survival Guide* lists many ways to get a group of samurai together, and although it is easy to get this adventure started if the PCs do not know one another, a party that has been adventuring together for some time may not have the appropriate allegiance to jump into this module seamlessly.

If you are short on ideas, you can always pull one player aside before the game begins and tell her that her samurai owes a favor to Yasuki Nori. In order to get the adventure moving she will have to approach each of the other samurai and the party and beg a favor (in traditional Rokugani style). As an added boon, this samurai will now be obligated to the entire party for their "good-nature" and Yasuki Nori will not forget them



HISTORY OF THE STRONGHOLD OF YASUKI TOKETSU

The PCs may make an Intelligence + Courtier or History Roll at TN 25. If successful, feel free to reveal the following information about Yasuki Nori and the Stronghold.

65 years ago the powerful merchant Yasuki Toketsu, interested in establishing the strength of his family, took for himself a large unwanted parcel of land near the Plains of Foul Tears, where he built a modest castle and gathered a small army of samurai. Toketsu left the lands to his son, Nori, a moderately successful trader who has established many trading routes with the minor clans. Nori's wife died many years ago and she bore him no children. It is not known who will inherit the land.

either. To make things up to this player, offer her a few experience points or some useful item to be named later.

Remember, it is recommended that you use the seventh character provided with this adventure as an NPC. If you are not running this as a tournament and the attached characters are not being used, you have an assortment of characters to choose from.

Once you've figured out why everyone is going to visit Yasuki Nori, you can begin your journey.



The journey takes many weeks (in the tournament version, the party leaves from Otosan Uchi). The travel should be uneventful, but if you're running *Lesser of Two Evils* as part of a campaign, you may wish to throw in a few encounters with locals to spice things up. Some bandits, an ambush, local dignitaries with nothing better to do than hassle samurai, a recent flood that has leveled a village, and so on. No matter how you proceed, the adventure itself does not truly begin until they are within one day of the stronghold.

The directions from the last way station were adequate. The road is easy enough to follow and winds west through a light patch of forest. Slender and sparse bamboo dots the landscape on both sides as your horses trod along the worn road. As you get further into the day, the road becomes less and less obvious, but you are still able to maintain your bearings. Sometime after noon, however, you feel a slight tremor in the earth; although not strong enough to knock you from your horse, it is definitely powerful enough to warrant notice.

Rokugani are familiar with earthquakes as most of the land is turbulent, but those who live far from the Shadowlands may not be used to their frequency here. Do your best to indicate that this is odd, but do not over-emphasize it. Just an hour later, the party will stumble on further evidence to indicate that the tremor was not normal.

Have someone in the party notice the following (Perception Rolls perhaps).

To your right you notice movement as a great deal of small, hunched humanoids scurry through the forest. Upon quick inspection you determine that 30 or so of these creatures are moving at an incredible rate and are now 100 yards out at your right flank. They do not appear to even notice your party and are quickly fleeing from something deeper in the wood.

At this time allow them an Intelligence + Lore (Shadowlands) Roll at TN 25 to recognize the creatures as a pack of ratlings. If the samurai happen to capture one alive, it does not speak Rokugani, but it does have a basic understanding of it. Crab characters who possess the Ratling Speech skill have no difficulty communicating, although the creature's dialect may be strange. These Nezumi live near a swamp to the west. There have been several tremors of late and this last one has them scared. They do not understand the cause of the tremors, but they do know that a great evil is rising. It is unable to communicate what it is running from even to someone who speaks its language, but it can point out directions to the samurai should they be smart enough to ask.

Kusatte Iru is growing restless and will soon wake. This last tremor was the oni's restlessness. Shugenja who communicate with the earth learn that something is stirring. "I cannot feel exactly what, but it is angry and will wake soon. It is far yet, but I fear that it is strong enough to crack the earth." Although the samurai are still 20 miles from the swamp where Kusatte Iru lies, he is large enough and strong enough to create tremors of this magnitude.

Ratlings are not tainted by the Shadowlands, but by Rokugani custom are still considered beneath humans. It is therefore not strictly dishonorable to kill one; however, it is certainly not honorable to kill a defenseless creature.

The rest of the trip to Kyuden Toketsu should be uneventful.

Arriving at Kyuden Toketsu

Nestled in a small valley, the castle of Yasuki Nori was built almost 70 years ago. A small village can be found over the ridge of hills to the west just a half-mile from the keep. Everything is in order and the grounds are fertile and well-kept. The estate itself appears as though it can house anywhere from 50-100 people; one small outbuilding separate from the others appears to be a small residence of some sort. When the samurai approach the gates they will be met by Yasuki Kyume.

YASUKI KYUME

A simple yet observant man, Kyume manages Nori's estate. He greets the PCs when they reach the estate and has a young stable-boy (Enyi) take their horses to the stables. Kyume is well-dressed and has a strong jaw; PCs will notice his focused gaze and his head-wrap. Kyume keeps a top-knot but does not shave his head. More about Kyume can be found in the NPC section at the end of this book.

Kyume guides the PCs through his lord's spacious estate. The entry hall (where the PCs may take off their shoes) is filled with elaborate and eclectic gifts. An array of statues, fans, paintings, bowls, and screens are placed in an aesthetically pleasing pattern. Samurai may make an Awareness + Etiquette Roll at TN 15 to see that the room has feminine touches to it, despite Nori's bachelorhood (something they may learn later). There are also the typical trappings of a noble, poems and gifts from important and influential daimyo.

The samurai are ushered through a series of chambers and asked if they require water, sake, rest, or a bath; anything simple they request is provided. Kyume explains that Nori will meet them for dinner in the main hall and that until then he would be honored to serve them in any manner. He shows them to their rooms, where he politely suggests they leave their weapons. Kyume may have a higher Glory Rank than others here, but he remains courteous and gracious at all times.

Until dinner, the PCs have an opportunity to look around and talk to a few people or enjoy the entertainment that Suko is providing. GMs shouldn't let the investigations go too far until Nori has had time to explain what is going on. However, feel free to let them squander a little time, taking in the ambiance.



GOSHIRO

The PCs may make an Intelligence + Law Roll at TN 25. If successful, feel free to reveal the following information about Goshiro.

Five years ago, Goshiro and eight other ronin were hired by a Crane noble to infiltrate a village rumored to be hiding bandits. They were to capture any bandits if possible and return them to Kyuden Doji to stand trial. When Goshiro and his men reached the village, they killed every bandit and burned the village to the ground. The Doji sought to have Goshiro imprisoned for his transgressions, but nothing came of it. Since then, Goshiro has made a name for himself as a man who gets things done.



ENTERTAINMENT

About an hour after the samurai arrive and have washed and rested, Nori's geisha Suko begins playing her biwa in the main audience chamber. Suko is an attractive young woman with slight features and a calm and introspective shyness that samurai may find endearing. Suko is, in truth, the bog hag Higashato. Since she has taken her time mastering the skills of a geisha, there is no reason for the samurai to suspect her.

She knows quite a few classical Rokugani songs and music fans will recognize most of her songs. Her passion comes across in every note, but anyone with the Music skill will notice that her hand work is crude and unrefined. She plays until 40 minutes before dinner, at which time she smiles politely, bows, and excuses herself.

DINNER

It is at dinner that the PCs first meet Nori and his ronin yojimbo, Goshiro. Nori is an old man and seems to be far too old to run an estate himself. Some of the samurai may recognize Nori from Otosan Uchi or from previous courtly dealings. If using the Glory recognition rules from the *GM's Survival Guide*, Nori has an effective Glory 3 (he's been out of the scene too long) and Goshiro has Glory 1.7. Goshiro does not eat with the samurai and is constantly at the ready. He is the only one wearing his swords.

The dinner is elegant, but simple: shredded tofu steeped in brown sauce, steamed salmon over rice, raw yellowtail (hamachi), steamed long-stem broccoli, bamboo shoots, cabbage, long-grain rice, and mochi. Sake and green tea are also provided. There are many servants to keep the food and drink coming. Nori does his best to honor special requests, but he is not flamboyant or ostentatious.

Nori greets all of the samurai at dinner and spends the greatest portion of his time talking about how honored he is that they have come and that it has been a long time since he visited Otosan Uchi (or Ryoko Owari or wherever they have come from). He speaks humbly about himself and his family and deflects any interrogation into his own family or past.

It may become apparent that Nori is stalling. A simple Awareness + Etiquette Roll at TN 20 reveals that Nori is a merchant at heart. Merchants are negotiators, who typically view "getting right to business" as a weakness. Often during negotiations, a merchant (or lord for that

matter) will make others wait – sometimes for hours – in order to find out who among the group is the weakest. His tactic may simply be out of habit more than from secrecy or fear. Eventually, after everyone has finished eating and drinking, Yasuki Nori explains why he has asked for them.

My friends, it is with great shame that I admit to you my family's shortcomings. Things are not well in these lands and it is under strict counsel that I share this news with you. At first, I thought them mere rumors by peasants afraid of their own shadows; fables told to children. But then matters grew worse. The peasants refused to work too close to dusk or dawn. No manner of threat would persuade them. Then the worst happened.

A samurai, one of my yojimbo, went missing. Rumors among my house began to spread. Strange lights had been seen in the swamp; the kami were angry, and we were to be punished.

I would humbly ask this of you: rid my lands of this plague and I will be forever in your debt. The restlessness that fills these walls, I fear, will chase me into the next world and into Jigoku.

Note to GM: In addition to the bushi's disappearance, Nori's personal physician has gone missing as well, but he does not reveal this.

Nori looks very concerned and emotional at this point. His face is painted with grief and it is obvious he is pained by all of this. Samurai making a successful Awareness + Sincerity Roll at TN 40 notice that Nori is doing a great job of presenting his "face". Those who fail believe his sincerity to be true. Either way, it is a samurai's duty to honor a man who can bring himself to cry.

WHAT THE SAMURAI MAY LEARN ABOUT THE ESTATE

During and after dinner, there may be opportunities for the characters to learn a few things about Lord Nori and the estate. A Kitsuki, for instance, may notice subtle changes in Nori's deportment depending on what he is talking about. A shugenja may be able to commune with spirits and ask questions about things that could not normally be discerned. This is where things get tricky.

It is the nature of a role-playing game that the players will try something unexpected or that they will know everything about the villain of this



The Journey Begins



story quicker than you'd hope. Try as you might, stubborn players will fixate on a specific facet of an NPC, for instance, and nothing you do can dissuade them. All that we can recommend in these situations is that you neither compromise the integrity of the adventure, nor sacrifice the fun of the game. If, in the end, the PCs have burned the entire village to the ground but everyone has had a good time, don't resist it. Just make sure to dock them points on the score sheet.

AT NIGHT

Dinner ends after dark. Nori asks that the samurai enjoy some sake, relax and begin their work in the morning. "I would not ask that you burden yourself tonight when you have traveled for so long." Suko has recommended to Nori that he address the guests in this manner. She does not want the samurai snooping on the first night they arrive. She also knows that it would be dishonorable to ignore their host's request. Suko is not far away and she will know if any of the samurai are up and about.

While everyone is having dinner and enjoying Nori's company, Higashato slips into the stables and kills the stable-boy Enyi. She does not intend to wear Enyi's skin, but rather wishes to eliminate

any witnesses that would spy her killing Kyume later that night. She hides in the stables and waits for Kyume to make his nightly visit to the estate's horses. After killing Kyume, she drags his body from the stables to a safe place where she can remove his skin. She uses her magic to immolate the remains.

If anyone should come out to the stables after dinner they find Enyi dead, his throat slit and his face butchered; tracks of skin have been cut away and his jaw is broken. Blood covers the room and the sight is more gruesome than most samurai are used to. Anyone looking deeper into the stables finds all of the horses murdered, their carcasses now covered in flies.

Moving around inside the stable without stepping in blood is impossible and calling for eta would only lend credence to the rumors about the evil in the valley. Should information about the murdered stableboy leak out, most of the peasantry spends the next day inside.

A single trail of blood leads away from the house into the darkness. If the samurai choose to track it, it leads them almost a mile into the wooded hills surrounding the stronghold. At its end is a patch of blackened earth, roughly the size of a large dog (or human in the fetal position), where Higashato has buried the burned remains of Kyume's corpse.

BUSINESS BEFORE PLEASURE

Higashato's work is not done. If you are running this game with a samurai NPC, Higashato now sneaks back into the house and murders the NPC samurai. In the tournament version, she finds his skin inferior and leaves his corpse in his room, in the same butchered state that she left Enyi's body. Additionally, she strips his armor apart and breaks his swords. Anything of value or importance she soaks in blood so that the PCs cannot use it.

A Variation

As a possible variation of this adventure, Higashato can take the skin of the NPC samurai and assume his role. The character will be much quieter than before and assumes a more auxiliary role in the party. NPC samurai are typically secondary anyway, but as GM you may wish to give telling signs that the character is subtly different.

If you choose to use this variation, bear in mind that the final act of the game will resolve

much differently and no harm will come to this NPC samurai while in the temple. Additionally, Higashato-as-samurai will not help them decipher any clues inside the temple and feigns ignorance about most of the markings and sigils.

She will, however, help PCs trigger all manner of traps and causes misfortune whenever possible. While in the temple she distracts them whenever a surprise attack is coming.

TAKING THE PCs ASIDE

During the night the PCs should feel slightly uneasy. In order to create more hysteria and to put most of the "know-it-alls" off guard, the GM should take everyone aside from the table and talk with each for a minute or two about a variety of subjects. Perhaps they hear noises in the night or are disturbed by foreboding dreams. The idea is to create the illusion that there is something going on and that no one can be trusted. If the PCs begin to suspect too much about the adventure, this helps to put them off guard.

This also gives certain nefarious characters an opportunity to sneak around unchecked or to spy on their comrades. But no one would do that, right?

Keep the sessions short and get back to the game as soon as possible.

A Variation

If you are not playing this as a tournament and you wish to include a trusted player in on the action, pull him aside and tell him that his character has been murdered in the middle of the night. However, the game is not over for him, as his skin has been removed and he is now the bog hag Higashato. Do not give the PC all of the information just yet, as you want to get back to the game as soon as possible. Make sure that the player understands that someone new is in the skin and that the PC will be a bit more reserved. If you are playing this game over several sessions, find a good place to break and explain everything before the next game. With the right player, you can enhance the play of this adventure tenfold.

Alternately, you could work this out before the game and share the details of the adventure with the player before the action begins.

The Village

On a hillside near Kyuden Toketsu is the quaint village that provides Lord Nori with his rice and other harvests. The family has never taken time to mine the hills and despite the greed one would expect from a Yasuki merchant, the small farms seem to provide adequate sustenance for the household.

It is quiet and eerily calm for a village of its size. There are 16 huts and enough farmland to feed 200 samurai for one year. However, with no peasants working, the paddies are beginning to become overgrown. A small dirt road leads down over the hill into the village and splits into smaller paths leading to the huts. The path ends at a small Torii arch, recently painted by crude, uneducated hands. The village is a serene and unremarkable place (from a distance).

If the samurai investigate the village, they find it quiet and still. Most of the peasants do not come out to work until late morning, and if rumors have spread about the death of Enyi or the NPC samurai, then the farmers will remain indoors even later. In the village the samurai can find two important pieces of information. First, something in the swamp has caught the attention of the peasants and folklore has run amuck, turning strange lights into fuel for superstition. Second, the peasants' huts contain strange idols carved from solid black rock into the shape of hideous oni.

For ease of play, no matter which hut the PCs choose to approach they find an old woman working alone in the field. Her name is Buki and her young son Chiyo is inside.

If they greet Buki alone in the field, she falls to the ground bowing and scraping, obviously frightened of the samurai. She sobs in between words attempting to answer their questions.





This is what she knows:

- Buki has seen strange lights at night coming from the north, on the edge of the swamp. She believes that something is alive in the swamp, or worse, something is dead but still moving around.

- Buki has heard that livestock has gone missing. Taeki (a neighbor) lost two pigs and a chicken several weeks ago. He was overheard to have said "We are doomed," and "Lady Sun hates us."

- Buki believes that this has happened before. Her mother told her the stories when she was a girl: in her grandmother's time, shortly after the village was founded, an evil claimed the lives of several villagers. Prominent men were killed by horrible spirits. Buki's mother said that the men stood against the evil to no avail.

- The monks have told the villagers to beware the evil. They have given the peasants wards to defend against it. The idols are sewn into the bamboo reeds inside the house. The monks told her that crystal was useless against it.

She only divulges information when asked and does not reveal anything without prodding. If asked about the idols found in the hut (*see below*), she remarks that the idols were given to them by the monks of Harike temple. The monks said that they would be kept safe from harm if they kept the idols close.

If they approach the house and announce themselves, there is no answer. They may try again and again, but there will be no answer. If they go inside anyway (as is appropriate for samurai), they find a young boy huddled crying in a corner of the spare, small hut. Chuyo is frightened and his mother has told him to stay inside all day. Chuyo doesn't know anything more than his mother (he is aware of Enyi's death, however, whether or not the rumor has spread).

Samurai with the Investigation skill may roll Perception + Investigation at TN 25 to notice a small black stone sewn into one of the bamboo reed walls. It is an easy task to cut it away from the reed. Should a samurai inspect the stone an Intelligence + Lore: Shadowlands Roll at TN 15 reveals it is an oni carved from a black stone. With one Raise, the samurai learns that stone is obsidian. With five Raises, the samurai recognizes the oni to be a powerful and horrible myth form (whose name escapes them). With nine Raises, the samurai recognizes the oni as Kusatte Iru. A success at this level will also trigger the history of Harike Temple (*see page 20*).

At this point, the samurai should realize the evil involved and may slay Chuyo and Buki for their transgressions against the Empire. GMs are reminded that it is a samurai's duty to honor the Celestial Order, and any person (samurai or otherwise) dabbling in *maho* is considered an enemy of the Emperor and the Kami.





The samurai may wish to find Taeki, the neighbor with the absent livestock, and ask him a few questions. Unfortunately, Taeki left this morning upon hearing rumors of more deaths. He and his family have fled their hut, leaving it bare and disarranged (they left in a hurry). If they inspect the walls, they find another idol like the one in Buki's hut, indicating that Buki's story was true. Every hut in the village has an idol.

After the samurai finish interviewing the peasantry there will be another, stronger earth tremor, and the party must make Reflexes rolls at TN 20 to stay on their feet. Failure indicates that the quake has thrown them to the ground. Although they do not suffer any Wounds, their pride may be injured and they will surely notice how powerful the quake was. The quake lasts for a full minute before subsiding.

OTHER VILLAGERS

Continued investigations in the village reveal that rumor and folklore have turned the village inside out. People have seen lights, livestock has gone missing, and noises from the swamp and temple continue to haunt the populace.

At this point the samurai have three choices: return to the house of Nori, explore the swamp to the north, or visit the Temple. There is no road leading to either the swamp or the temple; if the party wishes to go to the temple, they must rely on directions from the peasants.

THE HOUSE

If the samurai return to the house they find Goshiro guarding the door to Nori's room; Nori refuses to come out. If they force their way past Goshiro, they find Nori composing his will at a small writing table. Nori intends to leave the entire valley to his geisha, Suko. His wakizashi for seppuku is laid out on a small table and stacks of letters and poems lie about the room. He is preparing for his death, as he does not want the evil to consume him.

Should the samurai begin to interrogate him regarding the evil here, he claims ignorance about the idols (and he really does not know about them). Should the PCs continue to probe for information he breaks down crying and sobbing, unable to withstand the pressure and badgering.

After the samurai leave, Nori completes his letter and commits seppuku before the end of the day.



The Plains of Foul Tears are no longer truly plains at all. Named so by a Hida explorer 800 years ago, the Plains are one of the last untainted stretches of land on the edge of the Shadowlands. Located away from the Crab lands north of the Kaiu wall, the Plains are not protected by anyone, but still close enough to the Unicorn and Crab lands to be of relative importance to the clans. For the Unicorn, it provides the perfect natural barrier to the Shadowlands.

Spanning some 30 miles, but only six miles wide, the plains are a wide strip of spoiled and putrid terrain, dotted with swamp, marsh, thicket, and rubble. When there finally is a break in the terrain, the surrounding humidity chokes the visitor. This is no place to live.

Moving through the Plains is a slow and arduous process. It takes a full day to march across the short axis of the Plains and no one has ever traversed the longest portion of the Plains. Movement is not easy and it can take its toll on even the hardest samurai. Every day, after the first four hours of marching travelers must make a Stamina roll at TN 15 to remain on their feet. This TN climbs by 5 for every four hours of walking or marching. Even remaining still requires a roll at TN 15 every 12 hours or the samurai falls victim to the heat, unable to move. This TN does not go up over time, however.

GMs who want to make visits into the swamp difficult should use these rules to vex and frustrate unprepared samurai.

There is no direct path to the swamp. Samurai choosing to move overland find it difficult to traverse the fields and hills. Although only 10 miles away, it will be nearly nightfall before the party reaches the edge of the swamp. Once there, they must either camp or search at night. In either



case, the PCs should stumble upon a thicket of woods in the swamp.

A successful Perception + Hunting Roll at TN 25 results in finding the lair in 2 hours (3 hours at night). Double this time if the roll is not successful. In either case, the samurai will be tired and filthy after stumbling through the murky water. The lair they find should shed some light on what has been going on.

You see a small spot of swamp where the trees have been uprooted and the water diverted into a makeshift dam. The 'pond' has murky brown-greenish water not unlike the rest of the swamp; however, someone seems to have made a home here.

If the PCs search the lair, allow them a Perception Roll at TN 20. Success reveals a small tree that appears to have something jammed in it. Samurai who pry the stone out find a piece of black rock carved like the ones in the village. Worse, the hollowed-out tree contains many more of these idols. If this doesn't convince the PCs that they should visit the temple which the villagers said had supplied them with these idols, perhaps another tremor will.

In addition to finding Higashato's lair, the PCs will also uncover an old and unkempt torii arch somewhere in the swamp. It is covered with moss and swamp water which has stained the arch and left it unsavory. The arch is small, but if the PCs took some time, it could be cleared away and the PCs could use it for prayer or, if necessary, purification.

The Temple

Rather than listing a sequence of events that the players must follow, this section of the adventure simply details the important locations within the temple, leaving the PCs to search the grounds and determine the relevant clues on their own. The Temple should be challenging and only the worthy will defeat the evil within.

No matter what time the samurai arrive at the Temple, they find it shrouded in an unnatural, constant twilight. The temple is unseasonably humid as well, much like the swamp, and bits of grass and moss grow in various places around the temple. Feel free to add atmospheric details wherever you wish.

North, south, east, and west are used as descriptors for the GM's use only. At no time should you reveal to the players which way is north. Part of the trick of the temple is for the PCs to realize that half of it is hidden away.

The Exterior

TEMPLE GROUNDS

From the outside the temple is a beautiful calm building alone in a field of grass and mud. The surrounding garden seems well-maintained despite the rumors that the monks have gone mad. Walking the grounds, the samurai will find that very little has been disturbed. A Perception + Gardening Roll at TN 20 reveals that the garden has been pruned recently. Some minor scraps of seaweed and peatmoss can be found around the edge of the monastery. It is at this time that the samurai may notice that the Temple is built directly on the ground and not stilted like typical Rokugani structures.

A Perception + Hunting Roll at TN 15 reveals no excessive or inconsistent footprints. A Perception + Hunting Roll at TN 30 indicates that something inhuman has been through recently. Characters inspecting the footprints may make an Intelligence + Lore: Shadowlands Roll at TN 20 to realize that a small mujina has been through here recently (within a week). The footprints end abruptly. There is no way to determine which direction the mujina left in.

THE VERANDA

Although the grounds are clean and nicely kept, the "porch" is covered in recently trimmed vines, grass, flowers, and overgrowth. The samurai may walk around the verandah as much as they like. All of the windows have been boarded up and nailed shut. Astute samurai notice that the wood used to nail up the windows is fresh and does not mesh with the rest of the temple. (Only relay this information if someone asks.)

Large, simple double doors lead into the temple. They are not locked nor barred. Any shugenja in the party may roll Perception + School Rank at TN 30 to notice magical wards burned into the wood. A further Intelligence + Lore: Shadowlands roll against a TN of 25 reveals that they are the markings of a powerful binding ritual. A raise on the roll yields the information that disturbing the door will release the oni. Only through the use of the Evil Ward or Purification spells can the party hope to banish the markings from the door and bypass the spirit.

Attempting to push the doors open awakens the lesser guardian oni that is bound to them. If the samurai are unaware of the ward or unprepared for the attack, the guardian strikes during the first Round before Initiative is rolled and automatically hits for 4k2 damage. At this time, you may wish to show the players the picture of the creature.





Lesser of Two Evils

SMOKE ONI GUARDIAN

Earth: 1

Water: 4

Fire: 4

Air: 6

Attacking: 6k4

Damage: 4k2 (razor claws)

TN to be Hit: 40

Armor: 7

Wounds: 30: -1; 60: -2, 90: -3; 120: Dead

The Smoke Oni is a large cloud of black smoke made up of several small horrible images. Each is the physical manifestation of a spirit bound into the monastery. Higashato has bound many spirits together and twisted their will into evil little demons. The cloud is a single powerful entity, as any of the samurai will learn when the oni guardian powers into him and cuts the flesh from his bones. The smoke oni is resistant to most magic, and all spells from the Rings of Water, Fire, and Air have their target number increased by 10 when targeting the oni. If defeated, the oni dissipates in a flurry of smoke and wind only to return within a day to guard the door again.

After the samurai defeat the oni, they are greeted at the door by the image of a mysterious male figure. If they attempt to speak to him, he does not respond and merely smiles. If anyone should try to touch him, he disappears in a puff of smoke. It is not important at this time, but the man is the image of Kuni Harike. They will see the image again later, inside the temple.

The interior of the temple is very dark. The samurai will need a light source to do much of anything inside. If using the supplied characters, the Iuchi shugenja has a scroll of Amaterasu's Blessing which could be cast upon a stick or even a samurai's daisho.

The Interior

I. ENTRANCE CHAMBER

The entrance chamber to the temple has, at first glance, the accouterments of a typical monastery. The interior is spartan, without even a tatami mat. Strange idols mark the walls and the twisted and gnarled body of a great demon has been painted on the floor. Anyone inspecting the painting will notice that it is colored rock salt, carefully spread out on the floor. Stepping on it

causes tiny pops and cracks to echo eerily throughout the chamber. A successful Perception Roll at TN 30 (20 if there is a useful light source) will reveal that a cryptic haiku has been traced into the spine of the oni.

*The woman of night
Breathes us and feeds us our life
Never shall we want*

The abbot of the temple has been slowly twisted to view Higashato as a goddess and to revel in what she brings him. He has taken the time to place this image of Kusatte Iru on the ground to honor both his "mother" and his "father". He does not see himself as a victim, but rather as saved by nurturing parents.

Shadowlands experts may wish to know the identity of the Oni. Only a successful Intelligence + Shadowlands Roll at TN 60 will reveal that is the legendary oni Kusatte Iru. If the PCs encountered the idols in the village, they will recognize this image as a depiction of the same creature. If the roll is successful, (if the GM has not already explained it) the GM should recite the fable of Kusatte Iru as explained in the boxed text below. Remind the samurai that most Crab do not put much stock in this fable. This monastery and mosaic indicate that the monks living here take it much more seriously.

Once inside the PCs can see that there is a large wooden plank behind the double doors, and a place to bar the doors from within. Whoever locked up last forgot to bar the doors.

Sliding doors at the far edges of the chamber lead into the next room.

400 years ago, as the story goes, Kuni Harike set out to destroy the great Oni Kusatte Iru. Fearing that he would bring about the deaths of others, Harike went alone. Traveling to the very edge of the Kaiu Wall and beyond, Harike found sacred ground on which he could battle the great Oni. Summoning great magic, Harike called forth the Oni and battled him for several days and nights.

Unable to subdue the great beast, but guarding himself with wards and fetishes, Harike was safe from the instant death the Oni would have meted out to any unprotected soul. Drawing upon his last resource, Harike put the great beast to sleep and called upon the spirits of the earth to bury the Oni miles under the rock and soil. Harike died





THE HISTORY OF HARIKE TEMPLE AS READ TO THE PCs

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Drawing upon his last resource, Harike put the great beast to sleep and called upon the spirits of the earth to bury the Oni miles under the rock and soil. Harike died soon after.

(Continued on opposite page.)



soon after. His scrolls and records were later discovered by monks who built a shrine and later a temple to the great Kuni Harike. Although plagued with supernatural problems, the monks of Kuni Harike Temple endured in the name of Harike's sacrifice, considering the disruptions simply part of the Oni's restless sleep.

For over a century the temple remained at the edge of Crab lands without attracting notice.

2. DOJO

This large and well-maintained dojo has a large tatami mat and some weapons strewn about. The walls are made of rice paper, but very little light enters the room. A few bo sticks and sai lie on the floor as if someone left them in a hurry. There is not much for the PCs to find, but this is a good place for them to rest, if they feel the need.

There are two exits. Both are sliding shoji screen doors.

3. EMPTY CHAMBER

This is a storage room with nothing stored inside at the moment.

4. EARTHEN HOME

The PCs can smell plant life and moss long before they reach this chamber. Covered in shafts of grass and leaves, the floor is a tangle of green. The walls are wooden and painted in dark colors, swallowing any light from the room. There is very

little to find here, but samurai taking time to walk around have two opportunities to find the door in the floor. Have any samurai walking around the room make two Perception Rolls. The TN for both is 30. If the first is successful, the samurai hears a low, soft thud as his footstep causes an echo in the tunnel below the door. If the second is successful he faintly smells rotting flesh and blood. In either case the door is easy to open once the greenery has been pushed away.

Cutting straight down is an earthen pit about five feet wide and 20 or 30 feet deep. The smell of rotting flesh is powerful when the trap door is open.

5. MUJINA LAIR

If the PCs have already been to room #15, then the mujina will not be here; otherwise, the following encounter occurs.

Resting on a bed of grass and mud is a single, wide-eyed creature roughly two feet tall. Its skin is rust colored and vestigial wings sprout from its shoulders. Two tiny horns break through the top of its skull, leaving cracks in its otherwise flawless skin, or shell. A wide comical grin spreads across its rather large head and its tongue dangles lifelessly from its mouth. Razor-sharp teeth show in its ridiculous grin. It appears stiff, as if frozen solid, and does not seem to be breathing.



The creature is an illusion; touching it causes the illusion to crack and then explode in a cloud of smoke that fills the room. During the few minutes while the smoke dissipates, visibility is almost nil.

In the meantime, the real mujina appears and steals something important from one of the samurai. In tournament conditions, it steals a scroll from the Soshi; otherwise, it takes the wakizashi from a highly honorable bushi. It then flies up the hole and disappears while the samurai wait for the smoke to dissipate. Catching it is impossible, but do not discourage the samurai from trying. Allow them to waste some time looking for it. They will have an opportunity later to confront it and retrieve their items.

Should the samurai ever catch the mujina, its stats are provided below.

MUJINA

Earth: 1

Water: 2

Strength: 3

Fire: 2

Agility: 6

Air: 2

Reflexes: 5

Skills:

Athletics 5

Defense 5

Attacking: 3k2

Damage: 1k1 (rocks or anything else that it can hurl)

TN to be Hit: -

Armor: -

Wounds: -

Mujina suffer no damage from physical blows and cannot be harmed by most spells. Elemental Ward will keep them at bay, and is usually enough to get them to move on; they are easily bored and will rarely have the patience to wait out a warding spell.

The only way they can inflict damage is by throwing something at an opponent. The more valuable the object, the more likely it is to be used as an impromptu missile. Mujina attacks are intended to vex and harass, no more; their damage rating reflects this non-lethal tendency.

If the samurai encountered the mujina in room 15, it is waiting for them and reclining once again on its bed of grass. The mujina has a sharp, high-pitched voice that hurts the ears. The PCs

may want to harm the mujina, but their weapons pass right through it. Whatever item it stole is not within sight. Destroying the creature (if they can manage it) results in the items being lost forever.

If they attempt to talk to it, the mujina offers their items back to them.

"In exchange for your possessions, I want something in return (cackle). I wish a piece of crystal from the samurai... hahahaha. Give it to me and you may have your things... (cackle). Are we agreed?"

Should the samurai say yes, he offers this advice:

"Know that the armor will not protect you from death. Only what death brings. When you have what I wish, bring it here to me and I shall gladly return your (sword/scroll)."

6. MEDITATION CHAMBER

Dark and poorly lit, this room is in fair condition in comparison to the rest of the temple. Organized personal-sized tatami mats line the floor. Nothing seems to have been touched or disturbed, but the sliding door to the north of the room is slightly ajar. Make the samurai nervous by hinting that something may be behind there. Without proper lighting there is no way to be sure, and without the fear of something behind the screen, the samurai would be able to use this time to rest.

If the samurai are chasing the mujina from room 5, they will no doubt rush into the room in hopes of cornering the creature.

7. FLESH-EATERS

This dark and musty room has bits of cloth and wood strewn about the floor. It appears that the room was once a place for monks to congregate, perhaps to eat. Another sliding door can be seen on the west wall.

If the samurai have an adequate light source, they may make a Perception Roll at TN 15 to notice skinless madmen hanging from the rafters. There are a number of flesh-eaters equal to the number of PCs, minus one.

If not noticed, the madmen wait for the most opportune moment to leap onto the backs of a samurai or two. Unarmored samurai will be easier targets and thus more likely for attack.

THE HISTORY OF HARIKE TEMPLE AS READ TO THE PCs (CONTINUED)

His scrolls and records were later discovered by monks who built a shrine and later a temple to the great Kuni Harike. Although plagued with supernatural problems, the monks of Kuni Harike Temple endured in the name of Harike's sacrifice, considering the disruptions simply part of the Oni's restless sleep.

For over a century the temple remained at the edge of Crab lands without attracting notice.



FLESH-EATERS

Earth: 3
Water: 2
Strength: 4
Fire: 1
Agility: 3
Air: 2
Reflexes: 4
Attacking: 7k3
Damage: 5k1
TN to be Hit: 20
Armor: 4
Wounds: 15: -1, 30: -2, 60: dead

During the fight, there is a very strong tremor. This time the PCs are standing at the epicenter of a very powerful quake, which lasts for 6 rounds of fighting. During the earthquake, all characters' and madmen's Reflexes and Agility are considered 2 less (the madmen roll 5k1 when attacking during the quake). Should this reduce anyone's Agility or Reflexes to 0, they are immediately knocked to the ground and must remain there until the quake ends.

8. LIBRARY

This room was used by the monastery to store important texts. Over the years verses have been written and rewritten, altered and changed. It has been a long time since anyone has written anything new and the high humidity in the temple has ruined most of the scrolls. Wooden walls line this room, unlike many of the previous rooms.

Rotted papers, wood, and cloth lie about the floor. The walls sag from the weight of shelves grown brittle with age. A series of "mailbox" holes hold old, torn scrolls. The room is otherwise empty.

Samurai taking time to investigate the scrolls find a narrow field of subjects. Depending how long they spend searching, they will find various items of interest.

15 minutes: The samurai find nothing that stands out as obvious or useful. The scrolls are brittle and a few crack under the stress of handling, no matter how careful the PCs try to be.

30 minutes: Someone discovers a scroll written in a careful hand. It is in fair shape in comparison to the others and may have been written recently. There is no signature, but it appears to be written to the abbot of the temple.



"Dear Koshi,

"I mean no disrespect, but as the abbot, I feel that you are the only one I can speak to of this. I understand the need to study the Shadowlands. After all, it was Harike's sacrifice that gave us our calling. However, to immerse ourselves so much in its study and understanding... this I cannot approve. We carve idols from black stone and paint pictures of a long-dead oni, and I cannot set my mind at ease. I hope you understand my thoughts and will address this in your next sermon."

1 hour: The PCs discover a scroll bearing a missive from a Kuni shugenja to his lord. The scroll is old and tattered. It appears to have been written in a hurry.

"Dear Lord Ikeru,

"I, Kuni Obesa, have reached the Temple of Harike. I have found nothing. I do not wish to countermand your orders, my lord, but I have found no one here. I have waited in the audience chamber for several days, but I have heard no one and seen no one in all this time. I have walked the length of the temple and found nothing amiss. There are the standard furnishings of a temple, but nothing that would indicate that anyone has been here in quite some time. Sometimes at night I think I hear clawing sounds, but nothing has yet surfaced. I suspect it is merely a rat inside the walls."

"What troubles me is that from the outside the temple appears to be rather large, but once inside the walls seems rather smaller, as if there were a hidden portion to the temple. Tomorrow I will search for a way into the hidden rooms I suspect to exist."

"I shall return home soon, but I am sending this with my assistant today, so there are no delays."

*"Lady Sun's Favor,
"Kuni Obesa, IC 821"*

2 hours: As 1 hour, plus a shugenja's scroll - *Not This Day!*

Not This Day!

Base TN: 5

Casting Time: 3 Actions

Duration: Rounds equal to the target's Void

Mastery: 6

Concentration: None

Raises: Casting Time, Duration

Effect: Single Use. This spell is keyed to a specific individual, and the scroll for the spell must be written in that person's blood, which must have been given willingly in a special ceremony. When cast, the target becomes one with his doom and gives his life for the sake of the family name. He rolls and keeps additional dice equal to his Void on every skill and damage die roll he makes for the duration of the spell. He also adds his Void trait to his initiative die roll. At the end of the spell's duration, the target dies.

Some Rokugani object to this spell, claiming that since the scroll is written in blood and requires blood to function, it is black magic. To this, the Moto counter that the traditional Rokugani fealty ceremony involves signing a pledge with a brush dipped in your own blood. Signing your fate to a magical scroll is no different. Further, the scroll does not need the blood to power it; it simply needs it to key itself to the individual.

9. HUMBLE QUARTERS

The interior of this room is simple and humble. Monks apparently live here, but presently there is no one about. Two tatami mats, two small boxes for storing a few items, two bowls, two pairs of chopsticks laid across the tops of the bowls, and an incense burner and sticks are all that the monks owned. Nothing appears to have been disturbed and there is no sign of the occupants.

10. HUMBLE QUARTERS

The interior of this room is simple and humble, but its harmony is ruined by the corpses of two monks, their clothes torn and bloodied.

It is not likely that samurai will get close to the bloodied bodies; if someone does choose to inspect them, it is obvious that major portions of their skin have been torn away and their throats have been slit. There was no struggle and the two died in their sleep. A successful Intelligence + Autopsy Roll at TN 20 (30 if no one has the Autopsy skill) reveals precise claw marks at the scalp and temples where their faces were torn away.

If it is possible for any of the samurai to commune with the dead, the monks do not know anything, as they were asleep when they were slain. No kami in this room will be of any assistance either.





PLAYER CLUE (Room II)

"...do not resist the teachings, but it seems we have strayed from Hagike's law. Certainly much can be learned by studying the Shadowlands, but is it necessary for us to embrace them so whole-heartedly? I am sickened by..."

II. HUMBLE QUARTERS

This room is very similar to room 10, down to the presence of two slaughtered monks. In this room, however, one of the monks was writing something upon a scroll when he was attacked. Although he did not put up much of a fight, it appears that whoever cut him apart was neither careful nor precise in their butchery.

Like the rest of the room, the scroll is covered in blood. A few kanji can be made out, but most of it is useless. The ink had not yet dried when the attack took place and the characters are smudged and illegible. What can be discerned is this:

"...do not resist the teachings, but it seems we have strayed from Hagike's law. Certainly much can be learned by studying the Shadowlands, but is it necessary for us to embrace them so whole-heartedly? I am sickened by..."

If the PCs found the letter to Koshi in room 8 (the library), they will notice that the handwriting is the same.

If it is possible for any of the samurai to commune with the dead, the monk who put up a struggle has a little more insight than the others. It was dark but he saw a pale green-skinned woman with sharp nails and teeth. She moaned a hideous, infectious cry, and her speed was impossible to fathom as she was upon the monk in an instant. He attempted to defend himself, but there was no hope for him. He was dead in seconds.

Communing with the Air kami in this room nets the same story.

At this time anyone with the Lore: Shadowlands Skill may make an Intelligence + Lore: Shadowlands Roll against a TN of 35. A successful roll means the PC has deduced that the woman was a bog hag.

II. HUMBLE QUARTERS

The interior of this room is simple, much like rooms 9-11, but the room's salient feature is a pile of bodies four feet high, apparently the remaining brothers who lived at the temple. Flies swarm around the carcasses and even the most strong-willed samurai may find the macabre scene disturbing.

It is not likely that samurai will get close to the bodies; however, if someone does choose to inspect them, they cannot find signs of a struggle

and it is not obvious what killed the monks. There is no blood on their clothing and no scars on their bodies. A Perception roll at TN 20 shows that all of their eyes are closed, perhaps indicating that it was a peaceful death.

If it is possible for any of the samurai to commune with the dead, the monks do not know anything. No kami in this room will be of any assistance.

13. HIGH PRIEST'S CHAMBER

This room is slightly nicer than the other monk rooms. However, for the most part it is still a tatami mat, a small box, a bowl, a pair of chopsticks, a small writing box, and an incense burner. Flecks of dried blood can be found in various parts of the room, but there are no bodies. Clipped to the board is a scroll freshly marked.

Tonight.

I did it.

All but three are gone.

I have what I need to bring Father back.

I have everything I need.

Mother will be so proud.

It is up to the PCs to decide what to make of this.

14. TEMPLE ROOM

This is obviously the room where the monks congregate to meditate, worship, and rejoice in their faith. A statue at the far end of the room is of Harike in the traditional pose, holding a crystal sphere in both hands. Anyone inspecting the statue recognizes the face of Harike as that of the apparition they saw when first entering the temple.

The walls are decorated with a rice-paper mural depicting a magnificent battle scene of the Crab against the Shadowlands. Strewn throughout the painting are the suffering images of humans and oni alike. Close inspection (Perception roll at TN 20) reveals the image of Kusatte Iru in the southeastern corner of the room. On the floor, below this image, the floorboards creak and shift.

Benches are built into the walls, and years of use have worn the wood smooth. Robes have been folded and tucked away under the benches. If the samurai began to search through them, they will find over 50 robes. Eventually, one of the samurai (roll randomly to determine who) finds a



suit of skin. It will not be obvious at first what it is, but touching it the samurai will feel the familiar texture of human skin. A Willpower Roll at TN 20 is required to not immediately drop the skin in fright.

Closer inspection, if anybody is willing to do so, reveals that the skin is from the chest and arms of a human male. It appears to have been torn from the body, but there are no stretch marks or stitches. It seems to be in perfect condition, as if the body merely vanished and left the skin behind. There is a small tattoo of a crow on the left shoulder.

Samurai should be allowed an Intelligence + Lore: Shadowlands Roll at TN 30 to piece together that this is the work of a bog hag. Once they know this it is easy to deduce that the others who have been stripped of their skins were victims of the bog hag as well. At this point in the adventure the players may begin to deduce what has been going on, quite possibly assessing that Kyume and Suko are both skins of the bog hag.

If the PCs do not inspect the image of Kusatte Iru, allow one of them a Perception Roll at TN 30 to notice that floorboards just below the painting are subtly different from the others around it. If after 15 minutes of searching the room, the samurai do not find anything in this room, have one of them walk across the creaking floorboards. It is very important that the PCs make their way into the lower level of the temple.

Under the boards the samurai find a small shaft leading down some 30 feet below the temple into a poorly lit chamber. If they have a good light source, the PCs can see moss growing on the walls and floor of the shaft.

Finding Skins

Samurai are notoriously fastidious about cleanliness, both spiritual and physical. The act of touching skins is not to be taken lightly. In fact, this could seriously stall your games, if the players are as fanatical as their character counterparts should be. Finding a way to cleanse themselves should be of an utmost priority (depending of course on their clan affiliation and distinction as samurai).

There are a number of ways to deal with this. A shugenja could simply bless the befouled samurai in a simple, but lengthy ceremony. Two hours should do. Especially devoted PCs may have trouble with the priest of another clan

"blessing them" and may require a visit to a Torii arch and a lengthy stay of meditation.

Exceptionally stubborn PCs may even wish to remove themselves from the game altogether as they return home, shamed and seeking a family priest to minister to them.

If a single PC chooses to remove herself from the game in this manner, do not stall the action for the rest of the party; after all, eventually Kusatte Iru will rise, and samurai sitting out in a field watching someone meditate is hardly heroic behavior. Then again, neither is picking up human skin in the first place.

We are not telling you to enforce any code of behavior for the players. This is a tournament module; simply note this under "role-playing/acting as samurai" when judging their points for the session.

Variation

If you are playing the variation in which one of the party members is the bog hag, it is very important that the NPC samurai do nothing to draw especial attention. If you've run the game with an ample amount of distrust, everyone should be suspect and the players should be looking sideways at each other, much like the scientists in the movie *The Thing*. Despite their suspicions, it is important that they find out the source of the evil hidden in the temple.

15. SECRET ROOM

If the samurai have not yet encountered the mujina from room 5, it is playing the same trick here that it would have played there.

Resting on a bed of grass and mud is a single, wide-eyed creature roughly two feet tall. Its skin is rust colored and vestigial wings sprout from its shoulders. Two tiny horns break through the top of its skull, leaving cracks in its otherwise flawless skin, or shell. A wide comical grin spreads across its rather large head and its tongue dangles lifelessly from its mouth. Razor-sharp teeth show in its ridiculous grin. It appears stiff, as if frozen solid, and does not seem to be breathing.

The creature is an illusion; touching it causes the illusion to crack and then explode in a cloud of smoke that fills the room. During the few minutes while the smoke dissipates, visibility is almost nil.

LOWER LEVEL OF THE TEMPLE

Rooms 15-20 represent the lower level of the temple. Once the PCs descend into the lower level, they may notice that the walls are stone and the floor is cold and damp. The GM should describe the setting as dank and chilling. Every step resonates and foreshadows their descent to Higashato's ambush.

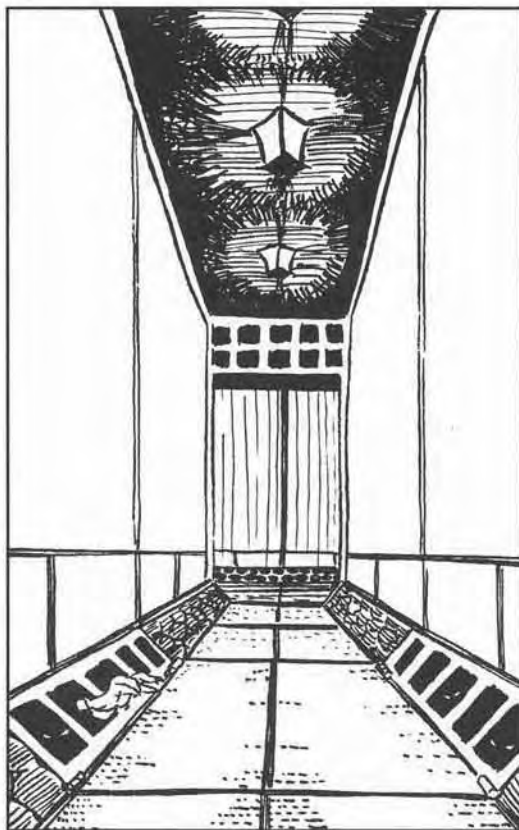
This environment should be very different from what they are used to and ill prepared samurai without lanterns, rope, or basic necessities will find themselves challenged by what lies ahead.



In the meantime, the real mujina appears and steals something important from one of the samurai. In tournament conditions, it steals a scroll from the Soshi; otherwise, it takes the wakizashi from a highly honorable bushi. It then flies up the hole and disappears while the samurai wait for the smoke to dissipate. Catching it is impossible, but do not discourage the samurai from trying. Allow them to waste some time looking for it. They will have an opportunity later to confront it and retrieve their items.

If the samurai encountered the Mujina in room 5, then it is resting upon a bed of pillows. However, whatever it stole is not to be seen. The mujina has a sharp, high-pitched voice that hurts the ears to hear it. The PCs may want to harm the mujina, but their weapons will pass right through him. If they wisely attempt to talk to it, the mujina offers their items back to them.

"In exchange for your possessions, I want something in return. <cackle>. I wish a piece of crystal from the samurai... hahahaha. Give it to me and you may have your things... <cackle>. Are we agreed?"



Should the samurai say yes, he offers this advice:

"Know that the armor will not protect you from death. Only what death brings. When you have what I wish, bring it hear to me and I shall gladly return your (sword/scroll/etc.)"

On the east wall is a solid wooden door.

"Beyond there lies your <cackle> doom. Unless you are brave enough to be right."

16. THE CAGES

Stretching away from the samurai is a corridor, well lit and lined on each side by grates in the wooden baseboards. The corridor is almost 50 feet long and there are short strips of brick between each grating. A successful Perception Roll at TN 15 reveals that there is something alive moving behind the grates. At this point show the PCs the picture.

This is not an easy room to traverse. The corridor is a mere five feet wide and anyone walking down this corridor is sure to be cut apart by the razor-sharp claws of the flesh-eaters below. Anyone standing anywhere in the corridor is a target of attack. Should anyone should attempt to run very quickly through the hall, the flesh eaters will be allowed four attacks (two from each side) on the samurai. Should they be successful, the samurai must make a successful Reflexes Roll for each attack against a TN equal to the damage dealt. If she should fail, she will fall to her feet in the corridor and the flesh eaters will tear the flesh from her fallen body in a single round.

Alternately, if a PC can fly across the corridor, this trap is easily dealt with. At the other end of the corridor is a pair of levers, one built into each wall, which close the grates. Although not easy to close, a Simple Strength Roll at TN 20 (for each lever) closes off the grates and allows the rest of the party to cross.

The PCs should be free to develop other methods of crossing the room, but unless they can find a way to remain two feet off the ground during the entire crossing, the flesh eaters will be allowed an attack. The small lamps on the ceiling are not strong enough to support a human, but let the PCs learn this on their own.

The stats for Flesh-Eaters can be found on page 22.



17. FLESH EATER CAGES

Only Koshi has the key to these heavy, locked doors. However, a successful Strength Roll at TN 30 breaks them open. A Large samurai may add one unkept die to the roll. If unsuccessful, the resonating thud alerts the flesh-eaters inside, who begin to bang on the walls and howl insidiously (imagine the sound of gorillas pounding the earth).

These chambers house 10 flesh-eaters each. They are cast in complete darkness – unless the grates are still open, in which case a small stream of light from above fills the room with an odd glow. Should anyone attempt to enter the room, these mad, hideous beasts attack and attempt to devour whomever has entered.

18. Moss Room

A moss-covered wooden door leads the samurai into this next room. The door swings open to reveal a room filled with moss and other plant life, so thick that it climbs to the ceiling and burgeons from the walls. Inside a short pathway leads through the fragrant and moist plant life. At the end of the path is a large box, painted black and green and covered with moss. The image on the box is of a sparrow dipping its bill into a calm brook of water.

Inside the box, the samurai find a small pile of skins, folded carefully. Follow the rules for “finding skins” as mentioned in room 14.

Should there be cause to fight anyone in the tight confines of this room, all attacks have their TN increased by 10.

19. CRYSTAL SAMURAI ROOM

At the end of a long hall is an open doorway leading into what can best be described as a small dojo. Above the doorframe, the name “Ryute” has been carved into the stone, although acts of vandalism partially obscure it. Past the doorway in the large chamber dedicated to Kuni Ryute, a dark room lit dimly by lanterns (filled with eternal light). Solid oaken walls show no sign of age. In the center of the room rests a suit of amber-colored metal armor with the symbols of the sun and moon emblazoned on the breastplate. Standing to the side of the armor is the form of a crystal samurai standing at the ready. A circle has been painted on the floor and lanterns (somehow remaining lit with no apparent source of fuel) depicting each of the five elements hang from the ceiling in a symmetrical

pattern around the circle. The samurai are free to enter the room and look about; the light from the lanterns does not, however, extend beyond the circle painted on the floor, and the corners of the room are cast into darkness. See the cover of this book for a picture of the armor and the crystal samurai.

Carved into the stone walls of the temple is the true history of Kuni Ryute and Kuni Harike. Told in an amalgam of kanji script and pictograms, the story details the journey of Ryute and Harike as they left the Crab lands to face Kusatte Iru as taken from the scroll journal of Ryute.

“The journey of man is as humble as any animal, but as courageous as any god. Harike bore the weight of knowledge, I the weight of duty. None but my friend and I knew our journey. No songs would be written in our glory. My father’s armor was my shield against Iru’s might. Harike’s friendship was earned through trial and worth. Our journey, long and strenuous, would not deter us. The battle comes tomorrow. I can feel it.”

The voice of the kanji changes considerably at this point, as the monks attempt to reconstruct the truth.

“The body of Harike was found face up in a ditch many miles from here, bound in crystal. His bloodied but undamaged armor shone with a holy, perfect light. We buried it away beneath the earth, under the temple, in order that the world might forget about Ryute and his armor, so that none may disturb the tomb of history’s greatest samurai and incur the wrath of the Fortunes who preserved him.”

Encased in the crystal is the spirit of Kuni Ryute, the yojimbo of Kuni Harike. Despite his prison, Ryute is a devoted Crab and will attempt to destroy anything that enters the room. Ryute is highly sensitive to the taint and now that he is made of crystal he is a powerful weapon against it. If any of the samurai have even a small degree of Shadowlands taint, Ryute fights with an additional unkept die to attack and damage. In this state, Ryute is unable to fully control his actions and he will surely bring harm to anyone he considers an enemy.

For more on the history of Ryute, see below.

Should a PC cross the line painted on the floor, the crystal samurai comes to life and immediately



ANCESTOR: KUNI RYUTE (6 POINTS)

Kuni Ryute was a noble man who served his family and clan well and was a good friend to Harike. In death, Ryute gained insight for sensing the Shadowlands beyond anything he had ever experienced. Ryute was trained by the Hiruma, and his skills were augmented and intensified by his experience. Anyone that has Kuni Ryute as an ancestor is assumed to have the Rank 3 Hiruma Scout Technique. If the samurai already possesses this Technique, double its effects. In addition to this benefit the samurai gains the Disadvantage: Driven (to destroy the Shadowlands and anything with the taint).

engages the samurai. The first time this happens a samurai without Combat Reflexes is immediately surprised and is unable to act the first round. Ryute will strike them successfully for 9k3 damage.

Fighting Ryute is not easy and any samurai engaging him one-on-one will surely die. Up to three samurai may fight the crystal samurai at one time (it's that big) and another could surely move around to get the armor while the suit is occupied; however, as soon as anyone touches the armor, Ryute charges the transgressor. Should the PCs succeed in defeating Ryute, they will be rewarded with freeing his spirit. The Armor of the Sun and Moon is still theirs to keep. Should anyone defeat the crystal samurai, alone, without assistance, Ryute becomes his ancestor, gaining the 6 point advantage without cost to the player.

RYUTE, CRYSTAL SAMURAI

Earth: 6
Water: 6
Fire: 6
Air: 6
Attacking: 10k6
Damage: 9k3
TN to be Hit: 30
Armor: 10*
Wounds: 20: -1, 40: -2, 100: dead

The crystal samurai has the Combat Reflexes Advantage, which allows him, after initiative is rolled, to switch places with the character whose action is immediately before his.

Spells which attempt to reduce or increase the crystal samurai's Traits fail automatically. Ryute is not Shadowlands-tainted and is immune to any attack or spell which only affects Shadowlands creatures.

The crystal of the samurai's katana can successfully damage a mujina.

* Nemuranai ignore this armor rating.

ARMOR OF THE SUN AND MOON

"Fear not that which is from this earth, for the heavens protect you."

The Armor of the Sun and Moon is older than anyone remembers. Lost for three hundred years in the Temple of Harike, scholars had assumed that the armor was consumed by the Shadowlands. However, after basking in the glow of the Crystal Samurai for 300 years, the Armor of the Sun and Moon is a powerful nemuranai worthy of mention.

The armor was cut for a tall and strong samurai. Only those with the Large Advantage and an Earth of at least 3 may wear the armor. When worn the armor provides powerful protection against weapons and magic. The TN to hit the samurai increases by 10 when targeted by anything but Air spells and the first 5 points of damage from any attack are ignored. In addition, all attacks from Shadowlands creatures increase the wearer's TN to Be Hit and damage absorption by an additional 5.

HISTORY OF THE CRYSTAL SAMURAI

Kuni Ryute was Harike's yojimbo and he traveled to the Plains of Foul Tears to battle Kusatte Iru alongside Kuni Harike. It was there that Ryute died and Harike cast his breath over the fallen samurai, permanently encasing him in crystal. The legend of Ryute would die with him that day as his story was lost to history.

When the ground where the great battle took place was settled, the monks who built the temple and shrine to Harike took the armor and the crystal form of Ryute and encased them at the heart of the temple, burying the secret of Harike's greatest guardian. Meaning no disrespect, the monks intended to preserve the integrity of the temple by hiding Ryute behind a magically-warded door.

What the monks never understood is that the spirit of Ryute was encased in the armor with his body. Although dead, his spirit was not allowed to rest, denied Jigoku by the crystal skin. For over three hundred years, Ryute has waited in the darkness for nothingness to claim him.

20. KUSATTE IRU SHRINE ROOM

The solid oak door to this room opens easily. Inside is a horrible giant obsidian statue bathed in unnatural putrid light resting atop a circular four-step stone dais. There is no indication where the light is coming from, as there is no skylight. Five (possibly four, if you're playing the NPC-as-Hag variation) figures are in the room. One is a monk dressed in dark ceremonial robes standing before the statue, his arms raised, gibberish flowing from his mouth. This is Koshi, the abbot of the temple. (For more on Koshi see the NPC section.)

Three acolytes in the robes of the temple are chained to the wall, their hands over their heads. They appear to be sacrificial victims of some sort. Two have stern lifeless looks on their face, their



throats torn open, blood covering their robes (although see the "variation" boxed text). The third is weeping and struggling to break free to no avail, his wrists rubbed raw from the struggle. The illustration on page 16 details this scene well.

The last person here (again, see "variation" below) is a hideous, malformed bipedal creature. She is turned slightly away from the samurai entering the room. Her near-skinless body is covered in greenish-brown dirt and filth. A short kimono wrap covers a bit of her body, but she is otherwise "naked". Closer inspection reveals this "wrap" to be another skin. A ridge of spiny bone protrusions jut up along her back, pushing the vomitous membrane from her body. Her face is missing a great deal of skin and her jagged teeth poke through sinew, muscle and tissue. Her diseased gums show years of decay, and anyone who knows bog hag ecology recognizes her advanced age.

Her hands are razor-sharp and there appears to be almost no skin on her body, excepting the human skin on her left arm that sags and shifts when she moves. Her legs are covered with three separate and distinct sets of skin. Each hangs from her body in an almost natural way, except for the gaps where there is no skin. In her left hand is an obsidian stone. She is whispering something to the monks as the PCs enter; it is not clear what.

Variation

If one of the samurai is Higashato in disguise, then she is with the party and not in the room preparing her ritual. The monks are not dead either, as Koshi has tied them up but not yet killed them, but they will be silent, as Koshi has drugged them in preparation for this bluff (see below).

Since Koshi is alone in this room, the party may try to talk to him to find out what is going on. Alternately they may try to make their way across the room to free the monks or attack Koshi. Use the rules below for the yari traps built in the floor.

If a samurai fires arrows at Koshi he will not cover or wince, instead standing there and bleeding until he is dead or until the samurai cease firing at him. Higashato does nothing to stop them.

In this variation, GMs are expected to fudge things a little, honing the adventure to fit the style of the players. If the players are not averse to

having their characters murdered in cold blood, Higashato should begin cutting up the samurai from behind, quietly and methodically, not wasting any time. Use her Agility + Stealth as a contested roll against the PCs' Perception for her to move through the party without drawing notice.

If the players are not the type to take that sort of thing well (and who would?) have the NPC samurai slink across the room when the samurai aren't paying attention. Once Higashato has crossed the room, she removes the face of the samurai skin she is wearing and reveals herself to the party.

THE BOG HAG

If the PCs have already determined that a bog hag is involved in all of this, immediately tell them that this woman is such a creature. Otherwise, having now seen this creature in her real form, tell any PCs with Lore: Shadowlands, Maho, or related skills that this is a bog hag; no roll is necessary. Continue to describe her as a skinless, mold covered crone for the rest of the players.

When the PCs enter the room, she turns and speaks, allowing the PCs to see her full visage. (GMs may wish to ask for Willpower Rolls to continue looking at her.) She has an eloquent voice and does not stumble over her words. She is wise and careful and meticulously explains to them everything they need to know.

You may wish to have the last remaining monk begin screaming to the players: *"She's mad! She's going to summon a demon! It will eat the world!"* The monk's threats should be dire and immediate; you may even want to have him scream in the background while Higashato speaks.

"Do not seem so stupid as to try and destroy me. With a final breath and the death of these men, I shall raise the great earth demon, Kusatte Iru."

At this point she slowly moves to the last remaining monk and cuts away his throat. The sobbing monk's cries subside only to be replaced by the enigmatic chants of the mad abbot.

"If you do not give me what I want, I shall finish this ritual."



At this point she holds the stone up for them to see. It is a perfectly shaped obsidian stone, drenched in the monk's blood.

At this point, brave and stupid samurai may wish to charge at her. She is expecting this. When a samurai applies pressure to the floor just 10 feet into the room, spring-loaded yari punch up through the weakened boards and the samurai falls into the upward thrusting spear. Roll 8k4 Wounds and have the samurai make a Willpower roll against a TN of the Wound total to stay conscious, whether or not the Wounds would actually take them to Out or Dead. Success indicates that they stay conscious, but the shrill cry from the pain of these razor sharp spears cutting the samurai's flesh is dreadful to hear. If there isn't a great deal of wincing here, you're not doing your job.

Where the samurai lies a 5 foot by 5 foot hole in the floor has collapsed, and anyone feeling brave may certainly attempt to leap over it.

Should the PCs approach carefully, allow them a Perception Roll at TN 40 (30 if they have their own light source) to notice the weakened floor boards. The unnatural light in this shrine conceals the undermined floorboards. However, careful walking may not trigger the trap or break the wood. Allow anyone walking carefully across the floor may make a Reflexes at TN 20 roll to not trigger the trap. Failure indicates the same results as above.

There are safe places to walk along the floor, but only the abbot and bog hag know where they are.

"I want your skins. But being brave samurai, I know you are too proud to give them to me. Instead, I will take Ryute's armor. Do not make me ask again."

If anyone has fallen into one of the pits, she will look at the dead carcass and smile, knowing that she has collected one skin already.

"It is very simple. I shall stop Kusatte Iru from rising, once I have the armor of Ryute. Retrieve it for me and I shall spare all of your lives. Of course, I will accept your skin as well, should you be so inclined as to remove it for me..."

A wicked smile crosses her skinless face, bearing her teeth and gums for all.



At no time in all of this does Koshi stop his insane ranting.

Allow the players to talk among themselves to figure out how they will respond to her terms. If they wish to bargain with her, go to that section (below). If they agree to her terms, read the section under "Skins" or "Armor" as appropriate. If they choose to fight her, move to the "Combat" section. Keep Higashato's statistics close at hand during the battle and make sure that she takes a few samurai with her.

Interrupt their deliberation from time to time with comments like, "I know you are honorable samurai. You will do the right thing." Keep them nervous and don't forget to hint that time is running out.

BARGAINING WITH HER

The PCs may wish to try and make a deal with her. There is not much that they can offer her other than their skins or the armor. Still, allow the players some creativity here, bearing in mind that no nemuranai other than the Armor of the Sun and Moon have any value to her. If the PCs come up with a good plan allow them an Awareness + Sincerity Roll to put it into effect (see the rules for this below). This is a blanket rule that protects the integrity of the adventure from smooth-talking players who have no intention of being honorable with their samurai character. PCs must estimate how great a blow it would be to their honor to treat falsely with an enemy, even one so vile as a bog hag.

She is not yet aware that Nori is leaving the lands to her, so if the PCs promise her the entire valley, she will consider letting them go, on their honor that they will never speak of this again.

Make an Awareness + Sincerity Roll at TN 35 (no Void Points may be spent on this roll) behind the game screen for the samurai who is making the bargain. If the roll is successful, she agrees to the terms. If the samurai honestly intend to honor their agreement, no roll is necessary; roll again under the same conditions for any samurai who intends to betray the contract.

If either roll fails, she does not believe the samurai and the terms are unacceptable. She understands Rokugani culture well enough not to state to the PCs' faces that she knows they are lying.

Skins

Should they agree to give them her skins, Koshi steps forward, walking in an odd pattern

across the floor, and retrieves a wakizashi from his robes. He strikes one time at the back of the neck removing each samurai's head: no attack or damage roll is necessary. If they all agree, Koshi finishes his work and Higashato puts Kusatte Iru back to sleep with the bloodied sphere.

It is quite possible that they intend to go back on their word and cut down Koshi when he approaches. Higashato expects this as well. "Not all samurai are honorable. I have learned this from watching Goshiro. Very well, samurai, come and finish what I have started." At this point, Higashato begins raining magic upon them. Follow the rules for fighting Higashato below in *Combat*.

If the samurai would rather commit seppuku and ask a comrade to be their second, Higashato honors the request, taking great pleasure in watching this supreme act of honor. Higashato is fascinated by bushido and witnessing a seppuku, to her, is the ultimate act of meyo (honor) and chugo (duty and loyalty).

Armor

As with Skins, should the samurai offer up the armor, Koshi walks toward them following an odd pattern across the floor. He approaches the samurai in question and takes the armor, returning to Higashato's side. Higashato uses the last of the stone's blood (see *Using the Stone*, below) to settle the rumbling in the earth and complete the ritual of 1000 Years of Terrible Slumber.

She invites the samurai to find their way out of the temple. Once they have left, Higashato will make her way out of the temple secretly. The adventure ends here and if this is a tournament, the GM tallies points.

Should the samurai choose to betray their bargain with Higashato or attack Koshi when he comes for the armor, a fight breaks out per the guidelines for *Combat* below.

Combat

Should combat begin, Higashato protects herself by maneuvering behind the traps that she and Koshi have set throughout the room. She plans to kill the shugenja quickly and without mercy, for she is most interested in the skins of the Lion, Crane, Dragon and Phoenix bushi. Should such characters be present, she would also be strongly interested in the skins of unusual characters such as Kitsuki Investigators, Ishiken-

THE VALLEY

If Higashato should live, the samurai will find themselves in the predicament of what to do about her. If they make a deal with her to trade the armor or some of their skins, the surviving PCs may consider the ramifications of such a gambit; it is not likely that the PCs will take this well.

Returning to the temple to deal out justice is not a good plan. For starters, Higashato now has a suit of very powerful armor. In addition, she still has the obsidian sphere and quite possibly some dead samurai to turn into zombies.

In addition, the PCs will be hard pressed to convince a lord to send troops to this unimportant valley to fight a hag they should have killed themselves. Pressing matters results in more shame and disgrace than is worth the effort. The samurai will have to go it alone. Worse yet, braving all of the temple's traps again could result in Higashato returning to the swamp where there is no hope of ever finding her.



CONTINUING THE ADVENTURE

It is recommended that if you are playing this as a campaign, you continue using Higashato as a villain.

She will no doubt want to exploit the new skins or nemuranai that she has acquired. Also, because she knows a thing or two about Rokugani etiquette, the samurai will most definitely want to conceal the shame of letting her live. Higashato can use this to her advantage.

Perhaps she wears the skin of an important dignitary and orders that the samurai be found or arrested. She could have gifts sent to the samurai's lords or rumors could spread of a powerful Crab heirloom that slipped through the PC's fingers – or worse, was sold for sake.

It would not be difficult for Higashato to discover where the samurai are from. After all, she asked Nori to "fetch" them. If she learns that a certain samurai is married or has children, she could make threats on the family or even follow through on them.

do, and Kakita Artisans. We recommend that you read up on all of the spells stored in the stone and develop a strategy for each. Below is a list of conditionals that should help you with the most obvious tactics that the players may employ.

- Higashato attacks the shugenja of the party first, using fire spells without compunction for the damage they will do to the skins, as she cannot take proper advantage of shugenja skins.

- If the samurai begin firing arrows at her, she moves behind the shrine and uses *Fury of Osano-Wo* and *Wind's Distraction* on any archers or shugenja that remain.

- Bushi without bows are her least concern as they must cross the floor to get to her. As such, she only casts spells at them once the shugenja and archers are dispatched.

- Only one bushi may engage her in melee combat at one time. The broad strokes of a samurai in such tight confines would surely cut another samurai in half, were they to get too close to the blade.

- If combat somehow gets outside, Higashato uses *Fist of the Earth* to open up a chasm and attack everyone at once.

- If Kusatte Iru should rise she casts *Wings of Fire* on herself to flee the site as quickly as possible.

Should Higashato escape with the stone of Harike, the samurai are forced to fight Kusatte Iru without the aid of *1000 Years of Terrible Slumber*. See the rules for using this spell in text provided. (See page 37)

USING THE STONE

Higashato has coated the stone in enough blood to cast any spells that she wishes. This is for ease of game play, and to give her a fighting chance against possibly six samurai. Should the stone fall from her possession, the PCs will find it dry of blood and must activate it again with fresh blood.

Harike's Obsidian Stone

Harike stored a great deal of magic within the stone, powerful spells that he would expect to use

against Kusatte Iru. In order to accomplish this, he bound kami to the stone permanently, enslaving them in a mad and diabolical ritual. Although dishonorable, Harike sacrificed his honor in order to defeat the great oni and protect the Empire. In addition to the spells listed below, the stone may also cast *1000 Years of Terrible Slumber*, a powerful maho spell known only to Harike and now to Higashato.

In order to use the stone, the possessor must coat the stone with fresh blood. This is the equivalent of sacrificing 5 Wounds. The magic coursing through the wielder's body at this point is incredibly powerful, and a Simple Willpower Roll at TN 15 is required to hold the energy inside her. Failure results in the energy erupting from her body and discharging into the universe. The power of the stone is let loose upon the universe and no effect is demonstrated. The stone's power must be activated once again, requiring additional blood from the user. If the roll is successful, there is no additional effect.

Casting these spells does not count against a shugenja's allotted spells for the day, and even a bushi that understands the use of the stone will be able to cast magic from it. Each use of a spell from the Stone requires the sacrifice of 5 Wounds, and once the stone is coated with blood, all of its powers become evident, as if the stone were speaking and breathing. GMs should describe the stone as a heavy lung, wet with blood and mucus, if a samurai should choose to pick it up and use it. This is a powerful artifact and the PCs should be careful that it does not fall into the wrong hands.

The stone's innate abilities are *Earth's Stagnation*, *Fist of the Earth*, *Sympathetic Energies*, *Amaterasu's Anger*, *The Fire from Within*, *Fury of Osano-Wo*, *Wings of Fire*, *Cloak of Night*, *Mists of Illusion*, *Way of Deception*, *Wind's Distractions*, and *Wrath of Osano-Wo*.

A FINAL TREMOR

Unlike the other tremors, this one is timed specifically to the real world. When there are only 30 minutes of game time left, a powerful tremor will trigger in the earth. If the PCs arrive in this room after the 30 minute mark, then the tremor comes at the 15 minute mark. If the PCs have not reached room 20 by the time only 15 minutes of game time remain, the tremor comes at the end of the game, sealing their doom. Should the final tremor come during a battle, everyone is thrown



to the ground. If the samurai are deliberating during the tremor, Higashato uses the stone to cast Wings of Fire and escape.

When the tremors start this time, there is no stopping them. During this time the earth shakes with such force no one can remain standing. Spells are impossible to cast during the earthquake. After several minutes the earth begins to crack and the quake increases in intensity. The obsidian stone of Kusatte Iru shudders as the earth below it splits apart, allowing the great oni to rise.

In an instant the temple is destroyed by Kusatte Iru's might and the samurai inside are flung in separate directions, hundreds of feet from the temple grounds. Each samurai suffers one die of Wounds from the crash and is stunned for a few moments attempting to catch their breath.

A shadow looms over them, casting the earth in darkness.

KUSATTE IRU RISES

There are no words to describe the monstrosity that is Kusatte Iru. Standing over 200 feet tall and possessing shoulders the size of a village, it is the single greatest oni known to walk. If the PCs of this adventure squander too much time or kill Higashato before she casts 1000 Years of Terrible Slumber, Kusatte Iru will certainly rise. Kusatte Iru scarcely notices the samurai at first, although they are welcome to draw their weapons against it. It will howl as if in immense pain for nearly a minute causing sonic waves to ripple in every direction. Birds flee into the sky and small trees are knocked over from the force of its bellow. The PCs will be slightly deafened, but for what comes next that hardly matters.

PUTTING KUSATTE IRU TO SLEEP

Without Higashato, it will be nearly impossible for the PCs to work Harike's magic and put Kusatte Iru to sleep. They must therefore win possession of the obsidian sphere to cast 1000 Years of Terrible Slumber and put Kusatte Iru to sleep, or else allow him to roam and carve a swath of destruction across Rokugan. If left alone, Kusatte Iru cuts a path into the Plains of Foul Tears and eventually disappears. The adventure is now over and you can score the record sheet.

If the PCs have Harike's stone, they may attempt to put Kusatte Iru to sleep. Use the rules

under Harike's Obsidian Stone to determine if the samurai are successful.

If Higashato is still alive (and still possesses the stone), she can put Kusatte Iru to sleep easily and only requires time to do this. However, Kusatte Iru is familiar enough with the scent and power of Harike that if Higashato is wearing the skin, he immediately attacks her, requiring the samurai to defend Higashato from the enormous oni.

If the PCs choose to fight Kusatte Iru, his stats are listed below. Bear in mind that until damage is actually done to Kusatte Iru, he may not even notice the samurai.

KUSATTE IRU

Earth: 8

Water: 1

Strength: 10

Fire: 3

Agility: 4

Air: 2

Reflexes 3

TN to be Hit: 15

Armor: 20

Wounds: 100: -1, 200: -2, 300: -3, 400: -4, 500: Dead

Kusatte Iru may be the most powerful Oni in all of Rokugan. Its immense size and strength make it far too powerful for a single man to fight and a small army may be necessary just to get it to notice that it is not alone. Kuni Harike and his yojimbo fought it alone for days without fazing it. Kusatte Iru has never felt the sting of a katana and its only weakness was falling prey to Harike's spell.

ONE FINAL BARGAIN

It is the intent of this scenario to make the samurai choose between the lesser of two evils. What those two evils represent depends on how they play. Keeping Higashato alive and committing seppuku so that the Empire may be spared the horrors of Kusatte Iru is one. Cutting their own hands open and bleeding upon a *maho* enchanted stone to cast the spell themselves is another. Whatever the players choose, this adventure should have lasting repercussions on your campaign. If run as a single event or tournament adventure, it is to be hoped that the

CONTINUING THE ADVENTURE (CONTINUED)

It is not entirely impossible for Higashato to arrive in Otsan Uchi before the PCs. Killing their direct supervisory magistrate, she would be able to direct the samurai as she sees fit, making them duped slaves to her evil machinations.

GMs are welcome to entertain whatever twisted or foul plans she might have for the samurai. After all, an enemy that can look like anyone is likely to vex them time and again.



players will glean further insight into bushido and the horrors that samurai must undergo for the good of the Empire.

Epilogue

What happens afterwards depends on how you play L5R. If you are using this as a tournament module, then the game is over; tabulate the points and announce a winner if there are prizes.

If this is a one-shot game and the players like these characters, you can use this as the starting ground for a series of adventures investigating the Shadowlands or to return to the capital a little wiser about the horrors of Fu Leng's taint.

In future adventures the PCs could discover that the Yasuki family knew that Toketsu was moving into a foul and miserable land. Or maybe the Scorpion were using Toketsu as a way of finding lost scrolls from the temple. What if the magistrate (or other contact) that sent them here was a Scorpion bent on learning Harike's secrets, or was in truth another foul Shadowlands thing in disguise? What the PCs report back to him could have specific results to your campaign depending on the level of intrigue.



Yasuki Nori

Appendix

The NPCs

YASUKI NORI

Complimentary, sometimes a little too informal, Nori is a pleasant host who will provide the samurai with most anything they require. Maintaining a small house with some 20 servants (although lacking in a house shugenja), Nori is not likely to deny them much.

Yasuki Nori is an old man and a dupe in all of this. He's a tired gokenin who leaves most of his small home's work to his seneschal and karo, Yasuki Kyume. His geisha is a young woman named Suko, who unbeknownst to him is the bog hag Higashato. Nori has been listening closely lately to the advice of Suko and he intends to keep himself far from the suspicious magistrates. It was Suko who recommended that Nori call in a favor from the courts, and it was Suko who recommended a team of magistrates visit the valley. If his reluctance to provide details and his nervous mannerisms make him suspect in the eyes of the PCs, this works perfectly into Suko's plan.

There will be few opportunities to interact with Nori during this adventure. Once things start to happen, he will close himself in the house. All concerns will have to be directed to Kyume.

Earth: 2

Water: 2

Fire: 2

Intelligence 3

Air: 2

Awareness 4

Void: 3



School/Rank: Yasuki Merchant 3

Skills: Acting 1, Bard 1, Commerce 4, Courtier 2, Etiquette 3, Falconry 1, History 1, Knife 1, Manipulation 2, Oratory 1, Painting 2, Shintao 1, Sincerity 4, Tea Ceremony 2

Honor: 2.2

Glory: 5.0

Advantages: Gentry (estate and village), Inheritance (family holdings), Wealthy

Disadvantages: Bad Health, Poor Sight (use rules for Missing Eye)

GOSHIRO — RONIN BODYGUARD

Yasuki Nori believes that money is more loyal than honor. As such, he maintains a personal ronin yojimbo named Goshiro. Goshiro is a grizzled veteran and a strong warrior. Although he has had no formal training, life itself has shown him what it takes to be a man. Goshiro has no love for anyone, but works hard for the money that Nori pays him. His reputation may precede him, and GMs may wish to give the PCs an opportunity to recognize him and recall his exploits.

Goshiro's role in the adventure is limited. It is possible that the PCs will suspect something is amiss when they realize that Goshiro could have gone to the village months ago to learn what they have – and who's to say he hasn't?

Earth: 3

Stamina 4

Water: 3

Strength 4

Fire: 4

Air: 3

Reflexes 5

Void: 3

School/Rank: Ronin

Skills: Archery 3, Battle 2, Defense 4, Forgery 2, Gambling 3, Horsemanship 2, Hunting 3, Iaijutsu 3, Jiujutsu 3, Kenjutsu 4, Law 1, Locksmith 1, Stealth 2, Wrestling 1

Honor: 1.0

Glory: 1.7

Advantages: Combat Reflexes, Quick, Way of the Land (Toketsu Valley)

Disadvantages: Bad Reputation (see page 9), Insensitive, Social Disadvantage (Ronin)

YASUKI KYUME

Yasuki Nori's seneschal is 42 years old, but shows little sign of age. He has a soothing voice and a desire to treat others well. Kyume's station within the clan remains low due to his lack of ambition. Never overly greedy, Kyume's usefulness as a merchant was limited. However, 20 years ago, Kyume petitioned Lord Nori for work in his remote home. Kyume enjoys the simple and delicate task of managing Nori's lands.

Kyume is a pleasant man, concerned with his lord's needs and maintaining the estate. However, the two have never developed a close bond and this troubles Kyume. He is loyal and has no plans to harm his lord or take the estate from him. However, he fears for the future of Kyuden Toketsu, knowing full well that Nori has no heir and that the rumors of a supernatural presence in the valley may very well be true.

Earth: 2

Water: 2

Perception 3

Fire: 3

Intelligence 4

Air: 2

Awareness 3

Void: 3



Goshiro



Abbot Koshi

School/Rank: Yasuki Merchant 2

Skills: Calligraphy 1, Commerce 3, Courtier 2, Craft: Sculpting 3, Etiquette 4, Falconry 1, History 2, Kenjutsu 2, Lore: Yasuki Family 2, Manipulation 1, Music 2, Shintao 2, Sincerity 3, Tea Ceremony 4

Honor: 2.6

Glory: 3.2

Advantages: Clear Thinker, Voice

Disadvantages: Coward

HIGASHATO AS KYUME

Use Higashato's statistics for Kyume. His soothing voice is no longer appropriate and his pleasant mannerisms become a little more nervous. If there is any question as to why, he is still a little tired from the events of last night.

ABBOT KOSHI

It is possible that the PCs will go the entire adventure neither hearing about nor meeting the abbot of Harike Temple until the very end. Koshi is aware of Higashato's true identity and has been twisted over time to believe that raising Kusatte Iru is a grand plan that will bring about his salvation. Koshi is, needless to say, mad.

Years of manipulation, lies, and promises have twisted his mind. Visitations from Harike blessing Koshi as the chosen leader of the monastery went

far to insure that a weak-minded simpleton would become abbot. Higashato has entrusted Koshi with a few simple tasks in preparation for the coming of the clan magistrates. First, he has carefully incorporated Shadowlands teachings into the scriptures of Harike. Second, on the night that the samurai arrive in the valley all of the monks but three are to be murdered in their sleep. The others are to be bound in the chamber where the great obsidian statue of Kusatte Iru rests.

Earth: 1

Stamina 4

Water: 2

Strength 3

Fire: 2

Agility 4

Air: 2

Reflexes 3

Void: 1

School/Rank: Ronin Shugenja Rank 2

Skills: Bard 1, Calligraphy 2, Cipher 2, History -1*, Kenjutsu 1, Knife 2, Lore: Shadowlands 3, Medicine 1, Meditation 2, Oratory 3, Research 4, Shintao -1*, Spellcraft 2, Stealth 1, Theology -1*, Torture 2, Traps 1

* these skills represent that Koshi's view of the world is askew from reality. What he assumes to be true about Shintao is far from the truth.

Honor: 0.0

Glory: 1.1

Shadowlands Taint: 1.6

Advantages: Innate Ability (Fires from Within)

Disadvantages: Ascetic, Enlightened Madness 3, Haunted, Social Disadvantage (Monk)

Spells: Sense, Commune, Summon, Counterspell, Calling the Elements, Force of Will, Sympathetic Energies, Katana of Fire, Essence of Air, Wind-Borne Speed

HIGASHATO AS SUKO

She spends some time in the guise of Suko, but because there is no geisha house in this valley, she makes herself available to her lord when it is convenient for him. She must therefore maintain a careful balance, and she has carefully regimented the time she spends with Nori, convincing him that he has important duties during the day. He maintains a small cottage for her just a few hundred feet from the stronghold.



He visits her every other night or so, although his visits have been more frequent of late and she has taken advantage of this.

Higashato has a very detailed plan and she has been careful to monitor every effect of it. She has left nothing to chance and will kill anyone who looks like a loose end or an uncontrollable factor. She is aware of Koshi's instability and is prepared to kill him at a moments notice.

Oddly enough, Higashato respects samurai bushido and honor and finds the concepts of the code of bushido fascinating. She avidly seeks opportunities to discuss samurai ethics, learning as much as she can about the way of the samurai.

HIGASHATO, THE BOG HAG

Earth: 5
Willpower 7

Water: 5
Strength 6

Fire: 5
Intelligence 6

Air: 4
Reflexes 6

Void: 0
Shadowlands Taint: 2.3

School/Rank: (one at a time) Hida Bushi Rank 3, Shinjo Bushi Rank 2, Otaku Bushi Rank 2, Bayushi Bushi Rank 2



Suko

Skills: Acting 3, Advanced Medicine 3, Astrology 2, Athletics 3, Bard 3, Calligraphy 4, Cipher 3, Courtier 2, Defense 3, Etiquette 3, Herbalism 3, History 2, Iaijutsu 3, Intimidation 2, Jiujutsu 3, Kenjutsu 3, Knife 4, Manipulation 3, Medicine 3, Mimic 3, Oratory 3, Poison 3, Research 2, Seduction 2, Shintao 2, Sincerity 3, Sleight of Hand 3, Spellcraft 2, Stealth 5, Tea Ceremony 2, Theology 3, Torture 5, Traps 2, Wrestling 4

Any skill that is not listed, that Higashato may possess (based on clan affiliation – she may not have Tsangusari for instance) is assumed to be at 1.

Honor: 0.0

Glory: 0.0

Advantages: Benten's Blessing (in her geisha form), Blood of Osano-Wo, Clear Thinker, Hands of Stone (3k3*), Heartless, Large, Quick, Strength of the Earth 3, Way of the Land (Plains of Foul Tears)

* Higashato's claws are razor sharp and cut with more precision than a katana.

Disadvantages: Benten's Curse (when not wearing skin), Cruel, Driven, Shadowlands Taint

New Spells

1000 YEARS OF TERRIBLE SLUMBER

Base TN: Target's Earth x 5

Casting Time: 15 Minutes

Duration: 100 Years

Mastery: 12

Concentration: Total

Raises: Duration

Effect: 1000 Years of Terrible Slumber is a powerful maho spell bound into Harike's Obsidian Stone. None but Harike were ever aware of its existence. Purposely hiding its power from Rokugan, Harike learned and mastered the use of the stone for one purpose – to defeat Kusatte Iru. If the PCs get hold of this very powerful stone, they may be able to defeat Kusatte Iru without the aid of Higashato.

Rolling her Earth, the caster must exceed the TN of the Target's Earth x 5. This is no easy feat, and if being cast on Kusatte Iru, the base TN is 40.

If the spell is successful, the target is put to sleep for 100 years, plus an additional 100 years for every successful Raise. There is a small degree of error (GM's discretion), and someone that is put



to sleep for 100 years could wake in 90 to 110. During this sleep the body does not age and the creature in slumber is immune to damage. Effectively, they become like a rock and do not stir. However, during this time, the target's mind is awake. Anything waking from this spell will be a mad blathering mass of sinew and bone without any control over its actions. Using the stone's power on anything human immediately reduces the caster's Honor by 2 Ranks.

The same power may be used to raise any slumbering creature from the earth, with the same rules applied above, except the duration is permanent. Any creature that is raised from slumber with this stone must never sleep or rest again, as an unholy energy imbues them with perpetual awareness.

Any target that is put to sleep or woken from slumber with this spell gains 2 dice of Shadowlands Taint.

HARIKE'S CRYSTAL BREATH

Base TN: Target's Void x 5

Casting Time: 5 Minutes

Duration: Instantaneous

Mastery: 7

Concentration: None

Raises: None

Effect: Before Harike's yojimbo died, he was imbued with the power of Harike's Breath. This powerful spell was created by Harike to insure that his trusted companion would live forever, encased in solid crystal. For those that know Ryute's story, this tomb became a prison and a life

of doom. However, the power of this spell allows samurai dedicated to the Crab cause to remain useful, even in death.

The target of this spell must be dead or near death (within one Wound Level of Dead). They need not be willing or give their consent. If the roll is successful, the samurai's spirit is permanently encased in crystal. The target's physical body is not the target and therefore is unaffected by the spell.

The Crystal Samurai will come to life in a number of days equal to the Wounds suffered before death.

This spell may not target anyone with Shadowlands Taint.

Crystal Samurai

Earth: 6

Water: 6

Fire: 6

Air: 6

Attacking: 10k6

Damage: 9k3

TN to be Hit: 30

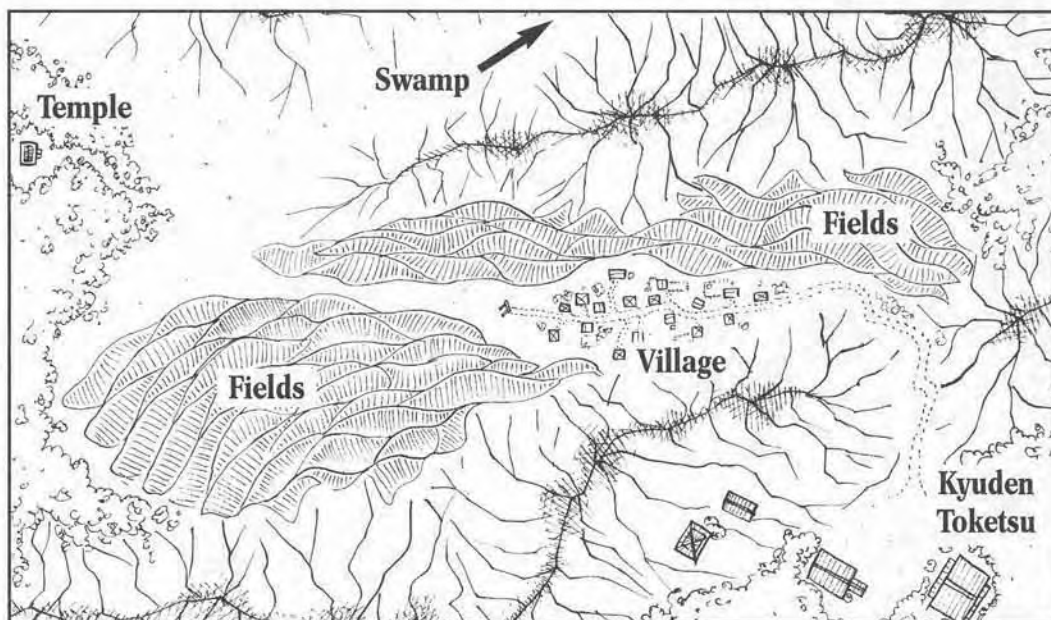
Armor: 10*

Wounds: 20: -1, 40: -2, 100: dead

The Crystal Samurai is assumed to have Combat Reflexes (see *Way of the Lion*).

Spells which attempt to reduce or increase the Crystal Samurai's Traits fail automatically. The Samurai is not Shadowlands-tainted and is immune to any attack or spell which only affects Shadowlands creatures.

* Nemuranai ignore this armor rating.



HIDA SAMASU

Earth: 4

Water: 2

Strength: 4

Fire: 3

Air: 2

Void: 2

School Rank: Hida Bushi 2

Insight: 161

Honor: 1.8

Glory: 2.2

Advantages: Blood of Osano-Wo

Disadvantages: Bad Reputation (Crass), True Love
(Kakita Akahito)

Skills: Archery 2, Battle 3, Defense 3, Intimidation 4,
Jiujitsu 3, Kenjutsu 3, Onojutsu 4, Ratling Speech
2, Shadowlands Lore 4, Tetsubo 3

Primary Weapon: Fine Ono

Damage: 7k3+4

To Hit: 7k3+4

Primary Armor: Heavy

TN to be Hit: 20

Wounds

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-0
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-1
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-2
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-3
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-4
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	Down
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	Out
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	Dead

Hida Samasu's greatest tragedy was being born a Crab. Although his mannerisms befit the gruff champions of the Kaiu wall, it is this same deportment that pushes Kakita Akahito away. He cannot explain his feelings for her, nor would he want to. Serving as a magistrate only reminds him of what he cannot have.





KAKITA AKAHITO

Earth: 2

Will: 3

Water: 3

Perception: 4

Fire: 3

Air: 4

Void: 3

School Rank: Kakita Bushi 3

Insight: 180

Honor: 4

Glory: 3.6

Advantages: Precise Memory

Disadvantages: Insensitive, Vanity

Skills: Archery 3, Athletics 4, Etiquette 3, Heraldry 2,

Iaijutsu 4, Kenjutsu 2, Manipulation 4,

Oratory/Rhetoric 5, Sincerity 3

Primary Weapon: Fine Katana

Damage: 6k2

To Hit: 8k3

Primary Armor: None

TN to be Hit: 20

Wounds

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-0
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-1
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-2
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-3
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-4
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	Down
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	Out
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	Dead

Akahito is everything people say of the Crane. Regal, honorable, and proud. She is a stately member of her clan and chooses to serve as a magistrate for the good of the Empire. Akahito finds the base advances of Hida Samasu sometimes repulsive, but she is not so shallow as to not realize the potential of his sword arm.

TOGASHI RENSHI

Earth: 2

Water: 2

Strength 4

Fire: 4

Air: 2

Reflexes 3

Void: 3

School Rank: Ise Zumi 2

Insight: 164

Honor: 2

Glory: 3

Advantages: Noble Birth, Quick

Disadvantages: Epilepsy

Skills: Athletics 4, Bojutsu 4, Craft (Tailor) 3, History 4, Jiujutsu 4, Meditation 3, Nazodo 4, Shintao 4, Stealth 4

Tattoos: Chrysanthemum, Dragon

Primary Weapon: Bo

DR: 6k2

To Hit: 9k4

Primary Armor: None

TN to be Hit: 15

Wounds

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-0
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-1
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-2
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-3
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-4
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	Down
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	Out
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	Dead

Renshi is contemplative and studious. His slow mannerisms often times grate on the nerves of those around him, but he is a trusted companion and a good friend. His innovative ideas never seem to slow and those that have traveled with him before know that he sees things much differently than they do.





MATSU KOSO

Earth: 3

Water: 2

Strength 3

Fire: 4

Air: 2

Reflexes 4

Void: 2

School Rank: Matsu Bushi 2

Insight: 157

Honor: 3.8

Glory: 2.5

Advantages: Leadership

Disadvantages: Idealistic, Proud

Skills: Archery 3, Athletics 4, Bard 2, Battle 4, Jiu-jutsu 2, History 2, Horsemanship 3, Kenjutsu 4, War Fan 3

Primary Weapon: Fine Katana

Damage: 7k2

To Hit: 9k4

Primary Armor: Light

TN to be Hit: 25

Wounds

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	-0
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	-1
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	-2
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	-3
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	-4
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Down
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Out
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Dead

Koso's proud heritage has afforded her luxuries that few Lion know. Raised by a prominent sensei, Koso attended some of the Matsu's finest schools and was trained by veteran warriors at a young age. However, Koso never allowed her family's wealth to soften her and she has grown into a proud and willful samurai. Having led many men to battle, Koso knows her role and duty in any group.

SHIBA KATSUMI

Earth: 4

Water: 2

Perception: 3

Fire: 3

Intelligence: 4

Air: 3

Void: 3

School Rank: Shiba Bushi 3

Insight: 174

Honor: 3.2

Glory: 3

Advantages: Luck 2

Disadvantages: Gullible, Small, Yogo Curse

Skills: Archery 2, Defense 2, Etiquette 3, Iaijutsu 2,
Investigation 2, Lore: Shugenja 2, Kenjutsu 3,
Meditation 3, Naginata 2, Shintao 3, Tea
Ceremony 3

Primary Weapon: Katana

Damage: 5k2+3

To Hit: 8k3+3

Primary Armor: Light

TN to be Hit: 20

Wounds

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-0
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-1
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-2
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-3
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-4
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	Down
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	Out
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	Dead

Katsumi's past is filled with strife. Unlikely as he is to speak of it, he has always come out on top, no matter the situation. He is not one to complain and very humbly "takes his lumps" without so much as a whisper. His positive spin on everything can be sickening sometimes, but more enlightened individuals consider him a beacon of hope in an otherwise sour time.





SOSHI RYOGO

Earth: 3

Water: 3

Fire: 4

Air: 4

Void: 2

School Rank: Soshi Shugenja 3

Insight: 194

Honor: 1.6

Glory: 3

Shadowlands Taint: 0.7

Advantages: Clear Thinker, Strength of the Earth 4

Disadvantages: Benten's Curse, Dark Secret (Maho)

Skills: Yarijutsu 3, Calligraphy 4, Etiquette 2, History

2, Intimidation 3, Lore: Maho 5, Lore:

Shadowlands 3, Medicine 3, Sincerity 2,

Meditation 3, Shintao 2

Spells: Sense, Commune, Summon, Counterspell, Tempest of Air, Wind-Borne Slumbers, Yari of Air, Path to Inner Peace, The Fire from Within, Dark Divination, Touch of Death, Strike at the Roots, The Fire from Within, Mists of Illusion

Primary Weapon: Yari of Air

Damage: 6k3

To Hit: 8k4

Primary Armor: None

TN to be Hit: 20

Wounds

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	-0
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	-1
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	-2
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	-3
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	-4
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Down
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Out
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Dead

Ryogo knows far too many secrets, even for a Scorpion. Much of his life must be hidden from others and as result he has grown reclusive and independent.

IUCHI TENKAZU

Earth: 4

Water: 3

Perception: 4

Fire: 4

Air: 2

Void: 3

School Rank: Iuchi Shugenja 3

Insight: 191

Honor: 2.6

Glory: 3.1

Advantages: Ancestor: Otaku, Irreproachable 2,
Voice

Disadvantages: Haunted 4

Skills: Calligraphy 4, Defense 4, Herbalism 5,
Horsemanship 3, Hunting 2, Jiu-jutsu 4, Kenjutsu
4, Meditation 5

Spells: Sense, Commune, Summon, Blessing of
Purity, Calm Mind, The Path to Inner Peace, Fires
of Purity, Inflammation, Katana of Fire, Jade Strike,
Amaterasu's Anger, The Fires that Cleanse, Wings
of Fire, Courage of the Seven Thunders

Primary Weapon: Fine Wakizashi

Damage: 6k2

To Hit: 8k4

Primary Armor: None

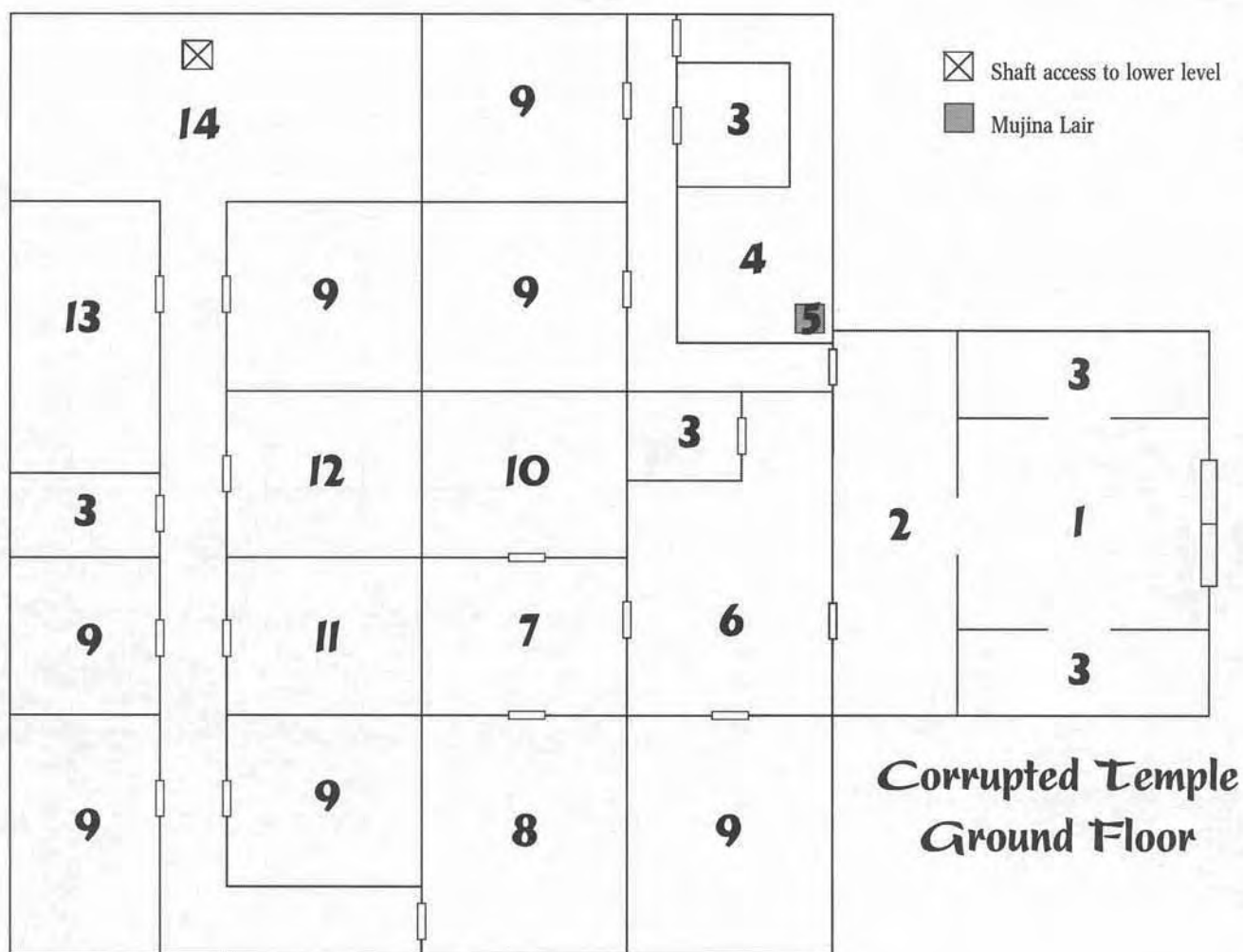
TN to be Hit: 10

Wounds

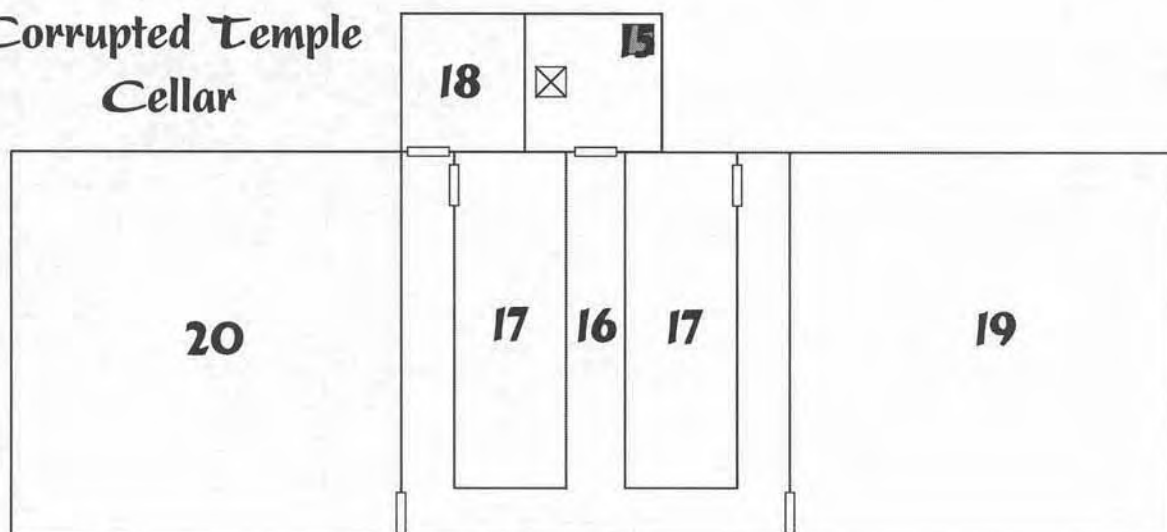
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□□□□□□□□	-3
□□□□□□□□	-4
□□□□□□□□	Down
□□□□□□□□	Out
□□□□□□□□	Dead

Tenkazu is a stubborn man. He has seen a great deal more of the world than others have and believes he has a singular grasp of how the world operates. He is not afraid to share his opinions with others.





**Corrupted Temple
Cellar**



THE LESSER OF TWO EVILS TOURNAMENT SCORING SHEET

Next to each plot point, note how well the players performed, allocating points for success (or failure). Each section lists the maximum points a player may earn (or lose). GMs should be fair. Give credit where it is due. Depending on the structure of the tournament, points may be compared from team to team or within the same group to determine a winner.

	SAMASU (CRAB)	AKAHITO (CRANE)	RENSHI (DRAGON)	KOSO (LION)	KATSUMI (PHOENIX)	RYOGO (SCORPION)	TENKAZU (UNICORN)
INTERROGATING RATLING (5)							
KILLING RATLING (-10)							
ROLEPLAYING WITH KYUME/NORI (-5/5)							
INVESTIGATING THE STABLES (5)							
LEARNING ABOUT THE MISSING SHUGENJA (5)							
LEARNING ABOUT THE IDOL (5)							
FINDING TEMPLE DOOR TRAP (10)							
DEFEATING THE SMOKE ONI (5)							
RETRIEVING ITEMS FROM THE MUJINA (10)							
DEFEATING THE MADMEN (10)							
GETTING THE ARMOR (25)							
KUSATTE IRU RISES (-25)*							
DEFEATING KOSHI (5)*							
DEFEATING HIGASHATO (25)*							
SACRIFICING THEMSELVES (10)							
ROLEPLAYING AND PROBLEM SOLVING (25)							
DYING (-20)							
NOT FINISHING/LOSING SKIN (-20)							
FINISHING EARLY (5/15 MINUTES)							
TOTALS							

* always full points

Dramatis Personae – Lesser of Two Evils



YASUKI NORI
LORD OF KYUDEN
TOKETSU



YASUKI KYUME
KARO AND SENESCHAL TO
LORD NORI



SUKO
THE TRUSTED CONCUBINE
OF LORD NORI



GOSHIRO
RONIN BODYGUARD



HIGASHATO
THE BOG HAG



ABBOT KOSHI
HIGH PRIEST OF THE
HARIKE TEMPLE

Lesser of Two Evils

"What I do is for the good of others, so they might be spared the burden of knowing evil's true intent. My contract with the darkness is arrested by men who do not understand. Nor should they."

– Kuni Harike

Choosing the lesser of two evils is still choosing evil. But, lest the whole of Rokugan fall to the tyranny of Fu Leng, steps must be taken and choices made that would forever dishonor a clan. Samurai forced to take a stand in such a gambit prove their worth to the Emperor even if their story can never be told. In *The Lesser of Two Evils*, which steps the samurai take may forever change their destiny.

The Lesser of Two Evils is the next chapter in the horrifying and deadly Shadowlands series. Each adventure in the S series asks players to fight against the forces of Fu Leng. In *The Lesser of Two Evils*, the players must uncover the secret that haunts the Plains of Foul Tears and the Crab that live there. In a world where the slightest offense can mean death, priorities shift when facing down the taint of an demon or the strength of the undead.

Do your players have the mettle to defeat *The Lesser of Two Evils*?

- Designed for 6 mid-level (ranks 2–3) player characters.
- The first ever Legend of the Five Rings tournament adventure.
- Two new spells, a never before seen ancestor, a new and powerful oni, a sacred forgotten nemuranai, and a black magic relic.
- Filled with deception and intrigue, *The Lesser of Two Evils* can be used independently or as part of an ongoing campaign.
- Requires a copy of the *Legend of the Five Rings* basic rules.



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