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PENUMBRA

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LEAN & HUNGRY



An adventure for characters
of 4th - 6th level

BY CHAD BROUILLARD

LEAN & HUNGRY



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Dedication

To Mike D., whose wit and enthusiasm always kept us game masters on our toes, and whose strength and determination now inspires us all to hope.

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Introduction

Long Ago ...

In times long past, the Kadaichi range of foothills was serene and peaceful, remaining far removed from the *daimyo* lords and imperial politics. As ages passed, the winds brought merchants over these secluded hillsides, and later a handful of settlers to farm upon the fertile landscape.

A dark time came when a *daimyo*'s entourage arrived to survey the hills and valleys. After inspecting the land, the *daimyo* ordered the construction of a pyramid, which he claimed was to serve the court's astrologists as an observatory of the stars. What none in the villages knew was that the *daimyo*'s wife, an ambitious and ruthless woman, had seduced her new husband and diverted court funds to oversee the construction of a sanctum specially designed to enhance the practice of her alchemical arts.

Construction of the corrupt woman's pyramid took almost a hundred years. When it was complete, the withered crone, having buried her husband long since, took up residence within its darkened corridors. The now-powerful Alchemist used potions to restore her youth and prolong her life so that she could

continue her plan to achieve absolute divinity and immortality.

In order to create servitors, she trapped villagers in a prison cell and starved them until they devoured each other, creating *jikininki* — walking dead cursed to feed on corpses. Using the *jikininki*, the Alchemist captured more subjects to experiment upon in her search for immortality. Her work resulted in the discovery of the Essence of Divine Winds, a liquid distillation of divine *ki* energies. By immersing herself within its waters for a millennium, the Alchemist could achieve perfect immortality, and be transformed into a living god! Sealing her inner sanctum, and so losing control over the *jikininki*, she has slept undisturbed over the centuries in the crystal bath that refines these energies.

The people of the Kadaichi range shunned the place and whispered of the missing villagers and of the tortured screams that sometimes echoed in the hills. All forgot the name of the *daimyo* and his ancient widow, and a new legend arose of long-fingered 'demons' that walked the foothills by moonlight. Eventually, a brave band of demon hunters — monks and priests of light — sought out the pyramid and discovered the nest of living dead. While the group could not breach the seals to the hidden inner sanctum, they suspect-



ed the warded chamber led to *yomi* — the spirit worlds. To ensure that no other demons could come though, the band placed their own wards, guardians, and traps within the pyramid.

Also, the demon hunters succeeded in releasing many of the jikininki from their tortured state, but accidentally scattered the rest so that they spread across the foothills. Believing the job done, they sealed the pyramid and left for parts unknown, stopping only to establish the Shrine of the Vigilant Light nearby in thanks for their god's favor in cleansing the hillside.

The diaspora jikininki, following their depraved instincts, returned to the hold of their mistress to find themselves locked out. The cursed packs dug a network of tunnels underneath the pyramid so they could lie close to their vile mistress. For centuries the jikininki entombed themselves there, remaining dormant until their unnatural hunger would rouse them once again.

One Month Ago ...

As the centuries passed, the pyramid became overgrown like a *kofun* — an ancient mound tomb — shrouded with vegetation that transformed it into just another hill within the Kadaichi range. For years, the peaceful villages lived in harmony with the flow of seasons. But then sorrow again came in the form of a barbarian *obok* called the Han — a tribal clan from the mainland.

The Han *obok*, lead by the cunning bandit Zhang, came to the island chain to seek out a lost arcane pyramid or tomb. While searching the area on behalf of their relic-seeker employers, the Han took the opportunity to sack and plunder the surrounding villages. What the barbarian raiders did not foresee in this remote locale was formidable resistance in the form of a hunting lodge housing several *samurai*. The *samurai* proudly met the Han in battle on the plain called the Killing Fields, falling before the superior numbers of the barbarians.

As the characters enter the scene, the weakened Han have taken up residence in the old hunting lodge, called Nagaya, and the undead jikininki have just awakened, roused by the unburied on the earth above them.

Adventure Overview

Lean and Hungry is a Japanese-analogue fantasy scenario for a mid-level party of about 4th to 6th level. The adventure will likely take up two sessions, and a good breaking point is at the end of Chapter Two.

Clerics, monks, and paladins — characters symbolizing authority or faith — have an easier reception and should be included in the party if possible. The module assumes the party to be more or less heroic, but can be converted for play with more mercenary parties by adjusting the character lures given below. For example, the characters could be sent at the behest of a *ninja* clan to stake a claim in the area.

Also, having at least one PC capable of tracking and at home in the wilderness will be of considerable help to the party.

Alternate Settings

While this scenario is intended for an Eastern setting, the events can be refitted for a Western game, or an interesting mix of the two. A Western-style game involves mainly 'converting' the names and places to fit a more traditional fantasy campaign. Many of the character types and settings have Western equivalents; for instance, the Chinese barbarians become Viking raiders, the *samurai* Nagaya becomes the hunting lodge of Sir Roderic, the jikininki become burrowing ghouls, etc. Much like a 'Spaghetti Western,' this module can then work with a band of wandering *samurai*, monks, or some combination of both, travelling in a Western land.

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GMs might also want to consider the possibility of introducing a Western fantasy group into an Eastern setting for the module. For example, if the party has survived the attack described in the *Maiden Voyage* adventure module, also published by Atlas Games, or otherwise finds themselves on a ship, sea storms (or the vengeance of Krakas) may strike, marooning the hapless PCs on this exotic Eastern island. The strangeness of being confronted by a different culture adds an interesting element to game play.



One suggestion for this type of starting point is that the GM should make sure that a scroll or magic item with the *tongues* spell is somehow made available to one or more PCs.

A final note; the local villagers have wild legends about demons and dragons in the foothills. This is a manifestation of their own intuitive sense that something wicked has always lain dormant there. GMs should allow the PCs' paranoid imaginations to run wild and confused at first by the conflicting accounts.

Story Focus

Lean and Hungry stresses a deep-immersion roleplaying focus. While the PCs explore the *kofun* pyramid, the villagers, the barbarian raiders, a group of relic seekers, and eventually the local *daimyo*'s swordsmen are affected by what the players do within the forgotten sanctum. The *kofun* should be looked at as a character in its own right, as it has a layered history. GMs should accentuate the difference between the Alchemist's mark on the place as opposed to the departed demon hunters', for example. Also try to consider the varying roles of the *kofun* as you describe it: the structure was built as a sanctum at the bequest of the Alchemist, but thanks to the departed demon hunters now serves to imprison her; to the relic seekers and barbarian raiders, the *kofun* is a vault to exploit; to the villagers, it is a demon's den that threatens their survival. Keep this in mind as the factions react to its discovery. Descriptions and stats for NPCs can be found in Appendix II; monster stats are located in the text of the adventure itself.

Luring in the Characters

Several options for getting the characters involved include:

- The characters are simply passing through the remote Kadaichi range in order to travel to another destination. They are expecting wild animal attacks and stiff necks to be the worst of their problems. But then they catch sight of the first sacked village ...

- The characters serve a local *daimyo* lord or owe her a substantial favor. Her scouts have reported a barbarian longship skirting the coast north of her hold. She is somewhat unconcerned as the area in question is quite remote and inconsequential to the prosperity of her demesne, but wants someone to scout out the area in order to make sure these raiders aren't establishing a staging point for further attacks.
- A shipwreck has marooned the unsuspecting heroes on an Eastern island chain. The natives, speaking a strange dialect, cannot be understood without magical aids. The PCs soon learn of the plight of the innocent villagers and take it upon themselves to mete out justice. Foreign characters may also find they have some explaining to do once the local lord's *samurai* arrive to deal with the barbarian raiders ...
- The PCs are a wandering band of demon hunters hoping to send errant demonic minions packing back to *yomi*. Divine visions and arcane prophecy lead the motley group to the remote village; there, omens suggest that an ancient evil must be put down once again. For a variant on this theme, the PCs could be reincarnations of the original band of demon hunters, come again to put things right for good.

Plot Synopsis

Whatever the ploy, the characters arrive in the remote range of foothills to find several recently destroyed villas. Fearing the worst, the PCs are somewhat relieved to find one village, Mura, remains and serves as the last stand for refugees. The overcrowded village initially meets the PCs' arrival with panic, then later with wonderment and hope as the village's leader, Madoka, declares them heroes and champions.

Determined to rescue the enslaved children of the ravaged *buraku* and incensed by the desperate hunger of the refugees, the characters set out to find the trail of the barbarian raiders responsible for the devastation. The NPCs learn of the presence of the raiders at a nearby hunting lodge, which they took after leaving the corpse-laden field where the barbarians and *samurai* did battle.

Soon after, the players discover the carnage at the Killing Fields has awakened corpse-eating 'demons' that use shallow tunnels to travel underground and attack the unwary. The finery that the demons wear hearkens to ancient days, and the villagers come to the conclusion that these monsters must come from deep tombs built in the days of the old empire.

Thanks to a spy within the village, the barbarians are tipped off about the *jikininki* and by implication the ancient *kofun*. They send word to their employers — greedy relic seekers eager to steal any magic items with-

in. Once the relic seekers arrive, they induce the barbarians to offer a truce to the village, giving back some food and a few children as a token. Laying out the terms, the relic seekers offer to mediate the return of the children and food in exchange for the chance to capture the relics hidden within the *kofun*. A small cadre of NPC observers joins the PCs in exploring the structure.

Making slow progress to the center of the jikininki tunnel system, the PCs finally discover an entrance to the *kofun*. Within, PCs and NPCs alike are afflicted with a curse driving them to ravenous hunger. Faced with the *kofun*'s wards, traps, and the hunger curse, the PCs find

themselves in a race against time to reach the hidden inner sanctum and rid themselves of the deadly curse.

The final layer of the *kofun* holds its own challenges. Within her sanctum the ancient Alchemist lies sleeping at the bottom of a magical crystal bath. Disturbing the chamber causes her to waken, forcing the PCs to face the fury of a near-immortal desperate to refuel the energies of her disturbed alchemical process. Even if they should defeat her or flee the Alchemist's wrath, the characters must circumvent the four *kofun* guardians bent on sealing all within.



A City Besieged

The Kadaichi foothills are cradled between the two western arms of the Stone Dragon Mountains, so named for the coil-like shape of the range. Access to the hills requires breaking from the *Daimyo's Road* — the main trade route — and climbing through a steep pass known as the Dragon's Teeth. Nyoruko, a small woodcutters' hamlet at the base of Dragon's Teeth Pass, features an inn where PCs can stock up on rice, enjoy warm *sake* (rice wine), and sleep indoors for the night. Within the humble inn, PCs may learn that wagons from the Kadaichi region are overdue.

takes a hard half-day of climbing, and the nearest real village — Mura — is another two days beyond the outlet of the pass. Taking wagons through this area takes three times as long as normal because of the narrow paths and steep inclines.



While working their way through the pass, have PCs make a Listen check (DC 15). If successful, the characters hear something rustling in the woods, just off the path. A DC of 20 realizes the noise is that of several creatures. Should the PCs investigate, they find a pack of wolves scavenging on a small human corpse somewhat off the trail.

Through the Dragon's Teeth

Leaving Nyoruko, Dragon's Teeth Pass affords passage into the Kadaichi foothills. The trail through the pass

The wolves are hungry but cunning; while they have risked coming so close to people, they don't start a fight unless their pack outnumbers the party members by two to one. In this case, the wolves opportunistically attack any separated members or mounts, should the PCs leave horses behind unguarded. The wolves retreat into the wilderness when the fight turns against them.



Assuming the PCs deal with the wolves, they find the half-eaten remains of young peasant child.

 A party member applying his Healing skill (DC 18) ascertains that the child was not killed by the wolves; rather it appears the child succumbed to the elements, exhaustion, or starvation. Evidence of each type of injury appears on the child. A subsequent Search check (DC 15) confirms the child was neither dressed nor otherwise equipped for a journey through the pass.

Should a spellcaster employ *speak with dead*, he finds the boy to be alone and frightened in the afterlife.

Through some questioning of the child's spirit, the PCs can discover the boy was a child from Hatimo, a small Kadaichi villa on the far side of Dragon's Teeth Pass. The boy recounts a horrific tale of how the huts of that *buraku* were razed and pillaged by barbarian raiders. Frightened, the boy made his way to the pass, but became lost and eventually succumbed to cold and hunger.

Should the characters enact a proper burial, including cremation with purifying salts, the young boy is put to rest.

Hatimo's Flight

As the characters emerge from Dragon's Teeth pass they view the expanse of the *Kaidachi* foothill range, which extends beyond the horizon to the far arm of the Stone Dragon Mountains. The hills are massive, several leagues in diameter but not steep, as they gradually roll and spill about each other. The tall green grass that carpets most of the hills waves in the breeze.

Note that even from the foot of the pass, the characters cannot see Hatimo, the closest *buraku*. This group of households forming a small villa rests on the far side of the first massive hill. After a few hours of travelling up the first hill in the range, the players spot Hatimo set into the gentle slope of the next hill. From first glance, alert characters may sense something is wrong.

 Characters succeeding a Spot check (DC 20) or Wilderness Lore check (DC 18) notice that signs of normal village activity are non-existent. No smoke or traces of movement can be seen.

As the PCs get closer, they find their suspicions confirmed — the peasant houses of Hatimo are noticeably gutted by fire and the fields are hauntingly empty. Little trace of the human tragedy remains at the scene, though.

 A Search check (DC 15) confirms that the burnt huts contain some of those people cut

Nyoruko: Gather Information Check

DC Rumor

- < 10 No one's talking. The locals seem tense and suspicious of outsiders.
- 10 Harvest wagons are two weeks overdue from the Kadaichi region. The innkeeper doesn't seem too alarmed, as there have never been barbarian raids in the sleepy hills. Most within the hamlet are only annoyed because they rely on the Kadaichi harvest to supplement their own food stocks. If food doesn't arrive soon, the hamlet may be forced to buy expensive supplies from the nearest city before the onset of winter. The innkeeper may ask the PCs to deliver messages to the village of Mura.
- 15 The local *daimyo* lord's tax collector has also been waiting here for the harvest delivery so that the farmers can make their annual payments. A nervous man, the bureaucrat has sent word to the nearest city asking the magistrate to send *samurai* outriders to assist him in entering the foothills to collect. He expects men to arrive within the week.
- 20 The innkeeper remembers a strange woman asking questions about the foothills a few months back. She asked many questions about the villages and how they communicated with civilization. The innkeeper describes the woman as very improper, obviously an adventurer of some sort. (GM Note: This was the scout Akane, reconnoitering for Sumitomo the relic seeker.)
- 25 Not only does the innkeeper remember the woman, but she happened to leave some effects behind. Within the collection of personal items is a map of the general area with markings made in the hills near the village of Mura. For a consideration of one gold coin he shows the map to the PCs. For a larger fee of 10 gold pieces he'll sell the map to the PCs.



down in the raid, but not enough to account for everyone missing. One searching character notices a broken wooden carving of a horse, a child's toy, half-buried in the mud.

Utilizing the Track feat (Wilderness Lore check DC 5) or Spot skill (DC 15), the characters can discover wagon tracks, leaving particularly deep impressions, heading north farther into the hills. The character can discern that the attack occurred a little over a week ago, and that many survivors also fled to the north.

If the PCs have an area map, they can surmise that survivors must have headed toward Mura, the nearest village and seat for all the neighboring *buraku* of the *Kaidachi* foothills. It is located two days past Dragon's Teeth Pass.

 A character scouting the perimeter of the tall grass surrounding Hatimo may Spot a burial mound (DC 15) for a fallen Han raider. The decayed corpse lies facing the sky, arms folded, centered between piles of rocks, his weapons and his saddle beside him. A barbarian PC, or someone else making a Wilderness Lore check (DC 18), recognizes the handiwork of Han raiders. Dead are

left in such a position so that the storm god may take the fallen and lift him up to join his ancestors.

During the long journey ahead, the characters run across several other small *buraku* similarly devastated and pillaged.

 In this frontier land, there is also an 8% chance per hour of a random wilderness encounter, which may include any creature normally found in a temperate hills terrain; you may also want to add Japanese-analogue creatures from other sources to give the encounters a more authentically Asian flavor.

The following plot-related encounters can also be used during the journey to Mura, and at any time the GM wants to add some excitement while the PCs are traveling from place to place in the *Kaidachi* foothills region.

- Several *sika* deer bound past the party on the grassy hills, heading back toward the Stone Dragon Mountains.

 A Wilderness Lore or Knowledge (nature) check (DC 10), or a *speak with animals* spell, confirms that the carnage in the Kadaichi foothills

has scared the animals from their normal feeding grounds.

Soon after, a pack of gray wolves skirts around the party as they travel across the foothills. The wolves will not attack the party unless provoked.

 Another Wilderness Lore or Knowledge (nature) check (DC 10), or *Speak with Animals* spell, notes that these wolves are also being forced out of their territory in the foothills by the carnage of the pillaged *buraku* and the flight of the deer into the mountains.

- In the middle of the night, several harmless ghosts invade the party's campsite. These silent apparitions are long-dead victims of the ancient Alchemist's experiments. They contort their visages into the grotesque forms of the jikininki and of the Alchemist, hoping to warn the party of the true danger within the valley. Before the characters can attempt magical communication, they depart into the shadows.
- A child of the Han *obok* wanders lost and alone in the morning hills. Left behind in a raid, the young warrior remains armed with a sling. Taught to be a warrior to the last, the boy will fiercely defend himself from any attempts at capture. Should the boy be taken unharmed, however, he could serve as a bargaining chip in the attempt to secure the *buraku* children later on.
- Visions of past their lives as demon-hunting monks flood the characters' dreams as they draw nearer to the *kofun*. The characters do not remember more than haunting visions of the *kofun*'s interior and the howls of dying jikininki. Once the players enter the

kofun, however, an eerie sense of *deja vu* prevails over their encounters within. For example, the guardians seem familiar, characters remember writing the cautionary inscriptions on the walls, and the final seal set to protect the Alchemist's sanctum evokes a grim reminder of ancient deeds.

- A young apprentice of a *samurai* fallen in the battle with the Han barbarians cowers in the hills, having fled the Killing Fields near the *kofun*. He hides himself in shame and fear of the Han.

 The apprentice is a 2nd-level human fighter.

Mura's Survivors

Two days later as they top a grassy rise, the PCs first catch sight of Mura, the seat of rule over the devastated local *buraku*. Just outside of Mura, a lone shrine is nestled in the hill just above the village proper. In even the darkest night, the Shrine of Vigilant Light casts the luminescence of many lanterns over the sleepy grasslands.

Mura itself looks like a small farming village converted into a makeshift fort. At the heart of Mura, a mill serves as both the productive center and a town seat. Large crude barricades block horses from travelling directly into the village, and many people wander about the village square and barricades.

Han Child

CR 1/2; SZ S (humanoid); HD 1/2d12+1; hp 4; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 12 (+1 Dex, +1 size); Atk ranged +1 (1d4–1, sling); Face 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; AL CN; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 8, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 10

Skills: Handle Animal +2, Listen +2, Ride +2, Spot +2, Wilderness Lore +2

Feats: Alertness, Fast Movement

New Community: Mura

Size: Hamlet; **Power Center Alignment:** Lawful Neutral; **GP Limit:** 40 gp; **Assets:** 172 gp

Population: 86 humans (134 including refugees)

Authority Figures: Madoka, the Voice of Mura (7th-level female human commoner); Sosuke, caretaker of the Shrine of the Vigilant Light (2nd-level male human faithful)

Important Characters: Kenji the guide (3rd-level male human expert); Goba the loudmouthed troublemaker (3rd-level male human criminal)

Trouble at the Gates

Upon their first sight of the PCs, the villagers let out a cry of alarm, then each man, woman, and child scurries to collect makeshift weapons to protect the barricades. At the head of the gates, a shifty and loud-mouthed man, Goba, taunts the player characters: “Hey you! Yeah, I’m talking to you bandits! We can’t be fooled by your monk’s robes. You’re as much a monk as I am a *samurai*! Raiders! Han! Filth!”

Depending on how the PCs deal with Goba, they could make a quick enemy. Goba himself is new to the village, having been here less than a full turn of the seasons. The villagers were reluctant to take him in, but Goba worked earnestly and hard, winning some measure of acceptance. Now Goba seeks to mete out an unfriendly welcome to newcomers in return for his own hardship. Even if the PCs gain the village’s trust, Goba continues to malign them behind their backs and snub them in public.

 The PCs can calm the villagers’ fears by approaching without weapons and succeeding at a Diplomacy skill check (DC 15, with a +2 bonus to the roll if any obvious paladins, *samurai*, priests, monks, or otherwise recognizably lawful-looking types are among the party). On a success the villagers open the gate to them immediately; otherwise they’ll have to talk with the village’s representative over the top of the barricade.

The leader of the village, Madoka, soon arrives. She rebukes Goba and then approaches warily, asking the characters what they want and what they are doing here. If the PCs reveal they are from the civilized lands, a general sigh of relief rises from the throng and the children begin cheering. If instead the PCs are foreigners, the villagers continue to keep a close eye on them.

The PCs are admitted, sans weapons, into the town square and then into Madoka’s *minka* — her departed husband’s small farmhouse connected to the mill — to talk and eat.

A Plea for Help

Madoka politely engages her guests in conversation, asking either about the goings-on in the city or the customs of foreign lands. Making it a point to get to know something about each of her guests, Madoka waves off any conversation about her village’s plight until after all have spoken and eaten their fill. The villagers’ fare is meager, but they supply a good amount to the PCs in hopes that they will offer aid. Madoka, after giving them some time to eat, explains the plight of her village.

“Mura, this village and my home, serves all the *buraku* as the region’s heart and soul. All born must first come here so that they may be accounted for the honorable *daimyo*. All newly married in the hills celebrate their vows right here, within my departed husband’s mill. And all dead come here, as well, so that Sosuke — the caretaker of the Shrine of the Vigilant Light — can purify their flesh and release their spirits to blissful afterlife. To travelers as yourself, Mura may seem small and insignificant; to the *buraku*, Mura is the first and last haven for all who live in the Kadaichi range.

“When the barbarians came, looting and destroying Hatimo and the other *buraku* for miles around, the survivors came here to seek shelter. And here they have remained safe. For now, anyway. We have enough food for everyone until the first frost, but come winter we will starve. Too many refugees have come. We cannot feed them all.

“The barbarians took more than food from the *buraku*, as well. These animals that call themselves men made away within any children they could find.

“I turn to you, strangers, asking for salvation. It is said the gods sometimes send wandering *kami* — good spirits — to help the reverent in their need. And we are in bitter need. Will you aid us, help us find our children and stolen food stores?

“In return, the village can offer its hospitality and a portion of its food.”

Madoka knows the following additional information, which she can impart to the characters if she thinks they are leaning toward helping her people:

- Mura avoided being plundered because their encounter with the nearby Nagaya *samurai* diverted the barbarians north. Madoka knows that the raiders defeated the swords from the Nagaya hunting lodge in the Killing Fields to the northeast, but Madoka does not know how many of the barbarians are left and where they have gone. It has been about half a week since their conflict. She believes the raiders’ numbers are much fewer after their conflict with the *samurai*, but she has no idea how many are left.
- The lord of Nagaya was an aged *samurai* in the *daimyo*’s army. After reaching venerable years, the *samurai* sought peace in the sleepy hills; a request granted by his respectful patron. For years the *samurai* enjoyed his declining years, often hosting hunting trips for some of his younger and more active brethren. Luckily for the villagers, one such trip was underway when the barbarians came to this quiet land.
- Madoka fears that the raiders might return and take this village, though. She also fears that the barbar-



ians may leave the area with the missing children. Madoka has sent word to the south, but knows that the coming winter will delay any authorities.

- As long as she has been alive, the Shrine of the Vigilant Light has overlooked Mura. An older priest cared for the shrine and mostly kept to himself before passing away several years ago. A gentle priest, Sosuke, has taken his place and has a greater interest in the people in the hills. Besides leading rituals, he occasionally takes part in village celebrations and gatherings. Madoka further recommends visiting the shrine at night to see the beautiful magic lanterns that keep watch.

If the PCs are insistent about a reward, Madoka hints that she may tell successful PCs the location of some hidden treasure in exchange for their trouble. (This ‘treasure’ is the cache of weapons and armor her son has hidden, not the *kofun*; see Mura’s Secret, below.) Should the PCs refuse, Madoka escorts them out of her house; it won’t be long before the whole village hears of their refusal, sending the people into a panic. They cling to the PCs, begging and otherwise entreating them for aid.

Should the PCs still not be moved, the priest Sosuke journeys down from his shrine to make a final attempt at convincing them. Sosuke suggests that the gods afflict those who will not move their hand to aid another. Despite his views, Sosuke’s attempts to persuade do not rise above theological threats.

In the event that the PCs do not agree to aid the villagers after all of this, they are promptly asked to leave. They will be spoken of forevermore in this region as dishonorable *ronin* wretches not worthy of the swords they carry.

Should they agree, Madoka marches to the middle of the village square and introduces Mura’s ‘champions.’ A great cheer erupts in the small crowd. For the remainder of their stay, the characters are treated as heroes: small children follow them around the village trying to emulate them; fair village daughters and sons try to catch the eye of good-looking adventurers. Madoka finally offers them the hospitality of her *minka* should they decide to stay the night before starting their search.

The Shrine of Vigilant Light

Perched upon the eastern hilltop, the Shrine of Vigilant Light has rested here for centuries. A simple wooden structure flanked by shrine wards and grave markers, the shrine serves as the central religious site for both Mura and the neighboring *buraku*. A consecrated fire pit in back of the structure is used to cremate the departed as tradition dictates.

At night, part of the caretaker’s duty is to hang *vigilant lanterns* from the shrine and site markers. The five lanterns, which were imbued with power by the ancient demon hunters who erected the shrine so long ago, are divine magical items that function at night or in dark places. The lanterns can only be taken with the consent of the caretaker, lest they lose their magical abilities.



Religion buffs in the party might recognize the general style of the lanterns and have some idea of their effects. This takes a Knowledge (religion) roll DC 20; see the New Wondrous Item insert, opposite.

When the PCs later discover the tunnels and *kofun*, they could convince Sosuke to allow them to use a

lantern by succeeding a Diplomacy skill check (DC 20). Apply a +4 to –4 modifier depending on how the PCs have interacted with Sosuke before their request.

Sosuke is at first curious and receptive to newcomers. While trying to remain disinterested in temporal events, he attentively listens to the news of the cities. Should the PCs be from foreign lands, Sosuke presses for information about their culture, and is specifically interested in their religion. Any PC cleric, monk, or paladin fascinates him the most. He barrages him with questions about his practices of worship and his host of gods.

Sosuke knows of the plight of the people and has tried to raise their morale through prayer and meditation. Given the current distress of the refugees, his efforts have only met with mixed success.



Should any ask, or the occasion give rise, Sosuke shares the legend of the shrine and its purpose within the hills, given below. A PC may further discover the tale by asking the villagers and succeeding at a general Gather Information check (DC 25).

“Long ago,” he recounts, “this land was under the sway of a great darkness. Served by demons, this darkness raised a great palace of bone from the earth. Tales of the misery the darkness inflicted on the good people spread to far lands, where a band of righteous and enlightened men and woman gathered. Making journey to these hills, these demon hunters confronted the darkness within its den and sent its minions back to *yomi* — the spirit worlds. But it hid itself in a cave, where the band sealed it for eternity. This shrine was consecrated to the divinities of light, to remain watching over the hills and to spread word if ever the seals are broken.”

Sosuke himself does not take the story to be literal in any sense, but sees it as a metaphor for his role in helping the people of the villages — it is a reminder that even among simple folk, darkness pervades existence. He works to remind his people that only contemplation can remove them from the striving and darkness of mortal life.

Mura's Secret

After the attack on the *samurai* of Nagaya, two villagers, loud-mouthed Goba and Madoka's only son Kenji, snuck out of the village to find the battle site and signs of the barbarian raiders. Finding the fallen *samurai* on the Killing Fields, but no hint of the surviving raiders, crafty Goba devised a plan to get rich. Convincing the gullible Kenji to help, Goba collected the armaments and weapons of fallen raiders and *samurai* alike. Piece by piece, they dragged the cache away from the battle site and hid it in the tall grass of the surrounding hills. Goba hopes to transport the weapons and armor to one of the southern cities and sell them for a steep price.

Two problems lie before Goba. While carting off the last of the armament, Goba and Kenji were attacked by a lone jikininki. Luck overcame stupidity and the two managed to escape the undead creature and make their way back to Mura. But unbeknownst to the pair, the jikininki followed and now the entire flesh-eating den sees Mura as a target to exploit once they finish devouring all the bodies on the Killing Fields. Both Goba and Kenji agreed after the fact that the creature must have been a wolf, scavenging the corpses.

The second problem is that Kenji was so scared that he told Madoka of the hidden cache of arms the next day. Kenji did not reveal the extent of Goba's involvement or the fact that they were chased off by a monster, though. Madoka has not spoken of the incident as she is ashamed of her son's dishonorable actions. She does not mention the fact unless it becomes extremely relevant; for example, she may use the cache as a reward for the PCs if she's forced to it, and if the PCs discover the looted corpses, she will feel honor-bound to reveal the desecration her son committed.

A Silent Assault

Depending on how long the PCs take to prepare for chasing the barbarian trail, they may be on hand for the

New Wondrous Item: Vigilant Lantern

This divine magic item is attuned to the presence of dark powers. Only active at night or in the dark, the lantern sheds a celestial light as if enchanted by a *continual light* spell. In addition, any evil-aligned creature that comes within a 30-foot radius of the lantern stands revealed for the infernal nature it harbors. Dark patterns of *ki* energy swirl around those with an evil bent while they stand within the penetrating light. Note that the light does not reveal true forms, merely the presence of evil, disguised or not. Occasionally, *vigilant lanterns* may be attuned to specific and notorious evils and used by holy men to track such targeted beings.

Caster Level: 5th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Items, *detect evil*, *continual light*; **Market Price:** 6,600 gp; **Weight:** 2 lbs.

jikininki's first attack on Mura. The night after the PCs' arrival, a curious pack of three jikininki decide to test the village as a target. Under the cover of the tall grass and their shallow tunnels, the jikininki examine the barricade before making short forays within the village. Once inside, the jikininki search for an easy target — one of the village's sick, sleeping, wounded, or elderly — to snatch and drag away into the night. This evening, the monsters only grab one victim each before retreating back to their den.

 PCs can each make a Listen check DC 25 to notice the muffled sounds of struggle in the huts around them during the night; otherwise, the villagers won't notice the missing victims until the next morning, and will blame the barbarian raiders.

The jikininki attack with predatory stealth and cunning. As the store of potential corpses in Mura is sizeable, the creatures do not fight with each other over victims. Any organized resistance to the nighttime raid sends the jikininki back to their den after a few rounds. The three then wait for their cousins to sate themselves on the Killing Field's corpses so they can face the village in numbers. See the jikininki stats on page 26.

The villagers themselves are not completely helpless. Soon after the real fighting starts, they notice that the things tend to come from the ground, and shouting voices tell everyone to get up on the barricades or roofs. Peasants fighting on the ground also note that the mill at the center of town has stone floors. After the initial attack, whether the PCs intervene or not, Madoka insists that all children and elderly be protected there.

Furthermore, Madoka's own house contains a *tokonoma*, or religious shrine, for her family. If the village is awakened by the attack, Sosuke comes down from his shrine to render aid, gathering the weak there to turn back any dark creatures. If Sosuke descends into the village, he brings one of the shrine's *vigilant lanterns*.

Should the PCs fell any jikininki before the creatures retreat, they find ancient valuables from the days of the old empire on their degenerate, undead forms. This ancient finery includes gold and jade necklaces and rings, and other finely made jewelry. Anyone from this Eastern culture immediately recognizes the relics as finds from days long gone. Upon this discovery, the villagers promptly identify the creatures as the long-fingered demons said to have walked the foothills by moonlight in the days before the demon hunters who created the Shrine of Vigilant Light destroyed them all. They claim

these monsters must come from deep tombs built in the days of the old empire. Sosuke promptly calls this superstition, and the story itself a baseless legend, and speculates that it's more likely the barbarians have the power to call up demons from *yomi*.

Heading Out

 When the PCs head out to find the barbarians, a player with Track who makes a Wilderness Lore check (DC 10) easily spots the deep ruts left by wagons travelling to the north a short distance from the village, away from Mura and the Killing Fields. Alternatively, Spot checks or straight Wilderness Lore checks may substitute at a –7 penalty.

A similar inspection of the tunnels made by the jikininki during their attack on the village (Track/Wilderness Lore check DC 20) determines that they lead off in a generally north direction from Mura as well; it's impossible to follow them for more than a few hundred feet, though, as the soft earth of the hastily-made burrows has already collapsed in on itself.

If no trackers run with the party, young Kenji claims to know the hills pretty well. At Madoka's urging, he offers to join the party. The barbarian trail leads steadily north for a just over a half-day's walk, eventually leaving the high grass and rejoining the main road. The wagon trails and horse tracks leave the sense that the barbarians headed toward the *samurai* Nagaya in a hurry.

Whether the PCs go in search of the barbarian raiders immediately after their arrival in Mura or the next day, the same three jikininki that were lurking about the village target them for attack, as they are exposed and alone. The flesh-eaters wait in shallow tunnels for the group to bed down before bursting out of the ground to grab the sleeping, taking them by surprise; use the jikininki stats on page 26. Again, should the players put up any real resistance, the creatures retreat back to their den after a few rounds. (If the players spent the night in Mura and so don't need to make camp on the way to the lodge, the GM can insert this encounter during the return trip, described below.)

The trip passes uneventfully otherwise, and the PCs soon come upon the Nagaya hunting lodge.

The Barbarian Raiders

The Han barbarians were not chased from Mura and the Killing Fields by jikininki as their tracks might suggest; rather, their leader Zhang feared the *samurai* were part of some force sent by the local *daimyo* to route them from the hills. Riding well into night, the Han came across the virtually undefended Nagaya and took it by force.

Since then, Zhang has used the hall as a temporary fort while his men scour the area in patrols, looking for the lost pyramid they were hired to plunder and for a possible incoming force of *samurai*. The barbarians are thus armed and ready for any intruders.

Approaching Nagaya

A stream separates the hillside Nagaya from the grassy fields below it. A large stone bridge connects the walled compound to the surrounding area. The barbarians have a few of their own watching the bridge at all times, as it is an obvious point of entry. As nothing but hill upon hill of open grass surrounds the lodge, it is nigh impossible to approach Nagaya unseen without magical help; a patrol of riders intercepts the PCs on the field. Lu'at — the young heir of the barbarian leader Zhang — and four of his own fighters meet them in the open, with six horse-mounted archers standing at a short distance as backup.

Zhang has dispatched Lu'at to discover whether the PCs are scouts for a larger war party, or if they were sent by their own employers, the relic seekers. If the party somehow leaves the impression of either, Lu'at asks them to remain in the fields where they can be seen while the Han converse amongst themselves.



Lu'at does not respect civilized attempts at diplomacy, and understands only a direct show of strength. Diplomacy rolls suffer a –5 penalty in any attempt to deal with him or his cadre. For interactions with Lu'at, Intimidate checks may be used in lieu of Diplomacy. A skill check DC 18 convinces Lu'at to send for Zhang should roleplaying not tend toward convincing him that they're part of a larger party or sent by the relic seekers; in this case, Lu'at again leaves to speak with the Han on a success.

Lu'at returns a short time later to inform the PCs that Zhang will parlay with them if they agree on their word

of honor to speak peaceably. Should the players agree to the talks, they are escorted within the compound, with weapons sheathed, to hear out Zhang Han.

Negotiating with Barbarians

Keep in mind that the Han, while savage, have dealt with sophisticated enemies and outsiders before. Zhang and Lu'at do not trust any outside their *obok* clan — including their employers. Ultimately, the Han pursue a singular objective: to make off with as much booty and supplies as possible before a *daimyo*'s trained force arrives to deal with them. Double-cross is a tactic they suspect and will readily employ if it suits them.

Zhang keeps his *obok* here to pursue a private goal, as well — to aid Sumitomo, the relic seeker, in the search for the fabled storm god's axe. The Han's dealings with the PCs thus depends on whether Zhang sees the PCs as a threat, as weaklings, or as potential dupes to be used as needed in accomplishing his own goals. Zhang is crafty enough to use them for multiple purposes if the PCs allow it.

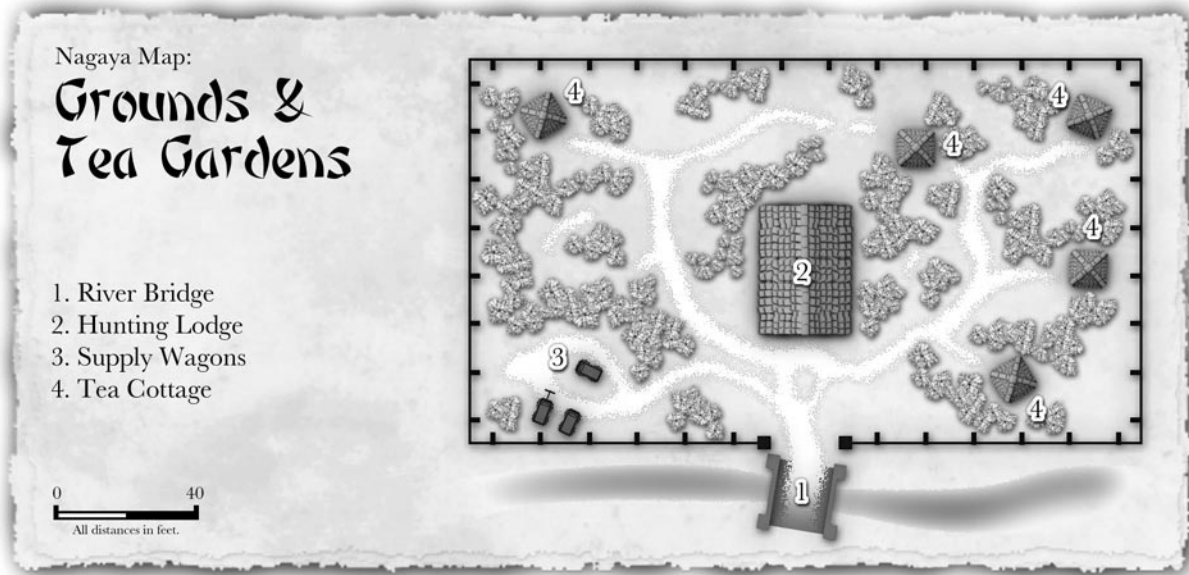
Lu'at, the young Han warrior, presents another nuance to the Han interaction. In some part due to the prodding of the *obok*'s seer, Lu'at swells with ambition and courage, something that has swayed the younger Han to follow him. However, he has not yet matured enough to fully appreciate that cunning and treachery are also chief virtues of a Han leader. Thanks to the encouragement of his comrades, Lu'at has begun to see himself in Zhang's position. To Lu'at, the PCs might be the perfect pawns in finally ridding himself of Zhang.

The Nagaya Compound

Nagaya itself is wordplay on the local term for barracks. This lodge served as a sort of officer's club for *samurai* to enjoy the pursuits of hunting and reminiscing about old battles. It is a structure built in the traditional style, with the following design:

Shoin Hall Ground Level

The *shoin* is the main greeting hall of the hunting lodge. A torn, ornate *noren* — a door-like curtain — sadly sags near the entrance to this once-proud hall. Musky smoke,



thick with the smell of spiced meats, permeates the slatted wooden wall and low roof. Since the Han occupation, the interior has been turned upside down. The wooden floor has been hewn through with an axe at the center of the great hall to serve as a makeshift firepit. The Han have delighted in having such a structure to protect their cooking fires from rain.

From the traditional *jodan* raised dais, Zhang Han keeps a watchful eye over the cooking fires and returning Han. Thick furs serve as both throne and bedding for the aged raider. Heavy cloth curtains hang from the rafters and are drawn to close off the *jodan* when Zhang requires privacy. Unless in use, Zhang keeps most of his personal treasures, as well as the Han's wealth, within view of his audience.



This hoard includes the following items:

- 3 chests of imperial coin (equivalent to 3000 gp)
- 15 large sealed urns of rice wine (15 gp each)
- 1 box of tea leaves, bearing the mark of the foreign mainlands (50 gp)
- 5 bolts of fine silk (50 gp each)
- 10 sets of fine eatingware (30 gp each)
- 5 large blocks of iron (100 gp each)
- a suit of finely wrought foreign *chainmail* +1 (1300 gp)
- 3 handsomely decorated foreign masterwork longswords (315 gp each)
- 5 foreign masterwork light crossbows and 50 bolts (335 gp each crossbow, and 350 gp for the bolts)

Shoin Hall Second Level

The Han find the upper floors of raised structures to be an affront to the air gods of the plains. As such, no Han

will set foot in the second level for fear of invoking the gods' wrath. The ornaments and personal effects left by the dead *samurai* remain relatively intact on this level, which includes sleeping areas and a meditation space that also housed the resident *samurai*'s family arms.



The possessions of the *samurai* include:

- 1 *mighty cleaving naginata* +1 with family crest (*mighty cleaving halberd* +1) (8310 gp)
- silk curtains (100 gp)
- silk bedclothes (25 gp)
- 1 masterwork longbow with 4 arrows (375 gp, and 2 gp for the arrows)
- pearl earrings (125 gp)

Soan Tea Cottages

Small grass cottages formerly used for drinking tea with guests are also located inside the lodge's wall. Now the cottages have been shut up so that the twenty-odd children from the *buraku* can be contained within. Another lone cottage serves as the abode of the Han seer called 'Grandmother' while she is at Nagaya.

The children are kept under strict guard, considering the weight the barbarians know they can throw around the hills so long as they have them captive. Zhang is wily and strict enough to ensure that even during revelries, at least three Han are kept watchful over the *soan*. Note that the Han do not drink spirits — it is forbidden by the storm god. Normally about half of the thirty Han warriors are away on scouting missions at any one time; their stats are in Appendix II.

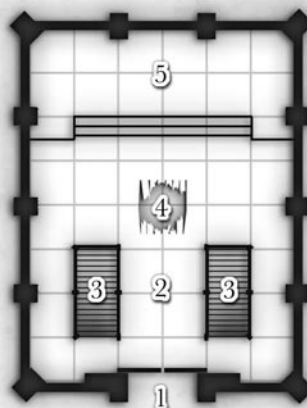
Should the PCs decide that a tactical move is required, let them free the children if they can manage it. A rescue raid could well succeed, especially if the party makes use

Nagaya Map:

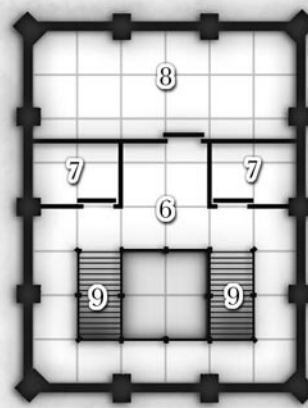
The Hunting Lodge

1. Entrance
2. Shoin Hall
3. Stairs to Second Level
4. Fire Pit
5. Raised Dais
6. Balcony
7. Sleeping Room
8. Meditation Room
9. Stairs to Ground Level

1 Square = 5 Feet



Ground Level



Second Level

of flashy magic or a diversionary assault at the front gate while stealthy types sneak within. The Han are hard people, and are well aware of the children's vulnerability, though; if the PCs are tactless enough to try a full frontal assault, they threaten retribution and then slaughter a few kids as examples.

Formal Tea Gardens

The three supply wagons of the Han have been driven up into these gardens surrounding the main building. By special order of Zhang, Lu'at and his warriors trade shifts guarding the supplies in the wagons — which includes the food stolen from the *buraku* — and the children's cottages.



The Grand Audience

Seated upon his *jodan*, Zhang watches closely as the strangers enter his new fort. From atop a pile of thick furs, he sips from a deerskin flask, soberly weighing each member of the party. By his side stands Grandmother; the withered seer squints to make out the approaching PCs, grasping an amulet made of thin metal. Her frantic attentions focus on any PC spellcasters. Like a hawk, she watches their every gesture.



Grandmother is no fool. She has heard the stories of island enchanters and their powers to beguile the weak-willed. Making use of the relic seeker Sumitomo, Zhang purchased for Grandmother an *amulet of the sheltered mind*, which provides her with protection from *charm* spells; see Appendix II. Note also that Sumitomo, who appears below and in Appendix II, carries an identical amulet, though he usually hides it within his clothing. In addition, Grandmother pays strict attention to make sure none of the Han are under PC influence.

Zhang begins, "Ah *samurai*, or is it *ronin*? Are you obedient or masterless dogs?"

Whatever the answer, Zhang scoffs before continuing, "So what is it you want here? How much do I need to pay you to send you away?"

If the characters mention the children and the *buraku* villas, or the village of Mura, Zhang replies, "We have taken what we need with strength. Your peasants present weak targets and were left undefended. Certainly their *daimyo* knew this. Do not blame us for taking what we need."

Should any player raise the moral issues that come with stealing food and kidnapping children, Zhang rises suddenly and, in a loud voice directed at the gathering of his men, shouts, "And what about our Han children? It is just for your emperor to raid the mainland, pluck our babes out of our arms, and burn our villages? These things his men do in godless obedience. You suggest we are savage? We are honest. We take what we must and as the storm god wills."

Just when diplomacy seems hopeless, Zhang relents, "But we of the Han are not without hearts. These children are important to you, eh? What do you have to trade, then? What things of value are these simpering peasants willing to part with for their return?"

Zhang entertains offers at this point. Should the players suggest valuables or start the bartering process, Zhang seriously considers what they say. If the characters act decisively they may also gain Zhang's respect. However well the PCs barter, though, Zhang tells them he needs time to consider their offer with the Han *obok* council. He asks the PCs to return to Mura; word will be sent to them there.

Should the characters barter poorly or, worse, insult Zhang, they are told to leave and advised not to return lest they suffer Zhang's wrath. Should they start babbling about undead demons, they provoke the same reaction.

In any event, as the Han warriors move to escort the PCs from Nagaya, Grandmother collapses at her post on the *jodan*. The young Lu'at rushes to her side. She croaks, pointing to the PCs, "My son, you must go below with them ... below to quell the unnatural hunger ..." Lu'at tries to quiet her and barks orders to his men to bring the characters outside.

Left outside, the characters are closely watched until they leave. Grandmother sries on them for the rest of the day, fascinated as to how her prophecy will unfold. Wearily, the PCs face a long but quiet half-day journey back to Mura.

A New Arrival

Whether or not the PCs were in Mura for the first jikininki assault, all the villagers took notice of the ancient finery worn by the creatures, which is still the talk of the town on their return. Loud-mouthed Goba — who in a moment of inspiration decides the barbarians are a more likely way of making a fortune than looting corpses has proved to be — slips out of the village after the characters have left, travelling to the hunting lodge where he sells information about the creatures and their treasure. The *obok*'s seer confirms the existence of the

Villagers of Mura and Foreign Swordsmen,

Allow me to assist in bringing the current conflict between yourselves and the Han raiders to a speedy conclusion. My name is Sumitomo, a merchant and diplomat by trade recently arrived in the Kadaichi hills on unrelated business, and I have just learned of your village's plight. Having spent many years trading with the Han, I am accustomed to their ways and will entreat them to return your goods and children.

In return for my services, I propose a bargain with your ronin and wish to parlay with them to deliver my terms. It is my hope that an expeditious bargain can be made for the betterment of all involved.

Most humbly,
Sumitomo

ancient finery while scrying, and discovers more of the jikininki tunnels southeast of Nagaya. The barbarians, alerted to the possibility the jikininki might infest the very tomb they've been searching for, contact their employer, the relic seeker Sumitomo.

Assessing the situation of the tunnels southeast of the hunting lodge, Sumitomo decides to convince the PC heroes to defeat the jikininki for him so that he can find some way into the lost *kofun* he suspects the jikininki come from. To this end, he bribes the barbarians to offer some food and children as tokens of peace in order to open talks with the village and PCs.

If the PCs already freed the children at the hunting lodge with a tactical assault, the GM might improvise continual jikininki raids on the village to make exploration of the *kofun* needed.

The Deal

After hearing of the PCs, Sumitomo decides to arrange a parlay between himself and these wandering adventurers. In counsel with the barbarian leader Zhang, Sumitomo convinces the Han to return three children and several barrels of food to the village as an offering of 'good faith.' Sumitomo sends the gifts with a sole Han warrior, Lu'at, to Mura's gates. The young warrior sends greetings from Zhang and a letter from an esteemed personage from the emperor's courts, Sumitomo. The Han warrior proudly announces the gifts, stating that he will remain until the village has an answer to the letter.

A copy of the letter is on page 18.

Sumitomo, of course, refers to the party as "your *ronin*" based on the Han's account. Should the PCs accept the arrangement, Lu'at tells characters the meeting will take place at the gates of the Han encampment. The Han warrior offers a sheathed dagger as a sign of truce if the PCs need assurance that they won't be harmed. He then travels with them back to Nagaya, providing another opportunity for the three jikininki to attack the party

on the road to the lodge or on their way back again if they haven't already.

The PCs arrive at the lodge to find two people waiting for them just outside the gate. Dressed in the court's finery, Sumitomo paces before the stoic figure of the scout Akane, his guide. Greeting them politely, Sumitomo tries to strike the figure of a civilized but well-traveled merchant who understands the savage Han:

"Ah yes, hello, welcome. Welcome. I am Sumitomo, the same from the letter this morning. Zhang Han told me of his dealings with you, and I hope that I can help. Upon the mainland, the Han seem not so savage, I assure you. Always willing to deal. Always abiding by their word, when they deign to give it.

"Mura's position is most unfortunate. I would like to do what I can, of course, but I am bound in a peculiar manner ... imperial decree. May I rely on your discretion in this matter? It is most sensitive to the emperor.

"Suffice it to say that I have taken the initiative in offering a large sum of money to the Han to pay for the children's ransom, at least. I can offer slightly more than what they could get from the slaver markets. With your word, the children can be delivered back to Mura, by the Han themselves.

"My dilemma is this, the payment I have offered comes from the emperor's coffers, given to me so that I may fund an expedition to unearth a lost family vault buried here in the Kadaichi range. I am willing to sacrifice this money, but cannot return to the emperor empty-handed.

"My scout Akane has determined that the vault does lie in this area, beneath an odd hill southeast of here. A large central door has resisted my attempts to breach it, but I suspect it can be opened from within the vault. If you accompany my guide into the *kofun*, and find a way to open the central door, I can in good conscience both aid your villagers and complete my duty to the emperor."

Akane throws down a severed hand on the grass,



before the characters' feet. A jade and gold ring glints from the rotted jikininki finger. "This thing, I cut myself near a hill southeast of here," she says. "It was returning from feeding on the bodies of the fallen *samurai* left on the field of combat. It uses tunnels beneath the hills to travel. Take a look at that ring. It's ancient ... from the old empire. This thing could only get such jewelry if it had access to the family vault we search for ... access through those tunnels."

Lu'at interrupts, "What she says is true. My warriors fell defending our wagons from the *samurai* near there. We did not have time to consecrate our fallen to the storm god. When we returned to the field, we found many bodies missing. Among the *samurai*'s fallen, more had disappeared. We took the remaining bodies of our own left behind, so as to perform our funeral rites. Some of the younger warriors tried to set fire to the pile of *samurai*, but the fires fell through the earth."

Sumitomo promptly makes his pitch, "Certainly, something like this, the emperor could not foresee. Swear upon your lord or honor to join Akane, to go into the tunnels and find a way to open the central door, and I'll make payment immediately. Mura may have the children back."



Note that Sumitomo intends to uphold his end of the bargain, should the PCs attempt a Sense Motive check or use *detect lie*, though he is not, in fact, an emissary of the emperor.

Sumitomo adds that he insists on sending his guide, Akane, along with the party into the tunnels to represent his own interest. While Sumitomo has no quarrel with letting the party keep treasure found on the foul demons, he does not want the treasures of the *kofun* itself to be disturbed before he can examine them.

Should the PCs accept, Sumitomo thanks them and makes preparations to have payment transferred to the Han. After the children are returned by the Han, he expects the PCs to gather outside Mura's gates. If pressed, Sumitomo also prompts the Han to give their word that no more raiding will occur while the PCs investigate the vault.

Keep Your Enemies Closer ...

Escorting the PCs away from the hunting lodge, Lu'at adds a wrinkle of his own: "Warriors, I have an additional offer from my *obok*. I understand the village has need of food supplies. In exchange for allowing me to join with you, as part of your expedition, my tribe is willing to relinquish up food. These creatures took what belongs to the storm god from the bodies of my fallen kinsmen. I must avenge them by reclaiming my *obok*'s blood price.

"Beyond the glory and benefit to my tribe ... there is a personal reason I would like to join. Grandmother believes my destiny entwines with your own within these hills, as her prophecy foretold. It is the storm god's will that I join you. His ways are unknown, but his will is clear. Will you have me?"

If the PCs accept, Lu'at accompanies them back to the village. Otherwise, he follows them at a distance.

The Children Return

A few hours after the PCs arrival back at the village, a small band of Han escorts a wagon filled with the missing children toward Mura. In disbelief, the refugees watch as the wagons unload and their small ones climb over the barricades. Shouts of joy and celebration go up from the villagers.

From the village center, Madoka sighs in relief. She thanks and blesses the PCs for their intercession. Soberly, she reminds the heroes of the bitter need for food; otherwise, the impoverished villagers will have to evacuate Mura before winter sets in, and many of their people would not survive the dangerous journey past Dragon's Teeth Pass.

Sosuke then comes down from his shrine to join the joyous gathering. Making his way through the reunited families, he waves down the characters.

Bowing, he greets them, "Thank you, heroes. Thank you. You have done well for us, but I'm afraid our troubles have just begun. Please join me inside the mill, with your blessing Madoka ... I have disturbing news."

Within the *minka*, Sosuke continues, "Meditating within the shrine, terrible visions came unbidden. An endless hoard of long-fingered demons erupted from the earth to attack all within the hills. Mura and the Han alike fell before their unnatural hunger."

Should the first jikininki attack on the village have gone unnoticed by anyone, and the PCs mention their encounter on the road with the creatures, Sosuke nods his head, "So it is true."

"There is more. The source of these demons lies not in *yomi*. A human heart, warped by the hunger for power, brought these here and will yet cause much sorrow. I saw no more."

If told about their deal to penetrate the *kofun* for Sumitomo, Sosuke considers, "You must honor your word as is your station. But I must caution you to be wary on your journey, and ask that, if you can, you discover the source of these demons and subvert it. For the sake of Mura."

The Field of Combat

Upon returning the children to Mura, the scout Akane and barbarian warrior Lu'at wait before Mura's gates for the expedition to begin. Akane, who was not told about the barbarian's presence, bickers loudly with Lu'at before the PCs arrive.

Angrily turning to the party she vents, "You told this ... *savage* that he could join us? Fine! He's your problem. The oaf had best not stumble into any of the emperor's kin or property, or you and he will have *yomi* to pay!"

Once the journey is underway, Lu'at strides out of Akane's earshot towards the closest player character to ask, "Are all of your hunters so ... fierce? I have never met one quite like her among your people."

Aside from the initial personality conflicts, the journey northeast to the clearing is undisturbed by incident.

Timing

Each group outside the *kofun* is running out of time quickly:

- The villagers are low on food and need some relief before they literally starve to death. Spells that create food may buy the village more time, but with winter coming soon, they need a permanent solution to their problem or they will be forced to make the dangerous trek past Dragon's Teeth Pass.
- The Han barbarians realize they were spotted by a band of *samurai* on the shores west of here in their efforts to find the *Kaidachi* hills. While they are a sizeable *obok*, they have no hopes of staving off an organized *samurai* attack so far from their ship. Above all, the Han want to get as much booty — food stores, children to sell as slaves, payment from the relic seekers, and treasure from the *kofun* — as they can get their greedy hands on. To this end, the Han are not above betraying their own employers.
- Sumitomo, the financier behind the relic-hunting expedition, desperately wants the artifacts that lie within the *kofun*. Relying on mistranslated scrolls penned by the demon hunters who defeated the jikininki so long ago, Sumitomo knows of the existence of a sealed room within the temple and believes arcane treasures lie within. Sumitomo ruthlessly stops at nothing to ensure that every artifact of the *kofun* is plundered.

The Killing Fields

The scout Akane leads the group over a small chain of hills to the northeast of Mura. Wreathed by a crown of smaller rises, a lone, overly large hill stands out of place in the range. Before the foot of this hill lies a strangely wide, flat stretch of field. The long grass promises to make travel difficult if any venture from the hewn path. Lu'at confirms a burnt clearing in the center of the field as the site of battle between the Han and the *samurai*.

If the jikininki have not attacked the PCs yet, keep in mind that they keep careful watch over them as they cross the field, searching for an opportunity to strike. The creatures shun daylight, but a single jikininki could use the tall grass surrounding the clearing to grab a lone, unwary character who strays from the main group, and drag him into the tunnels. If no such opportunity arises, the undead wait until the PCs either make their own way into the tunnels at the edge of the clearing, or until they disturb the corpses overly much; see below.

The Clearing

The smell of carnage first assaults the travelers. The reek of the clearing hangs over much of the field. Hordes of flies and other insects hover over key areas within the scorched circle. The bodies of the fallen lie heaped in small piles, as if they have been sorted.

Akane, upon entering the clearing, makes a straight line to the closest tunnel at its edge. She stops and examines the lip for a time, giving the characters a chance to look around and explore (see next page).

Stolen Goods

If the PCs follow the hobnailed boot tracks, they find that near the edge of the field a set of *samurai* splint armor lies in a heap as if dropped and left there. After the armor, the hobnailed feet ran from the field, seemingly followed by a strange bare, clawed print that chased the two back down the path. If the hobnailed feet are followed back towards Mura, the PCs find Goba and Kenji's hidden arms cache just off the path; Madoka tells the PCs of the plundering her son committed if she learns they found the cache.



Within the cache, Goba and Kenji managed to store the following in the hopes of selling them later:

- 5 suits of recovered splint mail (200 gp each)
- 4 *katanas* (masterwork bastard swords) (335 gp each)
- 5 *wakizashis* (masterwork short swords) (310 gp each)

Should the players discover the cache, they might be able to outfit the peasants against the jikininki. Note that the armor contains markings of the neighboring *daimyo*. Sosuke and Madoka resist using the armor except in an extreme situation as they see it as being disrespectful to the fallen heroes.

The Fallen

The jikininki saw no need to protect their corpse store, so they allowed the fallen to rot in the sun. As the foul demons hungered, they typically returned above under the cover of night to snatch up more food. Should the party show no interest in the corpses and not enter the tunnels, most of the jikininki (save the three that have been following them) leave them unmolested once they leave the area. But if the party includes those who insist on a traditional cremation, the jikininki horde grows increasingly restless and angered. Note that burial, on the other hand, does not disturb the creatures, as it actually makes their access to the food easier.

Up to ten jikininki gather beneath the earth to foil any attempt to raise a pyre, digging unstable underground caverns that collapse to swallow up the fires and wood. A few groups of two or three creatures rise from shallow tunnels to engage the firestarters, while individual

Exploring the Clearing

An examination of wounds of the bodies with a Heal check (DC 10) reveals all of the dead fell in battle, despite what looks like the teeth marks of some animal on many of them. The fire that burnt this clearing was also set long before any here died, since none of the bodies have burn marks or soot on them.

Those who make a Wilderness Lore check (DC 10) notice that there are no scavenging animal traces in the clearing. Despite this strange lack of scavengers, a number of the bodies appear half-eaten.

A Search check can discover several oddities about the Killing Fields:

DC Information

- 10 Many of the bodies — both Han and samurai — have been stripped of their weapons and armor.
- 15 The hill on the far side of the field is oddly symmetrical. On close inspection, it proves to be a stone structure blanketed by a few feet of thick vegetation.
- 25 A ring of twelve small terracotta statuettes surrounds field, facing off three to each ordinal direction; they are obscured by the tall grass and so are very hard to find.

The use of the Track feat (rolling Wilderness Lore checks) reveals several more clues, as detailed below:

DC Information

- 12 Several wagons were positioned closer to the lone hill and away from the path from Mura in a defensive stance. Three sets of tracks leave the charred area. Many bare human footprints lead to the wagon ruts and seem to accompany the horse tracks. The horses and wagons press through the fields, continuing to the northwest. (These are the prints of the barbarians, which lead to the main road and eventually Nagaya)
- 15 The tracks of two sets of hobnailed boots appear to enter and exit the char heading back towards Mura several times. The impressions show they carried heavy loads. (These are Goba and Kenji's tracks.)
- 18 The final set of tracks seems to be vaguely humanoid and clawed — it is definitely not the print of a natural scavenger. The tracks crisscross the char near the corpses, and are accompanied by drag marks that suggest more bodies may have been here before today. Following the clawed feet and drag marks leads into the grassy fields and eventually to the lip of several small tunnels. (These are jikininki tracks, of course.)

jikininki crawl out of the ground to snatch the remaining corpses, dragging them down into the earth with them. Killing one or two of their number in one round sends the creatures panicked and fleeing back into their tunnels. Should PCs succeed in destroying the remaining corpses, the jikininki actively start seeking alternative food sources, turning their attention to raids on the village while the PCs explore the *kofun*.

An Army in Miniature

The twelve terracotta soldiers overlooking the field serve as vessels for the Alchemist's familiar, an Earth spirit. The thing inhabits the specially prepared golems simultaneously, and by doing so its mistress remains aware of anything it experiences. This is true even as she sleeps within her crystal bath.

When the characters approach the field, the familiar examines the PCs while its vessels remain still and apparently lifeless. The golems only move if the party begins destroying the soldiers, in which case the tiny figures scatter and retreat into the tall grass. If the party destroys all the vessels, the Earth spirit familiar is dismissed back to its own plane. Also, bringing the vessels more than one mile from the Alchemist's resting place robs them of their enchanted nature; the stats for these vessels are on page 24.

 *Detect magic* reveals a weak but ancient enchantment upon the terracotta soldiers.

Once the party has left the area or entered the tunnels, the familiar sends one of its shells to follow the party to see if they mean to disturb its mistress. Anyone attempting to breach the door to the *kofun* by force is openly harried by this miniature army. Also, once the Alchemist

fully awakens, the soldiers pour into the *kofun* to attend their mistress. (The terracotta soldiers are described on page 24.)

The Lone Hill

On the far side of the clearing, a large hill juts up from the earth. Should the players investigate it before proceeding into the tunnels (succeeding at their skill roll, above), they notice it has oddly symmetrical sides, and is, in fact, a large stone pyramidal structure hidden underneath a thick growth of vegetation.

 If the party investigates the structure further, a successful Search (DC 20) notices an especially smooth area on the side of the hill facing the Killing Fields. Overhanging plants barely obscure the large ten-foot-wide and ten-foot-tall stone face. *Detect magic* finds no continuing magical trace and *dispel magic* has no effect on it, since this seal was created by an instantaneous and improved *wall of stone* spell.

The massive stone face appears much more like a solid wall than a door. Sealed by the demon hunters centuries ago, it bears a singular inscription in the tongue common to this area: "By the favor of the Vigilant Light this den of evil has been sealed and no man or woman should again enter to disturb it." The rest of the door appears much more faded and worn, as if the block of stone itself were much older than the inscription; the stone face also contains other scripts long since worn beyond legibility by the elements, even with magic.

 Opening the door itself proves impossible from the outside, short of using a *wish* spell. From within, a *disintegrate* spell or brute force can break



Terracotta Soldiers (12)

Tiny Clay Golem

CR 1; SZ T (construct); HD $\frac{1}{2}$ d10; hp 2; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 50 ft.; AC 15 (+2 size, +2 Dex, +1 natural); Atk melee +1 (1d3–1 each, 2 slams); Face 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ ft. x 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ ft.; Reach 0 ft.; SA Wound; SQ Alertness, Darkvision 60 ft., DR 5/+1, Empathic Link, Haste, Immune to Piercing and Slashing, Improved Evasion, Magic Immunity, Scry, Share Spells, Speak with Earth Spirits, Speak with Master, Spell Resistance 2, Touch, Vessel Vulnerabilities; AL N Fort +0, Ref +2, Will –5; Str 8, Dex 14, Con —, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 1

These golems collectively house a spirit from the Elemental Plane of Earth, which has been harnessed as the Alchemist's familiar. It acts at its mistress's command.

Alertness: While in the presence of one of the soldiers, the familiar's mistress gains the Alertness feat, giving her a +2 bonus to Listen and Spot checks.

Construct: Constructs never have Constitution scores. A construct is immune to mind-influencing effects and to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, and necromantic effects. Constructs cannot heal damage on their own, though they can be healed. A construct is not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage or drain, or energy drain. It is immune to any effect that requires a Fortitude save (unless the effect also works on objects). A construct is not at risk of death from massive damage, but when reduced to 0 hit points or less it is immediately destroyed. Since it was never alive, a construct cannot be *raised* or *resurrected*. Constructs have Darkvision with a range of 60 feet.

Damage Reduction (Su): The creature ignores 5 hit points from most weapons and natural attacks. A +1 weapon or better negates the ability.

Empathic Link (Su): The Alchemist and familiar can communicate telepathically as long as at least one of the soldiers is within one mile of her.

Immune to Slashing and Piercing (Ex): Slashing and piercing weapons, even enchanted ones, do no damage to a clay golem.

Haste (Su): After it has engaged in at least 1 round of combat, a clay golem can *haste* itself once per day as a free action. The effect lasts 3 rounds and is otherwise the same as the spell.

Improved Evasion (Ex): If subjected to an attack that allows a Reflex save for half damage, the familiar's vessel takes no damage if it makes a successful saving throw and half damage even if the saving throw fails.

Intelligence: The Earth spirit has an Intelligence of 12 as the Alchemist's familiar.

Magic Immunity (Ex): Golems completely resist all spells, spell-like abilities, and supernatural effects, except as follows: a *move earth*, *disintegrate*, or *earthquake* spell cast at a Tiny clay golem destroys it with no saving throw.

Natural Armor: Each golem receives a natural armor bonus of +1 rather than the +7 a standard familiar bonded to the Alchemist would get, as they must share the bonus amongst themselves.

Scry (Sp): The Alchemist may scry on each of her familiar's vessels once per day.

Share Spells: The familiar's mistress may have any spells she casts on herself also affect the familiar's golems as long as they are within five feet of their mistress.

Speak with Earth Spirits: The familiar can communicate with other creatures from the Elemental Plane of Earth.

Speak with Master: The familiar and its mistress can communicate verbally through any of the golems as if they were using a common language, though others cannot understand the communication without magical help.

Spell Resistance: The familiar can avoid the effects of spells and spell-like abilities, but it must split the SR 23 it would normally get as the Alchemist's familiar amongst its golems. The spellcaster makes a level check (1d20 + caster level), and if the result equals or exceeds 2, the spell works normally.

Touch: Any of the familiar's golems can deliver touch spells for its mistress.

Wound (Ex): The damage a clay golem deals doesn't heal naturally. Only a *heal* spell of 6th level or higher can heal it.

Vessel Vulnerabilities (Su): Removing a soldier to a distance more than one mile from its master renders that vessel mundane; bringing it back within that range allows the Earth spirit to reanimate it if it has not already been dismissed. Destroying all the vessels dismisses the spirit of the Elemental Plane of Earth that inhabits them, which promptly returns to its own plane of existence. Destroying an individual vessel has no impact on the spirit, however. The vessels also cannot draw on its mistress' stats to replace their own as a normal familiar can, though she gains the regular benefits of having a familiar and the golems still receive familiar special abilities.

the seal; see page 42. A spellcaster succeeding at a Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 18) realizes this.

The Tunnels

A network of shallow tunnels serves as the jikininki's access to the Kadaichi hills and the *kofun*; the nearest openings are on the edge of the clearing, obscured by the tall grass.

 At the lip of each tunnel, an odd odor might tip the party off that the scavengers lie in wait below. Also, an attentive listener may discern the demons crawling and shifting within the tunnels with a Listen check (DC 18).

These are obviously the tunnels Sumitomo has sworn the PCs to explore in order to enter the *kofun* and open the main door from within. The tunnels prove a tight fit for broad-shouldered characters as the diameter narrows to two or three feet in many places. They are wide enough that every character should fit if they can crawl, though; especially large packs, shields, and other bulky items are impossible to bring along, however. The scout Akane and barbarian Lu'at both accompany the PCs into the tunnels.

Lying in wait, the main force of the jikininki strike only when the party has entered the tunnel proper, as long as the PCs don't unduly disturb the corpses above. Within the tunnels, the jikininki are at an extreme advantage. Although not organized in any sense, the undead display pack-like cunning in separating their prey from the group and using the tunnels to their advantage, attacking in twos and threes. The tunnel system leading to the jikininki central den is in continual flux as the creatures collapse some branches and create new ones in response to intruders.

 A character who uses Wilderness Lore (DC 12) notes that some of the tunnels bore deeper into the ground, sharply inclining at places, and the smell of death becomes ever stronger in these passages. Indeed, steering toward these tunnels will eventually lead the PCs to the jikininki central den.

The jikininki use the following tactics to attack the PCs in the tunnels:

- The jikininki, buried for centuries under this *kofun*, detect even the slightest vibrations in the makeshift passageways, and so always know the location of intruders.
- The creatures burst through the walls, floors, and ceiling to attack the adventuring party, especially targeting weaker characters.
- The jikininki also collapse portions of the tunnel to

trap one or more PCs in the debris or to split the party up, then make opportunist attacks from their front and rear.

- Impromptu pit traps are dug, which collapse beneath the party's feet. Within the small pits, one or two jikininki wait to assail and rend the disoriented victim.
- The creatures hastily dig new tunnels, as well as collapsing old ones, to confuse the PCs in their search for the den. Sample tunnel branches are indicated on the map of the *kofun* on page 31, but there is no definitive route into the central den.

 While area effect spells may seem like a good option, no more than two or three jikininki are normally found in the same tunnel. Keep in mind that the tunnels form winding patterns, so lightning bolts and the like do not proceed to the central den. Allow each jikininki after the first targeted to use the tunnels as 75% cover while within the spell's range.

The brunt of jikininki traps may in general be avoided by successful Reflex saves (DC 12) with a –4 penalty for Medium-sized or larger characters because of the small tunnel space. Medium-sized or larger creatures fighting with anything larger than a Small or natural weapon suffer a –2 circumstance penalty to their attack rolls, as well, due to the cramped quarters.

Unwelcome Company

Hearing of the wealth that the degenerate jikininki hoard, Goba and Kenji have come up with a scheme to snag some treasure of their own. To this end, they follow the PCs to the hill and tunnels, and at a dramatically appropriate moment, run screaming down the tunnel with a lone jikininki nipping at their heels. Assuming the PCs intervene to save them, the pair beg the party to protect them so they don't die.

The scout Akane gripes about the unwanted baggage and suggests they leave the two to the consequences of their own foolishness. While sensible PCs may think of bringing the pair back topside, the sudden collapse of the out-bound tunnel forces the party forward to the central den.

An Unholy Den

The jikininki den is a wide, rough-hewn cave that houses many uneaten bodies. Bones litter the floor between the three tunnel entrances as testament to the corpse-

eaters' unholy feast. The stench first assaults the party while they are well back in the tunnels.



A Search check (DC 10) notices that, in the center of the pickings, a verdant mound of green earth juts from the debris. Thick vines and weeds sprout from the soft hillock, rich and full of life where no plant should be. Closer examination

reveals droplets of water trickling from cracks in the low stone ceiling onto the leafy ground.

Any of the PCs succeeding at a Knowledge (nature) or Wilderness Lore check (DC 15) can determine that the plants, while like normal plants, seem more healthy and resilient than their mundane counterparts.

Jikininki (35)

Hit Dice:	Medium-size Undead 2d12 (13 hp)
Initiative:	+1 (Dex)
Speed:	30 ft., burrow 10 ft.
AC:	13 (+1 Dex, +2 natural)
Attacks:	Bite +1 melee and 2 claws –1 melee
Damage:	Bite 1d6+1 and <i>minor rot</i> , or claw 1d3 each
Face/Reach:	5 ft. x 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks:	Minor Rot
Special Qualities:	Darkvision 60 ft., Dormancy, Eat Corpse, Tremorsense 60 ft., Turn Resistance +2
Saves:	Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +4
Abilities:	Str 13, Dex 13, Con —, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 13
Skills:	Intuit Direction +2, Listen +6, Move Silently +6, Spot +6
Feats:	Multiattack
Climate/Terrain:	Any land and underground
Organization:	Solitary, gang (2–3), or infesta- tion (10 or more)
Challenge Rating:	2
Treasure:	Double art (jewelry only); one in every 6 creatures has a <i>ring of</i> <i>sustenance</i> worth 2,500 gp in its stomach (roll 1d6)
Alignment:	Always chaotic evil
Advancement Range:	3–4 HD (Medium-size)

Jikininki are undead flesh-eaters adorned with ancient jewelry, including gold and jade necklaces or rings. Jikininki hoard valuables in testament to their insatiable greed. Should the PCs fell any jikininki upon the Kadaichi hills, they find ancient jewelry from the days of the Alchemist. Anyone from this Eastern culture immediately recognizes the relics as finds from days long gone.

Jikininki usually hunt in groups of two or three, avoiding bright light and using their tunnels as an escape route. They prefer the flesh of rotting humanoid corpses.

Dormancy (Ex): Should a jikininki not be able to eat flesh for more than a week, it enters a state of dormancy, much like the spell *temporal stasis*. It can remain in this state indefinitely, until the smell of a humanoid or a

humanoid corpse within 100 feet of it rouses the creature.

Eat Corpse (Ex): One disgusting aspect of jikininki nature can actually work against them in combat. Due to their ever-ravenous hunger, these corpse-eaters are prone to falling upon any fresh body they encounter (including those of their fallen comrades), becoming momentarily oblivious to their surroundings while they feed. To avoid this potentially suicidal behavior, jikininki must succeed at a Will save (DC 17) or spend a full-round action greedily gulping down chunks of dead flesh, thus losing their Dexterity bonus to AC and granting opponents a +4 to their attack rolls.

Minor Rot (Su): This supernatural disease is transmitted on a successful hit by the jikininki's bite attack: Fortitude save (DC 16), incubation period 1 day; damage 1 point temporary Constitution score. Two successful saving throws in a row means the victim recovers naturally, otherwise the victim recovers naturally at a rate of 1 point of damage per day. Any disease-curing or curse-removing spell will heal *minor rot*.

Tremorsense (Ex): By feeling vibrations in the earth, the creature automatically senses the location of anything that is in contact with the ground, moving, and within 60 ft.

Turn Resistance (Ex): When resolving a Turn, Rebuke, Command, or Bolster attempt, add +2 to the creature's Hit Dice total.

Undead: Undead are immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, necromantic effects, and mind-influencing effects. Undead are not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage or drain, or energy drain. They have no Constitution scores and are therefore immune to any effect requiring a Fortitude save (unless it affects objects). Undead have Darkvision with a range of 60 feet. Negative energy can heal undead creatures. An undead creature is not at risk of death from massive damage, but when reduced to 0 hit points or less it is immediately destroyed. Undead cannot be *raised*. *Resurrection* can affect them, but generally fails because they're unwilling to return to life.

Detect magic does not betray a magical origin for the plants' vigor.

On an Alchemy check DC 20, alchemists in the party know of certain exotic and non-magical compounds that mimic the life-giving effect the water obviously has.

Furthermore, anyone with Craft (masonry) or a similar skill (DC 15) notices that the stone above their heads actually serves as a foundation to a much larger structure and that the trickling water betrays a fault in that foundation. A close examination by a mason also confirms that a five-foot circular section of stone seems quite worn and is actually crumbling in places.

Another Search check (DC 15) reveals that the corpses here have been stripped of wealth by the vain jikininki, but some serviceable weapons

remain scabbarded or tossed aside in the filth, as listed below. They are all inscribed with the insignia of the *samurai* of Nagaya.

- 2 *katana* (masterwork bastard swords) of good make (335 gp each)
- 1 enchanted *keen katana +1* (*keen bastard sword +1*) (8,335 gp)

The Dead Speak

Once the PCs get close to the central den, the alpha of the jikininki packs signals his horde to retreat into the tunnels. The alpha watches the PCs carefully as they survey the den.

Jikininki Alpha

Medium-size Undead

CR 3; SZ M (undead); HD 4d12; hp 26; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft., burrow 10 ft.; AC 13 (+1 Dex, +2 natural); Atk melee +3 (1d6+2 and *minor rot*, bite) and melee +1 (1d3+1, 2 claws); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SA Minor Rot; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., Dormancy, Eat Corpse, Tremorsense 60 ft., Turn Resistance +2; AL CE; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +4; Str 15, Dex 13, Con —, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 15

Skills: Intuit Direction +2, Listen +6, Move Silently +6, Spot +6, Intimidate +3

Feats: Multiattack, Weapon Focus (bite)

Dormancy (Ex): Should a jikininki not be able to eat flesh for more than a week, it enters a state of dormancy, much like the spell *temporal stasis*. It can remain in this state indefinitely, until the smell of a humanoid or a humanoid corpse within 100 feet of it rouses the creature.

Eat Corpse (Ex): One disgusting aspect of jikininki nature can actually work against them in combat. Due to their ever-ravenous hunger, these corpse-eaters are prone to falling upon any fresh body they encounter (including those of their fallen comrades), becoming momentarily oblivious to their surroundings while they feed. To avoid this potentially suicidal behavior, jikininki must succeed at a Will save (DC 17) or spend a full-round action greedily gulping down chunks of dead flesh, thus losing their Dexterity bonus to AC and granting opponents a +4 to their attack rolls.

Minor Rot (Su): This supernatural disease is transmitted on a successful hit by the jikininki's bite attack: Fortitude save (DC 16), incubation period 1 day; damage 1 point temporary Constitution score. Two successful saving throws in a row means the victim recovers naturally, otherwise the victim recovers naturally at a rate of 1 point of damage per day. Any disease-curing or curse-removing effect will heal *minor rot*.

Tremorsense (Ex): By feeling vibrations in the earth, the creature automatically senses the location of anything that is in contact with the ground, moving, and within 60 ft.

Turn Resistance (Ex): When resolving a Turn, Rebuke, Command, or Bolster attempt, add +2 to the creature's Hit Dice total.

Undead: Undead are immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, necromantic effects, and mind-influencing effects. Undead are not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage or drain, or energy drain. They have no Constitution scores and are therefore immune to any effect requiring a Fortitude save (unless it affects objects). Undead have Darkvision with a range of 60 feet. Negative energy can heal undead creatures. An undead creature is not at risk of death from massive damage, but when reduced to 0 hit points or less it is immediately destroyed. Undead cannot be *raised*. *Resurrection* can affect them, but generally fails because they're unwilling to return to life.

Possessions: Triple art (jewelry only), and a *ring of sustenance* worth 2,500 gp in its stomach.

After giving the PCs a chance to look the area over, the alpha jikininki approaches the party with arms outstretched in a sign of peace. The horrid 'demon' croaks to those assembled, "please ... please ... we seek an end to our suffering ... then we can rest as we should ..."

Weakly, it rasps, "Years and years ago, thieves came to our tombs ... from eternal rest we were disturbed ... cursed to root in dark holes, dark places, forever seeking some way to return," it slowly points to the ceiling and finishes, "above! Above there to our resting places."

If the PCs flatly refuse to help them, the alpha hisses for each exit tunnel to be collapsed, trapping the PCs in the central den and leaving them little hope of escape but upwards into the *kofun*.

Note that the jikininki could have dug through the ceiling themselves, but the actively warded cell above — which was originally used to create the jikininki — prevents them from doing so; this plea for help is only a ploy to get the PCs to open the way to their evil mistress.

A Cell of Horrors

A few minutes of concerted digging breaks through the weak point in the rotted foundation. The resulting breach opens into a cramped ten-foot-wide cell. Once any of the party enters the cell, eerie greenish runes ignite and throb in the cell walls, and several of the characters suddenly feel sick to their stomachs. Unknown to the party, this transformation cell and glyphs were used by the Alchemist to create her jikininki servitors.

Note that the Alchemist's transformation cell is not the catalyst that creates jikininki, it is rather the hunger ward and the enclosed chamber combined that set the stage for the transformation, which is completed only when one affected by the hunger curse breaks down and commits cannibalism. The Alchemist delighted in trapping a handful of prisoners down in the chamber, which then tripped the hunger ward. Within hours, the strongest survivors of the bunch rose as jikininki. The Alchemist's version of the ward is permanent.

New Spell: Ward of Ravenous Hunger

Abjuration

Level: Clr 5, Sor/Wiz 3

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 10 minutes

Range: Touch

Target: Up to 5 sq. ft./level

Duration: Until discharged*

Saving Throw: See text

Spell Resistance: Yes (object)

Many legends tell of the dire fate that awaits those who would despoil tombs and sacred sites. Wards like this, granted by the gods, help fuel these legends. The unfortunates afflicted by this curse are slowly driven in to an all-consuming hunger that cannot be fully sated, no matter how much the victim eats. Those who trigger the ward may not notice more than a slight peckishness at first, as the curse takes time to onset. Succeeding a Will save (DC 25) on exposure to the ward negates the effect, which otherwise progresses as follows:

Onset — Afflicted characters feel slightly nauseous, as if they have an upset stomach.

Hour One — The hunger begins. Each afflicted character starts feeling slightly hungry, as if they should eat soon.

Hour Two — The hunger grows. The characters grow so hungry that they must make a Will save (DC 20) every fifteen minutes to keep from rummaging through their packs and devouring any foodstuffs they carry. No matter how much they eat, their appetite doesn't cease. Those with no food become

obsessed with finding stores of supplies. Their faces and bodies become unnaturally emaciated, and their skin takes on a slight greenish tinge.

Hour Three — The pain starts. Each afflicted is racked with excruciating hunger pangs every fifteen minutes. The fits nauseate those who fail a Fortitude save (DC 25) for 1d4 minutes; nauseated characters are unable to attack, cast spells, concentrate on spells, or do anything else requiring attention. Those who fail a save thereafter are shaken until they either become a jikininki in the next stage of the curse or are cured of the curse, suffering a –2 morale penalty on attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, and saving throws. After the first fit, whether they succeed or fail the save, the characters find themselves willing to take other people's food by force.

Hour Four — The hunger takes control. The unthinkable now becomes possible to all but the most strong-willed. In the absence of food, a character now finds himself able to murder or eat anything to survive. The hunger pangs subside but any characters who are shaken remain so, and unless the characters make Will saves (DC 25) every hour, they resort to cannibalism to assuage the fire gnawing at their bellies. Eating the flesh of another sentient humanoid causes the sufferer to immediately become a hideous jikininki; use the stats given on page 26 for the new monster.

Material Component: The powdered thighbone of a human, which is painted over the ward's glyph.

☞ The GM should make a secret Will check (DC 25) for all that enter the room while the ward is activated. Any that miss the save are afflicted by the *ward of ravenous hunger*, described on page 28, and are now on the road to being transformed into the accursed jikininki. Both Lu'at and Akane fall prey to the curse; by dumb luck neither Kenji nor Goba succumb to the curse, proving the gods do look out for fools. The GM should keep track of game time from now on to determine the ward's effects on the characters.

Detect magic alerts the caster that there is powerful magic imbued of the runes, but does not reveal the nature of the wards. Casting *read magic* does reveal the wards as harboring a 'hunger curse.'

The cell contains no apparent exits save for a large metal grate in the ceiling, which is obviously barred. Water continuously trickles from the room above, making the floor of the cell slippery.

☞ Anyone engaging in sudden or violent motion, such as happens in combat, must make a Reflex save (DC 12) or spill to the ground.

The grating is also warded against the jikininki, as the Alchemist needed control over her little pets. The wards are ineffective against player characters unless they have completed their transformation into the vile creatures.

☞ A rogue with proper (or makeshift) tools can easily slide the bar to unlock the grate with an Open Lock check (DC 10). The locking mechanism is harder to bend off with a Strength check (DC 22), but it can be done. A well-placed *knock* spell also swings the grate right open. Note that opening the grating breaks the ward against the jikininki placed on it.

Enemy at the Grate

The jikininki have waited for the sound of that rusted grate opening for several hundred years, as it signals the breaking of the ward that has kept them from their mistress. The entire throng descends on the central den and tries to slaughter its way into the *kofun* proper. Up to this point, the PCs may have encountered a handful of the corpse-eaters at a time — now, like ants, they try to overwhelm the vulnerable PCs *en masse*.

☞ Fighting the remaining jikininki — up to thirty five creatures, minus the ones slain by the PCs to this point — within the cell proves difficult for fighters with large weapons. If more than one PC stands within the cell, fighting with anything larger than a short sword incurs a -4 penalty.

The best chance the PCs stand is to scurry up into the *kofun* and shut the grate behind them. The wards, now broken, do not serve to keep the jikininki back. The PCs must scramble to find a way to keep the grate down and the creatures at bay.

If the characters don't come up with a quick way to block the hole — whether mundane or magical — Lu'at advises them, "Go! Find things to stack upon this grate. We may not be able to hold them forever!" He and Akane then hold down the portal while the others search the adjacent rooms — described in the next chapter — for large items to make a blockade.

Once the PCs return with furniture from the Hall of Displays or other rooms, or fix the grate tight with a spell, the jikininki fall back and reconsider their position. This is obviously only a temporary solution.

Lu'at then suggests, "Akane and I can guard this portal to be sure these foul things do not intrude before we are ready to deal with them ... find the sealed entrance and open it, quickly!"

Akane insists with alarmed fervor, grabbing one party member's arm hard, "Yes, go! And see if you can discover the purpose of those wards down below. See if there is any way to reverse whatever has been done to us. Hurry!"

The PCs, with Goba and Kenji, are now free to explore the *kofun* for answers and a cure to their fast-worsening affliction.



The Ancient Kofun

Entrance to the *kofun* is afforded through the jikininki transformation cell, used by the Alchemist centuries ago. The general structure of the *kofun* includes four *ki* collection nodes at each of its four corners that collect and refine the *ki* flow of the Kadaichi range through specially prepared crystals. Also of note are the true entrance, two Halls of Displays, access to the Alchemist's sanctum, and an access level for the alchemically-treated doors of the pyramid.

Each of the four *ki* node rooms contains a guardian put in place by the demon hunters when they cleared out the structure years ago. Note that many of the rooms contain two sets of inscriptions near the doors — an older one inscribed by the Alchemist, and a newer set placed there by the demon hunters; only the Alchemist's inscription requires a roll to read.

The stone doors that separate the areas act much like portcullises thanks to the Alchemist's application of *distillation of quickened stone*; see below. When unlocked, the doors run up stone runners into the ceiling, resting in an access level mid-way between the *kofun* proper and her sanctum above. Locked, the best chance to open them is to raise them by breaking or disengaging the iron lock mechanism above. Bursting the doors down by sheer force would be quite a feat.

 The stone doors have a thickness of 4 inches, a Hardness of 10, and 90 hp; the Strength check DC to break a locked door from the level of the *kofun* proper is 30. A character with Disable Device or Open Lock, or with an engineering Knowledge skill, who makes a DC 12 check from the *kofun* proper can determine that there is a locking mechanism located in the ceiling above, which can't be reached from below. A character in the access level can manually engage or disengage any door lock with an Open Lock check DC 30, or break it with a Strength check DC 25.

Near each door an unresponsive sigiled dial has been inset. Once the dials are activated (see the Access Level, page 36), each door can be accessed using the sigil-inscribed dials next to the corresponding doorway. The dials have three positions: Open, which opens any unlocked portcullis; Closed, closing any open portcullis; and Locked, which latches the portcullis so that it cannot be opened with the dials except from the side on which it has been locked. Alternatively, using the access level, one could latch or unlatch any of the doors manually, overriding the dials. Finally, should the Alchemist awak-

en and speak the command words, the entire place locks down regardless of dial settings.

 On a skill check DC 15, a character with Disable Device or Open Lock, or with an engineering Knowledge skill, can determine the intended use of the dials and their settings, and the fact that the doors normally can only be unlocked from the side that is set to Locked. This check also lets the character realize that all of the sigils have been disengaged at some central control point.

The stone doors throughout the *kofun* begin as closed and locked, except for the two leading from the chamber of the Pool of Sublime Reflection described below; the western door leading to the Northern Hall of Displays is open, and the southern door to the access level stairs is propped partially open with a jikininki skull.

All the secret doors are closed, but not locked.

Timed Encounters

In addition to encounters listed in the room descriptions of the *kofun*, certain optional events are triggered at timed intervals. Keep in mind that the characters' state also deteriorates as the hunger curse takes stronger hold.

Hour One

- Keep track of how long the PCs take in each room as the hunger curse slowly begins to take affect. Actions that take a considerable time, like searching for treasure, should be recorded as well. Stopping to memorize spells is not an option at this point.

As the time wears on, note that the NPCs may not be as able to control the curse's urges. In the early stages, those afflicted tend to be paranoid about the safety of their own food supplies and envious of others'. If someone goes back to check on the grate, Akane insists on having any news of reversing the curse. Lu'at, once out of his own provisions, demands any spare food the party has.

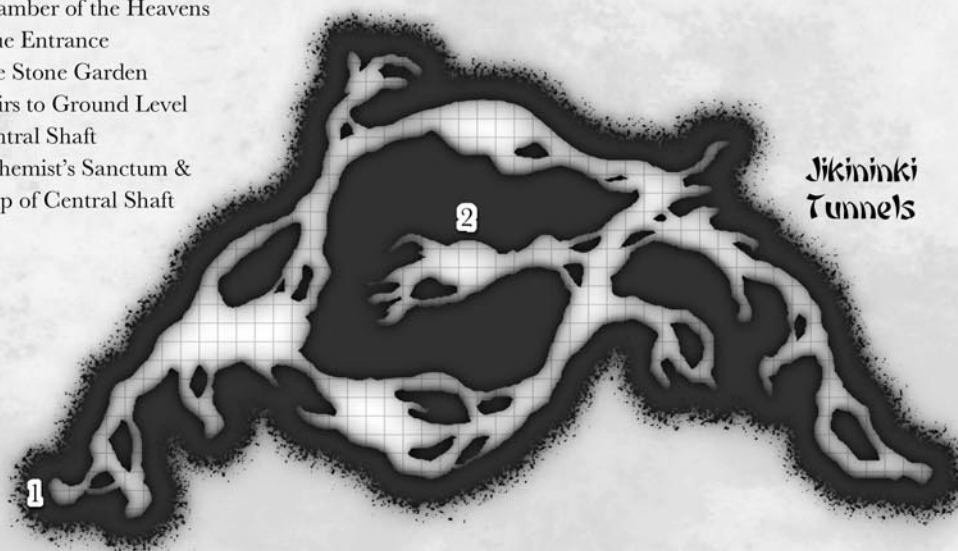
- Once within the *kofun*, Goba quickly becomes distracted by the prospect of loot. If left alone or given some other opportunity, Goba tries to steal anything

Kofun Map:

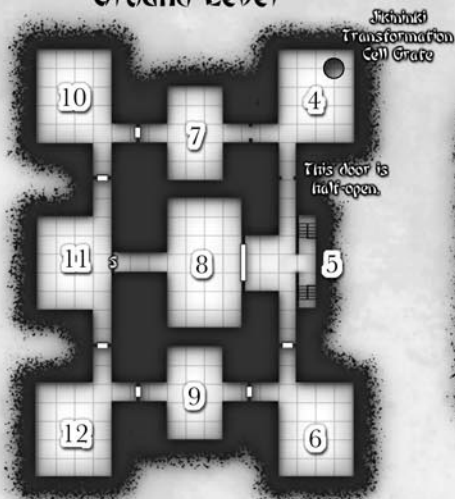
The Alchemist's Pyramid

1. Tunnel Entrance
2. Central Jikininki Den
3. Jikininki Transformation Cell
4. Pool of Sublime Reflection
5. Stairs to Access Level
6. Forge of Brilliance
7. Northern Hall of Displays
8. Central Chamber & Bottom of Central Shaft
9. Southern Hall of Displays
10. Chamber of the Heavens
11. True Entrance
12. The Stone Garden
13. Stairs to Ground Level
14. Central Shaft
15. Alchemist's Sanctum & Top of Central Shaft

Side View
(Seen from the south)



Ground Level



Access Level



Top Level



1 Square = 5 feet

of obvious value ... most significantly, he wants the *ki* node crystals in the Pool of Sublime Reflection and the Chamber of the Heavens. Goba enlists Kenji's aid in pilfering these if possible. As neither are all that bright, it is very possible that they die at the hands of a guardian or trap. Alternatively, the pool guardians may see them as useful vessels to possess when they need to take a more active role; see page 35.

- The Alchemist is sleeping at this point, unless someone tampers with the *ki* crystals or passes before her scrying statuettes in the true entrance. In this case, she begins awakening earlier than would happen otherwise; proceed to the entry for Hour Three.

Hour Two

- Finally realizing the significance of her cursed state, Akane becomes obsessed with finding both the way out of the *kofun* and a cure. If the party succeeds at translating the ancient inscriptions and texts in the pyramid, she stops at nothing to find a way to the upper sanctum. As the curse progresses, she abandons her post at the grate, choosing one of the Halls of Displays to hole up in by locking and then trapping the entrances.

- The Alchemist is still resting soundly, as above.

Hour Three

- Much time has passed since the party left, and Sumitomo gives up hope for the adventuring party and surveys the structure himself. Examining the clearing and *kofun* door from the outside, Sumitomo disintegrates the magic wall thanks to command words within the demon hunter's scroll that he possesses. With his lesser shield guardian in tow (see Appendix II), Sumitomo begins his own exploration of the structure. Once he finds the *ki* node rooms, Sumitomo quickly resolves to collect the four crystals and penetrate the hidden sanctum above.

Sumitomo proceeds to the Stone Garden, plucking the seemingly undefended crystal (if it's still there)

and releasing the stone guardian. Then Sumitomo proceeds to the central chamber, obsessively examining the seal to the Alchemist's sanctum.

This complication is extremely important if cautious PCs have heeded the warnings of the inscriptions and have resolved not to open the sanctum, as it forces the final encounter with the Alchemist. Using their familiarity with the rooms and the door mechanisms, the PCs might engage in a contest of wits to keep the would-be relic seeker locked out. Things could get especially sticky if Akane is with the PC group when they begin working against Sumitomo, or if she is driven to cannibalism early by the curse.

- Wakening, the Alchemist rises from her crystal bath and reasserts command over her sanctum. Calling first to her familiar, the small terracotta soldiers enter through the *jikininki* tunnels and serve as scouts in discerning the number and nature of the intruders. Seeing the guardians as more pressing threats than the PCs, she uses command words to lock down all of the stone doors in the pyramid.

PCs may find themselves separated or trapped as the doors come crashing down. At least one PC (or helpful NPC) should have access to the secret doors and access level to manually reopen the doors.

Hour Four

- Finally succumbing to his hunger, Lu'at roams the halls of the *kofun* in search of victims to sate his appetite. Anyone approaching the starving barbarian immediately notices the crazed desperation driving him forward. Once he finds the party, he hounds them ceaselessly, temporarily stopping if given food or if he gets his hand on a corpse.
- After Sumitomo opens the main door, Zhang sends a Han band to plunder what they can, and they may attack the PCs if they put up a resistance. Should the barbarians run afoul of magics or the stone doors, they leave to fetch Grandmother for guidance through the *kofun*.

New Potion: Distillation of Quickened Stone

When applied to stone substances, the application has the affect of hardening the stone (increasing the hit points the affected stone by half and adding +2 to hardness) while at the same time causing it to grow lighter as if affected with a *feather fall* spell. Note that magical stones (such as the substance used to create stone golems) cannot be modified by this distillation. Stone structures

treated with this preparation demonstrate greater flex, allowing structures to remain standing even on earthquake-prone islands. The potion is enough to treat a 5-foot by 10-foot span of stone.

Caster Level: 3rd; *Prerequisites:* Brew Potion, Alchemy +8; *Market Price:* 1,000 gp; *Weight:* —

Consider that the Han will be horrified if one of their own has become a jikininki, or is on his way to transforming into one, and may take it upon themselves to wipe out as many of the foul creatures as pollute the *kofun* when they discover Lu'at's condition. Should Lu'at fall entirely to the curse, the Han become noticeably demoralized. If possible, they incapacitate Lu'at and carry him from the *kofun*. Grandmother may also be called upon to reverse the affliction on the cursed Han.

The band may be found in either Hall of Displays, turning over the items in the rooms, looking for valuables.

- With Lu'at finally wandering from his post at the grate, the jikininki make a determined effort to infiltrate the *kofun* if the chamber of the Pool of Sublime Reflection isn't guarded by another character. They drag the debris the PCs used to block the grate back down into their den, and a few of their number scout down the halls for signs of the PCs or their mistress. Finding the central chamber, the alpha and the majority of the creatures proceed to the sanctum's entrance, setting up a defense and waiting for the Alchemist's return. Any jikininki surviving until the Alchemist awakens serve her unfailingly.
- Should the lone jikininki in the access level not be dispatched while dormant, it rejoins its brothers' cause, hence the jikininki can now lock down each door.
- The Alchemist focuses her power on calling the jikininki and preparing to deal with intruders, should they break the seal to her sanctum.

Hour Five

- Armed with a *vigilant lantern* and purified salt, Sosuke makes the journey to the *kofun* to find Mura's heroes. Inspired by visions from the divine, the brave initiate seeks to deliver the afflicted from the pyramid's influence. He is a wild card to play if things go really poorly for the PCs.
- Ready now to face the intruders, the Alchemist opens the seal to her sanctum herself to deal with her enemies one by one, using the doors to separate opponents.

Pyramid Floorplan

The following describes the layout of the *kofun* and those things of note inside it, as well as additional encounters the PCs might face.

Pool of Sublime Reflection

The party of PCs first arrives through the grate on the floor here. A 10-foot-diameter pool at the center of the room serenely overflows so that less than an inch of water covers the floor and trickles down the grate. Dim lights, set far in the ceiling, give off a muted glow across the room.



The light is from *continual light* spells cast on the ceiling. *Detect magic* or a Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 10) confirms this.

When the characters first enter the room in dealing with the jikininki rush, the western door is retracted up into the ceiling and the south door is fixed three-quarters of the way shut, jammed open by a jikininki's skull. Near each stone door an unresponsive sigiled dial has been inset in the wall; see page 30 for more on how these doors function.



As the locking mechanism never quite fell into place on the south door, it can be lifted open from this side by making a Strength check (DC 18). A nimble or short character may also be able to squeeze through the opening. Small-sized PCs or creatures succeed with a little pushing; medium-sized characters must succeed at an Escape Artist skill check (DC 17) to contort under the door.

The Ki Node

Within the perimeter of the pool itself, the water seems quite still and calm. Submerged at the center, a single crystal is embedded in the pool floor. The first of the four *ki* nodes, this crystal uses the pool to siphon energies from the hills and focus them towards the crystalline chamber in the Alchemist's sanctum above.



Upon closer examination, those with Spellcraft or Knowledge (arcana) may be able to discern that the crystal acts as a conduit to focus mystical *ki* energies (DC 18), and those with experience with *ki* energies (DC 22) recognize it as a subtle but powerful *ki* node devoted to Water, which lends itself to contemplation and meditation; Concentration checks and Fortitude saves both are made with a +2 sacred bonus within this room's confines while the *ki* node is active.

Examining the crystal closely (Search DC 20) also gives rise to the suspicion that its underside may connect into a socket of sorts connected to arcane mechanical devices. A rogue, taking a good look at the situation, will realize that the crystal can be pried out. The problem lies in those mechanisms underneath which may, or may not, contain a trap. With proper tools, the rogue can use Disable

Device (DC 20) to remove the crystal safely by turning it counterclockwise. On a failure, turning it clockwise locks the crystal into place and begins to waken the Alchemist; see Timed Encounters, page 30.

The crystal itself is a high-quality gemstone. An Appraise, Spellcraft, or Craft (gemcutter) check (DC 15) reveals the unique value of the crystal. Sold to the right buyer, a seller may be able to command around 1000 gp. This crystal and the other *ki* nodes in the *kofun*, however, are highly unstable and may burst when transported from this *ki*-rich structure, rendering them worthless; roll 1d6 to decide for each one, with a result of 1-3 indicating that the crystal is destroyed.

The Inscriptions

Ornate scripts illuminate the area near the doors. Below them, cruder scratchings mar the surface of the smooth walls.



The ornate scripts are an ancient variety of this land's tongue; they are very similar to those on the outside of the *kofun*, but are much less weathered and so still decipherable with a Decipher Script check (DC 20). The scratches are much newer and can be easily read by anyone who knows the Common dialect of this area.

The series of ornate scripts across the walls roughly translate: "The trickle that flows from this pool, given by the hills, a mighty river unchallenged, unstopped by dam or wall, joins above to bind and mend those wounds that ail both flesh and soul."

Pool Guardians (3)

Medium-size Undead (Incorporeal)

CR 3; SZ M (undead); HD 5d12; 32 hp; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd fly 30 ft. (perfect); AC 12 (+1 Dex, +1 deflection); Atk +3 melee (1d3+4 subdual, unarmed); Face 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SA Malevolence, Telekinesis; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., Manifestation, Rejuvenation, Turn Resistance +4; AL CN; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +4; Str 16, Dex 13, Con —, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 12

Skills: Concentration +6, Intimidate +6, Listen +7, Sense Motive +4, Spot +7

Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative, Iron Will

Incorporeal Subtype: Incorporeal creatures can only be harmed by other incorporeal creatures, by +1 or better weapons, or by spells, spell-like effects, or supernatural effects. They are immune to all non-magical attack forms, and cannot be tripped or grappled by corporeal creatures. They cannot fall or suffer falling damage. An incorporeal creature has a 50% chance to ignore any damage from a corporeal source. The physical attacks of incorporeal creatures ignore material armor. Incorporeal creatures are not burned by normal fires, affected by natural cold, or harmed by mundane acids. They do not leave footprints, have no scent, make no noise, and can pass through solid objects at will.

Malevolence (Su): One per round, the guardian can attempt to merge its form with a creature in the Material Plane as per *magic jar* cast by a 10th-level sorcerer, though no receptacle is required. Victims get a

Will save at DC 16 to resist possession by that ghost for the entire day.

Manifestation (Su): When they manifest, the ghosts become visible but remain incorporeal. A manifested ghost remains on the Ethereal Plane but can be attacked by opponents on both the Material and Ethereal Planes, and can strike with its touch attack or a ghost touch weapon.

Rejuvenation (Su): If destroyed, the ghost will reform in 2d4 days on a successful level check (1d20 +5) versus a DC 16. If the Alchemist is destroyed, the ghost will dissipate for good.

Telekinesis (Su): The ghost can use *telekinesis* once per round as a free action, as cast by a 12th-level sorcerer.

Turn Resistance (Ex): When resolving a Turn, Rebuke, Command, or Bolster attempt, add +4 to the creature's Hit Dice total.

Undead: Undead are immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, necromantic effects, and mind-influencing effects. Undead are not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage or drain, or energy drain. They have no Constitution scores and are therefore immune to any effect requiring a Fortitude save (unless it affects objects). Undead have Darkvision with a range of 60 feet. Negative energy can heal undead creatures. An undead creature is not at risk of death from massive damage, but when reduced to 0 hit points or less it is immediately destroyed. Undead cannot be *raised*. *Resurrection* can affect them, but generally fails because they're unwilling to return to life.

The cruder writing below the ornate script reads “Disturb not the pool lest you loosen the demon imprisoned above.”

The Pool Guardians

Hidden in the still of the pool, three ghostly forms rest at peace unless any cross into the pool itself. Set in this place by the demon hunters to guard the crystal, the ghosts are confined within the perimeter of the pool unless the crystal is released. The forms are protectors, so do no harm to the innocent if they can avoid it. They possess any who enter the pool, though, and make them drown themselves for a short while. After teaching the interlopers a lesson, the ghosts then hurtle the captive bodies across the pool to hit the wall.



Hurled characters must make a Reflex DC 18 save to halve 1d6 points of damage.

Should the PCs persist, or make motions to communicate, a female ghost possessing a character standing within the pool chooses to speak. She manifests and attempts to dissuade the party from removing the crystal. She does not know who bound her to guard the item, or what it is, but she believes something terrible will happen if they tamper with it.



Should the ghosts be Turned or Rebuked, they become dormant in the pool for the duration of the effect.

Lastly, if the PCs liberate the crystal, the ghosts are freed from the pool to roam throughout the complex, possessing PCs and causing mischief for any intruders. They cannot pass above into the Alchemist’s sanctum until the seal in the central chamber is broken, but join with the other guardians to attack the Alchemist once she fully awakens; see page 44.

The Northern Hall of Displays

This Hall of Displays has east and west entrances that end in doorways, both with nonfunctioning dials inset. When the characters first enter, the western entrance is locked down.

Various tapestries and statues — all depicting the same young maiden — reside in this hall; this is the youthful visage of the Alchemist herself. Her features are delicate, but in each depiction the artist has tried to capture a strange sort of intensity, making the overall effect a little bit disturbing.



Those familiar with the local culture or those who are performers, on a Knowledge (local) or Perform check (DC 10) are reminded of *hannya*



masks used in the theatre to represent jealous women and demons.

In the center of the collection, an ornate brass mirror hung on a plain stand reflects the maiden statues. The superior craftsmanship of the mirror is unmistakable. (Later the mirror may prove indispensable in thwarting the Alchemist.) Several bits of pearl and jade-laden jewelry are laid out on tables, and a hanging banner displays a family crest.



Those with some historical or political knowledge of the island, on a related Knowledge check (DC 10) recognize the crest on the banner as that of a long-passed bloodline of the ancient empire.

Those succeeding a related Knowledge check (DC 25) recall that the honor of the last *daimyo* of this family line was marred by a disgrace caused by his wife; he died heirless.

An Appraise check (DC 15) determines the following values for the items in this room:

- brass mirror (1000 gp)
- pearl and jade jewelry (500 gp total)

- crested banner (250 gp if sold to a historical collector)

Some of the larger statues and display furniture could easily be moved to hold down the grate in the next room. If Lu'at joins the party, he claims the jewelry as his cut of the expedition, making him willing to assure the release of the barbarian food stores to the village.

Chamber of the Heavens

A breeze of cool air greets those first entering this wide vault. The room is the same size as the chamber containing the Pool of Sublime Reflection, but the door entrances and dials are set on the east and south walls; the doors are both locked when the PCs enter the *kofun*.

Also, at the center of the room a crystal hovers above the ground, chained to the floor with an iron harness. There is no visible perimeter around the crystal. The vaulted ceiling is also somewhat peculiar as it is littered with five-pointed stars that combine to make a finely painted starry night mosaic.



A Spot check (DC 20) realizes that each of the stars is made of some shiny metal and actually emerges a bit from the ceiling, its points facing slightly downward.

The *Ki* Node

The *ki* node is well protected, despite its lack of a visible perimeter.



Those who have already succeeded at a previous Spellcraft or Knowledge (arcana) check to recognize a *ki* node (for instance, at the Pool of Sublime Reflection) automatically identify the crystal as such. If the characters failed the DC 18 check previously, they now get another opportunity at it. Those with experience with *ki* energies (DC 22) recognize it as a subtle but powerful *ki* node devoted to Divine Fire, which balances the inner motions of the body; Scry checks and Reflex saves both are made with a +2 sacred bonus within this room's confines while the *ki* node is active.

An intensified *wind wall* protects the crystal and any unwary (Reflex check, DC 22) stepping within a 5-foot radius of it are vaulted to the ceiling where the jagged stars impale and gouge before the victim falls back down. Medium-sized and smaller creatures take 1d10 damage from the spikes and 1d6 from the fall (a Tumble check, DC 15, negates the latter damage). Larger creatures are not affected by the wall's upward draft.

A Search check (DC 20, with a bonus of +5 if this check was successfully made previously for another *ki* node) after the barrier is breached reveals the presence of mechanisms that may trigger if the crystal is tampered with. A Disable Device check (DC 20, with a +5 bonus for a previous success) allows a rogue to free the crystal safely by turning the base of the chain counterclockwise. On a failure, turning the base clockwise or cutting the harness results in awakening the Alchemist immediately; see Timed Encounters, page 30.

Those who succeeded at a previous check to determine a *ki* node's value automatically realize that this one is also worth about 1000 gp. If they missed that check, they can now try it again.

The Inscriptions

Inscriptions much like those in the chamber of the Pool of Sublime Reflection also adorn the walls near the doorways.



The older script noted before, read with Decipher Script check (DC 18), tells the following story: "Divine fire rains down upon these hills, collected and refined here, gives infinite life above for those who would draw the god's breath."

The smaller scrawled script reads: "Nothing is eternal — betray yourselves by falling prey to greed and disturbing this room."

The Heavens Guardian

The wall of air is actually the dormant form of the heavens guardian of the *kofun*, a minor air elemental (page 37). If the crystal is released, the creature awakens and seeks to harry and buffet any within its path until defeated or trapped.



Note the elemental can be slowed by the doors if they're locked, and trapped if a closed stone door is reinforced by an *arcane lock*.

Access Level

At first glance, the corridor leading to the access level for the doors seems sparse and empty. Both the southern door and the large doorway in the hall to the west remain locked down from when the demon hunters came through so long ago, though as mentioned above the northern door is propped up with a jikininki skull unless the characters have forced it open. The dials for these doors, as in the other rooms, remain unresponsive.

 A Search check (DC 15) for secret doors reveals a faint doorframe in the eastern wall; this secret door is unlocked and gives way to the stone door access level, located just above the *kofun* proper.

Ladders embedded in the wall lead to a small crawl space just above the *kofun* proper. This passage is about three feet high and allows access to the mechanisms that raise, lower, and lock down the doors of the complex (except for the front entrance's seal and the secret doors). The mechanisms include levers that raise and lower the magically weightless stone floors, latches that individually lock each door, and an inscribed device that can close and lock every door upon a command word known only to the Alchemist. Also, a lever near the ladders enables or disables the dials that open the doors from below; they are currently disabled.

 The nature of the levers and latches may be discerned with an engineering Knowledge check (DC 10), or with a similar Disable Device or Open Lock check. A character who makes this check can automatically enable the dials below from this location. A character in the access level can also manually engage or disengage the lock of any door with an Open Lock check DC 30, or break it with a Strength check DC 25.

In the southern portion of the access level, a dormant jikininki, long separated from its brethren, rests like a corpse. The creature does not stir until a full hour after the access level has been disturbed, after which it seeks to rejoin its fellows by opening the grate in the chamber of the Pool of Sublime Reflection and then making its way with them to the central chamber.

Forge of Brilliance

Originally this was a workshop for the Alchemist's experiments, again built in the same proportions as the other *ki* node chambers. Crammed against the far walls, workshop equipment lies in disuse. A distinctive chalk circle rings a pulsating crystal in the middle of the room that smokes like a hot ember. To the left, a cold anvil and empty trough are set outside the chalk. A suit of ancient armor with full helm lies carefully piled just within the chalk circle. Stone doors and inset control dials are paired near the northwest corner of the room.

 The equipment and anvil may be of use to any with related Craft abilities.

The Ki Node

Removing the crystal proves difficult, of course.

 Those who have already succeeded at a previous Spellcraft or Knowledge (arcana) check to recognize a *ki* node (for instance, at the Pool of Sublime Reflection) automatically identify the crystal as such. If the characters failed the DC 18 checks previously, they now get another opportunity at it. Those with experience with *ki* energies (DC 22) recognize it as a subtle but powerful *ki* node dedicated to Metal, which intensifies the creative energies of the spirit; Craft skill checks and Will saves made in this room are awarded a +2 sacred bonus while the *ki* node is active.

Heavens Guardian

Medium-size Air Elemental

CR 3; SZ M (elemental); HD 4d8+8; hp 26; Init +9 (+5 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd fly 100 ft. (perfect); AC 18 (+5 Dex, +3 natural); Atk melee +8 (1d6+1, slam); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SA Air Mastery, Whirlwind, SQ Darkvision 60 ft.; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +9, Will +1; Str 12, Dex 21, Con 14, Int 4, Wis 11, Cha 11

Skills: Listen +7, Spot +7

Feats: Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse (slam)

Air Mastery (Ex): Airborne creatures suffer a –1 penalty to attacks and damage when attacking an air elemental.

Elemental: An elemental is immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, and stunning. Elementals are not subject to

critical hits or flanking and have Darkvision with a range of 60 feet. A slain elemental cannot be *raised* or *resurrected*, although a *wish* or *miracle* spell can restore it to life.

Whirlwind (Su): Once every 10 minutes, the air elemental may transform into a swirling whirlwind for 2 rounds. The whirlwind is 5 feet wide at the base, and up to 30 feet high. If caught in the whirlwind, creatures of less than Medium size must make a Reflex save DC 13 or take 1d6 damage. They must also make a second Reflex save or be picked up and held suspended in the winds, taking 1d6 damage each round. If the whirlwind's base touches the ground, it creates a cloud of debris up to 15 feet in diameter; it obscures all vision, including Darkvision, beyond 5 feet. Creatures 5 feet away from the base of the whirlwind have 50% concealment, while those farther away have total concealment. Those caught in the cloud must succeed at a Concentration check DC 13 to cast a spell.

The great heat of the crystal causes 1d10 points of damage upon contact and may cause flammable items to ignite; there is a 20% cumulative chance of catching fire per round of contact.

A Search check (DC 20, with a bonus of +5 if this check was successfully made previously for another *ki* node) reveals the presence of mechanisms that may trigger if the crystal is tampered with. A Disable Device check (DC 20, with a +5 bonus for a previous success) allows a rogue to free the crystal safely by turning the crystal counterclockwise in its setting. On a failure, turning the base clockwise results in awakening the Alchemist immediately; see Timed Encounters, page 30.

Those who succeeded at a previous check to determine a *ki* node's value automatically realize that this one is also worth about 1000 gp. If they missed those checks, they can now try it again.

The Inscriptions

Again, there are two inscriptions near the doors of this chamber.



On a Decipher Script check DC 18, the older script in this room reads, "By the hearth, will is born. By my will, this sanctum be. By this anvil, gods are made."

The newer script reads as follows: "Abomination."

The Armored Guardian

Upon any physical or magical disturbance of the chalk circle, the armor inside of the circle animates into battle readiness. Sternly, a ghostly voice warns the intruders away from the *ki* node. The activated guardian remains bound within the circle until the crystal is removed or the Alchemist herself releases him or dies.



Should the characters persist, the guardian uses its Animate Weapon ability to snatch armaments and threaten the PCs. Note that this guardian is both intelligent and honorable. PCs may therefore be able to convince the creature of the dire and worthy need to unlock the crystal (Diplomacy check DC 15). Furthermore, the armored guardian may recount his memory of the demon hunters and his purpose in remaining here; see below.

The Armor's Tale

The armor corrects any who call this place a *kofun* or vault: "Kofun? No ... no mortal is buried here. This place stands to hold the forces of *yomi* at bay. A great servant of darkness lies trapped within. That is why I am here. I ... and the others like me."

Armored Guardian

Medium-size Animated Armor/3rd-Level Fighter

CR 4; SZ M (construct); HD 2d10 + 3d10 (28 hp); Init +0; Spd 40 ft. (legs); AC 18 (+8 natural); Atk melee +5 (1d6+3 plus Heat, slam); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SA Animate Weapon, Heat; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., Hardness; AL LG; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +2; Str 15, Dex 10, Con —, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 13

Skills: Diplomacy +6, Listen +11, Sense Motive +6, Spot +11

Feats: Cleave, Power Attack

Animate Weapon (Su): As a partial action, once per round the armored guardian may call any weapon within a 20-foot radius to fight by the armor as if under the spell *animate objects* cast by a 11th-level cleric; use the standard D20 System stats for an object of the correct size, replacing the damage with that the weapon normally deals. He can call a total number of HD of animated objects equal to his own HD.

Construct: Constructs usually have no Intelligence scores and never have Constitution scores. A construct is immune to mind-influencing effects and to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, and necromantic effects. Constructs cannot heal damage on their own, though they can be healed. A construct is not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage or drain, or energy drain. It is immune to any effect that requires a Fortitude save (unless the effect also works on objects). A construct is not at risk of death from massive damage, but when reduced to 0 hit points or less it is immediately destroyed. Since it was never alive, a construct cannot be *raised* or *resurrected*. Constructs have Darkvision with a range of 60 feet.

Hardness (Ex): The guardian has a Hardness of 10.

Heat (Ex): Those hit by the guardian's slam attack or those attacking the guardian with natural weapons must succeed a Reflex check DC 15 or catch on fire. The fire deals 1d6 damage immediately, and each subsequent round the character is on fire he must make another Reflex save to extinguish it; each failure means he takes another 1d6 damage that round.

“Long ago, during the age of the great empire, holy men came here to vanquish the rising darkness. The holy ones scattered its minions, the fiends that littered this place, out unto the hills. The source of evil, however, lay in wait ... trapped behind the seal of a far more ancient power. The holy men, sensing the strength of the demon, left it bound for eternity behind the great seal, and set four guardians drawn from the essence of the earth and heavens to watch over its lair. Here I, along with my brother and sisters, have waited many long years.”

The armor knows that it came to existence in this reality at the bequest of a noble band bent on thwarting the will of what they thought was a great demon and its servitors. The band discovered that the seal in question was kept in alignment by the four *ki* crystal nodes set in place by unknown benefactors. The structure, to the demon hunters’ sensibilities, was a great prison binding an ancient darkness.

If *vigilant lanterns* are carried by the PCs, it adds, “You ... that lantern, it bears the mark of the holy men ... our masters ... Could it be that you’ve returned in a new form, old one? No? I see you do not recognize me yet. I am bound by your ancient will to remain here until the seal is opened, but will answer whatever questions I can to aid you.”

Mention of an alchemist or tomes confuses the armor, and it might incorrectly conclude that the alchemist was the one who bound the demon in the first place. If the party suggests this alchemist rests above in a sealed room, the armor disagrees, but may be convinced if the party offers proof from the tomes in the Southern Hall of Displays.

The armor is also curious about his brethren guardians and asks if they still remain. If the party has won his trust, he warns “beware of Brother-Borne-of-Wind, as he is slow in thought and angry; the Lost Sisters are determined but will not harm any that keep away from their pool; and Sister Earth knows little of this plane save that she must repel any intruders. Do not rouse her especially.”

The armor reacts suspiciously if it is revealed that any of the party suffer the hunger curse. “You should put your

friend to rest before the power of the demon above overtakes him,” it warns.

If later confronted with an out-of-control earth elemental from the Stone Garden (see page 41), the armored guardian may calm him and redirect his fury at whomever he perceives as being most dangerous to the security of the ancient prison.

The Southern Hall of Displays

This hall has doors and dials on its east and west walls, and contains many of the Alchemist’s arcane materials and books that had to be moved once her crystalline bath was installed above. Grown somewhat careless by the prospect of becoming a god, the Alchemist let key parts of her tome and scroll collection describing the making of jikininki and the *ki* nodes fall in with the rest of her excess equipment.

Most of the alchemical equipment was smashed during a conflict between the jikininki and demon hunters. One rare item that remains is the *sands of timing* (see below), which could be used by a PC spellcaster to predict the time remaining before the hunger curse becomes terminal.



PCs can find the *sands of timing* by searching through the broken alchemical equipment; this takes a Search check (DC 18).

The Tome Collection

Stacked in disorganized heaps, scrolls and tomes spill from storage boxes. Among the materials, an unmarked aged tome and a scroll containing construction notes prove of use to the PCs.



Finding the relevant tome requires a Search check (DC 15), and discovering the scroll requires a second Search check (DC 20).

Reading the tome and scroll may lead PCs to a cure for the hunger curse, but it also should eat up more precious

New Wondrous Item: Sands of Timing

This miniature hourglass is prized among those interested in alchemical estroerica. Featuring two inscribed dials on the top and bottom of the piece, the hourglass can be used to measure the precise temporal flow of arcane energies and processes. An alchemist who understands the use of the *sands of timing* gains a +4 Alchemy skill bonus for creating any compound while using the device

to time the process. Alternatively, once per day the device can be set to determine the precise duration of any spell. It is worthless unless the precise method of its operation is known by the user.

Caster Level: 3rd; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, Alchemy +6; *Market Price:* 1,500 gp; *Weight:* —

time. Note that each point of information given below constitutes ten minutes worth of deciphering and sifting through the many monotonous entries. Halve that if the book and scroll are translated through arcane means.

The tome is filled with laboratory notes on the Alchemist's experiments and production in the jikininki transformation cell. The style is cold and methodical. If deciphered, this ledger reveals some important clues, including:



Decipher Script Check

DC Information

- 15 The transformation of humans into jikininki was induced by use of an ancient *kofun* curse. The curse invoked terrible hunger in its victims, racking them with extreme pain in a matter of hours. The Alchemist designed a jikininki transformation cell to imprison several mortals, then activated the ward and waited until one or more were driven to cannibalism, triggering their change into the creatures.
- 20 Once those afflicted with the hunger curse who were trapped in the cell tasted mortal flesh, the curse became irrevocable. Although the Alchemist does not state so, the clear implication is that if the afflicted have not turned cannibal, the curse can be undone.
- 22 The grate barring the transformation cell was magically protected to repel the newly created undead creatures.
- 24 Human servitors for a time aided in upkeeping the cell and the pyramid. These servitors were protected from the power of the hunger curse by the aid of magic *rings of sustenance*; these function as the standard D20 System ring, and interact with the hunger curse as described below.
- 26 After amassing a number of the creatures, the Alchemist dispensed with her human servitors by making them swallow the magic rings, and then forced them into the pit themselves where they, too, soon transformed into jikininki.

Many of the rings used by the Alchemist's human servitors still exist in the blighted gullets of the accursed jikininki in the tunnels, including that of the alpha. Any recovered rings serve to cure the curse if worn for the amount of time the curse has afflicted a PC already. During this curative period, the curse stabilizes and the afflicted feels its effects as if downgraded to the next-lower stage.

Intuitive PCs may realize what dirty work lies before them. A foray back down into the tunnels may be in

order. Alternatively, a wily PC group may pick up on the fact that the creatures seem drawn inside the *kofun* for some reason. Utilizing the access level and mechanisms, a crafty group could trap a manageable pack alone in a room, or even leave them to the mercy of a *ki* node chamber's guardian.

The second work of mention is an old scroll detailing the construction of the *ki* nodes, the crystalline bath, and the structure of the pyramid itself. The information found in it is as follows:



Decipher Script Check

DC Information

- 15 The structure comports with an alchemical study of proper space and alignment. The design of the pyramid was intended to maximize the flow of living force — known as *ki* — through the region.
- 20 Each of the *ki* node chambers located in the four corners of the pyramid corresponds to an elemental aspect of the *ki* force.
- 22 The crystals resting at the center of the pyramid in the central chamber collect and refine the *ki* of the four *ki* nodes, refocusing the energy upwards to a crystalline receptacle located higher up in the pyramid.
- 24 The crystalline receptacle can cure all wounds, ailments, and even grant immortality or divinity to those who bathe in its waters for a thousand years; submersing oneself in the bath causes one to enter a deep, *temporal stasis*-like slumber.
- 26 The room above the central chamber must remain sealed for the process to work. Details suggest that the seal may only be opened from within the sanctum, or if all four *ki* node crystals have been removed.

Several other scrolls of alchemical observations could serve as fine additions to any discriminating collector. Should Sumitomo be exposed to them, he obsesses about adding them to his collection.



The scrolls include:

- 2d6 scattered alchemical scrolls (worth 100 gp each to collectors; or 25 gp each on the open market)
- a set of 3 scrolls detailing the creation of the *distillation of quickened stone* (see page 32) (worth 500 gp as a set or 100 gp each to col-

lectors; or 100 gp as a set or 25 gp each on the open market)

- a set of 20 scrolls explaining the creation of the *essence of divine winds* (see page 44). Wisely, the Alchemist keyed these scrolls to the *ki* essence within the structure. Removing them from the *kofun* causes the scrolls to instantly crumble into ash. The scrolls have no value within the structure, and a complete transcription of the scrolls would take years; however if such a task were completed, the right collector might be willing to pay upwards of 10,000 gp. (valueless)
- a scroll describing the operation of the *sands of timing*; see page 39. Without the *sands*, the scroll is worthless, and vice versa. Coupled, the *sands* and scroll make a complete set allowing the party to recover the full value of the *sands*. (1500 gp as a set)

The Stone Garden

An asymmetrical ring of stones rests embedded on the packed earthen floor of this room, with a *ki* crystal set in the middle of this circle.

 A *quarterstaff of speed* stands with one end planted in the earth nearby the crystal; it is worth 32,600 gp.

The weapon was lost during the demon hunters' battle. Should the quarterstaff be shown to the armored guardian in the Forge of Brilliance, he acknowledges it belonged to his master. No *kofun* guardian will attack any person who wields this weapon.

The northeastern corner of this room contains a pair of stone doors and control dials.

The Ki Node

No trap or defense bars passage to the stones.

 Those who have already successfully made a previous Spellcraft or Knowledge (arcana) check to recognize a *ki* node (for instance, at the Pool of Sublime Reflection) automatically identify the crystal as such. If the characters failed the DC 18 checks previously, they now get another opportunity at it. Those with experience with *ki* energies (DC 22) recognize it as a subtle but powerful *ki* node dedicated to Earth, which intensifies the resilience of the mortal form; all those within the room receive a +2 sacred bonus to AC while the *ki* node is active.

A Search check (DC 20, with a bonus of +5 if this check was successfully made previously for another *ki* node) reveals the presence of mechanisms that may trigger if the crystal is tampered with. A Disable Device check (DC 20, with a +5 bonus for a previous success) allows a rogue to free the crystal safely by turning the base of the crystal counterclockwise. On a failure, turning the base clockwise results in awakening the Alchemist immediately; see Timed Encounters, page 30.

Those who made a previous successful check to determine a *ki* node's value automatically realize that this one is also worth about 1000 gp. If they missed those checks, they can now try it again.

The Inscriptions

The inscriptions on the walls near the doors give yet another warning:

 The older script, which is understandable on a Decipher Script check DC 18, reads: "Ancient ancestors, by your leave, I draw through the earth my blood, and take the power which is mine to command."

The newer script reads: "Disturb these forces and be consumed."

The Stone Guardian

The stone guardian, an earth elemental, rouses to defend the crystal once it has been disconnected. It paradoxically poses the least threat of all the guardians while having the most physically powerful active form. The creature takes two rounds after the crystal has been removed to form itself from the earthen floor. Also, it moves remarkably slowly but does not tire in its relentless pursuit to return the crystal and beat back the Alchemist once she is awakened. Unless trapped in a room with no exits, party members should easily be able to avoid the guardian. It consumes any in its path without discrimination. The one exception to this is that it recognizes *vigilant lanterns* and the demon hunter's quarterstaff, and turns away from any who bear them.

The creature finds this realm of existence to be quite unintelligible and works only to fulfill its duty here within the structure.

The True Entrance

This is a wide hall with doors and dials to the north and south. The western portion of the room widens into a broad portal, which is sealed with a smooth stone wall of

a material different than that found in the rest of the *kofun* ... this is the door to the outside that the characters must find a way to open if Sumitomo hasn't already.

 The wall is an improved *wall of stone* erected by the demon hunters to shut up the vault of the Alchemist. A *disintegrate* spell can take the wall down from the inside, as can normal means such as breaking and chipping; nothing short of a *wish* spell can remove it from outside of the *kofun* (unless certain command words are spoken). The wall is 4 inches thick (cast at 8th level), and 10 feet wide by 10 feet high. Each 5-foot square has 60 hp, and the first 8 points of damage from each blow are ignored. A creature trying to break through the wall with a single attack must roll Strength with a DC of 28.

Anyone attempting to breach the door to the *kofun* by force is openly harried by the miniature army that makes up the Alchemist's familiar.

The Scrying Statuettes

Three statuettes with the countenances of a haunted-looking old woman rest in alcoves in the eastern wall, staring out towards the entrance to the pyramid. The Alchemist sees through the eyes of these figurines even while sleeping by using the *amulet of the watchful eye* described on page 45, so as she begins to awaken later she understands that intruders have disturbed her rest if they have passed through this area. Once the Alchemist awakens, the statuette eyes actually scan the room and focus angrily on spotted intruders.

 Anyone passing before a statuette who has an Intelligence of 12 or higher, and who succeeds

at a Scry check or an Intelligence check (DC 20) feels as if he is being scried upon.

Those who have examined the statues in the Northern Hall of Displays notice the same disturbing intensity and a resemblance to the subject of the art there. (Those depicted a younger Alchemist than is represented here.)

The Inscriptions

Again, there are both old and new inscriptions on the walls near the true entrance.

 The older script on the wall translates (Decipher Script DC 18) into the following admonishment: "Humble yourselves, you who enter this noble place."

The newer script reads: "Danger. Avoid this place and turn not to look back upon it. So orders the Vigilant Light."

The Secret Passage

 The secret passage in the eastern wall is finely crafted and can only be detected by a close Search check (DC 25). It is unlocked.

The Central Chamber

The central chamber serves as an access point to the sealed sanctum above. Entrance to the chamber can be had through the large eastern stone door, which is locked but has a dial, or the open secret door to the west. The

Stone Guardian

Large Earth Elemental

CR 5; SZ L (elemental); HD 8d8+32; hp 68 hp; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 18 (-1 size, -1 Dex, +10 natural); Atk melee +12/+7 (2d8+10, slam); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 10 ft.; SA Earth Mastery, Push; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., DR 10/+1; AL N; SV Fort +10, Ref +1, Will +2; Str 25, Dex 8, Con 19, Int 6, Wis 11, Cha 11

Skills: Listen +11, Spot +11

Feats: Cleave, Power Attack

Damage Reduction (Su): The creature ignores 10 hit points from most weapons and natural attacks. A +1 weapon or better negates the ability.

Earth Mastery (Ex): An earth elemental gains +1 attack and damage bonus while it and its foe are in contact with the ground. If an opponent is waterborne or airborne, the elemental suffers a -4 penalty to attack and damage. These modifiers are not included in the stats above.

Elemental: An elemental is immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, and stunning. Elementals are not subject to critical hits or flanking and have Darkvision with a range of 60 feet. A slain elemental cannot be *raised* or *resurrected*, although a *wish* or *miracle* spell can restore it to life.

Push (Ex): An earth elemental can start a bull rush without provoking an attack of opportunity. The Earth Mastery bonus applies to its opposed Strength checks.

northern and southern walls of this room contain rung-like niches for scaling into the sealed chamber above.

The Wooden Seal

The sealed ceiling trapdoor has a wooden face carved to depict a godlike female figure treading the heavens with a throng of worshippers below kneeling in homage. Included in the divinity's gifts to her followers are crystal spheres containing arcane glyphs for the hierarchy of elements; Water, Earth, Metal, and Divine Fire glow brightly while their *ki* node crystals are active, and a fifth sphere of Wood is lit as long as the other four are active. Once a crystal has been disconnected, the corresponding sphere blinks out; when even one of the crystals is not functioning, the sphere of Wood is extinguished, as well, indicating that the transformation process within the sanctum has been interrupted.

 The seal acts as a permanent *wall of force* either until the Alchemist has opened the door within, or the four *ki* node crystals have been safely disarmed without. A successful Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 18) lets a player understand the function of the spheres and how to open the seal.

The outer face of this seal has been marred by a newer inscription to read: "Be not tempted by the false gifts of *yomi*. Leave this place be, all you who stand in light."

The Wall of Faces

High on the western wall, a row of wooden masks set into the stone blocks behind it stares blankly out at the large doorway and ladders. The faces take the countenances of demons, lions, dragons, and exaggerated humanoid expressions. All of the faces are enchanted so that they react to any who pass before them, grimacing and making hideous, pained expressions. Only one face remains silent — that of the stoic lion.

 A trigger that opens the eastern door is concealed in the tooth of the lion's head; it takes a Search check (DC 20) to find it.

The Alchemist's Sanctum

The sealed trapdoor leads above into the middle of a large circle inscribed with the alchemical cyphers that were found on the seal below. Raised on a dais, a few feet from the trapdoor, rests a coffin-shaped crystal bath. The lid has been inscribed with the sleeping visage of the beautiful young maiden depicted in the Northern Hall of Displays. Beyond the carved circle of glyphs, alchemical equipment rests in disuse.

 The bath is protected with a magical trap. Those disturbing the crystalline shell are shocked by electricity dealing 3d6 electrical damage to the unwary; Reflex save for half damage. Rogues examining the coffin find the trap if they succeed at a Search check (DC 20); they can remove the trap by succeeding at a Disable Device check (DC 25). A *dispel magic* spell directed at the trap also suffices to disarm it.

Spellcasters probably take an extreme interest in the construction of the room, circle, and crystal bath. A Spellcraft check (DC 15) determines that each element of the room's architecture, the circle's positioning, and the bath's make-up serve to focus and hone enormous amounts of *ki* energy. Further inspection of the bath shows that the energy is centered and concentrated around it; this takes a Spellcraft check (DC 20).

An Appraise check (DC 15) finds that the bath itself is constructed of opaque crystal of high quality. A Search check (DC 15) finds that a light condensation dampens the surface, suggesting it contains some sort of cool liquid; in fact, it contains the *essence of divine winds* described below. Should the party remove the electricity trap, within they



find the bath filled with a scintillating clear liquid; a submerged form rests within it.

Option One: Waking the Alchemist in Her Sanctum

Touching or making loud noises rouses the sleeping Alchemist and she struggles to rise from the pool. Pausing momentarily to vomit the liquid from her lungs, she turns to face the intruders. Unknown to the Alchemist, the divine waters, distilling her perverse nature, have transformed her into a half-*oni*, a horned demon equivalent to an ogre mage. Roused and angered, the Alchemist realizes her plan to achieve godhood has been thwarted by interlopers. If confronted by the parties responsible at the outset, she looses destructive magics as a pure expression of frustration and contempt.

Also, once the Alchemist fully awakens, the waiting jikininki and the terracotta soldiers that hold her familiar pour into the chamber to attend their mistress. On the other side of the battle, the *kofun* guardians move to engage the Alchemist if they haven't already been destroyed, and NPCs such as the relic seekers and the Han exploring the *kofun* may move to aid the PCs at the GM's discretion.

Option Two: Disturbing the Already-Awakened Alchemist

An alternative resolution is set into play if the characters (or NPCs) have tripped any of the four *ki* node traps before making their way to the Alchemist's sanctum. Given some time to cool down before confronted with the interlopers, the Alchemist instead resolves to first regain control over her pyramid and then the Kadaichi foothills.

From within her sanctum, she contacts the jikininki, now directing them into organized bands through the power of the *rod of jikininki control*, described below. Using the command words for the stone door, she initiates a lock-down of the structure while she gets organized. Also, she communicates with her familiar, and she uses the scrying statuettes at the true entrance and her terracotta soldiers to locate intruders.

Methodically, she uses a combination of her magics, her minions, and her control over the doors to divide and conquer any within her pyramid. Any prisoners are brought to the jikininki transformation cell after the creatures repair it to create more minions. The loosed guardians present the most immediate problem in her estimation, so she doesn't focus on the PCs (and NPCs) to begin with; this gives them an opportunity to strike first or take care of the jikininki.

New Magic Rod: Rod of Jikininki Control

This is a blasphemous artifact allowing the user to bind the horrid jikininki to the wielder's will. Jikininki within a mile radius are controlled telepathically for as long as the wielder desires.

Caster Level: 14th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Rod, *control undead*, *sending*, caster must be evil-aligned; *Market Price:* 10,333 gp; *Weight:* 1 lb.

New Potion: Essence of the Divine Winds

This amazing liquid has the capacity to harvest and store *ki* energies if harnessed properly. The Alchemist has built a structure and crystalline receptacle to tightly concentrate these energies into this purified liquid.

The first property the Alchemist is well aware of, namely that one may bathe in the waters and be infused with *ki* energies. Ancient texts describe how one "displaying great patience" may transform himself into an undying divinity by immersing in the waters over the course of a millennium.

Some secondary effects also exist. One of the following occurs, in the following order of possibility:

- If the liquid is imbibed, it restores a monk's *ki* energies, in effect refreshing any expended *ki* abilities

(which can be used once per day, twice per day, etc.) as if they had not been expended for that day.

- The imbibed liquid can alternatively serve to heal physical wounds as if it was a potion of *cure moderate wounds*.
- If both the drinker's *ki* and body are fully balanced, the waters then perfect the living essence of the imbiber, acting as a *potion of heroism*.

Drinking the liquid only has an effect once per day.

Caster Level: 5th; *Prerequisites:* Brew Potion, Alchemy +10; *Market Price:* 5,000 gp; *Weight:* —

The Ancient Alchemist

Ogre Mage/5th-Level Wizard

CR 13; SZ L (giant); HD 5d8+15 + 5d4+15 (65 hp); Init +4 (Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft., fly 40 ft. (good); AC 14 (–1 size, +5 natural); Atk melee +10 (1d10+7/crit x3, *naginata*); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 10ft.; SA Spell-like Abilities, Spells; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., Flight, Regeneration 2, SR 18, Summon Familiar; AL E; SV Fort +8, Ref +2, Will +7; Str 21, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 17

Skills: Alchemy +9, Concentration +6, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Listen +5 (+7 when familiar is nearby), Spellcraft +7, Scry +7, Spot +5 (+7 when familiar is nearby)

Feats: Alertness, Brew Potion, Craft Rod, Craft Wondrous Item, Forge Ring, Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll

Alignment: Neutral Evil

Flight (Su): An ogre mage can cease or resume flight as a free action. While in *gaseous form*, she can fly at normal speed and has perfect maneuverability.

Giant: Giants are proficient with all simple weapons and with any weapons listed in their entries. Unless noted otherwise, giants have Darkvision with a range of 60 feet.

Regeneration (Ex): Damage dealt to the creature is treated as subdual damage, and the creature automatically cures itself of subdual damage at a rate of 2 points per round. Ogre mages take normal damage from fire and acid. An ogre mage that loses a limb or body part can reattach it by holding the severed member to the stump. Reattachment takes 1 minute. If the head or other vital organ is severed, it must be reattached within 10 minutes or the creature dies. Ogre mages cannot regrow lost body parts.

Spell Resistance (Ex): To determine if a spell of spell-like ability works against the creature, the spellcaster

makes a level check (1d20 + caster level). If the result equals or exceeds 18, the spell works normally, though the creature still gets a saving throw if the spell allows such.

Summon Familiar: The Alchemist does not have a normal familiar, as it would have died long ago. Instead, her research into the arcane allowed her to bond a spirit of the Elemental Plane of Earth to her as a non-standard familiar. This spirit possesses the twelve Tiny terracotta soldiers described on page 24 simultaneously as golems, and acts as the Alchemist's eyes while she rests in her crystal bath. All of the soldiers must be destroyed to release the spirit from the Alchemist's control, at which point it returns to its own plane. Her familiar has Alertness, Improved Evasion, Share Spells, Empathic Link, Touch, Speak with Master, Speak with Earth Spirits, Spell Resistance 23, and Scry on Familiar. This familiar also has a natural armor of +12, and an Intelligence of 12. The Spell Resistance and natural armor are split amongst the twelve golems, and the familiar cannot substitute the Alchemist's stats for those of its golems.

Spell-like Abilities: These abilities are as the spells cast by a 9th-level sorcerer. The save is DC 13 + the spell level.

At will — *darkness, invisibility*

1/day — *charm person, cone of cold, gaseous form, polymorph self, sleep*

Spells: (4/4/4/2) Having just awoken from her centuries-long sleep, the Alchemist has no presence of mind to prepare spells. Moreover, her spellbooks were destroyed by the demon hunters. As such, only *read magic* is available from her wizard's repertoire.

Possessions: *amulet of the watchful eye* (see below), *rod of jikininki control* (see below), *ring of sustenance*, *naginata* (masterwork halberd)

New Wondrous Item: Amulet of the Watchful Eye

This is the central piece in a magical scrying system keyed to a set location. By designating specially prepared "looking points," a spellcaster may keep track of the movements throughout her sanctum. When any pass before a looking point, the spellcaster wearing this amulet receives hazy mental images from the point of view of the looking point that was activated. Anyone passing before a looking point who has an Intelligence of

12 or higher, and who succeeds at a Scry check or an Intelligence check (DC 20) feels as if he is being scried upon. Spells such as *detect scrying* can also detect the nature of the looking points and amulet.

Caster Level: 8th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *scrying*; **Market Price:** 5,125 gp + 200 gp per "looking point"; **Weight:** —

And They All Lived...

The Alchemist has considerable abilities and invulnerabilities, though she is not actually immortal. Her heightened sorcerous power, resilient form, and regenerative abilities make her quite a challenge even for a resourceful party; adding the jikininki and her familiar into the mix makes it more than possible that they might decide to retreat. Should the party run, their attempt to make it out of the *kofun* should be a run for their lives. Feel free to have all hell break loose. Blocked passages, planned jikininki strikes, and transformed NPCs can all come into play.

The possibility also exists that a resourceful party may have enough power at their disposal to incapacitate her. If the PCs were able to enter her chamber without tripping any of the *ki* crystal traps, she only now awakens. Disoriented and angry, her outburst of hostile magics leaves her unbalanced. With the aid of surviving *kofun* guardians and NPCs, a party may very well be able to render her unconscious for the time being.

The crystalline bath, when severed from the *ki* supply, can serve well as a living tomb for the unconscious alchemist. Fully submerged in the waters, she returns to a deep slumber. If characters remove the *amulet of the watchful eyes*, without contact with the outside world she sleeps indefinitely. If all the *ki* nodes are deactivated, her horrid transformation does not progress further.

Another surprise tactic may be to draw the mirror up from the Northern Hall of Displays and show the Alchemist her current form. Shocked and repulsed, she backs into a corner, rubs her exposed skin, and babbles to herself incoherently for 1d4 days. In this state, she will do little save defend against direct physical attacks.



For a hint to his possibility, if the characters deciphered the scroll in the Southern Hall of Displays allow them a Wisdom check DC 18 or Spellcraft DC 15 after seeing the Alchemist to realize that this frightful transformation wasn't part of the original plan. Akane can also identify her as an *oni* as an additional clue.

Even after the Alchemist's defeat, a throng of frenzied jikininki still need to be dealt with. So close to being united to their mistress, they throw caution to the wind and rush *en masse* to reach the sanctum.

Loose Ends

This section details the possible directions the scenario could take after a climactic battle or dramatic escape from the *kofun*. It is suggested that if you wish the scenario to be self-contained, you adapt the Alchemist's actions so as to force a final confrontation with the party.

The Alchemist Released

The Alchemist could well serve as a long-term campaign villain. Maddened by her closeness to divine power and jolted by her hideous transformation, she stops at nothing to complete the process. Sending jikininki minions throughout the land, she hopes to gather more alchemical knowledge to correct her half-state. No center of learning or site of ancient mystery is safe from her consuming desire to perfect the process. Overconfident, thanks to her new abilities, she makes the *kofun* the center of her bid to take control of the island as its living god.

The Alchemist Defeated

The *kofun* itself has rather unique properties, making it an interesting stronghold for monk sects, wizards, or others interested in the arcane. Perhaps the players become involved in trying to ensure the place is converted into a stronghold for the forces of light and knowledge. Should word of the place spread, the local *daimyo*, ninja clans, and court alchemists may surely make some claim to the place. Dealing with the latecomers may spurn a whole litany of diplomatic problems for the players.

Evacuating Mura

Should the party be unable to defeat the Alchemist, provisions must be made to evacuate the village to the south before winter sets in. With the jikininki servitors of the Alchemist loosed over the hills, players will have their hands full protecting the caravan from raids and worse. Sosuke remains at his post in the village shrine until the bitter end.

The Flight of the Han

If the Han have seen the hunger curse afflict their own, they are eager to quit the hills. Attentive to the need to cut his losses, Zhang tries to hold on to as much treasure and supplies as he can before sailing off in his longship.

In the same vein, a bold group may incite the Han into battle against the Alchemist. Not given to idealism, the Han do have a primal urge for vendetta against any that would pervert their own — if the party can persuade them out of their fear, the Han may be crucial allies in an all-out siege against the *kofun*.

When the *daimyo*'s swords arrive, the Han immediately fall back towards their waiting vessel. No amount of diplomacy can convince them to stay. If the party allied with Lu'at, they are invited to join the Han as honored guests on their journey back to the mainland plains.

The Seekers' Spoils

If Akane saw Sumitomo use magic at any point in the adventure, she severs her ties with him and goes off on her own. If the party doesn't include magic-users she might ask the join them.

If forced to leave the area by the *daimyo*'s force, Sumitomo will return later to exploit the *kofun*'s remaining secrets. When done plundering this site, he will use the scrolls of the demon hunters that he possesses to go on to the next site mentioned. If he's on good terms with them in the end, he might ask the PCs to join him in his search, especially if Akane has abandoned him.

Laying Down the Law

At the bequest of the tax collector from Nyoruko, a small contingent of *samurai* arrive in the hills shortly after the

expedition into the *kofun*. Under the command of Lt. Chikafusa, the *samurai* set about securing Mura, reclaiming Nagaya, and recovering the children and supplies, in that order. Depending on the state of the *kofun* — whether the Alchemist is active or not — and the PCs' plans, the *samurai* either escort the refugees south or stay behind to stabilize the area while word of the situation is sent back to civilization.

Rewards

In addition to the standard awards for killing wandering creatures, jikininki, the various *kofun* guardians, and the Alchemist and her familiar, the PCs can also be awarded experience for achieving goals that didn't involve outright destruction of monsters:



Award the following experience for completion of these goals:

Goal	Award
Return the children of Mura to the village	500 XP
Leave the <i>kofun</i> with Goba, Kenji, Lu'at, and Akane still alive	150 XP each NPC
Win the return of Mura's food, or otherwise secure them for the winter	500 XP
Bypass the <i>ki</i> node guardians without killing them	Full XP based on EL of each
Succeed in permanently incapacitating the Alchemist without killing her	Full XP

In regards to monetary rewards, the PCs have access to a wide array of magical items and other spoils from the *kofun*. After Sumitomo and Lu'at take a cut (assuming they still live), the PCs can have the rest.

New NPC Classes

Note: The entire text of Appendix I is Open Game Content.

The Criminal

Less skilled than adventuring rogues, criminal NPCs make up the bulk of both urban criminal outfits and rural outlaw bands. This motley crew has access to many rogue skills without having the same level of perfectionist expertise and pride that marks the work of their adventuring counterparts. As with rogues, they may be a

diverse bunch, but criminal NPCs tend to be the undistinguished grunts of any lawless operation. Criminals cannot access advanced rogue feats, as they simply lack roguish discipline and finesse. See Goba's statistics in Appendix II for an example of the criminal NPC class.

Hit Die: d6

Class Skills

The criminal's class skills (and their key abilities) are Bluff (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Innuendo (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Open Lock (Dex), Pick Pocket (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), and Spot (Wis). In addition, criminals may choose two skills as additional class skills to represent their particular brand of delinquency.

Table: The Criminal

NPC Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save
1 st	+0	+1	+1	+0
2 nd	+1	+1	+2	+0
3 rd	+2	+2	+2	+1
4 th	+3	+2	+3	+1
5 th	+3	+2	+3	+1
6 th	+4	+3	+4	+2
7 th	+5	+3	+4	+2
8 th	+6/+1	+3	+5	+2
9 th	+6/+1	+4	+5	+3
10 th	+7/+2	+4	+6	+3
11 th	+8/+3	+4	+6	+3
12 th	+9/+4	+5	+7	+4
13 th	+9/+4	+5	+7	+4
14 th	+10/+5	+5	+8	+4
15 th	+11/+6/+1	+6	+8	+5
16 th	+12/+7/+2	+6	+9	+5
17 th	+12/+7/+2	+6	+9	+5
18 th	+13/+8/+3	+7	+10	+6
19 th	+14/+9/+4	+7	+10	+6
20 th	+15/+10/+5	+7	+11	+6



Skill Points at 1st Level: $(4 + \text{Int modifier}) \times 4$

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: $4 + \text{Int modifier}$

Class Features

The following is a class feature of the criminal NPC class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A criminal's weapon training is less subtle or extensive than a rogue's. All criminals are proficient with simple weapons and light armor without shields.

Starting Gear

3d4 x 10 gp worth of equipment

The Faithful

In civilized lands, many of those who fill up church ranks do not have aspirations for travel and excitement. With limited access to divine spells and cleric skills, these many faithful are content to pursue the everyday works of their chapels, churches, and cults, often serving their gods in mundane, inglorious ways — much like adepts fulfill similar wizardly roles among primitive races. Faithful NPCs may be found filling many roles within large urban centers of worship, or even as caretakers over remote shrines or missions. Evil-aligned faithful often comprise the ranks of cults. See Sosuke's stats in Appendix II for an example of the faithful NPC class.

Hit Die: d4

Class Skills

The faithful's class skills (and key abilities) are Concentration (Cha), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Profession (Wis). In addition, the faithful may choose 4 among the following as extra class skills, to reflect his additional study within centers of learning such as monasteries, or his experience living among the people in frontier missions: Handle Animal (Cha), Knowledge (any, purchased separately) (Int), Perform (Cha), Sense Motive (Wis), Speak Language (none), or Wilderness Lore (Wis).

Skill Points at 1st Level: $(3 + \text{Int modifier}) \times 4$



Skill Points at Each Additional Level: $3 + \text{Int modifier}$

Class Features

The following are class features of the faithful NPC class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The faithful is proficient with one simple weapon, although many avoid weapons altogether. They are not proficient with armor or shields.

Turn/Rebuke on Holy/Defiled Ground: As protectors and keepers of shrines and temples, the faithful can Turn or Rebuke Undead to some degree. Unlike adventuring clerics, the faithful can use their Turning or Rebuking abilities *only* while they stand on holy or defiled sites consecrated to their god. As the faithful lack the training to focus celestial energies, they further suffer a -3 modifier to any Turn attempt. The faithful may attempt to Turn or Rebuke Undead once per day, plus once more per day for every Charisma modifier point that they have.

The Faithful

NPC Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Spells per Day*	0	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	4	none+1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	4	none+1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
3rd	+2	+1	+1	+3	5	none+1	none+1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
4th	+3	+1	+1	+4	5	none+1	none+1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
5th	+3	+1	+1	+4	6	none+1	none+1	none+1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
6th	+4	+2	+2	+5	6	none+1	none+1	none+1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
7th	+5	+2	+2	+5	8	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	—	—	—	—	—	—
8th	+6/+1	+2	+2	+6	8	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	—	—	—	—	—	—
9th	+6/+1	+3	+3	+6	9	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	—	—	—	—	—
10th	+7/+2	+3	+3	+7	9	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	—	—	—	—	—
11th	+8/+3	+3	+3	+7	11	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	—	—	—	—
12th	+9/+4	+4	+4	+8	11	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	—	—	—	—
13th	+9/+4	+4	+4	+8	12	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	—	—	—
14th	+10/+5	+4	+4	+9	12	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	—	—
15th	+11/+6/+1	+5	+5	+9	14	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	—
16th	+12/+7/+2	+5	+5	+10	14	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	—
17th	+12/+7/+2	+5	+5	+10	15	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1
18th	+13/+8/+3	+6	+6	+11	15	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1
19th	+14/+9/+4	+6	+6	+11	17	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1
20th	+15/+10/+5	+6	+6	+12	17	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1	none+1

* In addition to the stated number of spells per day for 0-level spells, a faithful gets a domain spell for each spell level, starting at 1st. The “+1” on this list represents this. Faithful do **not** get bonus spells for high Wisdom. The “none” notation indicates that faithful cannot cast any spells above 0 level that are not domain spells.

Deity Spells: The faithful can only prepare and cast orisons (0-level clerical spells) and domain spells, as they represent the most general aspects of their god. Note that the faithful do not garner domain powers, and their spells per day, for which they must pray at a certain time each day for one hour, are strictly limited to the orisons and domain list; they do not get bonus spells based on Wisdom as clerics do. As with clerics, the faithful choose two of their god’s domains and each day prepare one or the other of each level they can cast. They must have a Wisdom score of 10 plus the spell’s level to cast it. The

DC for saves against their spells is 10 + the spell’s level + the caster’s Wisdom modifier.

Spontaneous Casting: As for clerics; faithful can drop an orison to cast *cure minor wounds*.

Starting Gear

2d4 x 10 gp worth of equipment

Characters

The following are the personality descriptions and game stats for the key NPCs in *Lean and Hungry*. Creatures such as the *kofun* guardians, the *jikininki*, the terracotta soldiers, and the Alchemist can be found in the adventure itself.

Villagers

Madoka, the Voice of Mura

Quote: “The winter comes soon and most of us would not survive a journey south without wagon or horse. Food is what we need; and food is what the Han have taken from us. We have prayed the gods would send us deliverance ... I believe you are their answer.”

Background: Madoka has lived in Mura her entire lifetime. Her husband was the miller, and since his passing she has overseen the operation of the village and the neighboring *buraku* of the Kadaichi foothills.

Appearance: Wearing simple but presentable dress, this middle-aged woman strikes a proud figure among the farmers of Mura.

Roleplaying Notes: Mura’s plight is desperate and Madoka understands this. While wary of outsiders, she

realizes the village can’t afford to distrust to anyone who might help.

Goals: First of all, Madoka needs enough food to feed the current refugees. Following close behind, she seeks the return of the children captured by the barbarian raiders. Beyond this, Madoka works to ensure the safety of her village and the refugees.



7th-Level Human Commoner

Hit Dice: 7d4+7+3 (28 hp)

Initiative: –1 (Dex)

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 9 (–1 Dex)

Attacks: Quarterstaff +2 melee

Damage: Quarterstaff 1d6–1

Face/Reach: 5 ft. x 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +5

Abilities: Str 8, Dex 8, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 16

Skills: Diplomacy +10, Handle Animal +8, Profession (farmer) +10, Profession (miller) +9, Spot +6

Feats: Endurance, Iron Will, Leadership, Toughness

Alignment: Lawful Good

Possessions: The quarterstaff left by her dead husband.



Sosuke, Caretaker of the Shrine of Vigilant Light

Quote: “I realize that if I remain, I may perish. Fear is not proper to one of my calling; therefore I face my end without trembling. As the Light wills it.”

Background: Schooled in a far-off monastery, Sosuke came to Mura to tend the Shrine of Vigilant Light five years ago. Since then, he has worked to upkeep his charge and minister to the religious needs of the Kadaichi region.

Appearance: With shaven head and simple robes, Sosuke casts the familiar appearance of the dutiful monk. In speaking with travelers, vivid curiosity and keen interest shift his otherwise tranquil demeanor.

Roleplaying Notes: Sosuke is a very good listener and tends to allow others to speak. He often wonders about far-off cities and their foreign customs, and is very excited to speak to travelers. Despite his relatively modest abilities, Sosuke is courageous when faced with adversity.

Goals: Sosuke is bound to protect the shrine and the village. Sosuke has come to care deeply about the people in Mura, and tries to help deliver them from troubles however he can.



2nd-Level Human Faithful

Hit Dice: 2d4+3 (8 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 10

Attacks: Unarmed +1 melee

Damage: Unarmed 1d3 subdual

Face/Reach: 5 ft. x 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +5

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 12

Skills: Concentrate + 4, Knowledge (religion) +4, Heal +5, Wilderness Lore +4



Feats: Alertness, Toughness

Alignment: Lawful Good

Spells: (4/none+1) Sosuke has the domains of Healing and Sun, and has the following spells prepared. The DC for saves against his spells is 12 + the spell's level. Sosuke has prepared *cure light wounds* as his domain spell.

0 Level — *cure minor wounds* (x3), *light*
1st Level — *cure light wounds*

Spontaneous Casting: Sosuke can drop any 0-level spell to cast *cure minor wounds*.

Turn on Holy Ground: Sosuke can Turn Undead twice per day as a cleric, but only while standing on holy ground consecrated to his god. He also suffers a –3 modifier to any attempt to Turn Undead.

Possessions: *vigilant lanterns* x5 (see page 13), *blessed salt* x3 (see below)

New Spell: Bless Salt

Transmutation [Good]

Level: Faithful 0

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: Touch

Target: A small container of prepared salt

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Will negates (object)

Spell Resistance: Yes (object)

This is a cousin of the *bless water* spell. Among many of the Eastern island chains, salt is both used to purify the dead and drive the unholy back. Remains sprinkled with blessed salt cannot spawn undead creatures.

Material Component: A powdered piece of jade worth at least 25 gp must be mixed with the salt.

Kenji, Cowardly Guide

Quote: “Mother says I must go with you and show you the dead men. Well, this I will do, but know that I have children and they have no one to care for them if I don’t return.”

Background: A Mura local, Kenji never had the temperament to make a useful farmer. As Madoka’s only son, Kenji enjoyed a small amount of insulation from the villagers’ censure, though. Madoka eventually discovered a way to put his wandering through the foothills to good use by having him hunt pesky field rodents. Unfortunately, Kenji has come under the sway of a village newcomer, Goba. Under Goba’s lead, Kenji may prove to be more of a nuisance to Mura than an asset ...

Appearance: An unkempt man, balding fairly early for his age. With his lack of personal hygiene, Kenji has been unable to find even a homely girl to wed.

Roleplaying Notes: Kenji blames his sorry state and Mura’s plight on the cosmic forces that have cursed him so. Since becoming friends with Goba, Kenji has become a coward, liar, and laggard. Still, under better influence, Kenji may yet do right by Mura.

If Kenji is present when one of the jikininki is killed in the village, he tells the villagers about the jewels they wear, and rumors quickly spread both of ancient evil and ancient treasure.

Goals: Kenji wants to hide his shameful act of stripping weapons from the dead. In a moment of weakness, he let the matter slip to his mother, Madoka, but she has not said or done anything as of yet. Kenji wants money, a small amount of power, and above all a wife, but doesn’t know how to go about getting any of them.



3rd-Level Human Expert (Guide)

Hit Dice: 3d6+3 (12 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 10

Attacks: Shortbow +2 ranged

Damage: Shortbow 1d6

Face/Reach: 5 ft. x 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +3



Abilities: Str 12, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 9

Skills: Handle Animal +5, Hide +4, Ride +6, Spot +5, Wilderness Lore +4

Feats: Run, Track, Point-Blank Shot

Alignment: Neutral

Possessions: The shortbow his mother bought him to hunt field rodents.

Goba, Village Outsider

Quote: “Let’s get things straight, I don’t like you. Sure, all of Mura loves you now ... but what happens when winter comes and we have nothing to show but the empty plates you’ve left behind? I know your kind.”

Background: Goba is a thief and con artist who came to Mura after narrowly escaping the noose in the civilized lands. A wanted man, Goba found the remote village to be a perfect place to get lost. At first the villagers treated him like the city’s *eta*, or underclass, giving him only the most menial and degrading tasks to earn his keep. Eventually, and largely due to Madoka’s mercy, Goba was accepted as one of Mura’s own. Still, farm life has proven to be more work than Goba had been accustomed to, and he hopes to throw off the yoke at the earliest opportunity.

Appearance: A short, abrasive farmer bustling with overconfidence. He is quite sensitive about the obvious pock marks that mar his face.



Roleplaying Notes: Goba regards the hard-working folk of Mura with barely checked contempt. Unaccustomed to real labor, Goba constantly schemes to make a fast buck that will buy him escape from this boring farm town. Goba has found the Kenji to be quite malleable and has groomed him into a loyal flunky.

Goals: Goba is obsessed with making some real money and getting out of this starving farm town.



3rd-Level Human Criminal

Hit Dice: 3d6 (11 hp)

Initiative: +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 11 (+1 Dex)

Attacks: short sword +3 melee

Damage: short sword 1d6

Face/Reach: 5 ft. x 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +1

Abilities: Str 11, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 12

Skills: Bluff +4, Hide +4, Move Silent +3, Search +4, Spot +6

Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse (shortsword)

Alignment: Chaotic Neutral

Possessions: Goba brought this short sword with him when he fled the city.

Typical Villager



1st-Level Human Commoner

Hit Dice: 1d4+3 (6 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 10

Attacks: unarmed +0 melee

Damage: unarmed 1d3 subdual

Face/Reach: 5 ft. x 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 10

Skills: Handle Animal +2, Profession (farmer) +4, Spot +2,

Feats: Endurance, Toughness

Alignment: Lawful Neutral

Possessions: None, since most of these people are refugees from the surrounding *buraku*.



Barbarian Raiders

Zhang Han, Obok Chieftain

Quote: “Ha, ha, ha! Say that again *ronin*! You want us to let the children free, or else we face the wrath of you and your starving villagers? Ah ... rich ... I hadn’t quite expected such foolish courage from this island. ‘No one tells a Han what to do.’ This is said among all the *oboks* of the mainland plains. Within the Han, however, we have another saying: ‘No one tells Zhang Han what he should do and lives.’”

Background: Zhang Han won dominance over the Han *obok* with the same shrewd manipulation that keeps him in power today. The fifth of six chieftain’s sons, Zhang learned to keep quiet and observantly watched his older brothers make war on the neighboring *oboks*. Zhang distinguished himself by showing an ability to manipulate the Han’s civilized neighbors into making deals that ultimately aided the clan. When the time came, Zhang took the seat of power using a mix of treachery and outright violence.

Zhang came into contact with the relic seeker Sumitomo last year. Sumitomo claims to have scrolls that tell him of the site of a lost Han artifact, a great axe forged in the heavens by the storm god. Having such an artifact may very well unite the other *oboks* under Zhang’s rule. Zhang has agreed to help Sumitomo on this expedition in exchange for Sumitomo’s guidance in finding the lost axe. Zhang does not believe any others can translate the ancient scrolls.

Appearance: The wily Zhang cuts a strange figure as leader of the savage Han. Despite his charm, each syllable of Zhang’s manner of speech thunders with confident strength and ability, ensuring his position for many years.

Roleplaying Notes: With disturbing alacrity, Zhang’s demeanor shifts between barbaric coarseness and polite civility. Above all, Zhang hopes to keep allies and enemies alike off balance. He assumes civilized peoples seek to murder and cheat his *obok* unless his people have some power over them.

Goals: Zhang plays a desperate game to extend his *obok*’s influence. By securing the treasure Sumitomo has offered, Zhang may arm and expand his *obok* to take control of his neighbors, making him a powerful figure on the mainland.



3rd-Level Human Barbarian/2nd-Level Rogue

Hit Dice: 3d12+6 + 2d6+4 +3 (40 hp)



Initiative: +4 (Improved Initiative)

Speed: 40 ft.

AC: 13 (+3 *studded leather armor*)

Attacks: +2 *greataxe* +8 *melee*

Damage: +2 *greataxe* 1d12+4

Face/Reach: 5 ft. x 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +3

Abilities: Str 12 (14), Dex 10, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 16

Skills: Appraise +5, Climb +6, Diplomacy +7, Handle Animal +8, Intimidate +8, Intuit Direction +6, Ride +5, Search +8, Spot +8, Wilderness Lore +6

Feats: Leadership, Improved Initiative, Toughness

Alignment: Neutral

Barbarian Rage: A barbarian temporarily gains +4 to Strength, +4 to Constitution, and a +2 morale bonus on Will saves, but suffers a –2 penalty to AC. The increase in Constitution increases the barbarian’s hit points by 2 points per level, but these hit points go away at the end of the rage. While raging, a barbarian cannot use skills or abilities that require patience and concentration. Zhang’s fits of rage last for 7 rounds. At the end of a rage, the barbarian is fatigued (–2 to Strength, –2 to Dexterity, can’t charge or run) for the duration of that encounter. The barbarian can only fly into a rage

once per encounter, and Zhang can only rage once per day.

Fast Movement: The barbarian has a speed faster than the norm for his race by +10 feet when wearing no armor, light armor, or medium armor (and not carrying a heavy load).

Illiteracy: Barbarians are the only characters who do not automatically know how to read and write. A barbarian must spend 2 skill points to gain the ability to read and write any language the barbarian is able to speak.

Uncanny Dodge: At 2nd level and above, the barbarian retains his Dexterity bonus to AC (if any) if caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible attacker.

Evasion (Ex): At 2nd level, a rogue gains Evasion. If exposed to any effect that normally allows a character to attempt a Reflex saving throw for half damage, the rogue takes no damage with a successful saving throw. Evasion can only be used if the rogue is wearing light armor or no armor.

Sneak Attack: Any time the rogue's target would be denied a Dexterity bonus to AC (whether the target actually has a Dexterity bonus or not), or when the rogue flanks the target, the rogue's attack deals extra damage. Zhang's extra damage is +1d6. Ranged attacks can only count as Sneak Attacks if the target is within 30 feet.

Traps: Rogues (and only rogues) can use the Search skill to locate traps when the task has a DC higher than 20. Finding a nonmagical trap has a DC of at least 20, higher if it is well hidden. Finding a magic trap has a DC of 25 + the level of the spell used to create it. Rogues (and only rogues) can use the Disable Device skill to disarm magic traps. A magic trap generally has a DC of 25 + the level of the spell used to create it.

Possessions: *Studded leather armor of invulnerability* (DR 5/+1), *gauntlets of ogre power* (+2 Strength score has been worked into his attacks), +2 greataxe

Lu'at Han, Young Heir

Quote: "I respect the strength of your ways. We have what you desire. So you have ridden out here to tell us to return it. Perhaps in more honest times, men and women like us, warriors, dealt as true peers. The Han were once like this ..."

Background: Lu'at Han is the only son of Zhang Han's deceased sister. As Zhang has yet to produce male heirs,

the Han watch Lu'at's emergence into manhood with rapt attention. Grandmother, a seer of the Han people, has given the young man many carefully crafted visions of his ascendance as a hero of the mainland plains. Lu'at already has attracted a small handful of peers his own age.

Appearance: Broad-shouldered and tall, Lu'at towers over most of his own people.

Roleplaying Notes: Lu'at respects strength in all things, and physical strength above all. Used to following his whims, the young barbarian has yet to learn the value of a good plan. Despite his erratic nature, Lu'at does adhere to sense of personal honor and glory and will not break his word.

Goals: Lu'at wants to be loved by his *obok* and feared by all others. Thanks to Grandmother, Lu'at believes Zhang is unfit to lead the Han and sees himself as its head.



4th-Level Human Barbarian

Hit Dice: 4d12+12 (38 hp)

Initiative: +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

Speed: 40 ft.

AC: 17 (+4 chainmail shirt, +2 *large shield*, +1 Dex)

Attacks: +1 greataxe +8

Damage: +1 greataxe 1d12+4

Face/Reach: 5 ft. x 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +7, Ref +2, Will +1



Abilities: Str 16, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 14

Skills: Climb +8, Craft (bowmaking) +3, Intimidate+7, Ride +6, Swim+8, Wilderness Lore +5

Feats: Cleave, Improved Initiative, Power Attack

Alignment: Chaotic Neutral

Barbarian Rage: A barbarian temporarily gains +4 to Strength, +4 to Constitution, and a +2 morale bonus on Will saves, but suffers a -2 penalty to AC. The increase in Constitution increases the barbarian's hit points by 2 points per level, but these hit points go away at the end of the rage. While raging, a barbarian cannot use skills or abilities that require patience and concentration. Lu'at fits of rage last for 5 rounds. At the end of a rage, the barbarian is fatigued (-2 to Strength, -2 to Dexterity, can't charge or run) for the duration of that encounter. The barbarian can only fly into a rage once per encounter, and Lu'at can only rage twice per day.

Fast Movement: The barbarian has a speed faster than the norm for his race by +10 feet when wearing no armor, light armor, or medium armor (and not carrying a heavy load).

Illiteracy: Barbarians are the only characters who do not automatically know how to read and write. A barbarian must spend 2 skill points to gain the ability to read and write any language the barbarian is able to speak.

Uncanny Dodge: At 2nd level and above, the barbarian retains his Dexterity bonus to AC (if any) if caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible attacker.

Possessions: *Potion of heroism*, +1 greataxe, large wooden shield of arrow deflection, chainmail shirt

"Grandmother," Seer of the Obok

Quote: "May the storm take you all ..." (hideous cackle followed by a distant thunderclap)

Background: Feared and respected, Grandmother brings visions and wisdom to the Han from their storm god.

Appearance: Grandmother is an old woman who leans heavily on a staff. She compulsively fingers her amulet, while her sharp eyes take in everything around her.

Roleplaying Notes: Grandmother uses her mystical abilities to heal the wounded and support those in battle, and she scribes to keep the Han informed as to the goings on in the Kadaichi hill range.

Goals: Grandmother pursues her own unfathomable ends within the Han *obok*, pushing Lu'at toward leadership of the Han.



6th-Level Human Adept

Hit Dice: 6d6+6 (27 hp)

Initiative: -1 (Dex)

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 10 (-1 Dex, +1 deflection)

Attacks: Quarterstaff +2 melee

Damage: Quarterstaff 1d6-1

Face/Reach: 5 ft. x 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +10

Abilities: Str 8, Dex 8, Con 13 (15), Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 13

Skills: Alchemy +4, Heal +7, Intimidate +5, Listen +5 (when near familiar), Spellcraft +4, Scry +4, Spot +5 (when near familiar)

Feats: Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Iron Will, Scribe Scroll

Alignment: Chaotic Neutral



Familiar: Grandmother has a toad familiar named Favorite Son. She considers her familiar to be the reincarnation of her favorite son, felled twenty years ago by Zhang Han in a duel for leadership of the *obok*. He has Alertness, Improved Evasion, Share Spells, Empathic Link, Touch, and Speak with Master. This familiar has a natural armor of +3, and an Intelligence of 8. As a toad, he also has the special ability to give Grandmother a +2 Constitution bonus when they are within one mile of each other, which is already worked into her stats.

Spells: (3/3/2) Grandmother has the following spells prepared. The DC to resist her spells is 13 + the spell level.

0 Level —*cure minor wounds* x2, *detect magic*, *read magic*

1st Level —*cause fear*, *command*, *sleep*

2nd Level —*cure moderate wounds*, *web*

Possessions: *bowl of scrying*, *potion of heal*, *potion of heroism*, *potion of invisibility*, *amulet of the sheltered mind* (see below), *ring of protection* +1

"Favorite Son," Toad Familiar



Diminutive Magical Beast

Hit Dice: 6d8 (13 hp)

Initiative: +1 (Dex)

Speed: 5 ft.

AC: 14 (+1 Dex, +3 natural)

Attacks: —

Damage: —

Face/Reach: 1 ft. x 1 ft./0 ft

Special Qualities: Alertness, Empathic Link, Improved Evasion, Share Spells, Speak with Master, Touch

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +7

Abilities: Str 1, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 8, Wis 14, Cha 4

Skills: Alchemy +4, Heal +7, Hide +21, Intimidate +5, Listen +5, Scry +4, Spellcraft +4, Spot +5

Challenge Rating: 1/10

Alignment: Neutral

Alertness: While in the presence of her familiar, the familiar's master gains the Alertness feat, giving her a +2 bonus to Listen and Spot checks.

Empathic Link (Su): The master and familiar can communicate telepathically to a distance of up to one mile.

Improved Evasion (Ex): If subjected to an attack that allows a Reflex save for half damage, the familiar takes no damage if it makes a successful saving throw and half damage even if the saving throw fails.

Share Spells: The familiar's master may have any spells she casts on herself also affect the familiar as long as it is within five feet.

Speak with Master: A familiar and master can communicate verbally as if they were using a common language, though others cannot understand the communication without magical help.

Toad Familiar: A toad familiar's master gains +2 to her Constitution score.

Touch: The familiar can deliver touch spells for its master.

New Wondrous Item: Amulet of the Sheltered Mind

Legends of the sway a wizard can wield over hearts and minds abound in these Eastern lands. To protect themselves, those cautious souls within the imperial courts and some wealthy merchant bands prize these charms that ward against the effects of enchantments. A simple metal disk with a geometric pattern inscribed on its face, the amulet provides a +4 sacred bonus to resist enchant-

ment spells of up to 3rd level. Numerous fake amulets also circulate in trade, as it is difficult for the unschooled to discern the difference.

Caster Level: 5th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item; **Market Price:** 6,600 gp; **Weight:** 2 lb.

Typical Han Warrior (30)



2nd-Level Human Barbarian

Hit Dice: 2d12+2+3 (18 hp)

Initiative: +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

Speed: 40 ft.

AC: 11 (Dex)

Attacks: Battleaxe +4 melee

Damage: Battleaxe 1d8+2

Face/Reach: 5 ft. x 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +0

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 10

Skills: Handle Animal +2, Intimidate +2, Intuit Direction +1, Ride +4, Wilderness Lore +3

Feats: Improved Initiative, Toughness

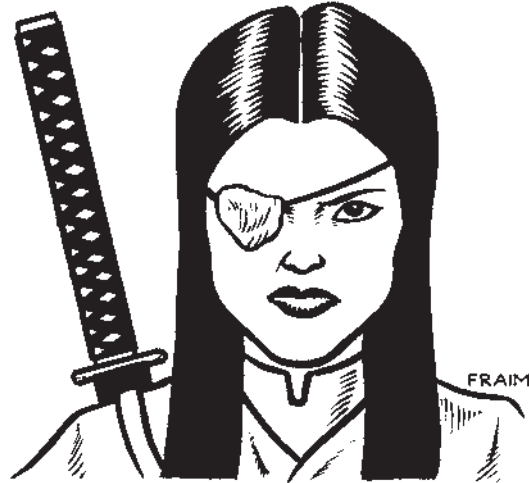
Alignment: Chaotic Neutral

Possessions: A worn and bloody battleaxe



Relic Seekers

Akane the Seasoned Scout



Quote: “Remember your bargain, *ronin*. Sumitomo would be most displeased should you disturb the burial effects of the emperor’s ancient kinsmen. If Sumitomo is displeased, I am displeased ...”

Background: Among the people of this island, Akane has garnered renown for slaying many wizards and sorcerers. Enslaved to a cruel court magician at an early age, Akane had a mean character beaten into her. With a disturbing moral indifference, Akane takes on jobs that promise to exercise her skills in putting spellcasters and their minions to excruciating death. She has joined forces with Sumitomo as a chance to stay in practice. She does not know Sumitomo practices magic and seeks artifacts for personal use.

Appearance: Akane lost an eye to a horned *oni* — an ogre mage — in the northern mountains a year ago. Her simple patch reminds her of the proper distance she must maintain between herself and her prey. When speaking, she tends to be terse and unfriendly.

Roleplaying Notes: Akane shows begrudging respect to *samurai*, monks, and fellow hunters. In the presence of obvious wizards, she demonstrates a barely controlled rage as she remembers the pain of her youth. She views most of the world as hostile and only finds peace in the course of a hunt. If Akane witnesses the awakening of the Alchemist, she will recognize her as being an *oni* because of her previous run-in with such a creature.

Goals: Akane wants the PCs to honor their end of their bargain. She jealously keeps eye on any treasures found

within the *kofun*. Once cursed with the hunger ward, Akane makes a dangerous party member — the hunger slowly undoes the constraints of honor that normally keep her hostile nature in check.



5th-Level Human Ranger

Hit Dice: 5d10+10 (38 hp)

Initiative: +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 12 (Dex)

Attacks: *Katana* +4 melee and *wakizashi* +4 melee, or light crossbow +7 ranged

Damage: *Katana* 1d8+1 and *wakizashi* 1d6+1, or light crossbow 1d8

Face/Reach: 5 ft. x ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +2

Abilities: Str 13, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 9

Skills: Climb +2, Heal +4, Intimidate +1, Intuit Direction +2, Knowledge (nature) +2, Listen +4, Move Silently +4, Ride +3, Search +4, Spot +2, Wilderness Lore +4

Feats: Alertness, Ambidexterity, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (*katana*), Improved Initiative, Track, Two-Weapon Fighting

Alignment: Lawful Evil

Favored Enemy: Akane gains a +2 bonus to Bluff, Listen, Sense Motive, Spot, and Wilderness Lore checks when using these skills against humans, and a +1 bonus against *oni*. The same bonus applies to weapon damage rolls against creatures of these types.

Spells: (0/1) Akane's caster level is 2nd level. The DC to resist her spells is 12. She has prepared the following spell:

1st Level — *summon nature's ally I*

Possessions: *katana* (masterwork bastard sword), *wakizashi* (masterwork short sword), and light crossbow

Sumitomo the Relic Seeker

Quote: "Among their own kind, the Han do not seem quite so savage and cruel. Indeed, they are one of the few tribes that actually deals with us rather than trying to kill us outright so as to plunder our caravans more easily ... Only desperate straits must have brought them so far across the sea. Nothing is quite so dangerous as desperation."

Background: Sumitomo worked as a minor bureaucrat in the capital city before stumbling on a cache of ancient scrolls in a forgotten temple. The scrolls comprised a number of reports from an old band of demon hunters made to the emperor centuries ago. Discovering ambition and courage, Sumitomo located the sites the hunters referenced in hopes of finding discarded magical treasures. Using the spoils of his earliest investigations, Sumitomo gathered a team to aid him in finding and looting more remote sites. On one such expedition last year, Sumitomo met up with the Han on the mainland.

Appearance: Five years ago, Sumitomo's frame testified to his years of cultivated apathy and indulgence. Inspired by the demon hunters' scrolls, Sumitomo has become physically robust and his demeanor considerably excited. He is dressed in a noble's robes to fool the PCs into helping him plunder the *kofun*.

Roleplaying Notes: The head of a very speculative endeavor, Sumitomo holds together his expedition with enthusiasm and shrewd planning. After discovering the ancient jewels the jikininki wear, he drives a hard bargain to get the player characters involved in the vault's discovery. Sumitomo is aware of Akane's prejudice towards the arcane and has managed to keep his own dabbling in the occult a secret thus far; he may warn the characters of her intolerance towards spellcasters before they start on their expedition to the *kofun* if they impress him as being reasonable people. For the most part, Sumitomo is inclined to keep his word if given.

Goals: Tempted by the thrill of adventure, Sumitomo works tirelessly to unearth the secrets of the hidden vault. Using talent, straight dealing, or just plain treachery, Sumitomo plans to exploit this site fully before moving on to the next mentioned in his scrolls.



5th-Level Human Expert (Bureaucrat)/1st-Level Wizard

Hit Dice: 5d6+5 + 1d4+1 (26 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 12 (deflection)



Attacks: Light crossbow +3 ranged, or Dagger +2 melee

Damage: Light crossbow 1d8, or dagger 1d4-1

Face/Reach: 5 ft. x 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +6

Abilities: Str 9, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 10, Cha 12

Skills: Appraise +6, Alchemy +6, Diplomacy +5, Concentration +5, Forgery +6, Knowledge (arcana) +9, Knowledge (history) +8, Search +3, Sense Motive +3

Feats: Combat Casting, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Knowledge: arcana), Skill Focus (Knowledge: history)

Alignment: Neutral

Shield Other (Sp): Just as the spell of the same name, this ability of Sumitomo's lesser shield guardian transfers half the damage dealt to him to the shield guardian if they are within 100 feet of each other. This ability does not provide the spell's AC or save bonuses.

Spells: (3/2) Sumitomo knows the following spells; those prepared are marked with asterisks. The DC to resist his spells is 12 + the spell level.

0 Level — *detect magic***, *read magic**, *daze*, *light*
1st Level — *identify**, *hypnotize**, *phantom image*

Summon Familiar: Sumitomo has not summoned a familiar, since the lesser shield guardian he found

in one of his treasure-hunting excursions is more than adequate for his needs; see below for its stats.

Possessions: Sumitomo's spellbook, *amulet of the sheltered mind* (see page 58), *scroll of dispel magic*, *scroll of knock*, *shield guardian amulet* (see below), *wand of magic missiles*, *potion of cure light wounds* x2, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, scrolls of the demon hunters, light crossbow

Lesser Shield Guardian



Medium-size Construct

Hit Dice: 6d10 (33 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 20 (+10 natural)

Attacks: Slam +8 melee

Damage: Slam 1d6+4

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., Guard, Find Master, Shield Other

Face/Reach: 5 ft. x 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +2

Abilities: Str 18, Dex 10, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 1

Climate/Terrain: Any land and underground

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement Range: 3-5 HD (Medium-size), 6-9 HD (Medium-size), 10-14 (Medium-size)

Construct: Constructs usually have no Intelligence scores and never have Constitution scores. A construct is immune to mind-influencing effects and to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, and necromantic effects. Constructs cannot heal damage on their own, though they can be healed. A construct is not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage

or drain, or energy drain. It is immune to any effect that requires a Fortitude save (unless the effect also works on objects). A construct is not at risk of death from massive damage, but when reduced to 0 hit points or less it is immediately destroyed. Since it was never alive, a construct cannot be *raised* or *resurrected*. Constructs have Darkvision with a range of 60 feet.

Find Master (Su): No matter the distance, as long as they are on the same plane, the shield guardian can find the wearer of the *shield guardian amulet*.

Guard (Ex): The shield guardian moves swiftly to defend the amulet wearer, blocking blows. All attacks directed at the amulet wearer suffer a –2 deflection penalty; this bonus has already been worked into Sumitomo's stats.

Shield Other (Sp): Just as the spell of the same name, this ability transfers half the damage dealt to the amulet wearer to the shield guardian if they are within 100 feet of each other. This ability does not provide the spell's AC or save bonuses.

