



TREACHERY'S REWARD

by Rich Wulf

Tara Mura is an indistinct village near the coast. The peasants who live here work hard and do their best not to attract attention from outsiders and few even know the tiny village exists. The road bends near Tera Mura as the sun slowly sets. Despite its boring appearance, it may have a passable inn.

A chill breeze blows through the pass, a strange, restless howl upon the wind. The moon hovers fat and full in a sky too bright for a night such as this. Perhaps it would be best to find a safe place to spend the evening.

The dry snap of a twig echoes in the high rocks to one side of the road. Several figures in black masks appear from behind the rocks, wielding rough-hewn spears. They outnumber the PCs two to one.

Perhaps this won't be such a boring trip after all.

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Requires the use of the
Dungeons & Dragons® Player's Handbook,
Third Edition, published by
Wizards of the Coast®



This adventure is designed to be easily dropped into your existing *Third-Edition D&D* campaign. It can be run in a just a single session and makes for an excellent evening's gaming. To prepare yourself to run the adventure, you should read it completely at least once to familiarize yourself with the material. You may wish to photocopy the map in the center of the book for ease of use as well. The text on the back of the book can be read to your players to introduce them to the adventure. After that, you're ready to begin. Good luck!

DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS

This module requires the use of the *Dungeons & Dragons® Player's Handbook, Third Edition*, published by Wizards of the Coast.® You won't be able to run this adventure without it.

GAME MASTER BACKGROUND

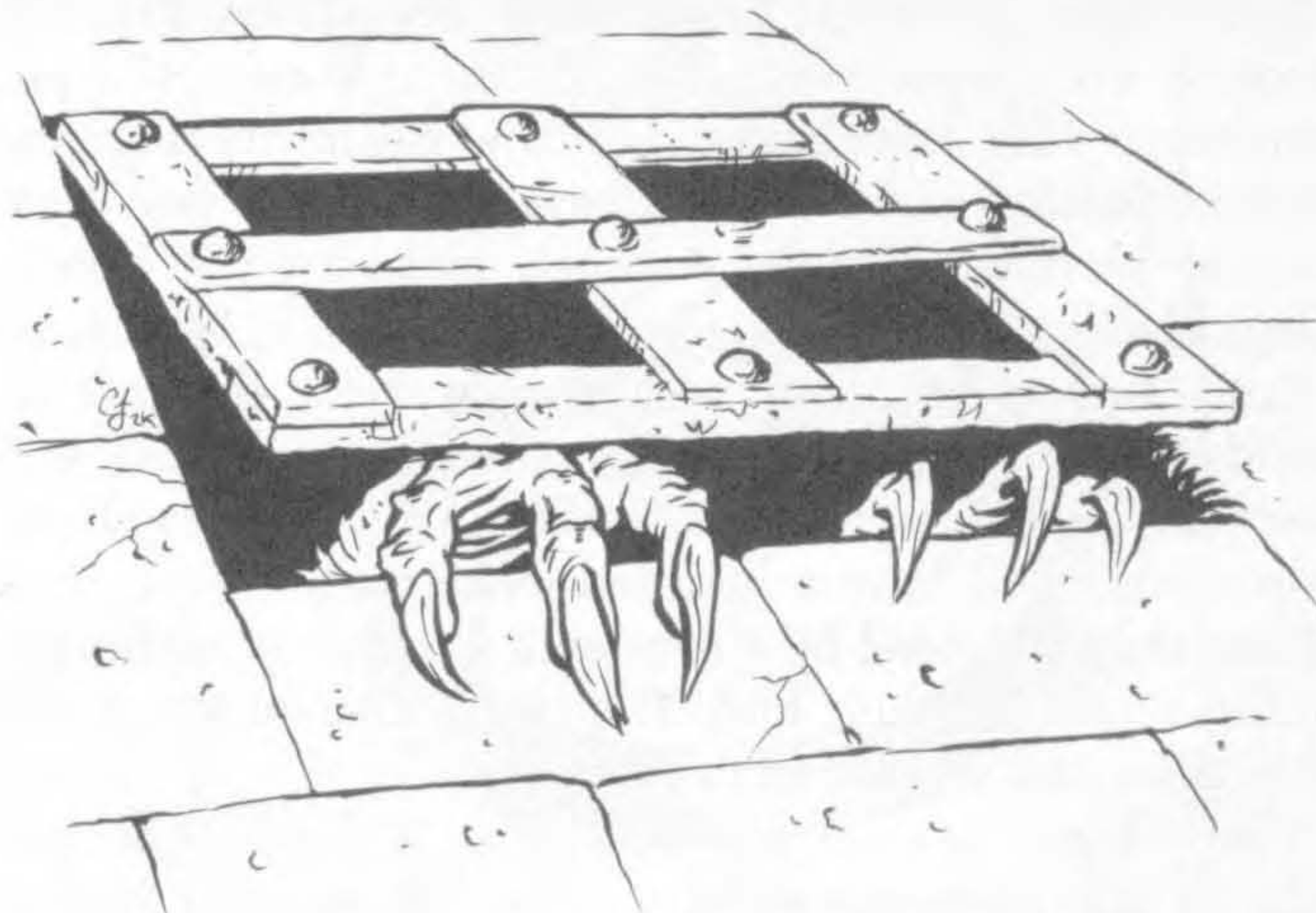
Treachery's Reward is an adventure for three to four PCs, levels 1–3. It can be used as a stand-alone adventure, or worked into an ongoing campaign. It is intended specifically for an Oriental setting.

Many strange spirits dwell in this world. Some of the strangest have humble origins. One legend tells of a cat that survives its own curiosity long enough to become a powerful spirit. Sometimes called an elder cat, it grows a long, split tail and ghostly fur. These vain creatures have a strange power over the living and the dead, and penchant for mischief. They call themselves *nekomata*.

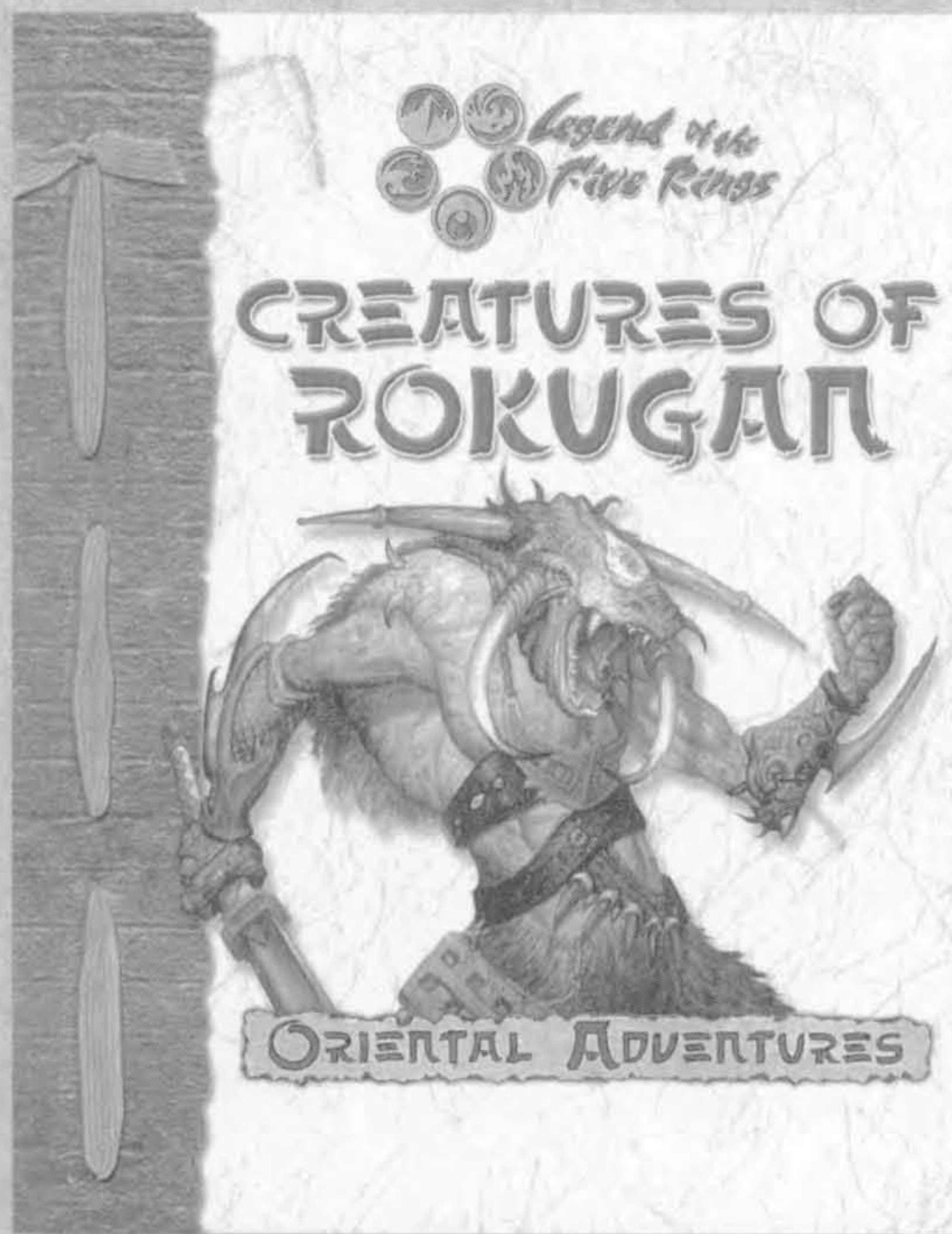
Ienobu, the governor of Tara Mura (Codfish Village), was a corrupt and evil man. The peasants knew no samurai would hear a peasant's testimony against Ienobu. Exposing his crimes would risk bringing even greater cruelty upon the village. Six months ago, the peasants of the village disguised themselves as bandits and murdered Ienobu on the roads outside Tara Mura.

Unnoticed, the ghostly Ritsuko watched from the bushes. The powerful *nekomata* immediately concocted a sinister plan. Animating the dead samurai's body, she sent his zombified corpse to the village. Claiming to be a demon of vengeance, the new Ienobu demanded the peasants pay for their crime. Ritsuko commanded them to abandon their lives as fishermen and become true bandits. Convinced that the *kharma* of their terrible crime caused Ienobu to return and punish them, the peasants reluctantly obeyed.

Ritsuko cares nothing for *kharma* or justice. She cares only for her slaves' glorious tribute. She remains in the village for as long as they believe the farce, enjoying their fear. She has made contact with a number of evil spirits from the forest, inviting them to live in Ienobu's home and share the bounty of Tara Mura.



“Mostly Harmless...”



Illus. Jim Pavelec © AEG 2001.

Shape-shifting tricksters. Foul name-bound demons from the depths of *Jigoku*. Blood-drinking ghosts. Faceless spirit armies driven only by vengeance. These are only a few of the creatures that stalk the Jade Empire. *Creatures of Rokugan™* is a great resource for *Legend of the Five Rings™* fans or *Dungeons and Dragons®* players looking for something new and unexpected.

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Requires the use of the *Dungeons and Dragons® Player's Handbook, Third Edition* and *Oriental Adventures™*, published by Wizards of the Coast®



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BANDITS

On a lonely road through rough terrain the PCs are suddenly surrounded by a large group of masked bandits (peasants). There are twice as many bandits as PCs.

Peasants: Com 1; CR 1/4; SZ M (humanoid); HD 1d4 +1; hp 3; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (+2 Dex); Atks Half-spear +1 melee (1d6 + 1), dagger +1 melee (1d4 + 1); SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 7; AL LN. Skills: Profession (fisherman) +6, Spot +4; Feats: Alertness.

The bandits wear peasant outfits and woolen masks dyed deep red with fish blood. They attempt to intimidate the PCs, attacking only if their demands are ignored. They demand coins and gems only; the bandits know better than to take a samurai's weapons. The bandits cover their trail, but a character with the Track feat can make a Wilderness Lore check (DC 17) to follow their circuitous route back to the village. If the PCs surrender any amount of wealth, the bandits retreat without further conflict.

Captured bandits confess to being from Tara Mura, and proceed to beg for forgiveness, claiming that they were forced to steal to provide tribute for "the demon lord of Tara Mura." They also reveal that Lord Ienobu is the ranking samurai in Tara Mura. He was "killed by bandits" six months ago, then returned from the dead shortly thereafter. Some of the peasant bandits are from the same group that killed Ienobu, but the captives avoid revealing this to the PCs. A Sense Motive check opposed by a peasant's Bluff check reveals that they are hiding something. Captured peasants do not willingly return to Tara Mura, terrified of Ienobu's punishment for violating his command to repel outsiders.

TARA MURA (CODFISH VILLAGE)

Tara Mura (hamlet): Leadership: Monstrous; AL CE (leaders) LN (population); 100 gp limit; Assets 475 gp; Population 200; Population: Human. Authority Figures: Ienobu, Medium-size zombie; Ritsuko, nekomata (see New Monster section). Others: Ashihei, male human ComI, village blacksmith; Mayoka, female human MnkI, priestess.

Tara Mura is a coastal village, named for the fish so abundant in the area. The peasants are extremely poor and after years of extortion by Ienobu, most are suffering from malnutrition. All have a haunted look in their eyes; they believe they are ruled by a demon, a kharmic punishment for the murder of their lord. The small boats at the docks are in disrepair, unused in months.

The villagers are wary of strangers. If the PCs do not make an effort to conceal themselves, the peasants swiftly report the PC's arrival to Ienobu. A Spot check (DC 15) reveals a peasant hurrying toward the castle in the hills. Assume any bandits who escaped the earlier battle alerted the creatures in the castle to the PC's existence.

There is no inn in the village. If the PCs wish to spend the night, their three most obvious options are in a peasant's home, the local temple, or Ienobu's castle.

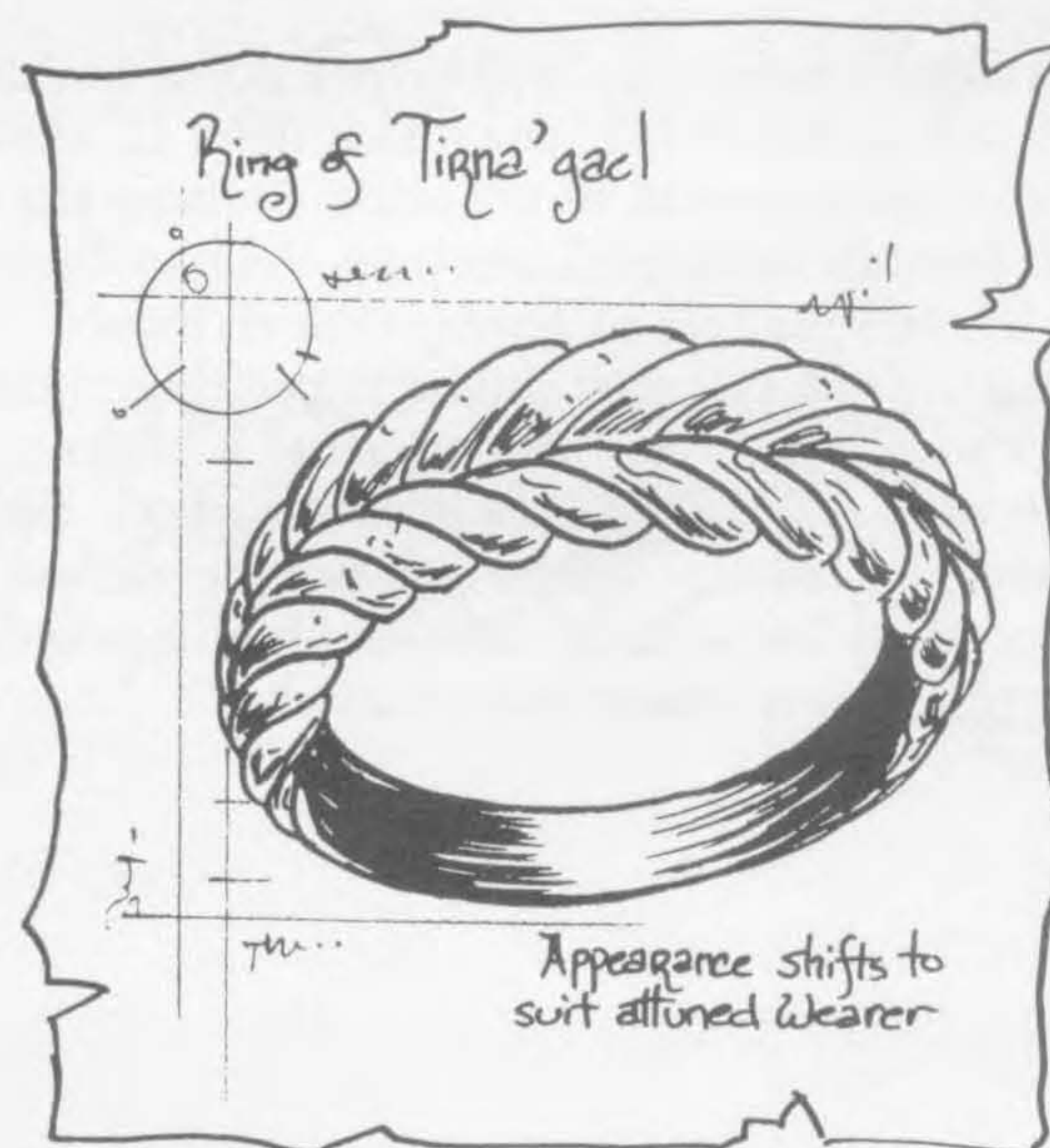
STAYING IN THE VILLAGE

Characters staying in the village are referred to Ashihei, the blacksmith, who offers a room for three coppers. Ashihei is a stocky older man with steel gray eyes. Though he seldom smiles and speaks mostly in monosyllabic grunts, he is a pious and thoughtful person. Ashihei's wife and three sons died of plague years ago, so he has plenty of room for visitors (he explains this quite bluntly). Ashihei did not participate in Ienobu's murder, and is ashamed of what has become of Tara Mura. Though he knows Ienobu is evil, he refuses to leave the village. He believes that he deserves punishment for failing to stop the others from slaying Ienobu. He tells the PCs everything he knows, but only if they ask. He thereafter encourages them to leave as quickly as possible before they become entangled in the dark fate of Tara Mura.

STAYING AT THE TEMPLE

The PCs may seek accommodations in the local temple to the Fortunes. Mayoka, the temple's only priest, is a pretty young girl with a muscular build, shaven head, and nervous grin. She offers the meager accommodations if they seem honorable. If they seem untrustworthy, she insists the temple has no room.

Mayoka's former master, an elder monk named Daisetsu, was slain by Ienobu after the evil samurai returned from the grave (Ritsuko saw the elder monk as a threat). Mayoka was meditating in the hills at the time, and thus survived. Mayoka does not believe Ienobu was sent by the gods; she believes he is merely an evil spirit to be exorcised. She has sketched a crude map of Ienobu's castle, but knows she cannot defeat the undead samurai alone and practically begs the PCs to aid her.



Mayoka, human Mnk1: CR: 1; SZ M (humanoid); HD 1d8+2; hp 10; Init +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Imp Init); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 Wis); Atks Kama +3 melee (1d6+3); SA Stunning attack 1/day (DC 12), unarmed strike; SQ Evasion; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +4; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 11; AL LG. Skills: Climb +7, Escape Artist +5, Hide +6, Jump +4, Move Silently +6, Tumble +6. Feats: Exotic Weapon Proficiency (kama), Improved Initiative.

STAYING AT IENOBU'S CASTLE

If the PCs demand free shelter, the peasants respectfully suggest that perhaps their lord, Ienobu, would be better equipped to accommodate them. Skip on to the description of the castle itself. Consider Ritsuko aware of the PC's approach.

ANGRY MOB!

If the PCs stay in the village, Ritsuko (as Lord Ienobu) commands a mob of torch-wielding peasants to kill the PCs. In the middle of the night, these villagers surround the PC's refuge, screaming for blood. There are at least sixty commoners wielding clubs, knives, and sharp stones.

A Listen check (DC 10) by any PCs still awake detects the mob 3d4 rounds before it arrives. (DC 15 for sleeping PCs, up to 1d4 rounds before it arrives.) If the PCs are staying with Ashihei, he wakes them and delays the mob for five rounds, giving the PCs a chance to escape. If the PCs are in the temple, Mayoka has an escape tunnel prepared, leading to the woods 100 feet away. The tunnel is narrow, so any PCs using it must make a successful Escape Artist check (DC 15) every twenty feet. One character may enter the tunnel per round, and may only progress further down the tunnel if the character in front of them makes their check successfully. Obese or claustrophobic PCs are unable to use the tunnel, and PCs wearing heavy armor has to drag it behind them or find another means of escape.

A successful Diplomacy check (DC 25) (the mob is Hostile) could convince the mob to back down. Shifting the mob's mood to Indifferent convinces them to escort the PCs out of town instead of attacking. Shifting the mob's mood to Friendly or Helpful convinces them to disperse, so long as the PCs promise to destroy the evil Ienobu.

Alternately, the PCs may choose to openly confront the mob. An powerful display of weaponry or magic can cow the mob with a successful Intimidation check (DC 20). Characters can aid one another, as per the normal rules. Killing peasants has an equal chance of frightening the rest away or instantly inciting them to attack.

KYUDEN TARA MURA

Upon their first approach to the castle, read the following.

A small castle is nestled in the hills, straddling a small river. The castle has been cunningly built to resemble a part of nature rather than an obstruction of it. It has no outer wall or other defenses, as there would be little reason for enemies to attack a village as insignificant as Tara Mura. Thick vines cover much of the castle. The wood has turned a dark, slimy black. A strange distant howl, not the howl of guard dogs but of some other, stranger beast rises on the wind. Something foul has overcome the castle of Lord Ienobu.

The castle is foreboding, but does not radiate evil to magical detection. The reason for the castle's hideous state is more mundane. Since Lord Ienobu's return, many of his servants have fled in terror from the strange spirits haunting the castle.

If it is night time, lights glimmer within the house, both in the main building and on the second floor. Some of the lights seem to flicker a pale green.

1. THE BRIDGE

A successful Listen check (DC 20) traces the howling sounds to this wooden bridge. The nekomata despises dogs, and thus replaced the castle's guardians with a pack of fierce baboons tamed by its hypnotic powers. There **baboons (hp 8)** are feasting on the body of a sea tortoise stuffed beneath the bridge. As soon as they detect the PCs, they rush to the attack. If the PCs are prepared, this may give them a round or two of ranged attacks before the primates can close. The baboons fight to the death.

Baboons: CR 1/2; SZ M (animal); HD 1d8 +1; hp 8; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 40 ft., climb 30 ft.; AC 13 (+2 Dex, +1 natural); Atks Bite +2 melee (1d6+3); SQ Scent; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 4; AL N. Skills: Climb +13, Listen +5, Spot +5.



2. ENTRANCE HALL

When the PCs enter, read the following:

This room appears to once have been used to entertain visitors, but has been thoroughly vandalized. Small stools have been broken and scattered about. The kakemono paintings have been slashed apart, and apparently chewed. A samisen lays broken in the corner. Only a small black dragon statue to the right of the door seems unharmed.

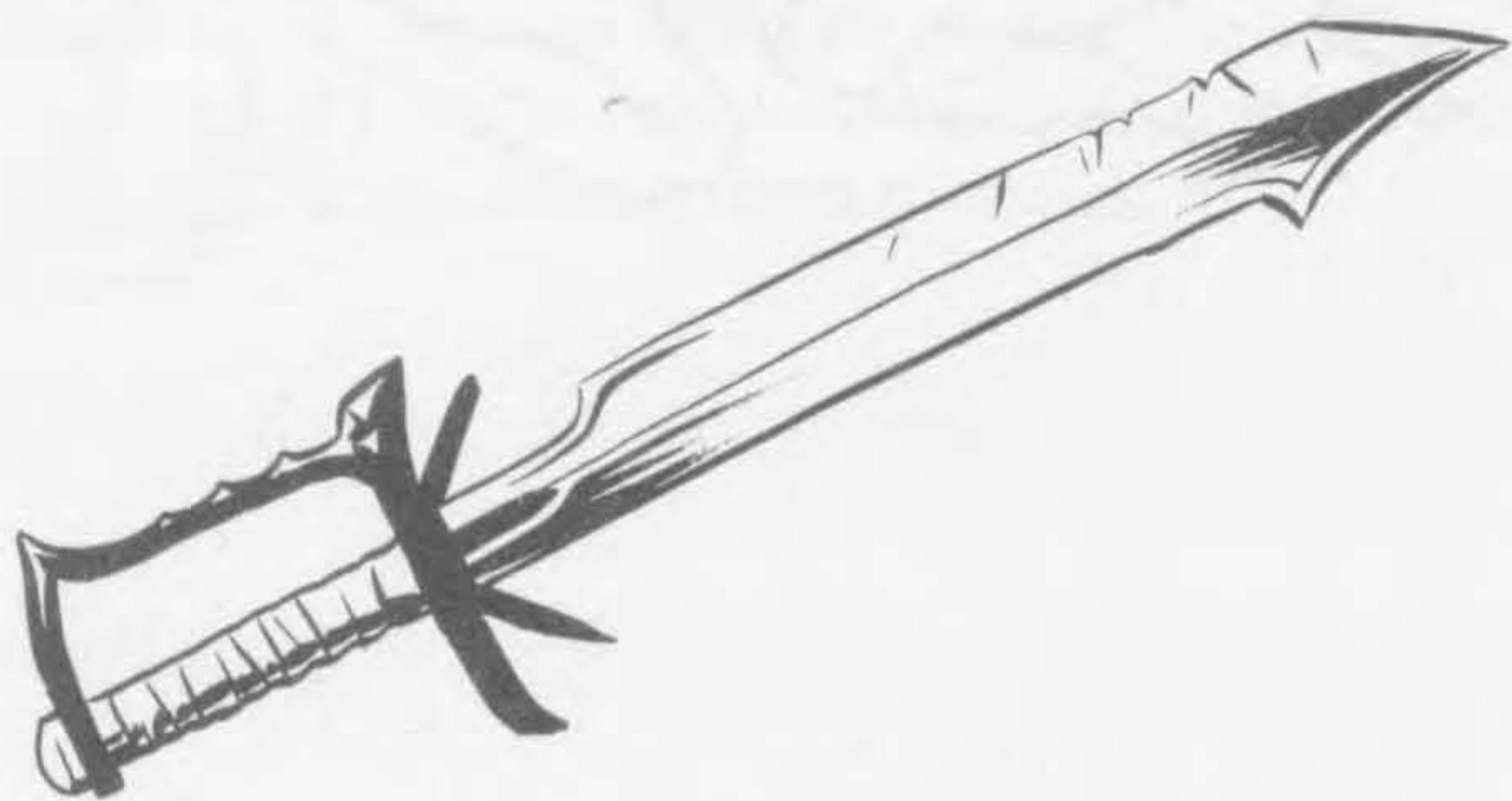
A young boy in the silken robes of a servant kneels in the middle of the floor, his face blue as he clutches at a black and red scrap of silk tied tightly about his throat. He claws the air and gasps, reaching toward you for help.

This is Hiro, the last sane human servant in the castle. Earlier today, he decided to make his escape. A haunted kimono — one of two fiendish animated objects serving the nekomata — captured the boy. The other object is the wooden dragon statue, which ambushes the PCs if they help him. (The PCs must make a Spot check vs. DC 20 to avoid being surprised by the statue unless they specifically state suspicion toward it.) Unless the PCs assist Hiro, the boy passes out from lack of oxygen in two more rounds. The kimono then snaps his neck. If Hiro dies, the kimono helps the dragon attack the PCs. If one of the animated objects is destroyed, the other flees to join the nekomata on the second floor.

Small Fiendish Animated Objects (2, statue and kimono):

CR 1; SZ S (construct); HD 1d10; hp 6, 4; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +2 natural); Atks Slam +1 melee (1d4); SA Constrict (kimono only), smite good (+1 damage against good opponent once/day); SQ Hardness 5 (statue only), construct qualities, cold/fire resistance 5, SR 2; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will -5; Str 10, Dex 12, Con -, Int 3, Wis 1, Cha 1; AL CE.

If Ritsuko was aware of the PC's approach, Hiro warns the PCs that peasants from the village have come to defend the castle. Otherwise, he has no information other than that something truly terrible inhabits the eastern wing of the castle. A few of the servants went there and did not return, so he advises the PCs to avoid it unless they prepare themselves well for battle. After delivering this warning, Hiro thanks the PCs and flees into the hills if he is capable.



3. LONG HALLWAY

This hallway has many open windows to admit fresh air. This hallway is never illuminated, though paper lanterns hang from the ceiling. The floorboards creek eerily, but there are no real dangers in this hall.

4. KITCHEN

This unused kitchen stinks of filth and excrement. The gnawed bones of animals lay scattered on the floor. A figure dressed in rags lurches to its feet, wielding a rough club and staring with wild eyes. It screams inarticulately and swings at the air, as if trying to drive you away. Its skin is filthy, its hair tangled, but its eyes seem disturbingly human.

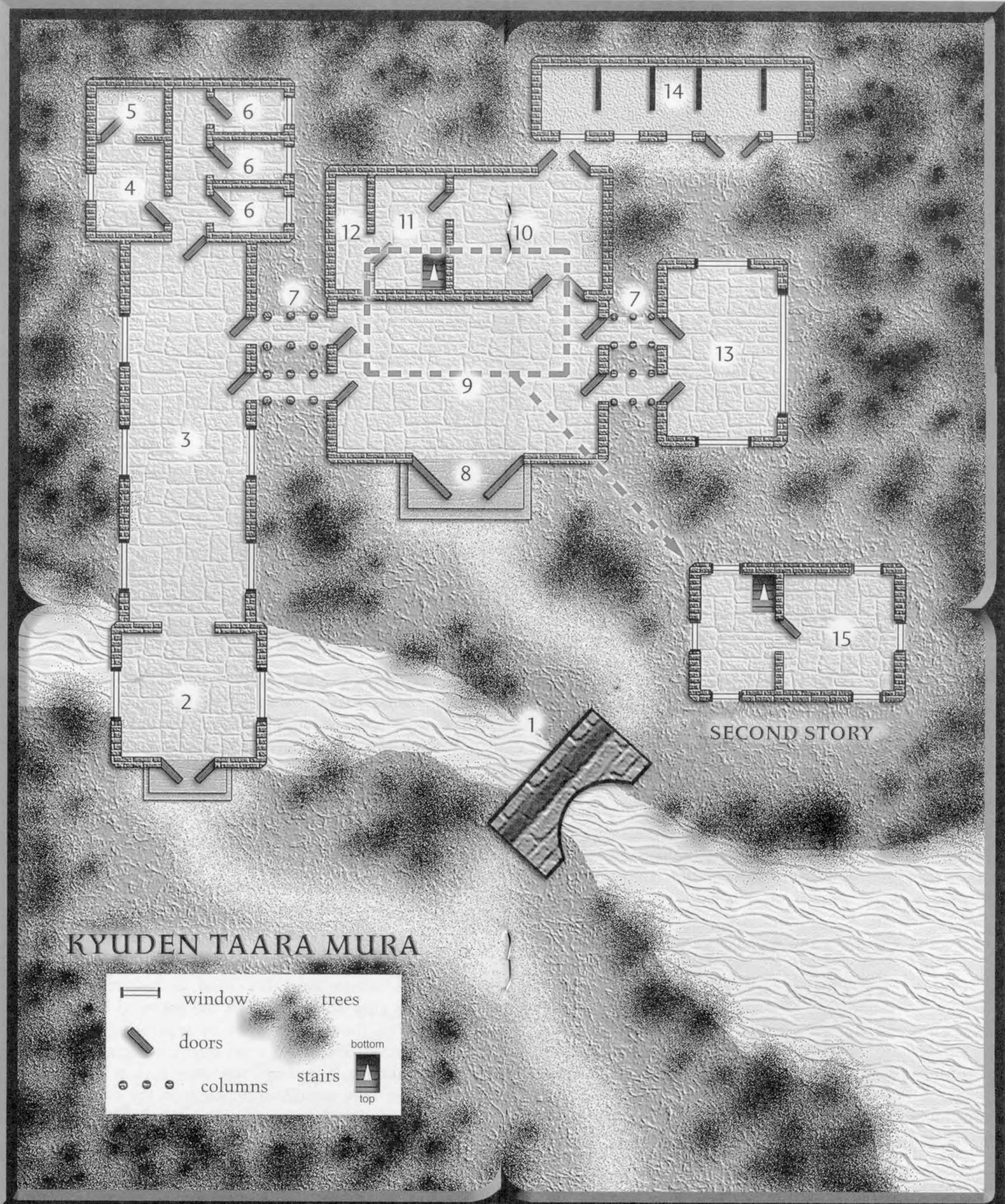
Kikujiro was once Lord Ienobu's doshin, a peasant who kept order in the village. The nekomata takes personal pleasure in hypnotizing this man regularly, implanting bizarre suggestions and gradually driving him insane. He strikes out against anyone that enters his "den."

Kikujiro, Ftr1: CR 1; SZ M (humanoid); HD 1d10+2; hp 12; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Imp Init); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+1 Dex, +3 ashigaru armor); Atks Club +4 melee (1d6+3); SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will -4; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 3,* Cha 7; AL CN. Skills: Climb +7, Jump +7, Ride +5. Feats: Cleave, Improved Initiative, Power Attack.

* Kikujiro's Wisdom is indicative of his current mental state. He effectively has 10 points of temporary Wisdom damage, which must be cured to restore his sanity. If the PCs cure Kikujiro (with the *potion of lesser restoration* hidden in the east wing or by separating him from the nekomata's influence for ten days), he agrees to assist the PCs. Kikujiro is perhaps the only person who knows of Ritsuko's true nature, and that it is the cat spirit that is the true danger here.

5. STORAGE

This room contains food and supplies. Most of it is rotted or has been consumed by Kikujiro. Ritsuko subsists entirely off of food delivered by the villagers.



KYUDEN TAARA MURA

	window		trees
	doors		stairs
	columns		bottom top

* Permission to photocopy pages 8-9 is granted for personal use only.

6. SERVANT QUARTERS

These cramped quarters are empty. One looks to have been occupied recently but the others have been long vacant. There is nothing of interest in these rooms.

7. OPEN HALLWAYS

The walls of these hallways are open to the air. Paper lanterns hang, burning with strange green light even during the day. These lanterns can be doused normally, but if the PCs leave this area and return, they find the lanterns burning green again. A Knowledge: Arcana check (DC 15) reveals that the light is due to a corruption in the elements. This is tied to a fiendish fire elemental that flits from lantern to lantern. (If the PCs are stealthy, they may notice the wisp-like creature.) If the elemental detects the PCs approaching, it hides in a random lantern and attacks them from behind.

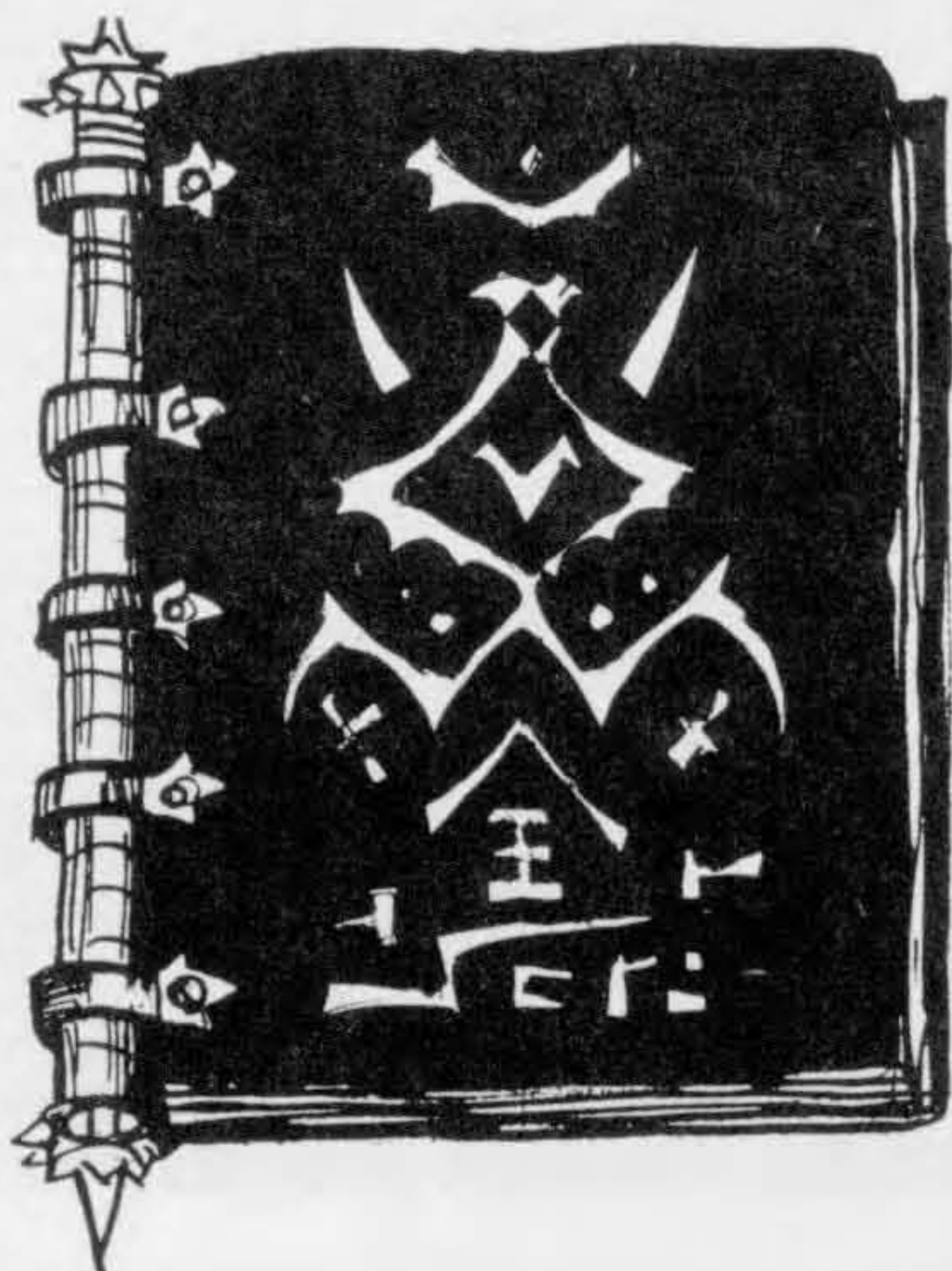
Small Fiendish Fire Elemental: CR 1; SZ S (elemental); HD 2d8; hp 11; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Imp Init); Spd 50 ft.; AC 15 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +3 natural); Atks Slam +3 melee (1d4 and 1d4 fire); SA Burn, smite good (+2 damage against good opponent once/day); SQ Elemental, fire subtype, cold resistance 5, SR 4; SV Fort +3, Ref +7, Will +0; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 4, Wis 11, Cha 11; AL CE. Skills: Listen +5, Spot +5. Feats: Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse (slam).

8. FRONT STAIRS

If Ritsuko is aware of the PCs' approach, it stations two peasants here. Each carries a shortbow and ten arrows. They crouch in the shadows (Hide +2) and wait for a clear shot. If attacked in return, they run into the hills (they know better than to enter through the front door). The doors behind them are barred from the inside (break DC 25; busting down the door likely sets off the trap in the next room).

9. ARCHER TRAP

This is the main receiving room. Archer statues stand at each corner of the darkened room, facing the center. If any creature weighing more than fifty pounds steps through



the door, a pressure plate causes the statues to aim in that direction and fire (once each). If the trap is detected, this can be avoided in a variety of ways. Characters can enter behind the cover of shields, they can disarm the traps (must be done at each statue, Balance check (DC 15) to cross the floor without activating the pressure plate), or the PCs could simply drop and crawl (causing the traps to fire harmlessly over their heads).

Arrow Traps (4): CR 1; +10 ranged (1d6/x3 crit); Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20). Note: 200-ft. max range, target determined randomly from those in its path.

10. GALLERY

A maze of shoji screens criss-cross the room. A number of kakemono (silk paintings) hangs from them. All of these paintings are new, and all feature paintings of cats. (Ienobu, under Ritsuko's control painted these.) A Listen Check (DC 10) detects a subtle mewing. There are over a dozen cats prowling about this chamber, keeping an eye on the PCs. They are ordinary cats, come to honor the elder cat spirit. They do not attack, but merely watch and report what they see to Ritsuko. The paintings (24 total) are worth up to 20 gp each to an interested buyer.

11. TINY BONES

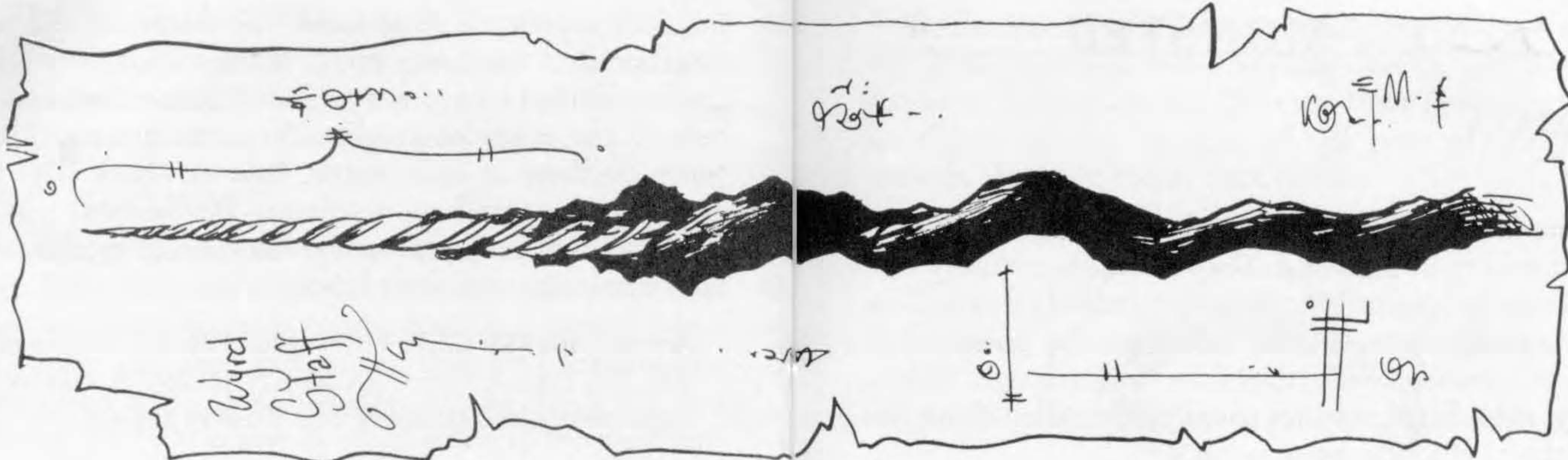
Five feline skeletons protect this room. They hide in the rafters and attack the PCs as they enter. This battle serves little purpose other than to make noise and alert Ritsuko above.

Cat Skeletons (4): CR 1/6; SZ T (undead); HD 1/4d12; hp 3; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Imp Init); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+2 size, +1 Dex); Face 2-1/2 ft. by 2-1/2 ft.; Reach 0 ft.; Atks 2 Claws +0 melee (1d2-2); SQ Undead, immunities; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +2; Str 6, Dex 12, Con -, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 11; AL N. Feats: Improved Initiative.

The west wall is a clever secret door. It seems to be an ordinary wall, with a window viewing the outside. This is actually a fantastic painting. A skylight in the ceiling above the painting allows sunlight to enter, causing the painting to subtly change color with the time of day. Any close study of the painting (Search check DC 15) reveals the lack of dimension and perspective. Reaching through the window finds the latch to open the door, just beneath the sill.

12. ARSENAL

Once the arsenal of Lord Ienobu, this room contains three shortbows, seventy arrows, twelve spears, and a full daisho (katana and wakizashi, effectively a masterwork bastard sword and a masterwork short sword). A trap door in the floor (Search check DC 20) reveals a small box containing a potion of hiding, a scroll of mage armor, and a Quaal's feather token (tree).



13. EAST WING

A gaping, eight foot wide hole has been smashed in the ceiling in this section of the castle. The walls are covered with a sticky brown substance. A few desiccated lumps stick here and there in the fluid, screams of silent agony frozen upon the faces of these unfortunate souls

A rogue giant wasp, arguably more deadly than even the nekomata, gutted the east wing. During the day, the wasp is 30% likely to be hunting in the hills. Read the following:

If the wasp is present, the PCs hear a buzzing as it prepares to attack. If they flee immediately, it attacks one character and returns to its nest. If they remain here, it fights to the death.

Giant Wasp: CR 3; SZ L (vermin); HD 5d8+10; hp 30; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (good); AC 14 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +4 natural); Face 5 ft. by 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; Atks Sting +6 melee (1d3+6 and poison); SA Poison (1d6 Dex/1d6 Dex, DC 18); SQ Vermin; SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 18, Dex 12, Con 14, Int -, Wis 13, Cha 11; AL N. Skills: Intuit Direction +7, Spot +9.

The wasp has accumulated a fair amount of incidental treasure, scattered about the wax-covered corpses of its victims. After twenty minutes of searching, the PCs find 305 gp, a masterwork quarterstaff, a potion of lesser restoration, two potions of cure light wounds, a wakizashi (short sword) +1, and a noble outfit that would be quite presentable after a thorough cleaning.

14. STABLES

There are no horses remaining, and the building has fallen into disrepair.

15. LORD IENOBU'S CHAMBERS

Nightingale floors, wooden floors designed to creak noisily when trod upon, cover the western half of this floor. The floors grant a +10 circumstance bonus to all Listen checks against those attempting to Move Silently upon them. Lord Ienobu, a zombie dressed in great armor, waits behind the door along with any other denizens of the castle that escaped (except the wasp and other peasants).

Ritsuko was warned of the PC's arrival, she has three peasants armed with spears here. Though the peasants have orders to attack the PCs, the nekomata doesn't seriously expect them to make a difference. She hopes that at least one of them will die so she will have a new body to animate in case the PCs destroy Ienobu.

Ienobu batters his opponents with his fists while threatening to rain the holy wrath of the gods of death upon the PCs for daring to attack him in his home (through Ritsuko's *ventriloquism*). Ritsuko, the nekomata, hides in the rafters, holding her action to animate another corpse once Ienobu falls (choosing heavily armored PCs first). If things go badly, Ritsuko flees.

Lord Ienobu: CR 1/2; SZ M (undead); HD 1d12+3; hp 15; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 18 (-1 Dex, +2 natural, +7 partial armor); Atks Slam +2 melee (1d6+1); SQ Undead, partial actions only; SV Fort +0, Ref -1, Will +3; Str 13, Dex 8, Con -, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 1; AL N. Feats: Toughness.

Ritsuko's treasures lie about Ienobu's bed chamber. The PCs find three bolts of fine silk (worth 300 gp each), a ruby ring worth 75 gp, 1,200 gp, 300 sp, a *ring of sustenance*, and a bag containing three *kharmic coins* (see New Magic Item).

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

When all is said and done, the PCs may feel it is their responsibility to decide the fate of Tara Mura. Do they report the murder of Lord Ienobu? Do they take pity on the poor peasants and conceal the crime? What of Ritsuko? If the cat spirit survived, it is extremely likely she'll wish to wreak vengeance upon the PCs as well as recover those impressive items in Ritsuko's hoard that were stolen by the villagers.

The results of this adventure could have interesting implications for a long-term campaign.

NEW MONSTER

NEKOMATA

Tiny Fey

Nekomata are a mischievous tricksters, delighting in the pain and misery of mankind. They resemble ordinary cats with extremely long tails, split in two halfway down their length. Legends claim that all cats have the potential to become nekomata should they live long enough. When traveling, these lazy creatures usually ride curled about the neck of their zombie puppet.

Nekomata speak common and Sylvan, and can use speak with animals with other felines at will.

COMBAT

Nekomata are subtle and canny opponents, seldom entering combat personally. They prefer to act from the shadows through their undead accomplices. Nekomata often use ventriloquism to appear to speak through an animated corpse, pretending to be the spirit of that person returned to life. Nekomata use their puppets to make all manner of ridiculous demands, extorting treasure and servitude, to as many innocents as possible before killing them outright.

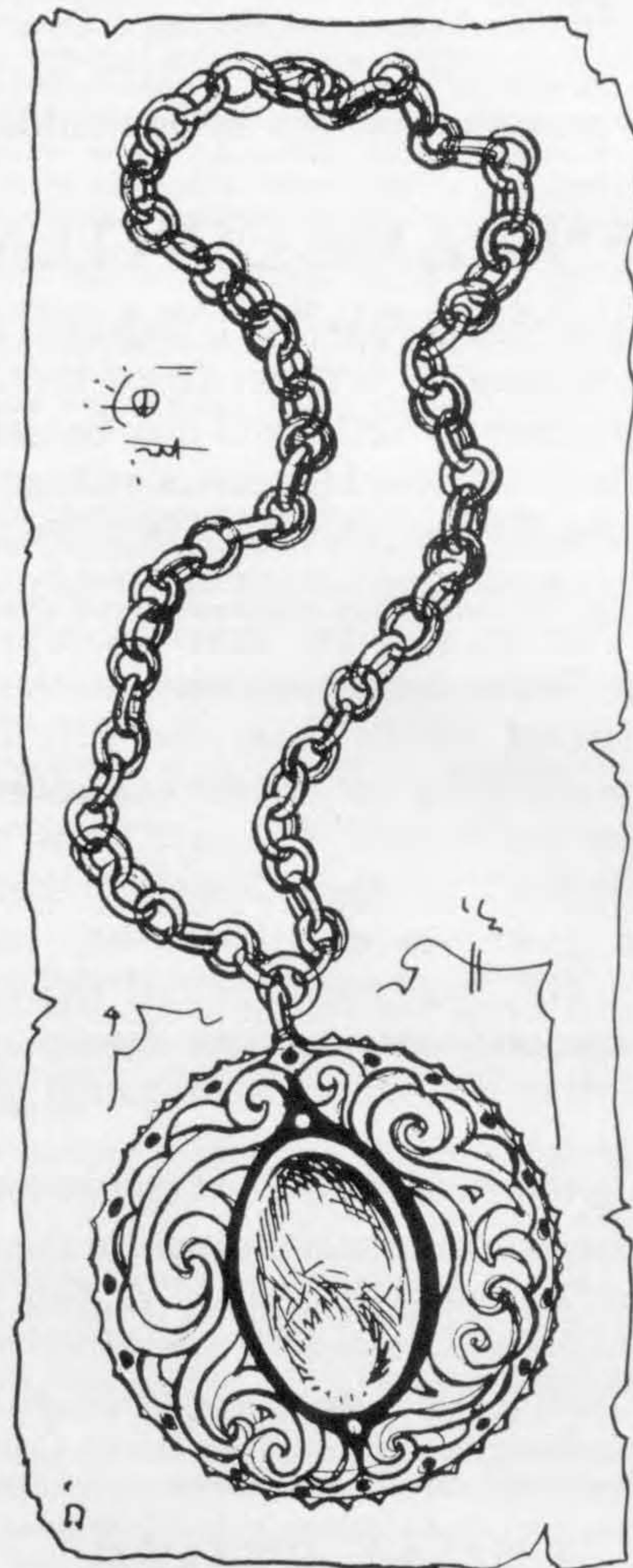
If confronted directly by a larger opponent, Nekomata use their spell-like abilities to distract their enemy so they can flee.

Corpse Dance (Su): A nekomata can control one corpse of up to large size. This creature is treated as a zombie in all ways (including vulnerability to being turned or rebuked). Animating a new corpse is a standard action, but the nekomata thereafter directs its actions as free actions. Unlike normal zombies, corpses animated by a nekomata tend to dance and caper about in a hideous parody of life. A nekomata can only control one corpse at time. If the nekomata is slain, its zombie becomes inanimate as well.

Spell-like abilities: at will — ghost sound, hypnotism, silent image, ventriloquism. 1/day — color spray. These abilities are as the spells cast by a 4th level sorcerer (save DC 13). A nekomata may use its hypnotism abilities through the gaze of its zombie servant, if it chooses.

Hit Dice: 4d6+4 (18 hp)	Skills: Balance +14, Bluff +9,
Initiative: +4 (Dex)	Climb +11, Hide +13, Listen
Speed: 40 ft.	+8, Move Silently +14,
AC: 16 (+4 Dex, +2 size)	Spot +8
Attacks: 2 claws +6 melee,	Feats: Weapon Finesse
bite +1 melee	(claw, bite)
Damage: Claw 1d2-3, bite 1d3-3	Climate/Terrain: Any land
Face/Reach: 2-1/2 ft. by 2-1/2	Organization: Solitary, Family
ft. /0 ft.	(2-5), or pack (11-20)
Special Attacks: Corpse dance,	Challenge Rating: 2
spell-like abilities	Treasure: Standard
Special Qualities: Scent	Alignment: Usually chaotic evil
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +8, Wis +5	Advancement: 6-9 HD (Tiny)
Abilities: Str 5, Dex 18, Con 12,	10-12 HD (Small)
Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 14	

Skills: Like an ordinary cat, nekomata receive a +4 racial bonus to Hide and Move Silently checks, and a +8 racial bonus to Balance checks. They use their Dexterity modifier for Climb checks. *In areas of tall grass or heavy undergrowth, the Hide bonus rises to +8.



NEW MAGIC ITEM

KHARMIC COIN

These powerful magical trinkets are golden with a slight red hue, and shimmer at all times as if reflecting moonlight. They otherwise resemble ordinary coins. Their power can be invoked simply by being carried on one's person so long as their bearer knows what the coins can do. A coin allows its owner to re-roll one attack roll, saving throw, or skill check and keep the better result. Each coin can be used once, then it turns into lead and loses its power. When crafted, a pouch of kharmic coins includes ten coins. A pouch found randomly contains 1d10 coins.

Caster level: 8th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, divination; *Market Price:* 14,000 gp for a set of ten or 1,400 gp each; *Weight:* —.

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THE LAST DEFENDER

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