

ADVENTURES
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SECRETS OF THE CRAB™



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WIZARDS OF THE COAST



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VIGILANT PART ONE

The Kaiu Wall.

It was one of the mighty wonders of the Empire, a wall that stretched the entire length of Rokugan's southwestern border. It was over one hundred feet high in places, peppered with guard towers, siege engines, and countless vigilant samurai. The twelve largest towers, the famous Kaiu Towers, were each the size of a large castle. Looking upon such an extraordinary monument to the power of the Empire, Miya Hatori felt very small in comparison.

"I have never seen the Shadowlands before," Otomo Taneji mentioned, joining his master at the edge of the wall. To the southwest, the barren landscape of the Tainted lands stretched out before them. Among the heavily armored guards and the grizzled shugenja of the Kaiu Wall, the two men looked distinctly out of place. Their fine silken robes drew more than a few surly gazes. One Crab sneered at the wakizashi on Taneji's belt as if he pitied the weapon.

"Pray that you will never have reason to see the Shadowlands so closely again," Hatori replied, smiling weakly at his assistant.

"Sekkou has gone forth to announce our arrival to Hida Kuon," Taneji said, eyes still fixed on the horizon.

"How is he?" Hatori asked.

"Confused," Taneji replied. "As am I."

Hatori looked at Taneji curiously. "Confused?"

"What are we doing here, my lord?" Taneji asked, tearing his eyes away from the Shadowlands and looking at Hatori pointedly. "These lands are dangerous. The span of stone we stand upon was conquered by the Horde mere months ago. Daigotsu's armies could return at any time. This is no place for important men."

Hatori smiled sadly at Taneji. "That is exactly why we have come," he said. "After all our travels... all the manipulations and political maneuverings of the last few months... I have brought us here to remind us what is truly important." Hatori rested one hand on the parapet, feeling the strong stone beneath his fingers. "We write our tales, we transcribe our histories, we play our political games and tell ourselves that we do so for the good of the Empire. But this is what truly insures that Rokugan will be here, tomorrow and the next day. The stones of the Kaiu Wall and the courage of the Crab Clan."

Taneji studied Hatori cautiously. "It is unlike you to wax poetic, Hatori-san," he said, looking around carefully. "What is the real reason you are here? This has to do with the Shadowed Tower, doesn't it?"

Hatori looked at Taneji placidly. "The Scorpion warned me to stay out of their affairs. Why would I ignore their warnings?"

Taneji sighed. "So I can take it as coincidence that not a month after we stumble onto a den of black magic near the heart of a Great Clan, we find ourselves in the home of a clan of warriors dedicated to eradicating the Taint in all its forms?"

"Until I can speak to the tsukai-sagasu, yes, it is a coincidence," Hatori said, his gaze suddenly intense.

"The Witch Hunters?" Taneji asked in a quiet voice. "You would bring them into this?"

"This is their duty, is it not?" Hatori asked.

Taneji looked worried. "Hatori-sama, I have heard tales of the tsukai-sagasu. They are brutal, violent men, even for Crab. Dealing with them may be as deadly as dealing with the Shadowed Tower itself. They may find you complicit simply for your knowledge of the affair."

Hatori looked at Taneji for a long moment then sighed. "Tales?" he said, looking toward the Shadowlands again. "Very well. If you wish

to share tales, then let me share one with you. You may have heard this tale before. Once, long ago, there was a man who made it his duty to create balance in a world of chaos. He was a great man, but he could not do this task alone. His brothers and sisters agreed to help him, and each assumed a duty to aid him in his task. One sister became an artist and created beauty and culture. One brother became a scholar and accumulated the wisdom of the universe. One sister became an explorer and set out to master the world. One brother became a recluse and made it his duty to master the mysteries that lie within the self. One brother became a warrior so that the way of bushido would never be forgotten. One brother became a spy so that his brother's secrets would be well hidden. The last brother, however, did nothing to help build the Empire. Instead, he took those that would follow him and marched to the southwest. They came here, where the armies of Fu Leng gathered to rend and crush and tear apart the world. This brother made it his duty to stand against the darkness, to defend what his brothers and sisters created, and to always stand apart from it. This was Hida, the First Crab."

"I know the origins of the Empire," Taneji said defensively.

"But have you ever considered what it means?" Hatori asked. "The other clans do not realize the sacrifices the Crab have made. We call them uncultured louts, but if it were not for them, what culture would the Empire have? We call them brash, warlike, destructive, but is it not their duty to make war? Even my Lion cousins step away from combat from time to time, but the Crab have no such choice. The Shadowlands are always here, and they never rest."

"Consider me reprimanded for overlooking the Crab Clan's noble sacrifice," Taneji said, his tone faintly confused. "I still fail to see what this has to do with the Shadowed Tower, or why we cannot leave well enough alone."

Hatori's eyes narrowed. "I have faced the Shadowlands before, Taneji," he said. "My point is that the forces of evil do not 'leave well enough alone.' The Shadowed Tower, for all its delusions of independence and vaunted goals, still serves the Horde. We cannot defeat such an enemy. Even Yojiro may not be able to defeat such an enemy. But I know who can."

Hatori rested his hand on the Kaiu Wall again, the eternal barrier that protected the Empire against the Shadowlands. With a final meaningful look at Taneji, he looked southwest once more.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Secrets of the Crab™ is for players and GMs who are interested in adding depth to their vision of the Crab Clan. Unlike *Way of the Crab*™ which detailed the history and major institutions of the clan, this book gives finer detail to the different families, their organization, holdings, vassal families, and lesser-known schools.

Secrets of the Crab™ is broken down into chapters as follows:

The Introduction deals with the Crab Clan's history, some general customs that the clan as a whole embraces, and several new mechanical options appropriate for Crab characters.

Chapters One through Six each deal with an individual family: the Hida, Hiruma, Kuni, Kaiu, Toritaka, and Yasuki. Each chapter presents information on the family's holdings, including several points of interest for each holding and adventure hooks for GMs; major NPCs within that family; descriptions of the vassal families that serve them; and new rules for characters from that family.

Chapter Seven: The Tower of Fear delves into the Kaiu watchtower permanently Tainted by Fu Leng's power. All the information needed for a GM to use the Tower of Fear as the centerpiece of an adventure is presented.

Chapter Eight: Behind the Veil details the darkest, most unpleasant truths about the Crab. Every clan has some shame buried deep within its histories, and this chapter explores the tragedies and secrets that the Crab hide from everyone, even themselves.

CUSTOMS OF THE CRAB CLAN

BIRTH

For a clan that has seen as much death as the Crab, every birth is cherished. When a pregnancy is about to come to term, whether samurai or peasant, the local shugenja renews all blessings upon the house. During childbirth a guardian always stands vigilant over the house, wielding a gohei (holy wand) to keep away goblins, spirits, and other demons that might want to harm or corrupt the child. In the case of important samurai, this guardian is always a shugenja. With lesser samurai, the shugenja hands off the gohei to a lesser priest or monk. In the case of peasants, the shugenja merely says a few words of blessing and then passes the gohei to the father. Though the status of eta is no better in Crab lands than anywhere else, a monk or lesser priest still drops by during childbirth to say a few words and bless the home. After all, a corrupted eta can be just as dangerous as any samurai.

A practice that was invented by the Kuni, but has grown popular with the entire clan, is that of a wish doll. A doll is stitched with only one eye, and a wish is made upon it. The spirit of the doll then helps to make the wish come true, but bad fortune follows if the other eye is not added to the doll when the wish is granted. Almost all Crab mothers stitch a doll shortly before childbirth and importune the doll spirit to guard their child. These dolls are left in places of honor in the child's room — not playthings but vigilant watchmen. When the child comes of age, the second eye is added. Typically the doll is then returned to the mother as a keepsake of childhood.

GEMPUKKU

Confronted with war and death from the day of their birth, young Crab samurai are prepared to face the trials that await them as they begin their adult lives. This is just as well, for the gempukku of the Crab are among the most grueling and

difficult in the empire. This is an issue of pragmatism with the Crab, for if the new samurai are not truly tested before taking their place upon the Great Wall they weaken the clan and the Empire.

The Hida family is particularly demanding in its assessment of potential samurai. Applicants must demonstrate a wide variety of martial skills, mental fortitude, and resistance to physical injury. If the prospective samurai's sensei approves, the student may venture into the Shadowlands. Upon returning with the head of a Shadowlands creature the student becomes a samurai. Though this gempukku practice is known throughout the Empire, it is somewhat less well known that the sensei pays careful note not to what creature the student slays, how quickly he returns, and how he goes about the hunt. Students who bring back the head of an oni or other dangerous creature are given important responsibilities on the Wall. Students wise enough to seek out groups of other potential samurai and enter the Shadowlands in a group are groomed as officers. Students who return with the head of a Nezumi are cursed as fools and cast out of the clan.

The Hiruma are also stringent in their demands, emphasizing cunning and speed over brute strength. The ability to enter the Shadowlands and return with valuable information is valued even more highly than the ability to return with an oni's head.

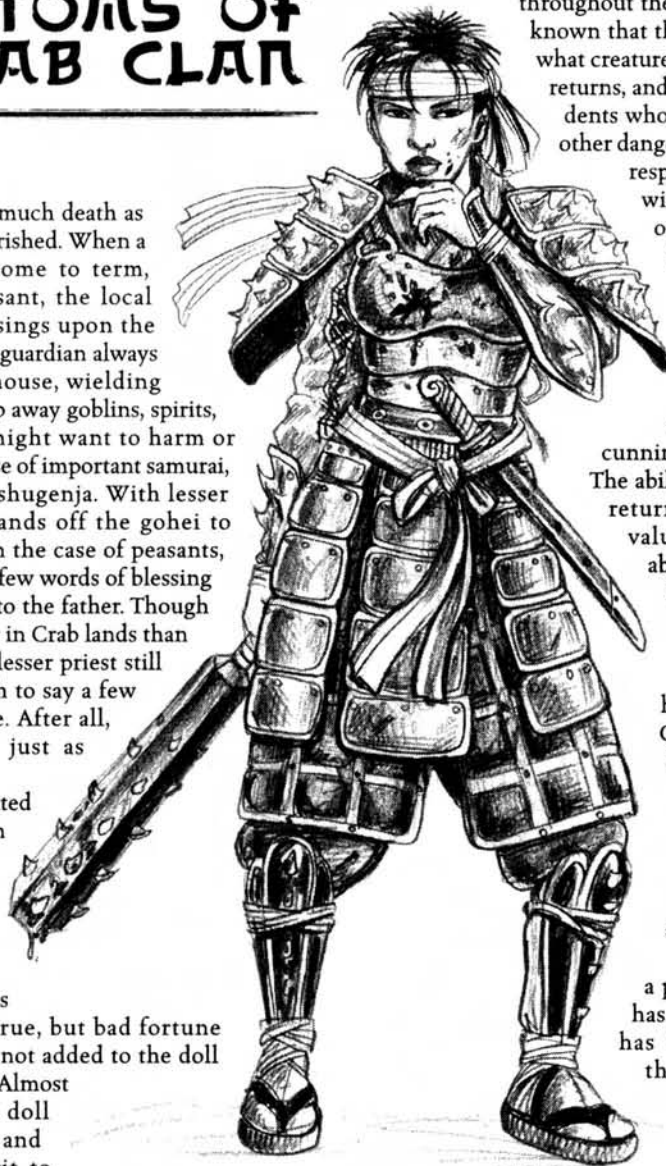
In the past, any brave young soul who was capable of bringing back an item from the lost Hiruma Castle was guaranteed his or her majority. Since Hiruma Castle has been retaken, this has been amended. Now any young samurai who can bring back a weapon or piece of armor from one of the many heroes who were corrupted at Voltturnum immediately gains a place of honor among the family.

Among the Kuni, gempukku is a personal thing. As each student has a different teacher, each teacher has his own requirements before the student can enter adulthood.

Passage is never easy. Many elder Kuni have a secret rivalry: the Kuni who can devise the most difficult test for his apprentice

gains the esteem of his contemporaries, assuming that the student passes the test.

The Kaiu and Yasuki families rarely demand excursions into the Shadowlands as part of gempukku (though some martially-inclined Kaiu still indulge in the tradition). Though the Kaiu and Yasuki disagree on most everything else, their gempukku ceremonies are very similar. Both families require rigorous written and oral tests in which students must display knowledge of family techniques and practices. The teachings are vastly different, but the methodologies are remarkably similar.



COURTSHIP

Samurai who reach the age of twenty-two still unmarried are granted arranged marriages. Unlike clans who have official matchmakers, Crab parents usually settle the arrangement. Sometimes parents without a shred of sentimentality (a common trait for the Hida) turn to the local magistrate to arrange a wedding. Crab marriages tend to be brief, solemn affairs followed by boisterous celebration. Whether peasant or samurai, the people of the Crab lands are quite fond of drink, and Crab marriages are a fantastic excuse to indulge in an extraordinary amount of drinking. The drinking contest that followed Hida O-Ushi's wedding (won by the famed warrior Hida Yagimaki) has become a subject of legend as popular among the Crab as the Day of Thunder or the Battle of the Cresting Wave. Many Crab look forward to Hida Kuon's wedding with great anticipation, hoping to create new legends.

SUPERSTITION

Living as close to the Shadowlands as they do, the Crab have a great number of superstitions. Many of these superstitions have a basis in fact, for the war against corruption often requires strange weapons. Some are merely the product of fear and boredom, but they are observed with the same zeal. The Crab are a stubborn people, and do not change their ways easily even in the face of logic.

Many Crab believe it is unlucky to leave home without a piece of jade. Most denizens of Crab territory consider this simple common sense, as one never knows where the Taint may be encountered. With the recent shortage of jade, most peasants and lesser samurai carry a fingernail-sized sliver set into a ring, bracelet, or other piece of jewelry. Those who enter the Shadowlands are always given at least a finger of jade. Jade that has already begun its transformation into obsidian is never wasted, but only the desperate share jade that has already become partially Tainted. It is considered unlucky to carry a piece that became Tainted during someone else's journey, for you are carrying their bad luck as well as your own.

The Crab naturally see obsidian as an unlucky stone (even ordinary obsidian not created by the Taint). Wearing obsidian jewelry is in bad taste in a Crab household, and may even insult the lord of the house. Stepping on a piece of obsidian with your bare foot is a bad omen.

The samurai who guard the Wall become used to the strange landscape of the Shadowlands. For those who spend more than a year on the Wall, there is no doubt that the land is alive and filled with a seething hatred; some even come to be able to predict its moods. Periods of peace and quiet in the Shadowlands are regarded with great trepidation among seasoned veterans, for the Shadowlands is always the most peaceful directly before a large attack or outburst of strange phenomena. The saying that a situation is "too quiet to risk sleeping" most likely originated in Crab lands.

As Osano-Wo, Fortune of Fire and Thunder, was the second Crab Champion, lightning is a good omen in Crab lands. A person who is struck by lightning and survives is said to be blessed by Osano-Wo, able to see the future. This does not include lightning summoned by magic, and a shugenja who tries to gain a vision of the future by tricking the Fortunes in such a manner will invoke the Thunderer's wrath.

Earthquake Fish Bay is home to countless spirits and mythical beasts. Foremost among these is Ryujin, King of the Sea, a great dragon made of coral. Throwing scraps of coral into the sea during the expedition shows respect for Ryujin and his kingdom, and will insure calm weather during the journey.

WAR

War is a part of life for a Crab samurai. Seasoned Crab warriors are quick to point out that their clan has more experience in warfare than even the Lion, the most acclaimed warriors of the Empire. The fact that the Crab spend so much of their time fighting an enemy the Empire would rather ignore only makes the Crab throw themselves into combat more zealously.

Perhaps the first tradition all Crab samurai learn to practice is that of beheading. A Crab always beheads the dead when possible, including his own fallen comrades. In the Shadowlands, of course, this is done so that the dead cannot rise as zombies. (The Kuni have recorded incidences of headless corpses returning from the dead, but these are exceedingly rare.) Even outside the Shadowlands the Crab behead their fallen enemies and comrades whenever they can. Ostensibly this is because the Crab believe that the Taint can strike anywhere, in any place. Its effect on the Crab's reputation as fearsome, merciless warriors is only a bonus.

The Crab are notorious for their lack of reliance on the katana, the samurai's typical weapon of choice. It is not that Crab have less respect for the katana than other clans. All Crab samurai train with the katana and most can use it quite well. As the katana symbolizes the soul of the samurai, a large number of Crab disdain using their katana against Tainted opponents. To draw one's katana against corruption is to expose one's soul to Jigoku; the katana should be used against human opponents only. Of course, not all Crab samurai share this belief. Many would just as quickly use a katana against a goblin as any other weapon. Some Crab choose the tetsubo or no-dachi out of pragmatism, as the larger weapons are typically more effective against armored Shadowlands beasts.

Crab samurai have quite a reputation outside their clan as ugly brutes, and this reputation is not undeserved. The healing unguents the Kuni family developed to prevent the Taint from infecting open wounds invariably cause those wounds to heal with hideous scars, considered badges of courage. A Crab warrior without scars is often nicknamed "Crane-face" by his comrades. On the Wall, where combat is most fierce, this is particularly evident. A warrior with no visible scars is distrusted, as other Crab assume he is either inexperienced or cowardly.

One of the strangest traditions of the Crab is that of the Twenty Goblin Winter. Whenever the clan has experienced heavy losses during the year, the Crab Champion may proclaim a Twenty Goblin Winter. Until the Crab Champion proclaims the Winter to be at an end (and this period has been known to last years beyond the actual winter in which it begins) any ronin seeking fealty in the Crab can do so by delivering twenty goblin heads to Kyuden Hida. By custom, the ronin is granted fealty, no questions asked. In reality, suspicious or dangerous ronin are usually given unimportant duties or immediately placed on the front lines where they will either learn their duty or die.

RETIREMENT

Crab samurai dread the life of a monk. The idea of turning away from one's duty to pursue a life of peaceful introspection is anathema to the Crab way of life. Crab monasteries are few, and most occupants are samurai forced into retirement due to debilitating injuries or insanity. Many Crab monasteries double as hospitals and asylums.

A more common fate for a Crab is a life of quasi-retirement to a position as sensei in one of the many Crab bushi dojo. This is seen as far more respectable than the pursuit of

enlightenment. A Crab who survives a lifetime fighting against the Shadowlands has a wealth of knowledge and experience to offer, and by training the next generation a samurai too old to fight can still contribute to the war effort.

FUNERALS

Funerals are a solitary exception to the Crab's usual disdain for ceremony. Death on the Wall is common, and each death is accepted with quiet respect. Funerals are elaborate affairs, usually celebrating the death and life of multiple samurai at once. In the case of large battles, such an act is not only practical, but it allows the Crab samurai to be remembered as they lived — as warriors and comrades. Crab funerals are punctuated, as most Crab ceremonies, with a period of heavy drinking, this time in celebration of the dead.

While Crab insult their living comrades with jovial familiarity, to speak ill of the dead is a grave offense. The only fault ever spoken of after death is cowardice. All else is forgiven once a soul has passed from the mortal realm. Visitors who accidentally insult a dead Crab find every Crab in the room suddenly turning their backs, quietly pretending that they no longer exist. If the visitor is truly unfortunate, the dead man's comrades or relatives will immediately demand a duel. The Crab Champion almost never refuses permission for such duels; to insult the dead is to insult what they have died for, and no Crab will endure an insult to his duty. The exception to this is the "voice after death," who is allowed to speak of the deceased as if he were still alive.

Prior to their deaths, some Crab warriors choose a friend or loved one to act as his "voice after death." This person is given a message that the Crab wishes to be said at their funeral. To ask another person to be one's voice after death is the ultimate gesture of trust and respect among two Crab; it is a bond some Crab take more seriously than marriage. It is an honor rarely given to a non-Crab. The voice after death is always given leave to speak during the funeral and treated with utmost respect. To question the deceased's choice of spokesperson is the same as speaking ill of the dead.

Koten, the Crab Ancestral Hall, is not as well known as the ancestral halls of the Lion Clan but it is still a treasured landmark. The halls of Koten are empty compared to those of the Lion Hall of Ancestors, for most of the greatest Crab heroes left no remains to mark their passing and their weapons are still in use by their descendants. Instead, the walls are inscribed with the tales of Crab heroes. It is not unusual for a voice after death to make a pilgrimage to Koten, to tell heroic tales of the dead to the lonely monks.

HISTORY OF THE CRAB CLAN

Hida's defeat: year 1

The Kami Hida is defeated in the Great Tournament, ensuring he will not become the first Emperor of Rokugan. After a brief conversation with Shinsei, the disgruntled Hida travels south with his followers and finds the Crab Clan in the great mountains near the Empire's southern border. Hida proclaims that anyone incapable of surviving in the brutal environment is unworthy of following him.

VASSAL FAMILIES

This book introduces a number of vassal families, lesser samurai who serve the greater families of Rokugan's clans. Though described in previous sourcebooks (such as *Winter Court: Kyuden Seppun™* and *Rokugan™*) these vassal families have never before been specifically detailed.

Vassal families occupy an unusual social position within the samurai class. Within the family and clan that they serve, they are recognized by their unique family name as a means of recognizing their distinctive service to the clan. Outside the clan, however, they are identified by the name of the family they serve. Favoring one's vassal name above the samurai family that one serves when speaking to an outsider is presumptuous and arrogant, implying that the individual presenting himself is so well known that the listener would be more familiar with his own lineage than that of the family he serves.

For example: Kakeguchi Reiha is a member of the Kakeguchi vassal family of the Hida. To all members of the Hida and other Crab families, she is known as Kakeguchi Reiha. In the Ikoma histories and to outsiders, however, she is known as Hida Reiha. When presenting herself to others outside the clan, Reiha may introduce herself as "Hida Reiha of House Kakeguchi" or simply "Hida Reiha of Kakeguchi." If a member of any other clan should visit Reiha in the Kakeguchi family estate in the shadow of Kyuden Hida, then she would be entitled to refer to herself by her vassal family name, for it is assumed the visitor realizes that he is in the lands of the Hida.

The Shadowlands are formed: year 11

Appearing suddenly to the south, endless armies of dark creatures spill into the Crab lands. Servants of Hida's fallen brother Fu Leng, these twisted creatures overwhelm Hida's forces and press into the Empire, threatening Hantei's rule only a short decade after his coronation.

The Day of Thunder: year 42

Somewhere deep in the Shadowlands, the Seven Thunders and their mentor Shinsei defeat Fu Leng. Among the Thunders is Hida Atarasi, Hida's son. Hida eagerly awaits his return, but Atarasi never appears and is presumed lost by all but Hida.

Defeat of Oni no Hatsu Suru: year 43

Three of Hida's most powerful followers, Kaiu, Hiruma, and Kuni, combine their abilities to locate and defeat Oni no Hatsu Suru, whose very touch brings never-ending pain. With the Oni's defeat, Hida gives each of his men the right to form their own family within the Crab Clan, creating the Kaiu, Hiruma, and Kuni families.

Hida abdicates as Crab Champion: year 63

Without warning, Hida declares that he is stepping down as Crab Champion in order to seek his son Atarasi in the Shadowlands. His second son, Hida Osano-Wo, takes control while his father begins preparing for the journey by leading hand-selected strike teams deep in the Shadowlands looking for signs of his son.

Hida Osano-Wo is murdered: year 97

Crab Champion Hida Osano-Wo, son of Hida Kisada and the Thunder Dragon, is killed by an assassin. His son Hida Kenzan is unable to leave his position guarding against the Shadowlands to avenge his father, but sends word to his brother Kaimetsu-uo, founder of the fledgling Mantis Clan.

YURUGINAI, THE CELESTIAL SWORD OF THE CRAB CLAN

The Celestial Sword of the Crab is perhaps the least frequently wielded of all the Celestial Swords. Its first wielder, Hida O-Ushi, carried it but preferred her trademark dai tsuchi. Hida Kuroda carried it briefly, but the weapon shattered during the Horde's conquest of the Kaiu Towers. Hida Reiha bore the shards of Yuruginai safely out of the fallen towers and brought them to the Kaiu family, where the sword was repaired at the legendary Kaiu Forge.

Now Yuruginai is stronger than ever. Hida Kuon carries the blade, though he has never used it. Kuon does not feel worthy of the weapon, and will not be until he finally faces his corrupted brother, Kuroda. On that day, Kuon plans to unsheath the sword and use it to free his brother's tormented spirit.

Yuruginai is an impressive looking blade. It is thicker than most of the Celestial Swords, and its handle and tsuba are intricately decorated. The blade's new saya is decorated with rare jade inlays, enchanted by the Kuni so that they will never tarnish in the Shadowlands. The blade is incredibly strong since its repair, and more than one blade (including a Kaiu steel blade) has been shattered against it testing its strength. Kaiu Tasuku, the master smith who reforged the blade, promised that if the blade ever breaks again he will break his hammer and become a poet.

D20 SYSTEM™

Yuruginai, the Celestial Sword of the Crab, is a +5 taint resistant ghost touch holy katana. The wielder of Yuruginai gains a +10 sacred bonus to his Constitution score, even if the blade is simply carried in its saya. Any attacks against Yuruginai are immediately negated and the blade does damage to the weapon attacking it as if its wielder had struck the weapon.

These abilities overrule those in *Magic of Rokugan*™ as Yuruginai's abilities have altered somewhat since it was repaired.

LSR RPG 2E:

Yuruginai is an Exceptional Quality katana which inflicts 4k3 Wounds and adds 3 to its wielder's Katana skill. The weapon may strike all ghosts and intangible spirits normally and does 2k2 extra Wounds against Shadowlands creatures. So long as the weapon is carried, its owner's Earth is considered two higher and he rolls two additional dice on any roll to resist accumulating Shadowlands Taint (in addition for any dice gained for his increased Earth).

Kaimetsu-uo and his followers assault the Phoenix castle where the assassin is hiding, and Osano-Wo, now the Fortune of Thunder, demonstrates his displeasure to the Phoenix. Cowed by the Thunderer's wrath, the Phoenix surrender the assassin to Kaimetsu-uo for justice, and the existence of a new Fortune is documented.

Hida, now removed from most Crab events, is outraged at Osano-Wo's death. He agrees to Kenzan's demands to avenge his father, however, and is secretly pleased with the way his grandsons deal with the matter.

Creation of the Badger Clan: year 110

A previously unknown Crab warrior wins an Imperial contest and claims the right to form a minor clan. The newly formed Badger Clan is given the duty of guarding the northern border of Rokugan just as the Crab guard the southern border. The Badger disappear into the northern mountains and go unseen for decades at a time.

Hida disappears: year 210

After nearly 150 years of preparation, Hida disappears into the Shadowlands in search of his son Atarasi. Years of searching later, he finds his son only to discover that Atarasi has become Tainted and is now a servant of Fu Leng. The two engage in a titanic battle that lasts for weeks before Hida destroys the foul mockery of his son and then willingly surrenders to his age and wounds. The spot where the two men fell is marked by a single, untainted mountain in the deep Shadowlands.

The Nezumi-Crab Alliance is formed: year 314

Crab samurai Hiruma Kazuma forms a bond with a tribe of Nezumi and brings the Crab and Nezumi together as allies against the Shadowlands. Kazuma is regarded as a hero by both peoples and both mourn him after his death years later.

The first Crab-Crane War: year 387

After seizing land along the Crane's southern border, the Crab find themselves attacked by the vengeful Doji family. Unhappy with their role within the Crane, the Yasuki defect to join the Crab and the first major internal war in Rokugan's history begins.

The Crab-Crane war ends: year 400

An Imperial edict bans large-scale combat between the Seven Clans, effectively ending the Crab-Crane war. The Yasuki are recognized as a Crab family. During the course of negotiations, a Crane diplomat is ousted from the Crane and goes on to form the Sparrow Clan, adding the Crab's involvement to the formation of yet another minor clan.

Hida Tadaka and Matsu Itagi in the Shadowlands: year 412

Arrogant Lion Champion Matsu Itagi enters the Shadowlands, vowing to close the Festering Pit of Fu Leng. When he fails to return, his sister threatens to go to war with the Crab, for only their treachery could have caused his death. Hida Tadaka goes into the Shadowlands after Itagi and brings him back. Both die of their wounds shortly thereafter, but the Lion and Crab are brought together by their valor.

Creation of the Boar Clan: year 447

A small group of Crab long thought lost to an avalanche appear in Otsan Uchi with a huge offering of steel and jade to the Emperor as taxes. Emperor Hantei Muhaki, known to

favor the minor clans, awards them the family name Heichi and grants them leave to create the Boar Clan deep in the Twilight Mountains.

Kuni Nakanu's journals discovered: year 499

The Emperor's youngest son, Otomo Jama, discovers journals kept by a fallen Kuni scholar. Kuni Nakanu's insight into the Taint and its effects on dead bodies and their resurrection begin Jama's path into darkness, which will eventually transform him into Tsuchiban, one of Rokugan's greatest threats.

Death of Hida Tenburo: year 509

Crab Champion Hida Tenburo inexplicably murders his children in their sleep, then takes his own life as well. The perplexed Crab store away his blade, a sword forged by Asahina Yajinden that is later discovered to be the bloodsword Judgment.

The Kusatte Iru defeated: year 634

The largest oni in history, the Kusatte Iru, is defeated by the sacrifice of two men: Kuni Harike and Kuni Ryute. Both men die to ensure that this terrifying beast can never again threaten the Empire with its inconceivable power. Eventually, a monastery is founded in their honor.

Yasuki Fumoki lost at sea: year 671

The greatest pirate in Rokugan history, Yasuki Fumoki, is lost at sea. Fumoki is killed in combat with a gigantic sea serpent, and both their spirits live. Some of his Nezumi crew survive on a lost island along with his incredible treasure. The spirit of the orochi destroys any ship that comes near the island, trapping the Nezumi and leaving Fumoki's spirit eternally restless. The Crab Clan's many attempts to find the treasure are unsuccessful.

The Battle of the Tidal Landbridge: year 715

A powerful force of Shadowlands creatures attacks the weaker Crab fortifications to the east, catching the Crab Champion and his personal guard unawares. When it seems that the Shadowlands will claim victory, the hunting horn of Daidoji Mishigi, daimyo of the Daidoji family, is heard. Mishigi and his hunting party cross the tidal landbridge separating Crab and Crane lands to aid the Crab. Mishigi disappears under the rising tides of Earthquake Fish Bay, locked in mortal combat with Oni no Kinjiro. His body is never recovered, but the Crab build a shrine containing his battered helm, which washes up on the shore following the battle.

Hiruma Castle falls and the

Battle of the Cresting Wave: year 716

A Shadowlands army of unprecedented size assaults Shiro Hiruma, crushing its defenders. The shattered Hiruma forces have no choice but to flee, watching the Shadowlands Horde devastate their homeland in their wake. The Crab marshal a defense and hold the Shadowlands forces off at the Saigo River, but the Oni Lord Maw is not easily stifled. A single Kuni shugenja forms the river into a mighty wall of water for over a month, allowing the Great Carpenter Wall to be built. The Crab turn back the Horde and slay the Maw, but the Hiruma lands are lost and the Kuni lands turned into a wasteland. The Hiruma lands remain under Shadowlands control for over four centuries.

A dark pact is made: year 1126

On the advice of sinister Kuni Yori, Crab Champion Hida

Kisada makes a pact with the Shadowlands. Kisada believes that he can use the Shadowlands as a weapon against the other clans long enough to claim the throne from the failing Emperor, then use his new influence to destroy the Shadowlands once and for all. The gamble costs Kisada the life of his youngest son, and nearly destroys the Crab.

The Crab storm Otsan Uchi: year 1127

Believing the Emperor on his deathbed, the Crab storm the capital to place Kisada on the throne. Instead, Kisada and his son Yakamo find that Fu Leng has possessed the Emperor and that they have delivered his army to him by bringing their Shadowlands allies to Otsan Uchi. Fu Leng wounds Kisada nearly unto death, but the Great Bear lives and escapes the city with the aid of his son and loyal forces.

The Jade Hand: year 1128

After the Crab's betrayal at Otsan Uchi, Hida Yakamo wrenches from his wrist the foul oni's claw that has replaced his hand and casts it aside. He replaces it with the Jade Hand, an ancient artifact of legendary power with which he can resist the Taint and begin a new era for the suffering Crab Clan. The truth soon rings across the Crab lands — Hida Yakamo is the Crab Thunder, heir to Hida Atarasi's legacy.

Death of Hida Kisada: year 1130

Hida Kisada survives an incredible two and a half years after being wounded by Fu Leng. His funeral is attended by the Emperor Toturi, who declares Kisada the Fortune of Persistence in honor of his assistance during the Second Day of Thunder despite his grievous wounds.

Crab assault on the Shadowlands: year 1130

Vowing to retake the Hiruma lands at any cost, new Crab Champion Hida Yakamo leads a huge army of Crab and Naga into the Shadowlands to seize the ruins of Shiro Hiruma. The Shadowlands are unprepared for the assault, and the armies soon reach Hiruma Castle. Soon afterwards, however, the Naga army breaks off and heads north at great speed, leaving Yakamo and his men trapped in Shiro Hiruma and surrounded by enemies. The warriors only survive thanks to the Third Whisker tribe of Nezumi, who bring their allies food and water through hidden tunnels.

Death and rebirth of Hida Yakamo: year 1132

Having escaped his imprisonment in Shiro Hiruma, Hida Yakamo is killed in battle with the Shadowlands. The Lion Clan aids the Crab in liberating Shiro Hiruma. Yakamo's body is recovered, but the Naga seize it. With an ancient artifact, they restore him to life and merge his soul with the Akasha, the Naga race's strange group mind. Yakamo assures his people that the Naga are their allies once more, and that they must work together to destroy the Lying Darkness.

Twenty-seven Days of Darkness: year 1132

Following Hitomi's defeat of Lord Moon, Amaterasu commits jigai (the seppuku of noble women). Hida Yakamo is led to the site of the event by the Akasha and serves as her second. Upon her death, he ascends to become Lord Sun opposite Hitomi's Lady Moon.

The Year of Death: year 1158

In a devastating chain of events, the Crab lose three daimyo. First, the Yasuki daimyo dies with no heir and no clear line of succession. A staggering discovery is made: the nearest living

COMPLETE CRAB TECHNIQUE FEAT LIST

Feat	Prerequisite	Location
Armor Focus	Armor Proficiency	Rokugan
Armor Mastery	Armor Focus, Con 13+ Base attack bonus +4 or higher	SoC
Armor Proficiency (heavy)	Armor Proficiency (light) Armor Proficiency (medium)	PHB
Cleave	Str 13+	PHB
Power Attack		
Daisho Specialization	+5 Base attack Weapon Focus: Katana or Wakizashi	Rokugan
Depths of the Void	Void Use, Samurai	Rokugan
Different School	By DM permission only	Rokugan
Dodge	Dex 13+	PHB
Endurance	—	PHB
Great Cleave	Str 13+, Power Attack Cleave Base attack bonus +4 or higher	PHB
Greater Daisho I	Samurai level 13th+	MoR
Greater Daisho II	Samurai level 15th+	MoR
Greater Daisho III	Samurai level 17th+	MoR
Greater Daisho IV	Samurai level 19th+	MoR
Hida's Charge	Base attack bonus +4 or higher Str 13+, Improved Bull Rush Power Attack	SoC
Hida's Terrible Wrath	Base attack bonus +8 or higher Str 13+, Hida's Charge Improved Bull Rush Power Attack	SoC
Hida's Ungodly Wrath	Base attack bonus +12 or higher Str 13+ Hida's Charge Hida's Terrible Wrath Improved Bull Rush Power Attack	SoC
Hiruma's Speed	Void Use	SoC
Improved Bull Rush	Str 13+ Power Attack	PHB
Jade Rationing	Knowledge (Shadowlands) (4 ranks)	SoC
Know the School	Knowledge (clan or family, 2 ranks)	Rokugan
Mobility	Dex 13+ Dodge	PHB
Power Attack	Str 13+	PHB
Run	—	PHB
Soul Forge	Iron Will or ancestral daisho Masterwork weapon or armor	MoR
Spring Attack	Dex 13+ Dodge Mobility Base attack bonus +4 or higher	PHB
Sunder	Str 13+ Power Attack	PHB
Toughness	—	PHB
Void Use	—	Rokugan
Weapon Focus (battleaxe)	Proficient with weapon Base attack bonus +1 or higher	PHB
Weapon Focus (greatclub)	Proficient with weapon Base attack bonus +1 or higher	PHB
Weapon Focus (katana)	Proficient with weapon Base attack bonus +1 or higher	PHB
Weapon Focus (warhammer)	Proficient with weapon Base attack bonus +1 or higher	PHB
Yasuki's Glare	Intimidate skill	SoC

ARMOR MASTERY

CRAB TECHNIQUE

You are able to wear heavy armor with little discomfort.

Prerequisites: Armor Focus, Con 13+, Base attack bonus +4 or higher

Benefit: Select any one type of armor for which you have taken the Armor Focus feat. Your check penalties when wearing this armor are reduced by four.

Special: This feat may be taken multiple times. Each time it applies to a different type of armor for which you have taken the Armor Focus feat.

HIDA'S CHARGE

CRAB TECHNIQUE

You are able to perform a devastating bull rush attack.

Prerequisites: Str 13+, Base attack bonus +4 or higher, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack

Benefit: Any time you successfully knock an opponent back with a bull rush attack, you automatically gain a free trip attack against that same target. Targets you knock prone with this trip attack take subdual damage of 1d4 plus your Strength modifier. If you have the Improved Trip feat, you do not get an additional free attack when using this feat.

JADE RATIONING

CRAB TECHNIQUE

You have learned purifying meditation techniques that allow you to preserve rations of precious jade in the Shadowlands.

Prerequisite: Knowledge (Shadowlands) 4 ranks.

Benefit: A finger of jade protects you from the Shadowlands Taint for three times the normal duration while in a Tainted area such as the Shadowlands.

HIDA'S TERRIBLE WRATH

CRAB TECHNIQUE

You can knock opponents flat with a powerful attack.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +8 or higher, Str 13+, Hida's Charge, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack

Benefit: When wielding a two-handed weapon you may make a single attack against an opponent as a full attack action. If this attack is successful, you subject your opponent to a bull rush immediately after this attack (you do not move to perform this bull rush attack). Half the damage of your initial damage is added to your opposed Strength roll during the bull rush attack.

HIDA'S UNGODLY WRATH

CRAB TECHNIQUE

You can cripple your opponents with a powerful bull rush attack.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +12 or higher, Str 13+, Hida's Charge, Hida's Terrible Wrath, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack

Benefit: Any time you successfully knock an opponent prone with the use of Hida's Charge, you also inflict two points of temporary Dexterity damage.

HIRUMA'S SPEED

CRAB TECHNIQUE

You can sprint short distances at great speed.

Prerequisite: Void Use

Benefit: You can spend a Void Point as a free action to increase your speed by 20 ft. for a number of rounds equal to your Constitution modifier.

YASUKI'S GLARE

CRAB TECHNIQUE

You can intimidate opponents with a searing gaze or a well-placed word.

Prerequisite: Intimidate skill

Benefit: You may use Intimidate in place of Bluff when feinting in combat. Intimidate is always a class skill for you.

NEW COURTIER ABILITIES

At fourth level and every third level thereafter members of the courtier character class gain courtier abilities chosen from a short list (see page 35 of *Rokugan*TM). The following new courtier abilities are available to any Crab Clan courtiers. Members of other clans who have taken the Different School feat and applied it to the Crab may also learn these abilities. The normal courtier abilities are still available for Crab courtiers.

Wily Trader (Ex): Many Crab courtiers are also powerful merchant patrons, with a keen eye for what a potential customer might desire. The courtier gains a +10 bonus when using the Gossip ability, but the knowledge gained when using the ability always pertains to items the target has bought, sold, or wishes to buy or sell in the near future. With a DC of 35 or better, the courtier not only knows what sort of business the target wants to do, but how much he is willing to pay or what sort of offer he'll accept to give up his goods. This ability is not always necessarily relevant to the matter at hand, and the target may wish to buy or sell something that has nothing to do with the courtier or is well beyond his means to purchase, but the chance of it being true (compared to normal use of the Gossip ability) is increased by 10%. A courtier may choose not to use this ability when applying Gossip, and instead gain information not related to commerce. This ability also grants a +1 bonus to all Profession checks and a +2 bonus to Profession (merchant) checks.

Prodigy (Ex): The Yasuki are noted throughout the Empire for their unexpected talents in a variety of areas. The courtier may choose two class skills (including class skills gained through the Versatile feat). He henceforth gains a +2 bonus when using these skills. This ability may be selected multiple times. It applies to two new skills each time.

Fear is a Gift (Ex): The courtier can use his powerful presence to cow those with weaker wills. The courtier may make an Intimidate check as a move-equivalent action against any target that can see him, opposed by the target's Sense Motive check. If successful, the courtier gains a +2 circumstance bonus on all attack rolls and Charisma-based skills and abilities and a +1 to the save DC of all his courtier abilities against that target for the next hour.

CHAPTER ONE:

THE HIDA

VIGILANT
PART TWO

Hatori paused, staring up into the sinister, empty eyes. The huge demonic skull grinned down at the courtier. Its curved horns gleamed red in the morning light like newly forged katana.

"Please, do not be alarmed," Hida Reiha said in an amused voice. "In four hundred years the Maw has never eaten any of our guests. I doubt you will be the first."

"I... have actually seen it before," Hatori said with a nervous chuckle. "Strange, I'm never quite prepared to see it again."

The samurai-ko looked up at the monstrous skull that dominated the gates of Kyuden Hida, then smiled at Hatori. "I doubt anyone is really prepared to see it," she said.

"I suppose that is why you keep it," Otomo Taneji said, studying the demon's skull. "To remind yourself and others of your eternal battle?"

Reiha raised one eyebrow and snickered. "I suppose you could look at it that way, Otomo," she said. "I think it's more likely that Hida Banuken just wanted something interesting to cover up the hole in the wall. If you look closely you can still see it." She pointed at the spot just above the gates and squinted.

Reiha waited a few seconds then laughed again. Fuzake Sekkou quickly looked away from the skull with an embarrassed expression; obviously he had been looking for the hole Reiha had joked about.

"Very droll," Taneji said. "I wonder if Hida Banuken would make such light of the Crab's accomplishments."

"He might," Reiha said, looking pointedly at Taneji. "Once you've actually seen combat, Otomo, you begin to realize that life should not be taken so seriously. Did not Shinsei say, 'Laugh while you can. Tomorrow you may be dead?'"

"I do not think Shinsei ever said that," Sekkou said, looking at Reiha in confusion.

"He should have," the samurai-ko replied as she led the way through the gates.

Hatori grinned broadly despite himself. It had been too long since he had been in Crab lands. These lands were bleak, tragic, and deadly, to be sure, but the people who lived here were the most sincere and honest samurai in all of Rokugan. How could they face death every day and lie to themselves? Reiha was a perfect example. He found himself carried away by her infectious smile and sense of humor. After months of dodging Lion threats, Scorpion enigmas, and Mantis manipulations, a bit of brutal Crab honesty was extremely refreshing.

The trio followed Reiha through the silent halls. Taneji was clearly taken aback by the lack of ornamentation in the Crab castle. The walls were flat gray stone, with only the occasional torch to break the monotony. There were no silken paintings, no ornamental weapons. Kyuden Hida was no place for decoration, no place for a weapon that could not kill a Shadowlands beast. Reiha led them through the fortress to a large audience chamber. Within stood a small table laden with steaming cups of tea and bowls of rice. A broad-shouldered man sat at the head of the table, chewing hungrily on a mouthful of rice. He wore a midnight blue kimono with the mon of the Hida emblazoned over the heart. Behind him a suit of shimmering red great armor stood, polished and ready. A jade-studded tetsubo and a magnificent daisho lay on the floor to his right, near at hand. As they entered, the man watched them

with a quiet scowl, neither ceasing his meal nor rising to greet them. Hatori could sense an aura of barely restrained violence about the man, as if he might rise from his table and slaughter them all at the slightest provocation. Seasoned Crab warriors who had lost much in their fight against the Horde gave him that feeling. It saddened Hatori that samurai could be transformed into such engines of violence and hatred, especially when they were men he knew and respected.

"Konnichiwa, Lord Kuon," Hatori said, bowing deeply to the samurai. "It has been too long. I was saddened to hear of the recent tragedies in your family. These are my attendants, Fuzake Sekkou and Otomo Taneji."

"Hatori," Kuon said, a grin spreading across his face. He set his bowl down and rose from the table. "It has indeed been too long. It was at the last Winter Court, was it not?"

Hatori nodded.

"You are welcome in Kyuden Hida," Kuon said, smiling broadly as he bowed to Hatori. "My mother often told me how you championed the Crab in the courts, how you frequently saw that the Emperor's Blessing was used to bring food and weapons to our soldiers in the Wall. Unlike many who bear the Emperor's name, you will always have friends here." Kuon's eyes fixed on Taneji. "Did Hatori say you were an Otomo?"

Taneji coughed, eyes bulging from his head in terror. A seasoned courtier, he was not intimidated easily, but Kuon had unnerved him with a glance. "Yes," Taneji replied. "Allow me to apologize for the... unfortunate incident with the Yasuki family. I assure you that the Otomo did all that they could to maintain peace. We would not have declared Hachi the rightful heir had his claim not been just."

"Just?" Kuon replied, tilting his head slightly. "I suppose, then, that you would call the way Doji Kurohito murdered my mother justice? I assume, then, that you would label the way Akodo Kaneka makes his home in a palace that belongs to my clan justice? What else do you call justice, Otomo?"

"Again, I am sorry," Taneji said. "Even we of the Imperial House are not perfect. There was no way that we could have predicted what would occur. We did all that we could."

"All that you could be bothered to do, you mean," Kuon said. "Hatori, you are welcome in my house, but the Otomo is not. Send him away, and I will hear what you have to say."

Taneji's jaw dropped. Suddenly all his fear was gone. "Hatori-sama, will you endure this?" he asked. "This is a grievous insult to my family. I will not..."

"Let it go, Taneji," Hatori said firmly, noting the tendon standing out on Kuon's throat. "Let it go. Leave now. I shall meet you in the village."

Taneji caught the hint and nodded obediently. "Very well, Hatori-sama," he said, smoothing one hand over his robe. He looked back at Kuon. "Kuon, again I repeat that I am very..."

Kuon looked at Taneji.

"Very eager to leave," Taneji finished. He quickly turned and exited the chamber. As soon as he was gone, Hida Kuon's face sprouted a mischievous smile.

"Why must you torment them like that, Kuon?" Hatori asked, seating himself at the table.

"Oh, please, Hatori-san," Kuon said, returning to his place at the head of the table. "The Imperials spend all year mocking the brutish, stupid, loutish Crab. It's so rare that I have a chance to turn the tables on them."

"I suppose so," Hatori said. "I think you scared Taneji halfway to his grave." Sekkou sat beside Hatori, speechless.

"He'll survive," Kuon said. "Now let us speak of business. What can I do for you, Miya Hatori, and what can you do for the Crab?"

THE HIDA PROVINCES

The Hida family inhabits an enormous amount of territory. This is only natural, as they are not only the largest family in the Crab Clan but the third largest family in Rokugan (after the Matsu and Doji). The northern provinces of the Hida are lightly patrolled and scantily populated. These areas are mostly rocky, barren wasteland with little to offer an invading army, so the Hida expend little effort in protecting them. Toward the south, one is more likely to encounter bands of armed Hida samurai. The southwestern territory of the Hida, especially as one approaches the Wall, are regularly patrolled by large bands of heavily armed bushi. Those without official business in Crab lands should be warned: the Crab are suspicious of outsiders. Any stranger roaming near the Wall may be perceived as a threat, and the Crab do not take threats casually.

Of course, any samurai who wishes to stand duty on the Wall can simply make his wishes known to the local magistrate and be assigned a post. Such outsiders are usually given assignments of little importance so that they will not be in the way, but are placed strategically so that they can see the most dangerous parts of the Wall. Most visitors leave after the first few weeks and do not return. Those brave enough to remain may gain the friendship and trust of the Crab Clan.

Hida lands are poor in natural resources, rocky and infertile. The Hida must turn to outside sources to feed their population, and have come to rely on the Yasuki to provide them. Two natural resources the Crab do have in abundance are iron and jade. The metals mined out of the Twilight Mountains are without a doubt the finest in Rokugan. While jade mines have become rarer since the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, most of those that remain are found within Hida lands. Every known jade mine in the Hida provinces is guarded by the finest Hida troops, and outsiders are rarely allowed to enter them for fear of sabotage.

MAJOR HIDA HOLDINGS

While the Hida are not wealthy compared to the other great military families, every koku they can spare goes directly into defense. So, while a Crab holding may not have all the comforts and luxuries of a Crane palace, a visitor can count on being well protected. Even the humblest Hida castle is built from Kaiu designs, making Hida structures virtually impervious.

KYUDEN HIDA (LOCATION CB17)

Kyuden Hida is not the oldest, largest, or wealthiest castle in Rokugan but it is easily the most intimidating. The enormous fortress overlooks the cliffs of Earthquake Fish Bay, seemingly carved directly out from the earth. The gates are topped by a fanged skull the size of three horses, the remains of the demonic Oni Lord known as the Maw.

Kyuden Hida is the most defensible castle in the Empire, but it has never known battle. During the Battle of the Cresting Wave, the Maw's armies could be seen from the castle walls. Again during the War Against the Shadow the Horde was on the horizon when reinforcements from the Lion Clan arrived. Neither time did so much as one enemy arrow strike Kyuden Hida's walls.

The Crab have never needed to rely on Kyuden Hida's defenses, but no one would dare call the fortress unnecessary. Kyuden Hida is the heart of the Crab's campaign against the Horde. It is here that the battle plans are prepared and relayed to the front lines. It is here that soldiers are trained and reviewed for duty. It is here that the descendants of Hida make their home. It is here, should all other defenses fail, that the Crab Clan would make its final stand.

TEMPLE OF PERSISTENCE, SUN AND THUNDER

A recent addition to the top floor of Kyuden Hida is the Temple of Yakamo. The walls of this temple are heavily decorated in stained glass imported by the Crab's Unicorn allies, and the cleverly modified ceiling can be winched open to view the morning sun. The existence of this temple is largely kept secret by the Hida family; it is their private shrine to Kisada (Fortune of Persistence), Lord Sun, and Osano-Wo (Fortune of Fire and Thunder).

The Crab have a special relationship with these three divine entities, all of whom were mortal Crab Champions who ascended to divinity. Only members of the central Hida line and those closest to them may worship in this temple. Hida O-Ushi began the tradition of visiting it to seek guidance from her divine ancestors in moments of doubt, a practice that both of her sons adopted after becoming Champion.

Artifacts belonging to each divine Champion are on display here, including Yakamo's wakizashi, the tessen Kisada carried into every battle, and a shard of wood split from Shiro Shiba's gates by Osano-Wo's lightning (donated by the Hida's Mantis cousins). The temple is not something the Hida advertise; its existence is intended only for them to retain their connection to their wisest and most powerful ancestors. Only a few Crab outside the central Hida line have been admitted and no non-Crab has ever seen the Temple.

HIDA ROHITEKI

[Shugenja 15; Kuni Shugenja 5]

Hida Rohiteki is the first High Priestess of Persistence, Sun, and Thunder. She is a gruff, blunt, and impatient woman with a special connection to the temple's divine sponsors: she is Hida Kisada's niece, Yakamo's cousin, and Osano-Wo's direct descendant. When she prays to the gods, they listen and reply, for she speaks to them not as a supplicant but as an honored friend. When the Kaiu Walls were retaken, Rohiteki called upon her ancestors and unleashed a rain of jade from the sky, a display of magic unparalleled since the time of Kuni Osaku.

Though Rohiteki is a shugenja, she is a Hida first and no stranger to warfare. She fought in the War Against the Shadow and the War of Spirits, has completed six tours of duty on the Kaiu Wall, and is among the most experienced Hida advisors. She fills an honored place on Hida Kuon's staff. As she grows older, her role in the Crab army has become more advisory as she participates less and less in the campaign against the Horde. Someday, she realizes, she will be forced to retire to the temple full time. It is not a day she eagerly anticipates.

HIGHWAYS OF THE HIDA PROVINCES

The Kaiu Wall — The highest-quality road through the Crab provinces is, ironically, the very Wall that protects the Empire from the Shadowlands. A wide road runs along its length, interrupted only by the twelve Kaiu Towers. (Many smaller towers also stand atop it, but these towers dominate their portions of the Wall.) Another path leads behind the Wall on the Crab side, allowing those without the military clearance to travel atop the Wall to move quickly along its length. Naturally the area immediately on the Shadowlands side of the Wall is also kept quite clear, but few travelers willingly choose to travel this route.

Koten Path (Connects CB17 to CB14 to CB11) — This well-tended highway is the only direct route to Kyuden Hida. It is constantly patrolled by armed bands of ashigaru and patrolled by Hida cavalry. The road is wide enough for six horses to ride abreast and relatively smooth throughout.

Mountain Road (Connects CB12 to CB10 to CB11) — This simply named road cuts directly through a small pass leading through the Wall Above the Ocean Mountains and west toward Shiro Kuni. Each winter it becomes entirely impassable, buried under snowdrifts.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: While visiting Kyuden Hida, an alarm suddenly echoes throughout the castle. If the player characters are not Crab, they find themselves forcibly detained and surrounded by suspicious Hida bushi. If they are Crab, they are immediately ordered to detain all visitors.

Focus: Non-Crab PCs are questioned at length about their whereabouts the previous evening, while Crab PCs are ordered to patrol the outer walls for any sign of invasion. Eventually, when it the party is absolved of guilt, the reason for the heightened state of alert becomes clear. The Maw's skull — the eternal fixture that guards the gates of Kyuden Hida — has been damaged. During the night the tip of its left horn was broken off. This is especially disturbing, as Kuni magic supposedly had not only purified the skull but also rendered it nearly indestructible.

The Crab refuse to allow any visitors to leave Hida province until the mystery is solved. Trustworthy PCs (and any Crab PCs) are invited to aid in the investigation if they wish, so long as they do not get in the way.

Strike: A group of maho-tsukai in Daigotsu's service is responsible. With Fu Leng's ascension to the Celestial Heavens, the Maw's spirit has been freed from Jigoku, but it cannot return to Rokugan while its skull exists in a purified state. A group of saboteurs have been sent to destroy the skull, but they underestimated the spells that protect it. Fleeing into the nearby cliffs, they have adjusted their strategy and plan to return once the Crab relax their patrols.

EARTHQUAKE FISH BAY

(LOCATION RRR IN ROKUGAN;™ LOCATION
UUU IN THE GAME MASTER'S GUIDE™)

With so few areas of fertile farmland in Crab lands, Earthquake Fish Bay is one of the clan's most valuable resources. The Hida and Yasuki both fish it heavily. The salted fish cakes that are a notorious staple on the Wall originate here. Earthquake Fish Bay is also home to the Crab Clan's impressive navy, a fleet second only to the Mantis. While the Crab have only attacked human opponents by sea once, they frequently use koutetsukan and other warships to fight the Shadowlands armies on the high seas. The Taint does not stop at the beaches, and the Seas of Shadow can appear without warning, so Hida captains are always ready for battle.

Earthquake Fish Bay is home to a number of dormant underwater volcanoes. When these volcanoes erupt, scores of dead fish wash up on the shores, boiled by the tremendous heat. The Hida never eat these fish, for their deaths are always a sign of ill omen. Such an eruption occurred just before the final battle for the Kaiu Towers, a battle in which Fu Leng's personal intervention permanently cursed the Tower of Fear.

KOTEN, THE CRAB ANCESTRAL HALL

(LOCATION CB14)

Modeled after the Lion Hall of Ancestors, Koten is a stark, foreboding structure nestled in the foothills of the Twilight Mountains. The statues of countless Crab heroes carved by master Kaiu stonemasons stand guard over the cavernous hallways. The chanting of lonely monks resound through Koten at all times, mourning the dead and grieving for the eternal battle that has become the Crab Clan's existence. Koten may be the most depressing place in all of Rokugan.

Though Koten has many shelves and niches to hold the remains of Crab heroes or the weapons they carried, most of them are empty. The majority of Crab heroes leave little in the way of remains. Many die on the Wall, where they are either carried away by the Horde or, occasionally, reanimate and depart of their own accord. As for mementoes of the dead, few Crab samurai would put a weapon on display in a tomb if it could still be used against the enemy. For these reasons, Koten is an empty place.

While Koten has few mementoes, the Crab Ancestral Hall has legends in abundance. The monks who tend Koten are renowned for their memories, and listen patiently to any tales of dead Crab heroes. A visitor to Koten can ask the monks for tales of nearly any Crab hero, no matter how obscure, and be rewarded with a stirring tale of courage and duty. Visitors from other clans sometimes remark that the monks could not possibly remember all the tales they claim to know, and that surely the stories they tell must be false. Such visitors are escorted from the Crab lands and asked not to return.

KINEN, CUSTODIAN OF KOTEN

[Inkyo 8; Four Temples Monk 3]

Strangely, no one remembers the Crab Ancestral Hall's custodian's real name. His chosen name, Kinen ("Memory"), is an obvious pseudonym. The old monk never speaks of his life before he came to Koten, and sometimes jokingly comments that he pushed his old life out of his memory to make more room for stories. Kinen seems out of place in a

Crab temple. He is a calm, soft-spoken little man with none of the scars or debilitating injuries common in Crab monks. Despite this fact, even hardened Crab veterans treat Kinen with reverence and respect, for they know that one day it will fall to Kinen to remember their story.

Kinen has an incredibly sharp memory and is an excellent storyteller. If he cannot recall a tale of a Crab hero, then that hero never existed. While he is calm and polite to guests in his temple, he is extremely strict toward the lesser acolytes. Those who fail to keep the temple clean or fail to maintain the chants for the dead are cast out. Those who cannot remember the tales of Crab heroes are punished severely. Kinen has the deepest respect for the sacrifices the Crab have made for the Empire, and will not tolerate those who do not take his duties as seriously as he does.

LONG WALK

(LOCATION CB9)

The Hida make little effort to conceal their dislike of outsiders. Visitors to Crab lands find much greater hospitality in the Yasuki or Kaiu provinces. On those occasions when the Hida find it useful to trade with non-Crab, Nagai Aruki — Long Walk — is where they choose to do so, in inimitable Hida fashion.

The "city" is only a city in the most technical sense. For whatever reason, the Hida decided to build Long Walk in the midst of a rare area of fertile farmland. As a result, it is peppered with large rice paddies. Bridges allow visitors to walk over the paddies without getting their feet wet (the bridges are mostly for the rice crop's protection) and Long Walk's numerous shops and trading houses are scattered on higher ground over an area of three square miles. For a clan that prides itself on practical design as much as the Crab, Long Walk is designed to be uncharacteristically inconvenient. The Hida would not have it any other way.

Some of the most talented Hida weaponsmiths and craftspeople make their home in Long Walk. Visitors who wish to trade with the Hida are forced to learn the interminable bridges and waterways. When a visitor finds what he is seeking, the artisan invariably forces him to place a special order and wait for several weeks while he completes previous orders for the Hida family. The situation would not be endured if the Hida craftsmen (most of whom were trained by Kaiu masters) were not so undeniably good at what they do. Thus, Long Walk allows the Hida to conduct a small amount of business with other clans, all the while firmly reminding outsiders that all business must be on Crab terms.

The Yasuki frequently urge the Hida to cease using Long Walk as their center of trade. They view the place as a public relations nightmare, a testament to Hida arrogance. The Hida disagree, claiming not to understand why visitors find Nagai Aruki so inconvenient.

HARU

[Expert 6; True Ronin (Insight Rank 2)]

Haru and his family are known throughout Long Walk. He, like his ancestors, is an ashigaru. His family has served the Hida for over four hundred years; they perform their duties with as much pride and zeal as any true samurai. Haru's duty is to protect the city of Long Walk, but since the city has rarely been threatened this duty is a fairly easy one. His secondary duty is to act as a runner. Once every three months Haru makes a circuit of all the major Hida castles and notes any

supplies they might need from Long Walk. Haru makes certain to meet any Crab samurai that enters the village. If he is not present, one of his sons will appear in his place. Haru and his family eagerly act as scouts, messengers, and gofers for any Crabs visiting Nagai Aruki. Crab samurai are invited to stay in Haru's home (which is extraordinarily comfortable for a peasant's home) while Haru conducts business in the city on their behalf. No Crab who wants anything from the city need ever set foot on a single bridge, or in any way put up with the intentional inconvenience built into Nagai Aruki.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: This adventure hook works best if the party is composed of Crab characters or characters that have won the clan's trust. The PCs are invited before an influential Crab lord to deal with a sensitive matter. A Crab caravan was attacked on its way to Long Walk, and the daimyo wants the PCs to return an item of great value.

Focus: While the shipment of steel the caravan was carrying was nearly priceless, the true treasure the caravan bore was Haru. The ashigaru was taken prisoner by the bandits and forced to join their number, as bandits often do with peasants they encounter. What the bandits do not realize is that Haru was also on his way back to Long Walk to place orders for all the Hida lords, and he still carries this information in his memory. If Haru is not rescued, this information will be lost, causing havoc in the Crab supply lines.

Strike: The bandits have no idea how valuable Haru is. If they realize the player characters are after them, they will assume their target is the stolen goods. Haru, for his part, will do his best to escape and help the party take down the bandits. If the bandit leader should learn how valuable Haru really is, on the other hand, the ashigaru will suddenly become a valuable hostage.

SHINSEI'S LAST HOPE

(CB22; SEE MAP ON PAGE 96)

Shinsei's Last Hope is rarely visited by non-Crab. Most outsiders do not even realize it exists. Despite this fact, the Hida regard Shinsei's Last Hope among their most important settlements. It is an island of purity in the midst of festering Taint. It is the only uncorrupted city on the Wall's western side.

When the Seven Thunders first defeated Fu Leng, it was a lonely Crab scout who first spied Shinsei, Shiba, and Shosuro returning from the Shadowlands. The Crab greeted the three famous heroes, shared his water, bandaged Shiba's terrible wounds, and then prepared to announce the Thunders' success. Before he could leave, Shinsei stopped the scout and whispered a short promise.

"This place where we stand now," Shinsei said, "will never fall to the Taint so long as your children protect it. Guard it well, for it is in this place that the Empire shall find its last hope."

Needless to say the scout was rooted to the spot and Shinsei and the others traveled on. Most histories do not recall him, and even the Crab do not remember his name. All that is known is that he stood his ground for seven days and nights until another Crab found him. He would not dare move for fear that he would not be able to find the place again. The second scout returned to Kyuden Hida with the news of Shinsei's promise. Kuni shugenja were dispatched to determine the truth of the scout's claim. Sure enough, it appeared

as if an area of the Shadowlands large enough to hold a small village had been purified. Already green plants had begun to grow there, and the Tainted waters ran pure.

Within months, a village was built in the Shadowlands. The Horde soon noticed it and directed their best efforts to destroy the tiny community. The Crab samurai fought fiercely to defend what they had built, and against all hope, the village survived. The village was named Shinsei's Last Hope after the promise the little man had given the Crab Scout.

Over the centuries, Shinsei's Last Hope has become a staging ground for those about to enter the Shadowlands. It is the last place where a samurai can hope to pick up food, water, jade, and a safe night's rest. It is the only safe place within miles for those fleeing the Horde's wrath. The village's outer walls of are studded with jade, enchanted by the Kuni at great expense so that they never tarnish and shine like a beacon in the night.

Even when the Maw dominated the land all around, Shinsei's Last Hope was never conquered. Many Hiruma fleeing the conquest of Shiro Hiruma found refuge there as the eternal jade's green light repelled the Horde. As the village contained little worth looting, the Maw was content to



besiege the village until their supplies ran low. By the time they did, the Kaiu Wall had been completed. The Crab armies rallied, slaying the Maw and pushing the Horde back beyond the Forgotten Tomb.

Every time a Twenty Goblin Winter is declared, Shinsei's Last Hope buzzes with activity. It is in this village that most aspiring Crab gather to be outfitted, and it is here that they return to drop off their grisly trophies. A large white stone stands as a monument in the village's center, inscribed with the names of every brave ronin who earned the Crab name during a Twenty Goblin Winter. The ronin are allowed to carve their own names upon the monument, adding to the Crab Clan's glory in their own small way.

MINOR HIDA HOLDINGS

WEST MOUNTAIN VILLAGE (LOCATION CB10)

Like most large Hida settlements, West Mountain Village (Nishiyama Mura) is an outpost and training ground for Crab soldiers. Situated along the western half of the Wall Above the Ocean Mountains, this remote village is only connected to the rest of the Empire by the single narrow road that bisects the village. Certain caverns in the surrounding mountains can lead a traveler to Higashiyama Mura, if he knows where he is going and wishes to defy the legends of beasts and spirits who dwell within the caves.

When the winter snows come, Nishiyama Mura is completely cut off from the outside world except for those who dare the caves. Were it not for the small jade mine just north of the village it is unlikely the Hida would have any presence here. It is, perhaps, the village's secluded nature that has attracted its most famous resident.

UNARI

[Samurai 10/Hida Elite Guard 5; Hida Bushi 4/Hida Elite Guard 1]

At one time, Hida Unari was numbered among the most famous Crab heroes. He joined the Crab armies only a few weeks before the Scorpion Coup, and earned a name for himself during the Clan

War. He was one of the first to swear fealty to Hida Yakamo when the Crab Thunder denounced the path of corruption the Crab had begun to tread. He was one of only a handful of heroes to stand beside the Acolyte of Fire as he defeated Lord Moon's avatar, and he led a Legion of Crab to Voltturnum. Unari cultivated a reputation as a merciless warrior and a ruthless commander, driving his troops to exhaustion for the sake of honor and glory. When he lost the lower half of his left leg in the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, a number of men in his own command quietly rejoiced. After returning to Crab lands, Unari reluctantly retired.

The Crab warrior found the sedentary life of a monk somewhat chafing, until one chance afternoon his life took a turn. Bored and listless, Unari happened upon a copy of the Tao that his granddaughter had given him to help acclimate to his new life. Unari had always despised the book, though he had never read it. With nothing but time on his hands, he decided to read the Tao and finally see what he despised so greatly.

To Unari's surprise, he found that the book inspired him as few things ever had. He was mystified at how Shinsei used words and turn of phrase to create worlds that had never been, to inspire thought where there had been none. Hungry for more, Unari delved into histories and legends. He who had been a blunt, surly, barely literate warrior became an avid reader, a student of the classics. Unari decided that he wished to give something back to the Empire, to create something as great as the works he now loved so well. After three years of labor, he offered his first novel as a gift to Hida O-Ushi. The book was entitled Persistence,



and told the bittersweet tale of Hida Kisada's rise, fall, and ultimate sacrifice for the Clan he loved so dearly.

The book was so well written that O-Ushi was moved to tears. At the following Winter Court she proclaimed Unari the Crab's foremost author and poet, a treasure of the Empire. A Phoenix who had known Unari in his youth snickered at O-Ushi's words. The Crab Champion left the man lying in a pool of his own blood. Copies of Persistence were distributed to the great houses of other clans. Even without the threat of violence, Unari's talents as a writer were widely acknowledged. Young writers began to undertake journeys to Crab lands to study under him. Unari wanted none of it; he merely wished to be left alone so he could continue writing. He moved to Nishiyama Mura where he hoped to be left in peace, and he has lived there ever since.

Unari is as much a village fixture as any building or monument. Everyone who lives there knows him and the people have come to rely upon his immense wisdom and experience. The years have treated him well, and were it not for his shaved head and missing leg he would look very much as he did during his days as a warrior. Though Unari recognizes the need for warriors, he has embraced the life of a monk and practices no violence unless it is first visited upon him.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: While passing through West Mountain, the characters are invited to Unari's modest home. The old monk greets them amiably. If any of them have read his novel, he accepts their praise with humility. If no one mentions his works, he seems slightly more at ease. Unari has a message that he wishes the player characters to carry for him, a scroll intended for Kinen, master of the Crab Ancestral Hall.

Focus: Unari does not seal the message and does not forbid the characters from reading it; he merely assumes that they will not. The letter requests that Kinen dispatch one of his acolytes to Nishiyama Mura so that he can share stories. It seems that since the great success of Persistence, Unari has been overwhelmed by the reaction and can no longer write. He hopes that the tragic tales of Koten can inspire him once more. If the characters are honorable enough not to read the message, they should be rewarded appropriately.

Strike: An unpublished author by the name of Ikoma Juichi is jealous of Unari's success, and has lately taken to spying on the old monk's home. When he sees the player characters are bearing a scroll from Unari bound for Koten, Juichi assumes that it must contain some tale Unari has written, intended for the Ancestral Hall. Juichi hires a band of thieves to steal the scroll so he can publish the story under his own name. Should he obtain it and discover that Unari can no longer write, he will take advantage of the situation to make a laughingstock of the Crab Clan's pet author.

EAST MOUNTAIN VILLAGE

(LOCATION CB12)

East Mountain Village is similar to its cousin only in name. West Mountain is a small, secluded settlement; East Mountain (Higashiyama Mura) is nearly a small city. The village is strongly fortified and houses a large number of Crab samurai. As one of a handful of settlements guarding the Crab's shared border with the Crane, it is always watched carefully. There is no love lost between Crab and Crane, especially following the recent Yasuki debacle. Any Crane who tries to cross the River of Gold may end up peppered with Crab arrows long before he

reaches the western shore. Crane who wish to make peaceful contact with the Crab are encouraged to try Long Walk instead.

Aside from its role as a minor military outpost, Higashiyama Mura is also a subject of curiosity for the Hida family. Many natural caverns extend through the Wall Above the Ocean Mountains, connecting East Mountain to West Mountain. For whatever reason, the caverns on the mountains' eastern side are frequently infested with all manner of predatory Shadowlands creatures and violent spirits. Every year a squadron of Hida bushi gathers to clean out the caves and exterminate the corruption at its source, but within weeks the problem always returns. Crab scholars find the problem baffling. Surely if the caves were to be infested at all, one would expect the problem to be worse in the western part of the mountains, closer to the Shadowlands. Instead, the western caverns are entirely free of dangerous beasts. The Kuni Witch Hunters have theorized that a powerful maho-tsukai may be responsible for the recurring problem, but their investigations have turned up nothing.

For the time being, the residents of East Mountain have essentially grown accustomed to the problem and avoid the caves except in emergencies. The Crab stationed in the area have come to look forward to the yearly "Higashiyama Purge." After all, the village is quite far from the Kaiu Wall and the Crane in Ookami Toshi generally mind their own business, so the yearly excursion is the most action the Crab bushi see all year. Those who have spent three years or more stationed in Higashiyama Mura plan for the Higashiyama Purge as if it were a vacation or a grand camping trip. They trade stories of past Purges with their comrades and sometimes invite other bushi friends to the village so they can participate. A small "Purge Festival" always accompanies the Crab squadron's return from the caves, transforming the annual battle against the mysterious infestation into a strange local holiday.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: The son of a local Hida magistrate is missing. The PCs are invited to join the investigation; should they discover the child's whereabouts they will gain a powerful ally in the Crab Clan.

Focus: The trail of clues soon suggests that the child wandered into the haunted caverns despite his parents' warnings and became lost. Following the trail, the PCs locate the child before any harm can come to him.

Strike: Just as they do so, a monstrous roar echoes from the caverns far above. The tunnels behind the party collapse, cutting off the path back to East Mountain Village. The magistrate's son thinks he knows another way through the caverns, but it leads all the way to West Mountain Village. If the party wishes to escape, they'll have to follow the trail under the mountains, through the heart of the haunted caverns, while protecting the magistrate's son from harm.

TWILIGHT MOUNTAINS

(LOCATION AAA IN ROKUGAN;¹ LOCATION DDD IN THE GAME MASTER'S GUIDE²)

This spectacular mountain range dominates the Hida provinces' northwestern border. Though the mountains fall closer to the Kaiu and Toritaka provinces, they are technically the Hida family's domain. Settlements are small and sparsely populated. Those who seek their fortune in the rich iron mines beneath the peaks rarely stay for more than a few years.

Most samurai who patrol the area are Toritaka phantom hunters, and even they seem more morose in the lonely mountains. Anyone who spends time in the Twilight Mountains inevitably feels as if he is being watched. Though the mountains are not Tainted, it is obvious that some powerful spiritual presence dwells there, and this presence prefers to be left alone.

In the late fourth century a group of Crab explorers vanished in the Twilight Mountains, lending credence to the idea that the area was haunted by some powerful malevolent entity. Scouts who explored the area found no sign of the lost party, and they were assumed lost forever. Sixty years later the explorers' descendants returned. Presenting the lavish wealth of their mines to the Emperor as "back taxes" they gained the Hantei's favor and were granted permission to take the Heichi family name as the minor Boar Clan.

The Boar's cousins in the Crab were surprised by this turn of events. They were prepared to welcome the Boar back, but the Heichi did not wish to return. Some claimed resentment over their "abandonment" in the mountains. Others gave no excuse at all. One thing was certain — the Boar possessed the finest iron mines in Rokugan, and their armorers were so talented that even the Kaiu looked at their work with unabashed envy.

Over a hundred years later the Boar Clan vanished as suddenly as they had reappeared. A sinister Bloodspeaker named Agasha Ryuden, working beside Iuchiban's lieutenant Asahina Yajinden, discovered that the Twilight Mountains had been the site of the First Oni's death. The Boar were aware of a powerful residual evil that stained the Mountains and had made it their duty to protect the Empire from it. Visiting the Boar in the guise of diplomats, the Bloodspeakers stormed the hidden mines and slaughtered the Boar. Using corrupted steel, they forged the Anvil of Despair, the most deadly nemuranai the Bloodspeakers had ever created.

Then, to the Empire's surprise, not to mention the Bloodspeakers, the surviving Boar simply vanished. The magistrates who later came to investigate found only bloodstains and the discarded possessions of the mighty Boar. By Imperial Edict, the lands returned to the Crab Clan's possession. As no other family wanted the haunted lands, they fell to the Hida by default. Since then the Hida have made good use of the rich iron mines whenever possible, though it can be difficult to find workers brave enough to venture into the Twilight Mountains.

The truth behind the Boar's disappearance is one of the strangest tales ever seen in Rokugan, and few will ever know it. When the First Oni died, its residual evil awakened something deep in the earth. A powerful spirit — the Shakoki Dogu — was roused by the demon's corruption. The pain the First Oni brought the earth outraged the Shakoki Dogu, and the spirit swore to spend eternity containing the demon's corruption.

After many centuries, the Shakoki Dogu became lonely. When a group of Crab explorers entered the mountains, the Shakoki Dogu imprisoned them between the Spirit Realms. It wished for companionship, and forced the lost Crab samurai to help it maintain its lonely vigil. For sixty years the Crab struggled to escape, until finally their leader Hida Heichi confronted the Shakoki Dogu spirit and demanded to know why they had been imprisoned.

When Heichi learned the truth, he found himself sympathetic to the Shakoki Dogu's plight. The spirit's eternal, thankless duty reminded Heichi of the Crab Clan's endless war. He promised that as long as the Shakoki Dogu fought the First

Oni's corruption, his descendants would stand beside the spirit. Overcome with gratitude, the Shakoki Dogu allowed the captured Crab to return to the mortal world.

When the Bloodspeakers began to slaughter the Boar, the Shakoki Dogu felt that it had made a mistake. In its zeal to protect the Boar, it tore them from the mortal realm again, permanently transforming the entire Minor Clan into fleshless spirits. Now the Boar walk beside the Shakoki Dogu, not quite alive but not quite ghosts, as they help the strange earth spirit maintain its vigil.

Forever.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: This adventure hook begins in a large city far from the Twilight Mountains. While browsing a small shop, a PC notices a strange stone doll (a Shakoki Dogu effigy). After momentarily blacking out he finds himself in the street, clutching the doll in hand. He has vague memories of purchasing the doll, but does not remember why he did so.

Focus: After a few nights of possessing the doll, the character begins to have terrible nightmares. The nightmares encourage the character to bring the doll to the Twilight Mountains. The effigy was separated from the Twilight Mountains during a period of dormancy by a greedy bandit who did not realize what he had found. Now this lost piece of the Shakoki Dogu wants to return home. If the character attempts to dispose of the doll, it somehow turns up in his possession once again.

Strike: Unknown to the character, the Shakoki Dogu is able to communicate with him because he is distantly related to the Boar Clan. His ancestor was an ambassador fortunate enough not to be in Boar lands when his clan disappeared. If the character returns the spirit, the Shakoki Dogu may decide to try to "protect" the character by rendering him a fleshless spirit as it did the other Boar. The character must find a way to get rid of the cursed doll or reason with the strange spirit.

IMPORTANT HIDA NPCS

HIDA KUON, CRAB CLAN CHAMPION

Hida Kuon never expected to reign as Crab Champion. He contented himself with the life of a warrior, loyally serving his twin brother Kuroda. Upon passing his gempukku, Kuon threw himself into personal combat, embracing the bloodlust of his Hida forebears. Meanwhile his brother Kuroda studied the tactics and strategies of great Crab and Unicorn generals. The brothers were the perfect pair. With Kuroda's cunning and Kuon's power there were few enemies they could not overcome. Even so, there was little doubt in anyone's mind, including Kuon's, that Kuroda would ultimately be a better leader for the Crab. So it came to pass that when Hida O-Ushi died, Kuroda became Crab Champion and Kuon served as his most trusted officer.

When Kuroda fell defending the Kaiu Wall, Kuon reluctantly assumed the mantle of Champion. Kuon was uncertain in his new role, unable to adjust to the idea of so many lives

depending on his decisions. When Kuroda returned, possessed by the demonic Kyofu, Kuon was galvanized by rage. As he charged into battle against his corrupted brother, those Crab who had begun to lose spirit when the Kaiu Towers fell were heartened by the sight of their seemingly invincible leader. Samurai on the brink of surrender took up their weapons again and fought against insurmountable odds.

When Kuon realized that he had won the loyalty of his clan, he took steps to make certain he would not fail them. Recognizing his weakness as a strategist, he surrounded himself with the wisest and most experienced military minds in his clan. He learned quickly, and in the meantime he continued to serve as he always had — at the vanguard of the Crab armies. No Clan Champion risks himself in personal combat with the frequency of Hida Kuon. He wields his grandfather's legendary tetsubo to devastating effect, cleaving a bloody swath through the Lost.

Where once the Shadowlands held six of the twelve Kaiu Towers, the Wall is now fully in the Crab's possession again thanks to Kuon's leadership. Though the Tower of Fear still stands, permanently corrupted by Fu Leng's intervention, Kuon organized the Crab to tear down the Wall and rebuild around it. The Wall stands pure once more, not the same as it once was but as strong as it has ever been.

Recently some of Kuon's advisors have begun to criticize his tendency to charge into battle at the head of his army. While Kuon realizes that the Crab cannot afford to lose another daimyo, he knows that neither can they afford to lose courage. He is a symbol of hope, throwing himself against countless odds and always emerging victorious. The Crab look to him, drawing strength from his example. Some say that with Kuon as their leader, the Crab cannot be defeated.

Kuon prays to his ancestors that his people are right to put their faith in him, but in his heart he fears for the future. Each time he charges into battle, he finds it more difficult to reach the depths of rage and bloodlust that have served him so well in the past. He finds himself distracted by thoughts of tactics and strategy. He finds his rage derailed by thoughts of concern for his comrades.

Kuon worries that he is becoming weaker, but those who stand beside him would argue that the opposite is true. Kuon is becoming a leader.

HIDA KUON

Male human Crab Ftr 10/Ber 5: CR 15; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 15d10 + 60; hp 185; Init +2; Spd 40 ft.; AC 27 (touch 13, flat-footed 25); Atk *Kisada's tetsubo* +28/+23/+18 melee, 1d10+16 damage +2d6 holy damage vs. evil; SQ Class skill — Knowledge: Shadowlands (family bonus), Rage 2/day, Uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus to AC, can't be flanked); Honor: 2; AL NG; SV Fort +16, Ref +7, Will +5; Str 20 (24), Dex 15, Con 19, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 11; Maximum Void: 2; Height 6 ft. 2 in.

Dojo: Sunda Mizu Dojo; *Kata*: Shards of Earth, Striking as Earth, Striking as Water.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, Nezumi, Oni), Climb +14, Intimidate +12, Intuit Direction +6, Jump +14, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +13, Listen +9, Wilderness Lore +9; Cleave, Hida's Charge, Hida's Terrible Wrath, Improved Bull Rush, Kharmic Twin (Ancestor — linked to Hida Kuroda), The Mountain Does Not Move, Power Attack, Void Use, Way of the Crab, Weapon Focus (die tsuchi), Weapon Focus (tetsubo), Weapon Specialization (die tsuchi), Weapon Specialization (tetsubo).

Possessions: *Kisada's tetsubo* (see page 29), +2 amulet of natural armor, stone of good luck (shaped like a figurine of Fukurokujin), obi of giant strength +4, ring of protection +1, *Yakamo's armor* (+5 great armor).

HIDA KUON

Earth: 6

Fire: 3

Agility: 4

Water: 4

Strength: 6

Air: 3

Reflexes: 4

Void: 3

School/Rank: Hida Berserker 2/Hida Bushi 3

Dojo: Sunda Mizu Dojo

Kata: Shards of Earth, Striking as Earth, Striking as Water

Honor: 2.3

Glory: 8.1

Advantages: Kharmic Tie — Hida Kuroda (3 points), Large, Strength of the Earth (8 points), Way of the Land (Crab Lands)

Disadvantages: Driven (to punish the Shadowlands), Nemesis (Hida Kuroda)

Skills: Athletics 6, Battle 3, Defense 6, Die Tsuchi 7, Hunting 4, Intimidation 4, Jiu-jutsu 5, Kenjutsu 4, Lore (Shadowlands) 5, Nezumi 3, Tetsubo 7

HIDA REIHA, ADVISOR TO LORD KUON

One of the youngest officers on Kuon's council of advisors, Hida Reiha is liked and respected by the Hida. Though she is of relatively low birth, none doubt her courage and dedication. She is intelligent, insightful, and diplomatic, able to see all sides of a situation despite her inexperience. Her prowess on the battlefield is unquestionable, and her beauty has inspired even the most inarticulate of Hida samurai to attempt to compose haiku in her honor.

Born to the Kakeguchi vassal family, Reiha was trained from an early age to serve the Hida with loyalty and honor. As the Kakeguchi family daimyo's niece, she was given the honor of training at the prestigious Sunda Mizu Dojo and invited to live in the household of Hida O-Ushi. The opportunity was like a dream for young Reiha, who had been raised on tales of O-Ushi's heroism and worshiped the Crab Champion. Reiha performed exceptionally well, and her sensei recommended her for a position on the wall under Hida Kuroda's command. As she had come to look upon Kuroda as a brother, friend, and comrade, she eagerly accepted.

The Shadowlands had been silent for many years at that time, but Reiha took her post seriously. While other Crab officers took the opportunity to relax, Reiha vigilantly organized scouting parties and saw to the Wall's defenses. Kuroda noticed her initiative and promoted her to his second-in-command. Like Reiha, Kuroda considered the silence from the Shadowlands a reason to be even more vigilant. Reiha came to respect Kuroda like no other samurai.

Though Reiha always got along well with Kuroda, she disliked his brother Kuon at first. Compared to his brother, Kuon was surly, arrogant, and had poor control over his temper. He had a tendency to tell raunchy jokes and had teased Reiha relentlessly when they were children. Kuon's only positive trait was that he was always able to make Kuroda laugh. Kuroda always tolerated his brother's gruff humor, and

always listened to his advice. Reiha tolerated Kuon for Kuroda's sake, and because Kuon was also the son of O-Ushi.

When Hida O-Ushi was killed, Reiha was surprised to see the change that came over both brothers. While Kuroda was overcome with grief, Kuon was apparently unaffected. He simply bore the news without emotion, even when Kuroda was in tears. Angered by Kuon's apparent lack of concern, Reiha decided to face him, consequences be damned. When she burst into Kuon's chambers to confront him, she found the younger twin's eyes red from grief, tears streaming down his face.

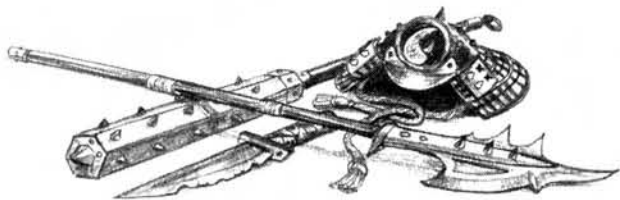
It was then that Reiha realized that Kuon was not the boorish lout he appeared to be. He simply played the lout's part to keep up his brother's spirits in the face of the impossible demands placed upon him. He pretended to be unaffected by his mother's death so that Kuroda could draw from his strength. Reiha had new respect for Hida Kuon, and with a sincere apology and a promise not to share what she had seen she left him to his grief.

When Kuroda fell to the Shadowlands, Reiha was shattered. It was she who carried the broken shards of Yuruginai to the Kaiu Forge, and it was she who brought Kuon news of his brother's death. Despite her terrible sorrow, she performed both duties with quiet fortitude. She had faith in the clan's future, for Reiha was one of the few Crab who felt confident in Kuon's ability to lead. All that he required was encouragement, someone to support Kuon as Kuon had once supported his brother. Reiha therefore stood by Kuon throughout the trials that followed his ascension to Champion, offering advice and support. Still angered at his brother's death, Kuon was stubbornly resistant to her offers of support.

After a crushing defeat in the campaign to retake the fallen Kaiu Towers, Kuon became particularly frustrated. He retreated from his advisors and refused to speak to anyone. Reiha disobeyed Kuon's commands, confronting him and insisting that he persevere. Kuon, ashamed and grateful, took new strength from her words. Since then, he has rarely been seen without the young samurai-ko by his side. He has never regretted placing his trust in her.

With Kuon now a strong leader of the Crab Clan, many Hida feel that it is time that he produced an heir. Though many political marriage arrangements have been offered, Kuon has refused them all. Few among his advisors doubt that the headstrong young Crab will make his own choice. Reiha has come to realize that her respect for Kuon had grown into something much more, and that he loves her in return. Kuon has privately offered to marry Reiha once the Wall is secure and a new Emperor has been proclaimed. She has gladly accepted.

The idea of a Crab Champion marrying a mere vassal would cause a scandal in any other Great Clan. In this case, both Kuon and Reiha are so beloved that the news will almost certainly bring joy throughout the Crab Clan.



HIDA REIHA

Female human Crab Sam 9: CR 9; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 9d10 + 48; hp 129; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 21 (touch 11, flat-footed 20); Atk +3 *katana* +15/+10 melee, 1d10+8 damage; SQ Ancestral Daisho, Class skill — Knowledge: Shadowlands (family bonus); Honor: 2; AL CG; SV Fort +10, Ref +4, Will +6; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 16 (18), Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 16; Maximum Void: 2; Height 5 ft. 10 in.

Dojo: Sunda Mizu Dojo; *Kata:* Striking as Water.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (High Rokugani, Rokugani, Nezumi), Climb +13, Jump +13, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +13, Sense Motive +12, Battle +12, Intimidate +15; Daisho Specialization (*katana*), Hida Technique, Strength of the Earth, The Mountain Does Not Move, Toughness, Void Use, Way of the Crab, Weapon Focus (*katana*).

Possessions: +2 *great armor*, +3 *katana* (ancestral daisho), +3 *wakizashi* (ancestral daisho), *bracers of health* +2, *haori of resistance* +2.

HIDA REIHA

Earth: 4

Fire: 3

Water: 3

Air: 3

Awareness: 4

Void: 3

School/Rank: Hida Bushi 3

Dojo: Sunda Mizu Dojo

Kata: Striking as Water

Honor: 2.3

Glory: 6.2

Advantages: Bente's Blessing, Large, Strength of the Earth (4 points), True Friend (Hida Kuon)

Disadvantages: Idealistic

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 3, Defense 3, Diplomacy 4, Intimidation 5, Jujutsu 4, Kenjutsu 5, Lore (Shadowlands) 5, Nezumi 3, Ono 4, Tetsubo 3

HIDA HITOSHI, LIAISON TO THE SHOGUN

Hida Hitoshi is eager to prove himself. His grandfather was a ronin who joined a Crab vassal family during a Twenty Goblin Winter. His father was a hero of the Clan War who so distinguished himself that he was adopted as a true Hida. His family has risen through the Crab's ranks in an extraordinary amount of time, through extraordinary circumstances. Now Hitoshi sees it as his duty to continue the tradition. His determination has given him a focused, headstrong character. He often speaks without thinking and has few real friends. Fortunately his talent as a warrior makes up for this lack, and he has found a place among Hida Kuon's advisors.

When Hida Kuon asked for someone to act as an emissary to Akodo Kaneka, Hitoshi immediately volunteered. Hitoshi was greatly impressed by Kaneka's actions in the Yasuki provinces. He resolved a volatile situation with a minimum of bloodshed, and showed great wisdom in not making the Crab his enemies. In Hitoshi's opinion, Kaneka was exactly the sort of Emperor the Crab Clan needed on the throne. By supporting the Bastard, Hitoshi would make certain that Kaneka did not forget the Crab once his position in Otosan Uchi was secured. When Kaneka demanded that his followers break their wakizashi so that he could forge a new katana from the steel, Hitoshi was among the first to step forward.

Unfortunately for Hitoshi, he is not suited to politics. He is a warrior, and a talented one, but Kaneka already has plenty of fine warriors. While Hitoshi struggles to find a way to make himself indispensable to the Shogun, every path he explores has already been taken. Moto Chagatai offers cavalry power. Akodo Ijiasu's troops are the finest in the Empire. Yoritomo Kumiko's fleets dominate the seas.

If Hitoshi could offer the entire Crab Clan's support, there is no question that Kaneka would accept him as an honored advisor. However, Hida Kuon is not yet prepared to offer full support to Kaneka. The Shogun is occupying lands that rightfully belong to the Crab, and while Kaneka has not interfered with the Crab's war against the Horde, Toturi Tsudao and Toturi Sezaru have done much more to aid the campaign. While Hitoshi finds it obvious that Kaneka would do much for the Crab if they allied with him, Kuon does not agree that such is in the Crab's best interests. For the moment, Kuon is staying neutral in the struggle between the Winds and focusing on the war against the Shadowlands.

Hitoshi is not about to argue with his daimyo, but he finds the whole affair frustrating. Every time he watches Kaneka turn to the Mantis or Unicorn for military advice, it chafes him. He knows that the Crab have a more powerful army, even after their recent conflicts with the Horde. He does not like Yoritomo Kumiko and he does not trust Moto Chagatai. He is certain that an alliance with the Shogun would be in the best interests of both the Shogun and the Crab. If he could bring that alliance to pass, his own place in the Crab histories would be secure.

For now, Hitoshi continues to act as emissary, patiently waiting for an opportunity to prove himself. He has become a familiar face in the Yasuki lands, and has developed a strange sort of friendship with the de facto Yasuki leader, Jinn-Kuen. Jinn-Kuen understands Hitoshi's plight and is quite sympathetic. He has promised that, should the opportunity arise, he will do his best to aid Hitoshi in his quest to ally the Crab and the Shogun. Of course, Jinn-Kuen will be expecting some sort of favor in return later, but such is standard practice for a Yasuki.

HIDA HITOSHI

Male human Crab Sam 8/Ftr 4: CR 12; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 12d10 + 36; hp 140; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 24 (touch 12, flat-footed 22); Atk +3 *keen katana* +20/+15/+10 melee, 1d10+11 damage; SQ Ancestral Daisho, Class skill — Knowledge: Shadowlands (family bonus); Honor: 2; AL CG; SV Fort +17, Ref +5, Will +8; Str 16 (18), Dex 11, Con 17, Int 12, Wis 9, Cha 9; Maximum Void: 5; Height 5 ft. 11 in.

Dojo: Daishiki's Anvil; **Kata:** Striking as Earth.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (High Rokugani, Roku-gani), Battle +14, Climb +19, Intimidate +10, Jump +19, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +12, Ride +15; Armor Focus (great armor), Depths of the Void, Great Fortitude, Hida's Rage, Power Attack, The Mountain Does Not Fall, The Mountain Does Not Move, Toughness, Void Use, Way of the Crab, Weapon Focus (katana), Weapon Specialization (katana).

Possessions: +3 *great armor*, +3 *keen katana* (ancestral daisho), +4 *wakizashi* (ancestral daisho), *amulet of natural armor* +2, *cloak of resistance* +2, *gauntlets of ogre power*.

HIDA HITOSHI

Earth: 4

Fire: 4

Water: 3

Air: 2

Reflexes: 4

Void: 4

School/Rank: Hida Bushi 4

Dojo: Daishiki's Anvil

Kata: Striking as Earth

Honor: 2.5

Glory: 5.3

Advantages: Ally (Akodo Kaneka), Large, Strength of the Earth (4 points)

Disadvantages: Brash, Contrary, Obligation (Akodo Kaneka), Obtuse, Proud

Skills: Athletics 6, Battle 5, Defense 4, Horsemanship 4, Intimidation 4, Jujutsu 3, Kenjutsu 6, Lore (Shadowlands) 5, Tetsubo 2

VASSALS OF THE HIDA

THE KAKEGUCHI FAMILY

One of the oldest vassal families, the Kakeguchi descend from Hida's original followers. Kakeguchi was a close friend of Hiruma who stayed behind to protect the young clan while Hiruma, Kuni, and Kaiu left on their legendary quest to destroy Oni no Hatsu Suru. When the three heroes returned and were granted family names by the Kami, Kakeguchi and his brothers maintained their quiet vigil.

One night a week after Hiruma's return, Kakeguchi was keeping watch in the highest tower of Kyuden Hida. His youngest brother Jakuchu came to him, full of anger and jealousy. Jakuchu told Kakeguchi that he should be angry with Hida, that he should resent the fact that Hiruma and the others were rewarded so greatly for leaving the clan behind while Kakeguchi maintained his post and was given nothing. Kakeguchi struck his brother fiercely and cursed him for a fool. "We all must play our parts, Jakuchu," he replied. "I do not do what I do with thought of reward. Hiruma's title is not a plaything; the family Hida has granted him will be as much a burden as a reward. That is his destiny. It is our destiny to guard Hida, and if you do not understand that you are not my brother."

Ashamed, Jakuchu apologized for his outburst and swore to stand by his brother loyally for all his days. What neither brother realized was that the mighty Hida had overheard their conversation. Filled with pride in such two worthy vassals, he immediately joined Kakeguchi and Jakuchu in their vigil. He told Kakeguchi that he was blessed for having such wisdom, and that Jakuchu was equally blessed for being wise enough to learn from his brother. He promised Kakeguchi that his name would never be forgotten, and that all of his descendants and followers would bear the Kakeguchi name along with the Hida name. Jakuchu eagerly asked to be the first to swear fealty to Kakeguchi's name, and the Kakeguchi vassal family was born.

Since then the Kakeguchi have served as officers in the Hida armies. While the true Hida always hold the highest positions of command, Kakeguchi often serve as *nikutai* (corporals), *gunso* (sergeants), and *chui* (lieutenants) in the Crab armies. The Kakeguchi also serve as wardens, riding out in large patrols to keep the peace in the vast Hida lands while their masters protect the Wall. Kakeguchi make excellent magistrates. While they may not be as learned as Kitsuki investigators or as ruthless as Tsuruchi bounty hunters, Kakeguchi are utterly tireless in their pursuit of justice. A Kakeguchi never rests while he is on the trail of a suspect, and never forgets a crime committed in his territory. Numerous are the tales of ronin bandits who fled Hida lands only to return years later, thinking their crimes forgotten, only to find a Kakeguchi magistrate waiting patiently for their return.

The Kakeguchi have served the Hida for so long that in the minds of many Crab the two families are indistinguishable. The Kakeguchi are the Hida family's most loyal and dedicated vassals. They are the Hida's strong right arm, their voice of wisdom and encouragement. The Kakeguchi train almost exclusively in the Hida Bushi school, and at least once a generation a promising young Kakeguchi is raised alongside the Hida daimyo's heirs. In this way the friendship between families is maintained, and close ties remain between vassal and lord.

The fact that Hida Kuon has frequently been seen in close company with Kakeguchi Reiha has not gone unnoticed. The Hida generally agree that Kuon could do far worse than wedding a Kakeguchi, and the elder Kakeguchi family members have already begun to quietly make arrangements for the marriage that is sure to occur once an Emperor has taken the throne.

SHIRO KAKEGUCHI

Just as the Kakeguchi seldom wander far from their Hida masters, so does Shiro Kakeguchi stand only a short distance from Kyuden Hida. The small castle stands exactly halfway between Kyuden Hida and the Kaiu Wall. Many Kakeguchi claim that the castle's presence there is a symbol of their dedication to the Hida. Should the Horde overcome the wall, they must yet face the Kakeguchi before they can touch the Hida's ancestral home. This claim is, of course, apocryphal; Shiro Kakeguchi was built centuries before the Battle of the Cresting Wave and the Kaiu Wall's construction. Regardless, it is a popular belief among the Kakeguchi, who care more for their vows to the Hida than getting their historic details straight.

Like Kyuden Hida, Shiro Kakeguchi is an impressively designed castle. Like Hiruma, Kaiu also became fast friends with Kakeguchi and was pleased to design the home of Hida's first vassal family. The castle is not large, but its defenses are quite formidable. Many have called it a miniature Kyuden Hida.

Unbeknownst to those outside the Hida or Kakeguchi families, Shiro Kakeguchi is in fact an extension of Kyuden Hida's defenses. Tunnels run between them, allowing messages, supplies, and troops to move swiftly from one castle to the other unseen. Like Kyuden Hida, Shiro Kakeguchi has never been attacked, so these contingencies have yet to be put to the test, but they bring the Hida great comfort all the same.

THE KAKEGUCHI FAMILY

Favored Class: Fighter

Starting Honor: 1

Class Skills: Knowledge (Shadowlands) or Search

Starting Outfit:

1. Masterwork martial weapon of choice.

THE KAKEGUCHI FAMILY

Benefit: +1 Agility

Glory: 0.5 (rather than 1.0)

Special: Members of the Kakeguchi family may exchange their initial rank of Lore (Shadowlands) for one rank of Investigation if they wish.

THE MOSHIBARU FAMILY

In the late fourth century, the demon known as Oni no Usu arose from the Festering Pit. Unlike most oni who rise directly from the Pit, Usu was extremely intelligent and possessed of free will. He gathered an army of demons



and marched on Hiruma Castle, where the Crab armies gathered to fight him. For the first time since Fu Leng's imprisonment the Crab were at a serious disadvantage. They had never faced an enemy as cunning or ruthless as Usu, and took serious casualties before they adjusted their strategies. By that time the Crab forces were seriously outnumbered, and all seemed lost. Runners were dispatched for Lion lands to inform the Akodo of the Hida's imminent failure, and warn them to protect the Emperor at all costs. Accustomed to operating independently without the Empire caring about their war, the Crab dug in and prepared for the worst.

One week later, the greater part of the Imperial Legions arrived in Crab lands, led by none other than Emperor Hantei Fujiwa. The Emperor placed the Imperial Legions under the command of Crab Champion Hida Ichido. He even placed himself under the Crab lord's command, an act that shocked the Legions and greatly impressed the Crab.

"My ancestor gave you this duty, to fight this menace," Fujiwa said. "We have failed you by not offering all the aid we could. Show me how to fight the Shadowlands."

Ichido did not hesitate, throwing the Legions into combat against Oni no Usu's demons. Despite Ichido's repeated attempts to protect the Emperor, Fujiwa charged into combat beside him, cutting down countless demons with his shining katana. When the battle was done, and Usu had been defeated, Ichido knelt before the Emperor and gave him his thanks. The Emperor replied that the Crab could show their strength by rebuilding the Empire's defenses. He bestowed a large sum of Imperial gold on the Crab to help them rebuild, and gave Ichido permission to recruit new troops however he wished.

Recruiting new troops was the difficult part. After rumor spread of the horrors the Crab had faced, few samurai would willingly join the Crab. Even ronin mercenaries were wary. To risk one's life for gold was one thing, but to risk one's soul and sanity against the forces of darkness was something else entirely.

So Ichido hit upon a new solution. If money was not enough, he would offer his allies honor and glory. He instituted the custom of the Twenty Goblin Winter. Any warrior who entered the Shadowlands and returned with twenty goblin heads would be granted samurai status in a Crab vassal family, no questions asked.

Hundreds of bushi flooded the Crab lands, eager for a chance to win their way into a true samurai family. Only one in three returned alive, and the goblin population was decimated, but Ichido had gathered the warriors he needed to rebuild his army. The only question was, what to do with them? Many new Crab were former criminals, vagrants, and even peasants who had taken advantage of Ichido's offer to gain samurai status. If they were given too much influence they might cause more problems than they solved.

Ichido's cousin, Hida Moshibaru, hit upon a solution. He offered to take these new Crab and form a vassal family. Thus, while they were technically still Crab, they would always be subordinate to other Hida. They would be given a small parcel of land in a remote part of the Hida provinces. Those who would be Crab must prove that they deserved the honor. Ichido endorsed the solution, and the Moshibaru vassal family was born.

To this day nearly all those who gain the Crab name during the Twenty Goblin Winter become Moshibaru. Unlike most vassal families, the Moshibaru are actually two families in one. The "new" Moshibaru are those who have recently obtained the name or who have not yet proven themselves to the Crab.

The "old" Moshibaru are those born into the family (including the direct descendants of Hida Moshibaru) and others who have proven themselves worthy of being Crab and decided to remain in the vassal family. Most new Moshibaru who demonstrate worthiness to be true Crab are promoted out of the vassal family, unless they wish to remain and help others find their way.

KYUDEN MOSHIBARU

(LOCATION CB23; SEE MAP ON PAGE 96)

Located a little over a day's ride north of Kyuden Hida, Kyuden Moshibaru is a remote and secluded place. It sits in the center of a large, rocky plain with little useful farmland. The roads leading to and from the castle are rough and ill tended, and seem to resist all attempts at repair. High winds scour the plain with such force that the Kyuden is in a continual state of repair. Life in Kyuden Moshibaru is not easy, nor is it intended to be.

The castle is both home to the Moshibaru family and dojo for the newest recruits of the Crab Clan. It is here that men and women who have survived the brutality of the Twenty Goblin Winter learn what it truly means to be a Crab, adopting the Hida's techniques and philosophies. Presently Kyuden Moshibaru is filled to overflowing with new recruits, as the Crab have had a Twenty Goblin Winter in effect for over a year. In other periods of history it has been almost unoccupied, as the Hida sometimes go for generations without declaring a Twenty Goblin Winter.

MOSHIBARU KINASHITA

[Fighter 4/Samurai 3; Hida Bushi 3]

Kinashita is the current Moshibaru daimyo, a direct descendant of Hida Moshibaru. To say that she takes pride in her legacy is a great understatement. She is a merciless taskmaster, punishing all those who wish to prove themselves worthy of the Crab name with ruthless efficiency. She has an instinct for picking out the mental and physical weaknesses of newcomers, and exploits them unflinchingly. It is not uncommon for a newly sworn ronin to flee Kyuden Moshibaru, never to return, rather than continue to face her training. Kinashita does not care. It is her duty to take scum and forge them into Crab, not to coddle weak fools. She is difficult because the Crab's duty is difficult, and there is no room for weakness on the Wall.

THE MOSHIBARU FAMILY

Favored Class: Berserker, Samurai, or Fighter (choose one)

Starting Honor: 1

Class Skills: Hide, Intimidate, or Knowledge (Shadowlands) (choose one)

Starting Outfit:

1. 300 koku, which must be spent on items. No masterwork items.

THE MOSHIBARU FAMILY

Benefit: +1 to any physical Trait

Glory: 0.5 (rather than 1.0)

Special: Members of the Moshibaru family may exchange their initial rank of Lore (Shadowlands) for one rank in any Bugei skill.

HIDA MECHANICS

ANCESTORS

The Hida are not typically obsessed with ceremony. Their celebrations tend to be marked more by drunken revelry than benedictions to the Fortunes. They seem to enjoy thumbing their nose at samurai traditions and interpreting bushido through their own unique world-view. One important exception to this rule is the worship of their ancestors. The Hida regard those who have gone before with quiet reverence and solemnity. Crab ancestral shrines are impressive monuments, usually dedicated to numerous samurai who died in the same battle. The Crab Ancestral Hall at Koten is the most dramatic example, but monuments to dead Hida heroes can be found in many places, often engraved into the stones along the Kaiu Wall.

HIDA ICHIDO

The first Crab Champion to declare a Twenty Goblin Winter, Hida Ichido was a peerless warrior and staunch supporter of the Hantei. He was the first Crab Champion since Hida to fend off a large, organized attack by the Shadowlands Horde. Sadly, most historians remember Ichido less for his successes than for his failures. Ichido was Crab Champion during the Crab-Crane War, the first true civil war in Rokugani history, and was slain by a Crane arrow. Many point to his death as a factor in the Gozoku's subsequent rise to power, as Ichido's successor was a less vocal supporter of the Hantei.

NEVER SURRENDER

ANCESTOR: HIDA ICHIDO

You continue to fight on even when all seems lost.

Clan: Crab

Benefit: You gain a +1 to all attack and damage rolls any time you are reduced to less than half your hit points, or any time your party is outnumbered at least three to one. These benefits stack with each other.

HIDA ICHIDO

(6 POINTS)

You can ignore Wound penalties up to +10 (this is cumulative with Strength of the Earth). You roll and keep an extra die on all attack rolls any time your party is outnumbered at least three to one.

"THE CRAB SCOUT"

His name has been forgotten to history, though he appears most often to the Hida family. Even when he appears to his descendants, the Crab Scout never introduces himself. The mysterious Crab Scout who greeted Shinsei upon his return from the Shadowlands and founded the village of Shinsei's Last Hope continues to guide his clan. One day, the Scout knows, the prophecy that Shinsei uttered in that village so long ago will come to pass, and his descendants must be ready.

GUARDIAN OF PROPHECY

ANCESTOR: THE CRAB SCOUT

Your will to survive against the forces of darkness is indomitable.

Clan: Crab

Benefit: You gain damage reduction 1/- against all attacks from enemies with the Shadowlands subtype. This damage reduction increases to 2/- within the village of Shinsei's Last Hope, and stacks with similar forms of damage reduction (such as that gained from levels of the berserker character class).

THE CRAB SCOUT

(5 POINTS)

You subtract one Wound from each damage die inflicted upon you by a Shadowlands creature. If you are within the village of Shinsei's Last Hope, you subtract two from each die. (This effect is applied after 10s are rerolled.)

HIDA O-USHI

One of the most beloved Crab Champions of recent memory, "the Bully" led her clan to victory during the War Against the Darkness and again during the War of Spirits. She was a powerful warrior, often defeating oni three times her size with a single swing of her mighty dai-tsuchi. Her death at Doji Kurohito's hands came as a shock, but was a fate that O-Ushi realized was coming. Growing bent and grey with age, O-Ushi feared that she would soon be unable to serve her clan as a warrior. She knew only one final way to aid her clan, by galvanizing them against the invading Crane Clan. Thus it was that she challenged the master duelist Doji Kurohito to personal combat, her death igniting her clan's fighting spirit. She will always be remembered.

BULLY

ANCESTOR: HIDA O-USHI

You bear the strength of the legendary Hida O-Ushi.

Clan: Crab

Prerequisite: Str 15+

Benefit: Your Strength is considered two higher for attack and damage rolls when wielding a two-handed weapon.

ANCESTOR: HIDA O-USHI

(5 POINTS)

Your Strength and Agility are considered one higher for attack and damage rolls when wielding any large weapon such as a tetsubo, dai tsuchi, or no-dachi.

SHAKOKI DOGU

Many strange spirits haunt the Twilight Mountains, the most formidable of which is the Shakoki Dogu. An ancient spirit drawn from the earth by the First Oni's poisonous blood, the Shakoki Dogu possesses an intellect few mortals can understand. It lives only to protect, but it does so in a manner of its own choosing. The Shakoki Dogu does not understand human thought, behavior, or physiology and sometimes its gestures go tragically wrong. The entire Boar Clan was rendered fleshless spirits by the Shakoki Dogu's well-intentioned

actions. Other visitors to the Twilight Mountains have gone insane or been killed because the Shakoki Dogu perceived them as a threat and attempted to drive them away.

The Shakoki Dogu is formless, fathomless, inconceivable to mortal minds. If anything, its body is the mountain range it inhabits. The spirit affects the environment in the Twilight Mountains in subtle ways. Given time, it can control the weather or cause small earthquakes and avalanches. It can open and close caverns, restricting passage into the rich mines for those it deems unworthy.

SHAKOKI DOGU EFFIGIES

The most dramatic manifestations of its power by far are the Shakoki Dogu effigies, tiny stone dolls with deformed limbs and wide staring eyes. These effigies can frequently be found lying about the mountains, often near mysterious stone circles. These dolls are formed from the mountain rock and possess a shred of the Shakoki Dogu's awareness. They are the spirit's attempt to understand the mortal realm, a reflection of how it perceives humanity. These dolls manifest within mysterious circles of stone created by the Shakoki Dogu.

When the Shakoki Dogu wishes, it can animate these effigies. The dolls possess extraordinary magical powers, but use them only at the whim of the enigmatic spirit that animates them. The effigies never speak, except to occasionally whisper the Shakoki Dogu's name. For this reason, many explorers have assumed that dolls are Shakoki Dogu. From one point of view, this is correct, and the Shakoki Dogu does not care enough to correct the mistake.

SHAKOKI DOGU EFFIGY

Tiny Construct

Hit Dice: 4d10 (22 hp)

Initiative: 0

Speed: 20 ft.

AC: 23 (+2 size, +1 Dex, +10 natural)

Attacks: Slam +4 melee

Damage: Slam 1d3-1

Face/Reach: 2 ½ ft. by 2 ½ ft./0 ft.

Special Attacks: Dream Control, Song, Spell-like abilities

Special Qualities: Bound to Mountains, Construct, Shakoki Dogu awareness

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

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

Skills: None

Feats: None

Climate/Terrain: The Twilight Mountains

Organization: Solitary (1) or mob (20-200)

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: None

Honor: Nil

Alignment: Always chaotic neutral

Advancement: None

Shakoki Dogu effigies are tiny stone dolls created by the spirit that haunts the Twilight Mountains. They are ultimately controlled by the Shakoki Dogu, and can sometimes behave quite strangely or even violently as they carry out that enigmatic spirit's wishes.

COMBAT

Shakoki Dogu effigies pretend to be inanimate dolls until they can gauge the purpose of an enemy. If they are attacked or damaged in any way, or the enemy seems to bear ill will toward the Twilight Mountains, the dolls attack without concern for their own safety. They prefer to use their spell-like abilities and overwhelming numbers to wear down opponents or make them flee in terror.

Dream Control (Su): A Shakoki Dogu effigy can influence the dreams of any sleeper within 60 feet. This has no mechanical effect, but it is the only way the Shakoki Dogu spirit can effectively communicate with humans.

Song (Su): If three or more Shakoki Dogu effigies are within thirty feet of one another, they can emit a horrifying song that draws upon the Shakoki Dogu's power. Their eyes fill with an eerie blue light as the spirit channels its power through them. This song fills a thirty-foot radius around each Shakoki Dogu and affects all targets with an Intelligence of 3 or higher except Nezumi, who are immune. This is a full round action. The song can have any one of the following effects.



Fear: All targets must save or become panicked for three rounds. The save DC is equal to 10+the number of effigies singing, maximum DC 30.

Pain: All targets suffer 2d8 holy damage, with a Fortitude save for half damage. The save DC is equal to 10+the number of effigies singing, maximum DC 30.

Sleep: All targets must succeed at a Will save or fall into a deep sleep. Sleepers awaken if they take damage, if any living creature approaches within five feet (effigies are not living creatures), or after one hour. Effigies often use this ability to cast intruders into a slumber and then carry them to a remote area of the mountains where they will die of starvation. The save DC is equal to 5+the number of effigies singing, maximum DC 30.

Spell-like abilities: At will — *detect Taint*, *meld into stone*, *passwall* (only the effigy can use the *passwall*); 3/day — *stone shape*. These abilities are as per the spells cast by a 4th level sorcerer (DC 12+spell level).

Bound to Mountains: If an effigy is removed from the Twilight Mountains it becomes dormant, and cannot move, attack, or use any of its abilities save the Dream Control ability. Even this can be used only once per day outside the mountains.



Construct: Shakoki Dogu effigies are immune to mind-influencing magic and effects, and are immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death, and necromantic effects. They are not subject to critical hits, ability damage, ability drain, or energy drain. Further, they are immune to any effect that requires a Fortitude save (unless the effect also works on objects). Guardian Statues are not at risk of death from massive damage, but when reduced to 0 hit points or less, they are immediately destroyed. These constructs have darkvision with a range of 60 feet.

Shakoki Dogu Awareness: The Shakoki Dogu can see, hear, and feel through its effigies and is aware of everything that happens to them. Should an effigy be threatened, the spirit will dispatch more to punish the attackers, or may use its powers to create a blizzard, avalanche, or other devastating natural disaster centered on its enemy.

SHAKOKI DOGU EFFIGY

Earth: 3

Fire: 1

Agility: 2

Water: 2

Perception: 3

Air: 1

Reflexes: 3

Rolls to Attack: 3k2

Rolls for Damage: 2k2

TN to Be Hit: 25

Carapace: 6

Wounds: 5: +10; 10: +15; 15: +20; 30: Dead

SPECIAL ABILITIES:

Dream Control: A Shakoki Dogu effigy can influence the dreams of any sleeper within 60 feet. This has no mechanical effect, but it is the only way the Shakoki Dogu spirit can effectively communicate with humans.

Song: If three or more Shakoki Dogu effigies are within thirty feet of one another, they can forego moving or attacking to emit a horrifying song that draws upon the Shakoki Dogu's power. Their eyes fill with an eerie blue light as the spirit channels its power through them. This song fills a thirty-foot radius around each Shakoki Dogu. The song does not affect animals, plants, other effigies, or Nezumi. Singing is a full round action. This song can have any one of the following effects.

Fear 5: This Fear increases by one for each additional three effigies, to a maximum of 8.

Pain: All targets must make an Earth roll vs. TN 10 or suffer two dice of Wounds. Those who succeed suffer only one die of Wounds. The TN is increased by 5 for each additional three effigies singing, to a maximum of 40.

Sleep: All targets must make an Earth roll vs. TN 5 or fall into a deep sleep. Sleepers awaken if they take damage, if any living creature approaches within five feet (effigies are not living creatures), or after one hour. Effigies often use this ability to cast intruders into a slumber and then carry them to a remote area in the mountains where they will die of starvation. The TN increases by five for each additional three effigies singing, to a maximum of 40.

Shakoki Dogu's Eyes: Shakoki Dogu effigies can see in total darkness and sense the Shadowlands Taint at will.

Earth Mastery: Through their connection to the pure spirit of the earth, Shakoki Dogu effigies can pass through normal earth and stone at will. Three times per day, they can perma-

nently reshape up to fifteen cubic feet of stone in a manner of their choosing.

Bound to Mountains: If an effigy is removed from the Twilight Mountains it becomes dormant, and cannot move, attack, or use any of its abilities save the Dream Control ability. Even this can only be used once per day outside the mountains.

Construct: As unliving creatures, Shakoki Dogu are immune to all spells which would not normally affect a block of stone.

Shakoki Dogu Awareness: The Shakoki Dogu can see, hear, and feel through its effigies and is aware of everything that happens to them. Should one of the effigies be threatened, the spirit will dispatch more to punish the attackers, or may use its powers to create a blizzard, avalanche, or other devastating natural disaster centered on its enemy.

ARTIFACTS OF THE HIDA

In the thousand years the Hida have guarded the Kaiu Wall, many legends have been born. Sometimes the spirits awaken, and create powerful nemuranai. The following are a few of the Hida family's most potent artifacts.

THE MAW'S SKULL

Following the Battle of the Cresting Wave, Hida Banuken's followers discovered the mighty Oni Lord's corpse among the fallen. A unit of Tainted Crab samurai, the first unit in Crab history to carry the banner of the Damned, had brought the demon low. The Maw was the most devastating threat that the Crab had yet faced, and the Crab Champion decided to make an example of the demon's defeat. The Maw's skull was cleaned, purified of all Taint, and mounted above the gates of Kyuden Hida. Since that day it has stood as a mute guardian of the Crab's most powerful family. After a time, the purified skull began to adopt the Hida family's fighting spirit.

Since Fu Leng's escape from Meido, his most powerful servants have likewise been summoned forth from the depths of Jigoku. This includes the Maw, who stands among Fu Leng's lieutenants in the army of demons currently besieging the Celestial Heavens. To the Maw's dismay, the Oni Lord has been unable to dispatch any of its spawn to the mortal realm since its return. Apparently the existence of its purified skull bars it from affecting the Empire in any physical way. The Maw has recently begun communicating with human pawns, hoping to manipulate them into destroying the skull.

All creatures with the Shadowlands subtype that look upon the Maw's skull must make a Will save (DC 30) or become panicked. The skull has a hardness of 30, 1000 hit points, and is impervious to all damage except by maho spells of level 7 or higher. The skull loses its fear aura if it is removed from the gates of Kyuden Hida.

All Shadowlands creatures within two hundred feet of the Maw's skull are affected by Fear 8. The skull has a Carapace rating of 10 and can suffer 1,000 Wounds before it is destroyed. It is impervious to all damage except by maho spells of Mastery Level 4 or higher. The skull loses its fear aura if it is removed from the gates of Kyuden Hida.

THE ANCESTRAL WAR BANNER OF THE HIDA

The Hida family have carried the same *j'uma jirushi* (great standard) into battle since Hida marched into battle against Fu Leng a thousand years ago. The enormous battle standard has weathered the ages well. A small family of Hida artisans is dedicated to its maintenance and approach their duties with the unwavering dedication of the Crab.

Whenever the Crab Champion marches into battle, the Ancestral War Banner of the Hida accompanies him. The banner is so large that it must either be carried by two soldiers or flown from an immobile structure. Whenever the Crab Champion is on the Kaiu Wall, the banner is flown from the nearest watchtower. Even the most mindless beasts of the Horde appear to recognize the standard, so the fighting is usually the thickest wherever it is present.

Since Hida Kuon conquered the fallen Kaiu Towers, this has changed somewhat. Even the Horde's demons and mindless undead have an irrational fear of Hida Kuon, and avoid his presence at all costs. For this reason, Kuon occasionally travels without the standard so that the Horde will be unprepared for his arrival.

Like all great standards, the Ancestral War Banner of the Hida allows its general a +10 circumstance bonus to all Battle checks that involve commanding troops on a massive scale. In addition, the war banner confers a prayer spell on all Crab soldiers in its army so long as they face opponents with the Shadowlands subtype.

The pair of soldiers carrying the banner move at half speed, may not run or charge, must fight one handed, and suffer a -4 circumstance penalty to attack rolls and Reflex saves.

As when bearing any great standard, the general of an army with the Ancestral War Banner of the Hida may add three to his Battle roll, and receives four Free Raises when attempting to deliver commands using the Battle skill. In addition, all Crab soldiers in an army with the war banner receive one Free Raise every round so long as they face Shadowlands creatures.

The pair of soldiers who carry the banner move very slowly, suffer a +15 penalty to all TN's when carrying the banner, and must fight one-handed.

KISADA'S TETSUBO

After his trademark die *tsuchi* was destroyed in a confrontation with Daigotsu, Hida Kuon took to carrying the *tetsubo* once wielded by his grandfather, the legendary Hida Kisada. Though Kuon also carries *Yuruginai*, the Celestial Sword of the Crab, he has sworn to wield it only against his corrupted brother, Kuroda.

Kisada's *Tetsubo* is a +5 *holy tetsubo*. Any successful strike against a Shadowlands creature with Kisada's *tetsubo* is considered a critical hit, even against targets normally immune to critical hits.

Kisada's *Tetsubo* inflicts 2k4 Wounds and, like all *tetsubo*, ignores armor and reduces Carapace ratings by 5. When striking a Shadowlands creature, it rolls and keeps two extra damage dice. In addition, if any 10s are rolled for damage against Shadowlands creatures, two dice are rolled and added to the total damage instead of one.

WEAPONS OF THE CRAB

There is a saying among the Crab that "there is no work of Kaiu engineering that Hida violence cannot improve." Indeed, while the Kaiu are talented smiths, the Hida have developed a number of ingenious modifications to Kaiu innovations.

DEMON ARMOR

The idea of adding spikes to a suit of armor would be seen as dishonorable, or at least distasteful, by most samurai. The Hida have no such qualms. Their famous "demon armor" is covered with spikes and blades, cunningly arranged so that the wearer will not be harmed by his own armor. If a Shadowlands beast would rush up to envelop a Crab bushi in its limbs, the Hida are prepared to make that beast regret the decision. Most Crab spike armor is decorated in elaborate, intimidating designs, usually incorporating purified skulls taken from goblins or minor oni.

There are two variations of Hida Demon Armor. Lesser Demon Armor is identical to the armor spikes described in the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*.™ Greater Demon Armor features larger blades that inflict 1d8 piercing damage (19–20/x2 crit) and count as an exotic weapon. If used during a grapple attack without the proper weapon proficiency, the user suffers a –4 penalty to all attack rolls. A non-proficient character wearing Greater Demon Armor suffers a –2 penalty to all attack rolls as the oversized blades get in the way.

Demon Armor can be equipped with jade-tipped spikes. These spikes inflict only 1d3 damage against enemies without the Shadowlands subtype. The spikes count as four fingers of jade and must be replaced if they are corrupted by exposure to Taint. Jade spikes cost five times the normal cost and are always masterwork.

There are two variations of Hida Demon armor. Lesser Demon Armor is used with the Wrestling Skill and inflicts 2k1 Wounds on any grappled opponents. Greater Demon Armor features larger blades that inflict 3k2 Wounds. A character with Greater Demon Armor must use the Demon Armor specialized Weapon Skill in place of Wrestling on all grapple rolls. Characters that do not have at least one rank in the Demon Armor Weapon Skill suffer a +5 TN penalty to all attack rolls while wearing the armor as the oversized blades get in the way.

Demon Armor can be equipped with jade-tipped spikes. These spikes only inflict 1k1 Wounds against enemies without the Shadowlands Taint. The spikes count as four fingers of jade and must be replaced if they are corrupted by exposure to Taint. Jade spikes cost five times the normal cost and are always Fine Quality.

JADE EGGS

Though the Hida would never admit it, the first Jade Egg was inspired by the eggshell smoke bombs used by Scorpion ninja. The Jade Egg is a mixture of explosives, irritants, and finely ground jade within an eggshell. When thrown, the egg cracks open and releases a cloud of dust. The jade dust irritates Shadowlands creatures terribly, and can provide a quick advantage in an otherwise difficult battle.

With the recent shortage of jade, these eggs are very rare. The Hida do not make many of these items, and give them only to their most trusted bushi.

A jade egg has the same statistics as a smokestick, and requires an Alchemy check (DC 20) to create, as well as the appropriate materials.

A jade egg is a thrown weapon with a range increment of 10 feet, and is thrown as a grenade-like weapon. Upon striking a surface it explodes, filling a 5-foot radius with irritating gas. Targets who fail a Fortitude save (DC 15) are blinded for three rounds. Targets with the Shadowlands subtype suffer a –5 to their saving throw and are also nauseated for one round if they fail. Jade eggs cost 150 koku each.

A Jade Egg is thrown using Ninjutsu or the Jade Egg specialized Weapon Skill. It can be thrown up to sixty feet, and upon striking a surface fills a five-foot radius with irritating gas. Those within the cloud must make an Earth roll vs. TN 10 or be blinded for three rounds (+15 TN to all rolls requiring sight). Targets with the Shadowlands Taint have the TN of their Earth roll increased by 20 and cannot act for one round if they fail their roll.



CHAPTER TWO:

THE HIRUMA

VIGILANT
PART THREE

Hatori waited patiently as a servant poured him steaming tea. The room he was sitting in was cramped, but easily one of the most comfortable he had ever seen in the Crab provinces. Some of the tapestries that hung nearby could be three or four hundred years old. The warmth and stillness of the room belied the fact that he was several miles beyond the Kaiu Wall and could be assaulted by some slobbering Tainted monster at any time.

The young girl finished her task without the slightest splash, bowed low to the old Miya, then silently turned and padded out of the room. Against the serenity of the room, the hiss of the shoji door closing was almost offensive. Alone once more, Hatori took a moment to collect his thoughts as his eyes wandered around the chamber. He had intended to send Taneji to meet with the Hiruma family, but was forced to change his plans. The Hiruma's slight xenophobia was unknown to Hatori and he was somewhat shocked when the young Otomo said the Hiruma would not receive him. Hatori was experienced enough to know that such behavior wasn't meant as an insult — just an indication that the Crab thought their visitor would be better served not tromping through lands that the hordes of Fu Leng claimed just over a generation ago.

After two day's worth of discussion with the Hiruma at Kyuden Hida, Hatori had been informed grudgingly that he would be allowed past the great Wall to meet the daimyo of the Hiruma at Lone Candle Keep. He Miya knew that the Crab valued strength and thus didn't care that the location of the meeting had been changed; he just hoped his persistence impressed them.

As an afterthought, the shisha bowed his head and whispered a quick prayer to the Fortunes. He was growing tired of "interesting" visits and would settle for a boring, routine journey just once.

When Hatori raised his head, an imposing figure stood before him fully clad in well-kept great armor. The man's helm rested in the crook of his left arm, revealing a shaven head and an amused expression. The shisha had not even heard the man enter. "I will have to tell my children someday that an Imperial noble mistook me for a Fortune when he met me," the large man said in a smoother voice than Hatori had anticipated.

The Miya began to speak, but then realized that not only had the man entered silent in full battle dress, but also had heard his barely audible prayer. "Impressive, samurai," Hatori said after a brief pause, rising to his feet. "You must be Hiruma Masagaro-sama. Tales of your skill in silence are legendary."

"No," the stranger replied flatly, setting his helm on the floor and kneeling before the table Hatori had been sitting at. "Masagaro will not see you," he continued, taking the cup beside Hatori's and drinking from it. "I am Tatsuya, Miya Hatori-sama. Masagaro-sama sends his regards and apologies."

Hatori slowly sank back to the floor and eyed Tatsuya expectantly. When nothing else was forthcoming, he spoke. "He sends many things besides an explanation, it would seem."

Tatsuya smiled broadly and chuckled. "My apologies, please," he said without sarcasm. "Like many from my family, I am unused to dealing with those outside the Crab. When an important daimyo like Masagaro is unable to keep his appointments, it is naturally assumed the reason involves a sudden threat from our neighbors."

"I see," the Miya replied, understanding Tatsuya was not referring to the Scorpion or Crane. "I trust you are sent to speak in his stead, then, Tatsuya-san?"

"I am often better suited to do Masagaro-sama's speaking than he is," the Crab replied. "So what can the Hiruma do for a servant of the Miya?"

Hatori felt off-balance from the Hiruma's blunt manner and insulting comment about his daimyo. "Forgive me," he said quickly. "I am afraid that you are hardly what I was expecting."

"Of course," Tatsuya said. "You were expecting Masagaro-sama."

It was Hatori's turn to laugh. "No, no, Tatsuya-san. I mean to say that I had come prepared to deal with the brutes of the Crab Clan or its clever courtiers. I did not foresee I would have to do both at the same time."

The Hiruma bushi raised a critical eyebrow and smiled at Hatori. "Make no mistake, Hatori-san. I would much rather meet samurai at the end of my sword than attempt to bandy words with them." Tatsuya leaned in slightly, as if to make his words clear over the din of a noisy market. "Let me be direct, Hatori-san, for I understand you are a man who would rather deal in honesty than wordplay. Many in the Crab have come to respect you and we are most honored to have you and your retinue visit our humble lands. You are a man of action when it is due and one of peace when it would serve the Empire best. I say this without guile or flattery. Please feel free to ask of me whatever you would, and I promise your requests will be given full consideration."

Hatori nodded politely at the praise and replied, "What makes you believe I have come to ask something of the Hiruma? I simply wish to extend an invitation to the Crab Clan. In this time of turmoil, we must not forget it is your clan that keeps the Empire safe to..." Hatori almost stopped himself, but decided there was no harm in continuing. "...to make war upon itself and waste the peace you buy with your lives." The Miya's words conveyed sarcastic humor, but his face was regretful.

"You even think like a Crab, Hatori-san. Most impressive," the Hiruma said solemnly. "I can tell you this, then. Do not waste your time looking for problems to solve among the Crab — the Hiruma least of all. Though I truly understand and appreciate your concern, my kin would only take offense at such an offer. We have become defined by our struggle, Hatori-sama, and wish to gain total victory by our own effort alone. The Shadowlands challenged our strength and bested us centuries ago, but now we have the chance to avenge that loss." Tatsuya paused a moment, then let his gaze slide up the wall to a tapestry depicting the defunct Boar Clan. "Should our strength prove insufficient a second time, then we are not worthy. That is our way."

Hatori nodded slowly and sipped thoughtfully from his teacup. "I understand, Tatsuya-san. Thank you for making it clear to me."

"Think of it as a favor to you, Hatori-sama. A favor I would like to call upon now, if you are willing."

"Oh?" Hatori said, fearful he had let himself foolishly stumble into some clever trap.

"Hai, Hatori-sama," Tatsuya said. "I would request the honor of you recounting to us a tale tonight before the night watch begins. Any tale at all. As I have said, we do not deal with outsiders much here, and sometimes we forget the Empire we fight for." Tatsuya paused and held Hatori's gaze. "Sometimes we forget hope."

"A tale of hope to return your favor of enlightenment, Tatsuya-san. I cannot reasonably refuse such an honor," the Miya said.

"Thank you, Hatori," the large Crab replied. "You will never be forgotten by the soldiers you share a meal with tonight, I swear."



THE HIRUMA PROVINCES

The lands of the Hiruma family are the Crab's largest physical reminder of the price of failure. Once these lands were fertile and dotted with the holdings of the Hiruma family. Centuries ago, however, the armies of the oni lord The Maw attacked without warning, overrunning Crab lands all the way to the site of the Kaiu Wall. Though the Battle of Cresting Wave is the stuff of legend and the Crab were ultimately victorious, the Hiruma were dealt a blow from which they would take over three hundred years to recover.

Today, the Hiruma stand proudly once again on the ramparts of their ancestral castle. They have held these lands for over thirty years and (with the aid of the Kuni) cleansed the Taint from a great swath of land south of the Kaiu Wall. Though the Hiruma have not regained even half of what they lost to the Maw, they once again have the right to call land their own and have a stronghold from which to found a new direction for their family. Since the reconquest of Hiruma Castle, the Crab have made little headway in reclaiming more land from the Shadowlands. What they have regained, however, is a silent ghost of the lands the Hiruma were driven from. Like the Kuni Wastes, the Hiruma lands are completely barren. Much of the land holds only standing dead trees and broken patches of dry earth and rock.

MAJOR HIRUMA HOLDINGS

With the notable exception of Shiro Hiruma, every large holding the Hiruma own within their lands has been constructed within the past generation. Countless tiny outposts dot the landscape to serve as points of reference and meeting for the constantly moving Hiruma patrols. With no Wall to hide behind, the Hiruma accept the fact they can be attacked within their homelands at any given time, and their construction reflects this. Every building on Hiruma lands is heavily fortified and connected to escape tunnels that emerge miles away. These tunnels generally connect to one of the myriad small scout towers throughout the lands but sometimes simply lead to an opening in the middle of nowhere.

SHIRO HIRUMA

(LOCATION CB13)

Daylight Castle has undergone constant construction since Hida Yakamo's raiding party reclaimed it four decades ago. When the major repairs were completed, Shiro Hiruma was almost completely restored to its former glory. The Hiruma had neither time or desire to decorate their ancestral home, for they never host major delegations from other clans, or even other Crab families. Any visitor to the castle is exceedingly unusual; most samurai do not wish to travel past what the Empire regards as its southwestern border. Though the Hiruma lands are barren and lonely, Shiro Hiruma eternally reminds the family of how truly isolated they are from the Empire.

HIGHWAYS OF THE HIRUMA PROVINCES

None. The Hiruma have a tenuous hold on their lands and have had neither the time nor inclination to construct major roads. The only well-worn path stretches from Razor of the Dawn Castle to Shiro Hiruma through Lone Candle Keep. Most of the Hiruma's supplies travel on this fiercely guarded road. Though it is not officially recognized, it is referred to as the Road of Jade. There are no easily discernable paths between any other Hiruma holdings. Scouts and patrols of the Hiruma make their runs by memory and their skills and are forbidden to carry maps.

The Shadowlands constantly assault Shiro Hiruma — many of the Tainted beasts perceive Hiruma Castle as “theirs.” The Crab suffered years of attacks through unseen tunnels or breaches in the outer walls before sealing the last of them. The walls of Hiruma Castle have undergone much the same treatment as the Kaiu Wall did, though on a smaller scale. Though the armies of the Shadowlands have become highly organized under the rule of Daigotsu, the Hiruma have constantly adapted against the Lost. Small hidden ambush pits dot the land around Hiruma Castle, making siege weaponry nearly useless. The Hiruma Stalkers sabotage large weapons before they can be put to use. For now, the Hiruma have made it clear to Daigotsu that Daylight Castle would be a jewel too costly to pluck from the hands of the Crab. For over two decades, the oni and goblins have made attacks too small to take the castle, but large enough to pose a constant threat.

CANDLE TEMPLE

One of the new features constructed by the Hiruma is a temple of unusual size for a Crab holding. Candle Temple houses the largest shrine to Hiruma as well as a number of monks from the order of Osano-Wo. The Fortune of Fire and Thunder has taken a keen interest in the Crab attempts to purify lands beyond the Carpenter Wall. Candle Temple is the only structure on the grounds of Shiro Hiruma that is not as bleak and gray as the surrounding lands. The monks dress in garb colored to honor their Crab hosts, wearing bold shades of red and blue as they stand watch with the Hiruma and go through their daily routines. The trim of the temple is gilded, and several colorful paintings depicting the Fortune of Fire and Thunder in combat with Tainted beasts decorate the interior and exterior of the structure. The few times Shadowlands creatures have breached the fortifications of the castle, they have avoided the temple grounds as if the very earth was made of jade.

The Hiruma respect the Osano-Wo sohei for their martial prowess and the wisdom that sets them apart from average bushi. Important Hiruma daimyo often have at least one monk from Candle Temple as a close advisor and personal guard, and the relationship between the monks and the Hiruma samurai grows closer each year.

THE HIRUMA BARRACKS

The vast chambers underneath Shiro Hiruma are solely the training and living quarters of the Hiruma samurai. First Strike Dojo is located in these seemingly endless corridors,

as are the sleeping barracks of nearly every Hiruma samurai within the castle. Burying the barracks ensures that they will never come under direct assault from the Shadowlands even if the outer walls of the castle are lost, and also provide an excellent base of operations should Shiro Hiruma once again be lost to the Shadowlands. Fire is forbidden, and the Kuni have placed wards against fire throughout the chambers.

Fifteen tunnels lead from barracks to surface exits, some miles away, some only a few feet from the walls of the Hiruma stronghold. These tunnels mean that the Hiruma can make a rear assault on any force attacking the castle. Locating these “exit points” is often a fruitless effort by the armies of the Lost, though rare enterprising Tainted foes have found the tunnels. Without exception, anything foolish enough to try and follow the Hiruma back to their castle through the passages has been dispatched by the Kuni wards of jade or the prowess of the Hiruma Stalkers.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: During a stay in the Crab lands, one of the characters is told to deliver a message to a Hiruma daimyo at Shiro Hiruma. Usually messages to and from Daylight Castle are relayed by special couriers, but in this case the character's lord wishes to make a special impression on the Hiruma.

Focus: Even if the selected character is from another Crab family, the request is odd. Gaining access beyond the Kaiu Wall is a complicated matter to begin with and the Crab are loath to grant access to the paths that crisscross the Hiruma lands. The lands south of the Wall are populated with mortal and spiritual danger, and the Tainted denizens of the area pay special attention to the purified lands of the Hiruma. Unless the character and his group can prove themselves to the Hida and the Hiruma samurai within the Wall, they will make it no further than Lone Candle Keep.

Strike: Should the characters be granted permission to travel to Shiro Hiruma, danger and paranoia plagues their journey. The payoff is fulfilling the orders of their lord in a distinguished manner (having to hand off the message at Lone Candle is considered a barely acceptable execution of their orders), and gaining some measure of acceptance by the solitary Hiruma.

THE WHITE TEMPLE

North of Shiro Hiruma and along the western edge of the purified Hiruma lands stands an impressive structure of stone and steel called the White Temple. Kuni come here to conduct “field research” and study the Crab's eternal enemy up close. The Kuni and Hiruma work side by side, combining the relentlessly inquisitive minds of the Crab shugenja and the agile intellect of the Hiruma to unravel the secrets of the Shadowlands. Since the Temple's construction 21 years ago, the libraries of the Kuni have grown astoundingly, to the benefit of the entire Crab Clan. The Hiruma have become quite adept at practical applications of the Kuni's findings at White Temple. The Kuni here routinely dissect the creatures the Hiruma bring back from their forays. Combined with the Hiruma Stalkers' observation of their enemy, the Hiruma have come to understand certain groups of Shadowlands beasts better than the creatures know themselves.

White Temple also serves as a necessary base of spiritual and physical well-being. Though Shiro Hiruma and other important outposts of the Hiruma house shugenja to tend the sick, White Temple is a bastion of knowledge and skill so great that even those on the brink of death can be healed.

The temple also serves as a physical reminder of the power of the kami and the strength of the Fortunes in the heart of the bleak Hiruma lands. The stone of the temple was drawn from the earth slowly, grown and tended like a flower bush in the Emperor's garden. Due to the relative lack of kami in the purified Hiruma lands, the slow process drained the Kuni shugenja who enacted it, but the results are impressive. White Temple earns its name from the pure ivory sheen of the stone walls accented by the polished finish of the steel that girds it. Though the sight of it seems to call out like a beacon to the Shadowlands to come and try to destroy it, its proximity to Daylight Castle and its sheer number of dedicated Kuni shugenja is more than enough to ensure it is one of the safest holdings the Hiruma claim.

BISHAMON AND KISADA SHRINE

The largest of the shrines in the White Temple is dedicated to the Fortune of Strength. Next to Osano-Wo, Bishamon is the Fortune most commonly invoked by the shugenja of the Crab Clan whenever they must use their magic against the Shadowlands. Many of those stationed within White Temple pray here daily for guidance and the blessings of the Fortune of Strength. The Shrine of Bishamon stands next to an impressive Shrine of Kisada, the Fortune of Persistence, whom the Hiruma revere both for his mortal ties to the Crab and the virtue he represents. Like many Crab, the Hiruma value the ability to stand firm in the face of adversity. Unlike them, they are walking reminders of the true blessing of persistence — not simply to hold ground against challenges but to create gains in the face of constant troubles.

A sizable number of monks dedicated to Bishamon make a pilgrimage to the shrine to stay several years as part of their vows to their order. Though the monks aid the Hiruma in times of need, they do not see themselves as part of the Crab military as the monks of Osano-Wo within Shiro Hiruma do. The Bishamon monks are responsible for maintenance of the White Temple and are in constant prayer for protection of the grounds when not at their other duties.

CHAMBERS OF THE KUNI

The floors of the temple beyond the ground level are largely the province of the Kuni shugenja, though the Hiruma maintain a presence. Many of the rooms here are dedicated to the art of the Kuni and their macabre study of everything contained within the Shadowlands. Common sights include corpses of Tainted beasts impaled on jade-studded spears,

or barely living subjects caged by Kuni magic. Eta servants constantly scuttle about, fetching supplies for their masters or disposing of test materials that are no longer useful. Those unused to the Kuni's practices are often warned not to wander beyond the ground floor of the White Temple, as even the Hiruma are not always prepared for the sights contained therein.

The Kuni's library here is vast, rich in knowledge useful for those combating the Shadowlands. Every scroll contained in the library at White Temple is copied at least twice, with one copy going to Shiro Kuni and another sent to the halls of Kyuden Hida.

Any Knowledge skills regarding the Shadowlands, Tainted creatures, the Taint, or the magic of the Crab are considered to be five points higher when making a skill check with the aid of the Kuni's library at the White Temple. GMs may feel free to add this bonus to other skill checks as deemed appropriate.

Any Knowledge or Lore Skills regarding the Shadowlands, Tainted creatures, the Taint, or the magic of the Crab are considered to be two ranks higher when making a Skill check with the aid of the Kuni's library at the White Temple. GMs may feel free to add this bonus to other Skill checks as deemed appropriate.

CHONO

[Monk 6/Samurai 9; Hida Bushi 3/Seven Fortunes 2]

The gruff and aged master of the White Temple was once Hida Chono, feared commander of the Crab forces during the Clan War and through the troubles of the Empire until his retirement shortly after the War of Spirits. The retired Crab samurai never once left his duty at the Wall, proving his valor time and again in some of the Crab's darkest hours. His advanced age eventually caught up with him and Chono was practically forced to retire by the clan elders. With attacks on the Wall far less frequent now due to the habitations of lands further south, the Crab had no need for another sensei with Chono's experience. Instead he might represent a new age for the Crab: one where aged samurai of the clan could retire in blessed peace during their twilight years.

Chono accepted the will of his superiors but asked to retire to White Temple so that he would never be too far to aid his clan should the need arise. Chono's request was granted, his head shaven, and his life begun anew as a pious monk of the Seven Fortunes. Within a year, his organized mind and surprising natural grasp of the Tao and the Fortunes made him one of the most valued members of the order within White Temple. Two months before the death of Toturi I, the grisly death of the senior monk within the temple left a void that



Chono was only too happy to fill. Once again productive and useful, the retired Hida bushi has become indispensable to Hiruma Hijime, the master of White Temple. While Chono is not the most spiritually powerful or wisest monk within the temple, his familiarity with the way of the Crab combined with his iron will has made him the perfect leader for the sohei at the White Temple.

MINOR HIRUMA HOLDINGS

LONE CANDLE KEEP

For hundreds of years, the Crab have been loath to let outsiders, even those of great importance, near or past the Kaiu Wall. The Crab cannot guarantee the safety of their guests, and it is their duty to protect others from dangers they cannot understand. Now that a great swath of Hiruma land has been purified beyond the Wall, visitors are only marginally more welcome beyond it. The Hiruma lands are far from safe even compared to the Shinomen Forest and the haunted regions near the Toritaka holdings. Only rarely are those outside the Hiruma family — even other Crab — given permission to travel beyond the large outpost known as Lone Candle Keep.

The Keep was the first structure built after Hiruma Castle was completed. It stands only five miles into the Hiruma lands, just southwest of Razor of the Dawn Castle. Those wishing to deal with the Hiruma come here under close guard and usually meet with a minor daimyo of the family. In the rare situations that warrant it — like a visiting daimyo of another family or the Champion of the Crab Clan — the Hiruma daimyo comes to Lone Candle to meet with the visitors. The Hiruma daimyo would certainly make an appearance if an Emperor were to visit Lone Candle, but the Emperor is more likely to summon the Hiruma.

AUDIENCE HALL

Though Lone Candle Keep is far from the largest structure the Hiruma claim, it is easily the most opulent. The dry winds and grains of sand blasting across the surrounding plains make adorning the outside of the keep a lost cause, but Lone Candle's interior must be ready to receive honored guests with some modicum of pomp. The largest and most frequented chamber is the audience hall, where outsiders meet with whomever the Hiruma have sent. The large room does not compare to the graceful halls of the Doji and the Isawa, but it is surprisingly warm and comforting for a place in a blasted wasteland beyond the Carpenter Wall.

The main feature that distinguishes the audience hall of Lone Candle Keep is the extraordinary number of guards. The Hiruma do not wish to suffer any shame by allowing any visitor to perish under their guard. Family leaders constantly worry that the wandering creatures of the Shadowlands will eventually come to understand the importance of Lone Candle Keep and assault the small castle at the worst possible moment. The Hiruma have considered receiving visitors at three different locations instead of just one, but the logistics are a nuisance the Crab family has yet to see as worthwhile.

HIRUMA TSUKIKO

[Courtier 3/Ranger 6; Hiruma Bushi 3]

The current master of Lone Candle Keep is a curious young Hiruma named Tsukiko. Though hardly the most intimidating warrior of the Hiruma, Tsukiko is one of the brightest samurai of her generation and showed diplomatic talent early. Like any dutiful Hiruma, she trains daily in the art of stealthy combat, but her true passion is unlocking the hearts of others. She is adept at understanding how others think and is most often the representative the Hiruma use when dealing with outsiders. Aged visitors who think Tsukiko too young to deal with — she has just turned 17 — are quickly disabused of the notion by her disarming smile and unsettling insights.

Tsukiko was raised by her father and his family in Shiro Hiruma while her mother was off scouting for the Hiruma armies. Tsukiko is much like her mother in many ways, but is secretly ashamed of her. The distance fostered resentment; now Tsukiko has learned that her mother is overseeing the construction of a Hiruma outpost in an abandoned Nezumi warren. They have spoken only once within the past ten years — at Tsukiko's gempukku where her mother's acidic tongue and gruff behavior, even for a Hiruma, nearly shamed her and Tsukiko before the day was over. Tsukiko almost thinks things are better off that her mother prefers the company of rats to her own family.

BLUE FUR WARREN

Shortly after the Hiruma's consolidation of power at Daylight Castle, scouting parties were dispatched to find other ruins left by the ravages of the Shadowlands that could possibly also be repaired. These expeditions found little besides a few crumbling stone foundations the size of towers. Some of these remains were used as the base for new outposts and towers that served as running points along the Hiruma lands, but many were abandoned. The scouting runs continue to this day even though most of the reclaimed land has been scoured thoroughly.

Several months before the assassination of Emperor Toturi, a Hiruma scouting party happened upon an abandoned Nezumi warren, burrowed deep into the earth ten miles south of Shiro Hiruma, devoid of life. The scouts found the warren at the same time as a small tribe of wandering Nezumi. A conflict seemed inevitable, as the leader of the Hiruma party had already claimed the land. The Hiruma saw the value of a habitable, camouflaged base of operations and was willing to start a minor conflict with the band of ratlings.

Fortunately, an accord was reached before bloodshed occurred — the Crab scouts and the Nezumi would share the warren as packmates. Now the Hiruma had not only another outpost, but a band of Nezumi that looked upon them as members of their tribe. For the past two years, the Hiruma and the Nezumi have worked side by side in a bizarre but successful experiment.

All of the Hiruma samurai from the original scouting party remain within the Blue Fur Warren, joined by a dozen Hiruma scouts sent a month after the initial bargain. These samurai make infrequent contact with the outside world (including their kin in the Hiruma family), though dispatches move between the warren and Shiro Hiruma every month. Human members of the Blue Fur Warren have become noticeably more Nezumi-like in their actions, while other ratlings are quick to point out how much the Blue Fur Nezumi act like pink-skins.

THE HIRUMA MON

Since the Hiruma have taken back their ancestral lands, they no longer feel a burning shame attached to their family names. Thus, they have adopted a family crest and a motto for their children to pass down the generations that symbolize their place in the Empire.



"A single fire against the darkness always burns brightest."

HIRUMA TSUNEKO

[Ninja 10/Fighter 6; Hida Bushi 1/Hiruma Bushi 5]

Hiruma Tsuneko is the nightmare every cultured samurai bachelor fears when his marriage arrangements begin. She is a beautiful woman (even in her old age) who bathes when she remembers to. Tsuneko remembers precious little of human etiquette and her behavior cannot be remotely considered socially acceptable. She is quick to speak her mind and is constantly ready to strike at any who would challenge her.

In her youth, Tsuneko was a promising warrior of the Hiruma family and part of the scouting parties that gathered intelligence on Shiro Hiruma before the Crab and Naga struck to reclaim it. In the final conflict for the castle, Tsuneko was saved by the intervention of the spirit Hida Sukune. Already an ally of several Nezumi, some ratlings witnessed the event and named her Sun's-Chosen-Daughter-Warrior (A-wat'Ichtr'foo-s'stch'ch), having misinterpreted the golden glow surrounding Sukune.

The combat had taken place so far from Daylight Castle that the ratlings took Tsuneko to their warren instead of the castle to heal her. When she did not report that night, the Crab presumed her dead. Knowing her clan would assume she had died on the field of battle, she took her time in returning in order to learn more about the Nezumi. She wanted to understand the ways the Nezumi dealt with living within the Shadowlands as the Hiruma would now have to, and to memorize their paths and arts of stealth. After three years Tsuneko returned to her family and revealed all that she had learned. She was given free rein to come and go as she wished; not since the days of Hiruma Kazuma had a Crab been more accepted by the ratlings.

Tsuneko was following the breakaway pack of Crippled Bone ratlings when they encountered the Hiruma scouting party and was the one to intervene and prevent bloodshed. The aging Hiruma scout is responsible for nearly every compromise between the two groups, and is the only member of the Blue Fur Warren equally accepted as leader by both races. Though she is responsible for the governance of the warren, Tsuneko often leaves its safety to personally patrol the areas of the Hiruma lands and keep up her relations with chieftains and shamans from other tribes. She has kept the existence of the Blue Fur from the other Nezumi for the time being, worrying that the Crippled Bone may not be so agreeable about the warren as their wayward cousins.

IMPORTANT HIRUMA NPCS

HIRUMA MASAGARO, HIRUMA FAMILY DAIMYO

Masagaro is the first modern daimyo of the Hiruma never to know the shame of having lost lands to Fu Leng. He was only two years old when Daylight Castle was taken back and recalls no other home. Despite this, Masagaro is keenly aware of the time when the Hiruma were fatalistic samurai with nothing left to lose. Every day he heard the stories of the years the Hiruma had no place to call their own, and countless tales of the darkness of the Shadowlands.

Masagaro could have grown into an inspiring figure of hope and a personification of a new age for the Hiruma, but he instead has become as grim as the samurai from the histories he has learned. He is the grandson of Hiruma Yoshi, one of the most revered names among the new generation of the Hiruma, but he focuses instead on his father Hiruma Kage — the last Hiruma daimyo to die while failing to reclaim the home of his family. The two previous daimyo, Hiruma Zunguri and Masagaro's mother Nikako, have made great strides in pushing the Hiruma into a new era, but the current leader of the Hiruma family constantly wallows in the failures of the past.

Raised mostly by his mother, Masagaro was keenly interested in the history of his family. He was more fascinated with the terrors of the Shadowlands than most Crab children and became equally enamored with bushido as a guide to steady the soul. The young man was raised in Razor of the Dawn Castle, as many Hiruma children are due to the dangerous nature of the Hiruma lands. Arrogant in his knowledge and status, Masagaro began sneaking into the Hiruma lands on his own at the age of ten. After three such excursions, Masagaro had taken the heads of seven goblins and narrowly escaped from three trolls.

Confident of his abilities, Masagaro convinced four other children to accompany him on another trip past the Kai Wall. Instead of treading the ways he had previously, Masagaro explored areas he had not scouted before. The young Hiruma's luck finally ran out, and he led his small party into a goblin breeding warren at the edge of the Hiruma lands. Masagaro was wise enough to know he and his group would easily be overrun and yelled for a retreat. The Hiruma children ran with a speed that came from their heritage, but two did not return to the Wall that day.

The young man was immediately called into a meeting with his mother where he was forced to recount every detail of the expedition. When Masagaro finished, his stoic mother nodded with a disturbing air of approval. She had known of his secret forays and allowed them to continue. "So now you know the face of our enemy, child," she said. "Not the Taint and not the beasts it controls, but the blind arrogance and fear inside all of us."

Reparations were made to the families of the two lost children, and with a word from Masagaro's father, the incident was buried. Since then, Masagaro has never been satisfied with his

progress as a bushi. The words of his mother and the deaths of his friends haunt his mind every waking moment and often in his nightmares. He constantly struggles against himself in a competition that will never end. The daimyo of the Hiruma has no close friends, only trusted lieutenants and reliable servants. Those that know Masagaro well enough realize that he does not just hide his lighter side from his vassals, but that he is a man filled with only anger and determination.

Masagaro sees himself as possibly the most unfit man to ever lead the Hiruma, but refused to dishonor his father's name by backing down from his inheritance. His mind is too clouded with visions of failure to focus on gaining further ground from the Shadowlands; instead he intend to hold the Hiruma gains until a better leader steps forward to replace him. Oddly enough, the Hiruma daimyo's determination not to give a single inch of land back to the Shadowlands has made him one of the most respected and successful leaders the Hiruma have ever had.

HIRUMA MASAGARO

Male human Crab, Rgr 5/Sam 2/Rog 2/Shadowlands Veteran 6: CR 15; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 13d10+52 plus 2d6+8; hp 172; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 28 (touch 22, flat-footed 21); Atk +3 *keen Kuni crystal katana* +20/+15/+10 *melee* (1d10+7 damage); SQ Ancestral Daisho, Favored Enemy (Goblin, Ogre), Grim Visage, Knowledge Class skill — (Shadowlands) (family bonus), Evasion, Resist the Darkness, Sense the Darkness, Sneak Attack +1d6, Strength Boost (3 × Day), Unchained Fury; Honor: 2; AL LN; SV Fort +16, Ref +11, Will +8; Str 15, Dex 20, Con 18, Int 16, Wis 9, Cha 14; Height 5 ft. 4 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani, Goblin), Balance +9, Climb +13, Heal +10, Hide +37, Intimidate +14, Intuit Direction +14, Jump +15, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +20, Listen +3, Move Silently +37, Search +3, Spot +3, Tea Ceremony +1, Tumble +10, Wilderness Lore +10; Armor Focus (Ashigaru), Daisho Focus (Katana), Improved Critical: Katana, The Mountain Does Not Move, Track, Triumphant (Ancestor: Hiruma Mai), Void Use, Weapon Focus: Katana. Dojo: First Strike; Kata: None.

Possessions: +3 *keen Kuni crystal katana* (ancestral daisho), +2 *jade wakizashi of speed* (ancestral daisho), +2 *short bow*, +4 *ashigaru armor of displacement*, *cloak of stealth* (as *cloak of elvenkind*), *boots of stealth* (as *boots of elvenkind*), *amulet of natural armor* +4, Hiruma's hakama, jade pendant.

HIRUMA MASAGARO

Earth: 5

Stamina: 6

Water: 4

Perception: 6

Fire: 4

Agility: 5

Air: 3

Reflexes: 6

Void: 3

School/Rank: Hiruma Scout 5

Dojo: First Strike

Honor: 2.2

Glory: 8.1

Advantages: Quick, Social Position (Hiruma Family Daimyo), True Friend (Hiruma Todori)

Disadvantages: Antisocial (2 points)

Skills: Archery 7, Athletics 7, Defense 4, Hand-to-Hand 5, Heraldry 4, History (Hiruma Family) 7, Intimidation 5, Kenjutsu 5, Medicine 8, Shadowlands Lore 8, Shintao 3, Stealth 8, Subojutsu 5

Kata: None.

HIRUMA TODORI, SENSEI OF FIRST STRIKE DOJO

The most trusted advisor of the grim Hiruma daimyo is the equally grim Hiruma Todori. Todori was one of the children to follow Masagaro over the Wall on the trip that would change the course of both their lives. After the deaths of two children Masagaro led into the Hiruma lands, Todori's father chastised him for his stupidity. The man knew his son well and realized Todori's stubborn nature would probably lead him to another such journey, so the young Hiruma was sent off to train in the Far Runner Dojo in Unicorn lands.

Todori grew up in the lands of the Unicorn for most of his life, isolated from the rest of the Crab Clan until his gempukku at age fifteen. By that time, he had grown up as a strong Crab, his severity tempered by his Unicorn upbringing. Todori's talent at sprinting had made him famous among the Unicorn samurai, and he sometimes raced the Unicorn's swiftest steeds. After his gempukku, Todori asked to remain at Far Runner as a senior student and perhaps serve the Crab as a sensei some day. He sent his request by letter to the distant lands of the Hiruma and patiently awaited the reply.

The response was nothing that Todori expected. A brief note from his uncle told the young Crab that his mother and father had both been killed in a goblin raid on the perimeter of Shiro Hiruma. Todori's uncle was now his legal guardian; Todori could stay at Far Runner with his blessing, but could instead stay with him in the Hiruma lands. Todori was shocked into denial, and with a deadly calm he thanked his uncle for his kindness. He knew what he wished to do with his life: stay at Far Runner Dojo.

Todori was quickly forgotten by his uncle and was left to tend to his life. The master sensei of Far Runner was impressed by the Hiruma's dedication, as Todori quietly convinced himself that there was nothing for him outside the walls of the school. Though the techniques of the school taught combat against Tainted foes, eventually the Shadowlands became a distant memory. Students remarked to one another that Todori seemed not to fear the ancient enemy of the Crab Clan, and they were correct. To Todori, the threat was not real.

All of this changed fifteen years later when the master sensei of First Strike Dojo was slain by a powerful Taki-bi no Oni spawn. Hida Masagaro sought a replacement, and the master of Far Runner told his daimyo of the talented and fearless Hiruma Todori. Masagaro instantly agreed when his childhood friend was strongly endorsed by the venerable sensei. Though Todori had not set foot in Crab lands for two decades, Masagaro felt sure that the fateful trip into the Hiruma lands had left Todori with a strong impression.

Todori's world crumbled again. First Strike was located in Shiro Hiruma and beyond the safety of the Kaiu Wall. Hiruma Todori informed his master that he felt his destiny lay with Far Runner; perhaps he could best serve the Crab where he was already. The aged sensei told Todori that he was great in both skill and talent, and it would be a great disservice to the clan to not go where Masagaro had requested. Pressured both by his master and the request of his daimyo, Todori could not refuse.

Life in First Strike Dojo was unlike anything he had experienced. Instead of training in peaceful solitude, Todoru was expected to lead strike forces against the Shadowlands creatures in the area. Every day was filled with uncertainty, and Todoru constantly fought the urge to run back to the open plains of the Unicorn lands.

His fear took only one week to overcome him.

On a routine expedition into the borders of the Hiruma lands, a gigantic Taki-bi no Oni assaulted Todoru's group. The demon had seemingly come from thin air, but it was alone. With their superior numbers and the skill of their sensei, the Hiruma party should have emerged easily victorious that day. Instead, Todoru could only think of the sensei before him — slaughtered by a demon such as this. What chance could he have? He found his reflexes almost stopped by his paralyzing fear and could barely choke out the command to run. It was too late.

Todoru reached Shiro Hiruma alone two days later, dying from lack of food and drink. Once he was brought back to health, Hiruma Masagaro visited him. The Hiruma daimyo dismissed the sensei's attendants and demanded an explanation with a stern face. The master sensei could say nothing but the truth to his lord and every word was a needle in his soul. He had run from the oni and could not save any of the students under his command. Twenty senseless deaths fell upon his weakness and he begged his lord to allow him seppuku to atone.

Masagaro refused and told him the same thing the Hiruma daimyo's mother had said years before. "Some are defined by their failure. But the stronger among us are defined by what it teaches us." The Hiruma daimyo gave his childhood friend the choice to remain in Shiro Hiruma or return to Far Runner.

Todoru has remained in First Strike Dojo and is the nearest thing to a close friend that Masagaro has. The two have a deep understanding of both each other and the enemy that surrounds them. While Todoru is nowhere near as fatalistic as his lord, he shares Masagaro's dark conviction that some day the Shadowlands will claim his life. Many have compared Todoru-sensei to the very lands of the Hiruma — a dark figure with a grim vengeance against the thing that took the light and joy from his soul.

HIRUMA TODORU

Male human Crab, Rgr 7/Nin 6/Stalker 5: CR 18; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 7d10+21 plus 6d6+18 plus 5d8+15; hp 183; Init +8; Spd 30 ft.; AC 27 (touch 24, flat-footed 22); Atk +3 *jade tanto of speed* +27/+27/+22/+17/+12 melee (1d6+5 damage), +2 *keen crystal tanto* +24 off-hand (1d6+3 damage); SQ Class Skill — Knowledge (Shadowlands) (family bonus), Discriminating Cut, Favored Enemy (Goblin, Troll), Hiruma's Strength, Hiruma's Vengeance, Ninja Dodge +2, Piercing Strike (+5), Poison Use, Sneak Attack +3d6, Speed of Darkness, Taint Resistance (+8), Uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus, Can't be flanked); Honor: 1; AL NG; SV Fort +14, Ref +16, Will +7; Str 14, Dex 20, Con 17, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 10; Height 5 ft. 7 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani, Goblin), Balance +11, Heal +12, Hide +42, Intuit Direction +18, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +24, Listen +23, Move Silently +42, Spot +23, Use Rope +11, Wilderness Lore +17; Cleave, Improved Critical: Tanto, Needle Strike, Power Attack, Stab At the Face, Track, Weapon Finesse: Tanto, Weapon Focus: Tanto.

Dojo: Far Runner; **Kata:** None.

Possessions: +3 *jade tanto of speed*, +2 *keen crystal tanto*, +2 *long bow*, +5 *ashigaru armor*, *cloak of stealth* (as *cloak of elvenkind*), *boots of stealth* (as *boots of elvenkind*), *amulet of natural armor* +4, Hiruma's hakama, jade pendant.

HIRUMA TODORU

Earth: 4

Willpower: 5

Water: 3

Perception: 7

Fire: 4

Intelligence: 7

Air: 4

Reflexes: 6

Void: 3

School/Rank: Hiruma Scout 2, Hiruma Stalker, Berserker 2
Dojo: Far Runner

Honor: 1.3

Glory: 7.3

Advantages: Magic Resistance (2 ranks), Social Position (Master Sensei), Kharmic Tie — Hiruma Masagaro, Death Trance

Disadvantages: Driven (Redeem failure)

Skills: Stealth 9, Archery 7, Athletics 7, Falconry 4, Hand-to-Hand 2, Kenjutsu 3, Lore (Shadowlands) 6, Sensei 8, Shintao 4, Tantojutsu 6, Tea Ceremony 3

Kata: None.

HIRUMA TATSUYA

Hiruma Tatsuya has never been one for subtlety. Though he is one of the few Hiruma actually raised on the grounds of Daylight Castle, he never showed interest in become a sneaking scout. Instead, ever since Tatsuya was able to understand the concepts of battle, he always pointed out where straightforward assaults or brute force would have been more effective than the traditional Hiruma strategies. Naturally, this gave Tatsuya a bad reputation among the Hiruma and the nickname "Hida Tatsuya." His father, Crab general Hiruma Koharu, made the mistake of bringing the boy to his war council only once. He was barely able to save face as his child made an embarrassing display of contradicting several respected bushi of the Hiruma family.

After that incident, Tatsuya's father decided that perhaps his child's disposition was indeed better suited to the Hida. He arranged entry into the Hida Bushi School, and Tatsuya was sent out of his father's sight for years. Dispatches between the two became more and more infrequent as Tatsuya became more convinced his father was a fool and Koharu began to think of his eldest child as an embarrassment to his line.

Tatsuya impressed his superiors at Sunda Mizu Dojo. He placed a high value on strength of arms and superior force but fused his Hiruma heritage with the teachings of the Hida. He became a clever and unpredictable warrior, besting opponents through strength or guile. The young man survived many personal attacks outside the practice dojo from rival students convinced he was little better than a cheating Scorpion. After the twelfth such ambush ended in the assailant unable to attend lessons for weeks, they stopped.

Tatsuya remained in Sunda Mizu for three years after his gempukku as a senior student at the master sensei's personal request. The sensei believed that Tatsuya's strange tactics would benefit other students. After his period as a junior sensei, Hiruma Tatsuya received an invitation from Hiruma Masagaro to attend him at Daylight Castle. The young man

was stunned at such an honor — to have gained the attention of the family daimyo at such a young age was a great honor. Tatsuya readily agreed, not caring what Masagaro wanted with him. The fact that he would return to Shiro Hiruma as an honored vassal after being practically expelled in shame was enough for him to return without question.

The reception for Tatsuya was nothing he had anticipated. Masagaro brought his trusted general, Hiruma Koharu, before him and announced that the aging war leader would be appointed a successor. Koharu accepted his lord's wishes but was not prepared for Masagaro to call forth his son. The reunion was tense for a moment until Koharu bowed low to his daimyo and then his son. Tatsuya returned the gesture and knelt before his father once again, pledging to learn what the elder Hiruma had to teach and never dishonor his lessons.

Four years ago, Koharu was slain and Tatsuya stepped forward to take his father's place as Masagaro's military advisor. Tatsuya's unique perspective has made him a great success at his position. The only negative to his current post is his constant conflict with the Hiruma daimyo's other advisor, Hiruma Tadori. The two men are like night and day in their strategies and rarely agree. Where in many situations two Crab would leave such rivalry behind after conferring with their daimyo, Tadori sees Tatsuya as an unimaginative moron. Tatsuya spent several months attempting to cool relations between them, but has since given up and regards Tadori much in the same manner.



HIRUMA TATSUYA

Earth: 6

Water: 4

Strength: 6

Fire: 3

Intelligence: 5

Air: 3

Reflexes: 5

Void: 3

School/Rank: Hida Bushi 5

Dojo: Sunda Mizu

Honor: 2.7

Glory: 6.7

Advantages: Strength of the Earth (2 ranks), Sage

Disadvantages: None

Skills: Athletics 5, Battle 6, Defense 5, Go 3, Intimidation 5, Jujutsu 3, Kenjutsu 6, Kyujutsu 2, Law 4, Lore (Shadowlands) 6, Shintao 4, Siege 4, Tea Ceremony 4, Tetsubo 3

Kata: Soul of Stone, Shards of Earth

HIRUMA TATSUYA

Male human Crab, Sam 10/Hida Elite 5:

CR 15; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 10d10+80 plus 5d12+40; hp 238; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 34 (touch 19, flat-footed 31); Atk +22/+17/+12 +3 keen Kuni crystal no-dachi melee (2d6+9 damage); SQ Ancestral Daisho, Class Skill — Knowledge (Shadowlands) (family bonus), Hida's Armor, Hida's Strength, Fear the Mountain; Honor: 2; AL LG; SV Fort +19, Ref +5, Will +9; Str 18, Dex 16, Con 22, Int 15, Wis 13, Cha 14; Height 5 ft. 11 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani), Battle +19, Diplomacy +17, Iaijutsu Focus +15, Intimidate +26, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +15, Ride +16, Sense Motive +17; Cleave, Depths of the Void, Great Cleave, Great Fortitude, Hida Technique (2x), Power Attack, Soul Forge (No-Dachi), Strength of the Earth, The Mountain Does Not Fall, The Mountain Does Not Move, Toughness, Void Use, Way of the Crab.

Dojo: Sunda Mizu; Kata: Soul of Stone, Shards of Earth (Tetsubo).

Possessions: +3 keen Kuni crystal no-dachi (soul forge), +5 lawful katana (ancestral daisho), +5 holy wakizashi (ancestral daisho), +4 great armor, netsuke of protection +4, jade pendant

VASSALS OF THE HIRUMA FAMILY

THE ENDO FAMILY

Shortly after the Hiruma took their castle back from the Shadowlands, the magnitude of the task before them became clear to the Crab. After nearly three centuries of abuse at the hands of Tainted beasts, only the most stalwart stone structures of the castle remained. The outer and inner walls were broken and useless in many places, and the Kaiu were amazed that the main chambers of the castle had not yet collapsed.

The leaders of the Kaiu family agreed that restoring Shiro Hiruma to its previous state would be too costly in both materials and manpower. Though the Crab had wrested the stronghold away from the Shadowlands, it still fell under regular assault. The minions of Fu Leng were hardly willing to casually surrender such a prize. The Kuni suffered losses daily as their shugenja wounded their very souls to purify the lands around and under Daylight Castle, and the Kaiu were too practical to suffer further losses in the endeavor. Suman, Kaiu daimyo at the time, submitted a conservative estimate to Clan Champion Hida O-Ushi and Hiruma daimyo Zunguri. Under Suman's projections, the castle could be restored swiftly by attempting to only repair the least damaged areas and break down the existing walls to create a smaller perimeter.

Zunguri was furious. He demanded Suman make an effort to restore the castle to its original state. He would not dishonor the vows of the previous Hiruma lords and the sacrifices of the Hiruma who had given their lives by settling for scraps the Crab would steal from the Shadowlands. The Kaiu daimyo did not waver, saying Zunguri was being foolish and acting without clear thought. Just when the two lords seemed ready to come to blows in front of their Champion, a young but respected noble of the Kaiu family stepped forward and calmly claimed he could give Zunguri exactly what he wished for.

The young samurai, Kaiu Endo, quietly explained several flaws in Suman's estimation: the Kaiu daimyo's plan did not use rocks in the area or the copious amounts of lifeless sand the Kuni were creating with their purification rituals. Endo continued to note problems with Suman's plan until the Kaiu daimyo cut off his vassal with a wave of his hand. "If you wish to take these problems on yourself," he grumbled, "then do so. On your own." Suman left, taking the rest of the Kaiu with him. Though offended by Endo's effrontery, he was still a Crab and realized that Endo was only doing what he thought was best for the clan.

Endo was not without resources. Though the young Kaiu was out of favor with the daimyo, Suman did nothing to stop Endo from gathering willing Kaiu to his cause. Two years later, Kaiu Endo and his small army of Kaiu engineers finished their major repairs on the castle and submitted Shiro Hiruma for inspection. Impressed by the near-miracle Endo and his followers had enacted, O-Ushi granted him his own family name and declared all those who had assisted him his followers. With the obvious favor of the Crab

Champion and the whole Hiruma family, it was expected Endo would return to the Kaiu and to glory. Instead, he gratefully accepted his Champion's honors and turned to kneel in front of Hiruma Zunguri. "Though what we have done was with the skill of the Kaiu, it was from the lands of the Hiruma and with their favor we have acted. I would have this state of affairs continue, if you find my meager worth acceptable, Zunguri-sama."

Since that time, the Endo have concerned themselves solely with the restoration and maintenance of the Hiruma holdings. They take great glee in discovering forgotten outposts of the Hiruma still in serviceable condition, and claim the endless duty of repairing the walls of Daylight Castle. The Endo's second generation has just come of age, and they are much like the Kaiu from whom they are largely descended. However, the time in the thick of the Hiruma lands has bent them into a grim reflection of the Kaiu, just as the Hiruma have been hardened by the Shadowlands' constant assault.

ENDO DOJO

The Endo live in Shiro Hiruma with the family they serve. Unusually, their "superior" family regards the Endo with very little differentiation in status. The Hiruma respect their vital duty. The Endo maintain a school for their children on the grounds of Daylight Castle. Hiruma and Endo alike are free to study with the sensei of the school so long as they take their education seriously.



Endo Dojo is the most heavily guarded building within the walls of Shiro Hiruma, for the charts and plans of the Endo expose every single defensive secret the Hiruma maintain. The Hiruma deplore these documents, but concede their necessity for the Endo's work. There are never less than two additional guards on duty at the Dojo at all times with a single task — should the walls of Shiro Hiruma be breached, the guards must destroy the Endo's papers.

THE ENDO FAMILY

Favored Class: Rogue

Starting Honor: 2

Class Skills: Craft (any one)

Starting Outfit:

1. Masterwork thieves' tools or two sets of masterwork artisan's tools, masterwork partial armor, five jade fingers.

THE ENDO FAMILY

Benefit: +1 Intelligence

Glory: 0.5 (as opposed to the normal 1.0)

Special: May only attend the Hiruma Bushi School or Kaiu Engineering School without taking the Different School advantage. Members of the Endo family taking the Kaiu Engineering School must also take a 2-point Obligation to the Kaiu family (the character receives no points for this Disadvantage). Members of the Hiruma family treat members of the Endo as if their glory were 5 points higher.

THE RAIKUTO FAMILY

The history of the Raikuto family begins with an aging Hiruma noble named Saitsune. Hiruma Saitsune was the advisor to the Hiruma daimyo of the time and generally considered the wisest and cleverest of the Hiruma line. Some said even the first Hiruma would have been confounded by her sly intellect. Though none contested her keen wit, Saitsune was not a inspiring leader or great general in the battlefield and therefore made the perfect advisor. The man she served was only the third Hiruma daimyo, and the Empire was still recovering from the war against Fu Leng, so her wise counsel was greatly valued. Saitsune was largely responsible for steering the Hiruma and the Crab Clan as a whole through the politically dangerous times of the early Empire.

As the Hida were too aggressive, the Kuni too intimidating, and the Kaiu too invested in construction to be well suited to represent the Crab outside of their lands, such duties often fell to the clever Hiruma family. Many Hiruma considered the games of the courts to be like their hunting expeditions within their homelands — the hunter would sometimes chase, sometimes wait, and sometimes entice his quarry until the moment was proper to seize what was sought. The Hiruma annoyed the Scorpion and Crane with their uncanny ability to sense and avoid political traps.

When Saitsune became too old to serve in the dangerous Hiruma lands, she petitioned her lord, now the son of the man she had first served, and her Champion to serve the Crab in the courts of Otosan Uchi. The life of a nun did not suit her and she felt she still had enough spirit left to serve the clan.

Hiruma Saitsune's exploits in the Imperial City immediately became both numerous and legendary. Even the enigmatic representative of the Dragon Clan was amazed at her almost supernatural ability to know everything that occurred within the city. The Crane spent money like water, but no Crab would betray her. The Scorpion eventually saw

her as such a potential threat to their covert operations that they planned to have her quietly dispatched and lay the blame on the Lion... or perhaps the Phoenix, it didn't matter. The day before the assassination order, the Champion of the Crab sent a missive to the senior emissary of the Scorpion within Otosan Uchi. It courteously inquired after the health of the Scorpion courtiers and expressed deep concern for the Scorpion's wild western border the Scorpion which often saw Shadowlands raiders. The Champion suggested that should the Scorpion ever wish to ask the Crab to ensure the safety of their borders, they would only need to speak with the wise Saitsune.

Never ones to disregard a hint, the Scorpion never sent their assassin.

Unlike many Crab, Hiruma Saitsune died aged and in good company far from the Shadowlands when her time finally came. Though surrounded by opulence, Saitsune never failed to protect the Crab Clan from the machinations of the other clans and was reportedly still able to outrun the young Fox ambassador a week before her death. In honor of her service, Saitsune was posthumously declared the first daimyo of the Raikuto vassal family. Many of those who served as her agents and spies within Otosan Uchi swore their service to her son.

When the Hiruma lost their lands, the Hiruma daimyo formally asked the Raikuto to swear to the Yasuki. The Hiruma's inability to defend their lands and their status as wandering samurai shamed them deeply, and they did not wish the Raikuto to share their loss. As the Yasuki had become the public face of the Crab, the transition was smooth, though the Raikuto still kept close relations with the Hiruma. After the Crab reclaimed Shiro Hiruma, the vassal family gladly accepted Hiruma Zunguri's offer of fealty, feeling that their return to the service of the Hiruma finally allowed their lord to say he had reclaimed all the family had lost.

Currently, the Raikuto serve as practically the sole Crab ambassadors. Though they no longer have a home within Otosan Uchi, many Raikuto have managed to work their way into the graces of powerful hosts for "extended stays." With the turmoil surrounding the Yasuki still far from over, the Raikuto often serve where the Yasuki would have, under the name of the Hiruma.

HOLDINGS

None. Less than a year ago, the Raikuto held an estate within the walls of Otosan Uchi. That holding was lost with the rest of the Imperial City, and the Raikuto have lived off the favors and graces of their hosts for the time being. The irony of the vassal family losing its own ancestral home a generation after Shiro Hiruma was reclaimed has not been lost on the Raikuto.

THE RAIKUTO FAMILY

Favored Class: Rogue

Starting Honor: 2

Class Skills: Bluff

Starting Outfit:

1. Wakizashi, 200 koku.

THE RAIKUTO FAMILY

Benefit: +1 Intelligence

Glory: 0.5 (as opposed to the normal 1.0)

Skills: Members of the Raikuto family may sacrifice any one of their starting Bugei skills to gain a rank (or an additional rank) in Courtier.



HIRUMA MECHANICS

ANCESTORS

HIRUMA YOSHI

Hiruma Yoshi was the first Hiruma daimyo to stand within the walls of Daylight Castle since its loss to the Shadowlands. His contemporaries would never have guessed that Yoshi would become a legendary Hiruma name; he was merely a man of strong honor and calm emotions. He never expressed the rage towards the Shadowlands most Crab harbored in their souls, and many leaders wrote him off as a man history would forget.

When Yoshi retired shortly before the Clan War and ceded control of the family to his son Kage, it would seem everyone had seen him correctly. Kage's death forced a decision on Yoshi: either come out of retirement or leave the Hiruma in the hands of a fool. A year later, Hiruma Yoshi stood with the Hida and the Naga as they forced the Shadowlands back and reclaimed Hiruma Castle. The Hiruma daimyo would sacrifice his life only months later to buy the Crab enough time for the Lion to come to their aid. Never was Yoshi uncertain of his destiny or his way — his quiet purpose became a byword to the Crab.

HONOR BEFORE ACTION

ANCESTOR FEAT: HIRUMA YOSHI

Your actions are guided with an unwavering purpose so long as you never bring shame upon your name or family.

Clan: Crab

Benefit: As long as your Honor is 2 or higher, you gain a +1 bonus to all saving throws against mind-affecting magic. In addition, if you gain the bonuses of a Favored Enemy (per the Ranger class ability and similar abilities) against an opponent, those bonuses are increased by +1 if that opponent has the Shadowlands Taint.

ANCESTOR: HIRUMA YOSHI

(5 POINTS)

So long as you have at least 2 ranks of Honor, you gain a Free Raise on all rolls to avoid the effects of fear, intimidation, and similar effects. In addition, any spell targeting you that would affect your mind in any way has its TN raised by 5.

HIRUMA ZUNGURI

Born to a Kaiu mother and a Hiruma father, Zunguri had just completed his gempukku when the Crab went to war against the Crane in the Clan War. Zunguri was one of the token Hiruma left to guard the Kaiu Wall while Kisada marched alongside the Shadowlands forces. Zunguri served at his undistinguished post with unflinching dedication and spent much of his time studying the Wall. As it was the first time it had ever been under no threat of direct assault, Zunguri had his Kaiu relatives begin repairing sections that badly needed it.

Hida Yakamo returned just over a year later carrying the barely-living body of his father on the heels of the Shadowlands betrayal. Zunguri had come to be recognized as a capable leader and keen judge of logistics. When the Crab later reclaimed Hiruma Castle and Hiruma Yoshi was slain, Zunguri had accumulated enough political power to claim the leadership of the Hiruma. Zunguri met his end five years later choking the life out of an ogre as it crushed him to death.

OPPORTUNIST'S MIND

ANCESTOR FEAT: HIRUMA ZUNGURI

Guided by the spirit of your ancestor, you have the uncanny ability to see the possibilities in every situation.

Clan: Crab

Benefit: You gain a +1 bonus to all Spot, Listen, Sense Motive and Search checks.

ANCESTOR: HIRUMA ZUNGURI

(3 POINTS)

The keen and agile mind of your ancestor guides your senses, allowing you to see opportunity where others see nothing at all. You gain a Free Raise to all Perception rolls when attempting to find something out of the ordinary (such as a hidden trapdoor under a tatami) and may spend a Void Point once a day to re-roll any die with a result of 1.

HIRUMA MAI

The daughter of Hiruma was as full of bravado as her father. Mai was obsessed with proving her superiority to everyone and everything she came in contact with. She was not quite a witless fool, though, and knew when to keep her need for conquest in check.

Though Mai is generally regarded as one of the most unforgiving and insensitive commanders in the history of the Crab (and quite possibly the Empire), few could ever find fault with the results of her instruction. She believed in victory at almost any cost, and her philosophy became the foundation for the Hiruma's evolution into a family of stalkers and spies instead of simply hunters and warriors.

There are a number of stories about Hiruma Mai's death, from her attempt to leap the width of the Festering Pit to losing a race against an oni of the wind. The truth is that Mai lost a bet against an Ikoma lord and was forced to marry him and take his name. Infuriated that her ego and bravado had been used against her, Mai planted flamboyant stories of her disappearance before sneaking into Lion lands under a false name. Mai's heart remained with the Crab even after her natural death due to age.

TRIVMPHANT

ANCESTOR FEAT: HIRUMA MAI

You have inherited the blood of Hiruma Mai and the calling to constantly transcend your limitations.

Clan: Crab

Benefit: Any time you spend a Void Point to enhance an opposed roll the effect is doubled. Should you fail the roll, this feat is inactive for the rest of the day.

THE LOST HIRUMA SCHOOL

The Hiruma Bushi School died with its last sensei shortly after the loss of Hiruma Castle. Between that time and the reclamation of Daylight Castle, several Hiruma raiding parties vainly attempted to find works detailing the techniques of their ancestors. Though concrete evidence eluded them, the Hiruma refused to abandon hope. When the Hiruma took their ancestral home back, the ancient texts were nowhere to be found, and were assumed to have been destroyed. The Hiruma finally gave up their quest to reclaim the techniques, conceding that they were gone forever.

Now the Hiruma wish that were true.

Eleven years ago, patrols around the Hiruma lands reported a small band of Lost Hiruma. Obviously tainted and willing servants of the Shadowlands, these Lost scouts hunted the Rokugani Hiruma patrols with unnatural skill. Survivors noticed a disturbing quality to their attackers' techniques — the Lost scouts appear to be combating their untainted brethren with the forgotten Hiruma Techniques. The Hiruma cannot deny the shameful fact: the term "Lost Hiruma School" has taken on a new meaning. In the same way that previous Hiruma daimyo vowed to retake Daylight Castle from the Shadowlands, Hiruma Masagaro has made a solemn oath to capture these Lost Hiruma and pry their secrets from them.

ANCESTOR: HIRUMA MAI

(3 POINTS)

The blood of Hiruma Mai makes you push yourself to become better than everything around you. Whenever you spend a Void Point on a Contested Roll, the effect is doubled. Should you fail the check, this ability is inactive for the rest of the day.

FAR RUNNER DOJO

Classes: Rogue, Ninja, Ranger, Samurai, Fighter

Schools: Hiruma Bushi

HISTORY

Shortly after the return of the Unicorn to Rokugan, the children of Shinjo found themselves unwelcome in the company of the other clans, save one — the Crab. Spurned for their uncouth demeanor, the Unicorn found friends in the families of the Crab Clan. The bond between the Hiruma and Moto grew particularly strong. The two grim families found much in common and the alliance was sealed shortly after the loss of Moto Tsume and his war party to the grip of the Shadowlands. The Moto offered the Hiruma a place within their lands to train and the Hiruma eagerly accepted. The Hiruma gained

great open plains to practice speed and wooded forests to train in stealth, while the Moto could learn about the Shadowlands and the dark forces there.

When the Hiruma reclaimed their ancestral fortress from the Shadowlands, the dojo in the Moto lands was practically abandoned for a decade. Out of respect to the courtesy the Moto showed the Hiruma centuries ago, they continued to train small forces of Hiruma in Far Runner Dojo while the majority of the family rebuilt what had been lost. Since that time, the Hiruma have slowly returned to Far Runner as their numbers steadily increase. The Hiruma understand the value of strong allies now more than ever, and now that the Moto command the Unicorn Clan, the Crab know they can count upon the Unicorn as steadfast brothers should the need arise.

RUNNING FIELDS

The Hiruma are legendarily capable of running at top speed for hours or even a full day. The grass of the Running Fields is crisscrossed with paths taken by new students and kept low to ensure a Hiruma collapsed from exhaustion can be easily found and tended to. If one could see the fields from a great height, they would resemble a great nest of ants constantly scurrying large distances from the dojo in odd patterns and returning. Even at night, the Running Fields are in constant use as the Hiruma train in the art of stalking and tracking in the darkness.

The plains roll gently, so the squat structure of Far Runner Dojo is hard to find from more than half a mile away. Initiates are never sent more than this distance away from the school; more advanced students go miles off and must remember their way back home. Visitors are warned of the confusing nature of the Fields, but once a curious Matsu scout was lost for a full week after asking permission to wander the Running Fields.

SOCIAL BENEFIT

Members of the Far Runner Dojo often serve as messengers and go-betweens for the Crab to other clans, or from one Crab family to another. Because of this, its students are adept at dealing with a wide variety of people.

Benefit: Students of the Far Runner Dojo gain a +1 circumstance bonus when attempting to use a skill check to act within the parameters of proper etiquette.

Benefit: Students of the Far Runner Dojo gain a bonus equal to their Insight Rank to all social rolls when attempting to act within the parameters of proper etiquette.

TRAINING BENEFIT

The Far Runner Dojo trains its students exhaustively in the arts of running and evasion.

Benefit: When sprinting, running, or making a double move action, a student of Far Runner has his movement for the round increased by his character level.

Benefit: When running, a student of Far Runner has his movement for the round increased by his Earth Ring in feet.

MAGIC IN THE HIRUMA LANDS

Like the Kuni lands, the Hiruma lands are barren and inhospitable to the kami. The spellcasting penalties that apply to shugenja while in the Kuni lands apply also to the Hiruma lands (see Chapter Three). As the Hiruma do not have the same spellcasting tradition as the Kuni, shugenja also suffer penalties when within a Hiruma castle (a penalty normally not applied in Kuni lands). The exception is the White Temple, where all shugenja can use magic normally.

BLUE FUR TRIBE NEZUMI

Originally a large pack of Crippled Bone ratlings, these Nezumi found themselves abandoned and alone in the Shadowlands when their pack leader was killed in combat with an ogre. The ratling that took command of the pack quickly pointed out several facts to the survivors, the most important of which being that none of them had liked their previous Chief, and that if they escaped everyone else would think they had died. Talks went long into the night, but in the end the new tribe was fully convinced of its superiority to the rest of the Crippled Bone. The tribe made Kch'ay-Bur their chieftain, as he was obviously the smartest of them all and was guided by the spirit of a Transcendent. Guided by the Name of Rik'Tik'Tichek, Kch'ay-Bur led his new Tribe when they reached the warren where they met the pink-skins of the Hiruma tribe and eventually allied with them.

The tribe has taken the name of Blue Fur as a reference to their packmates of the Crab and uses the grays and deep blues of the Hiruma in their warpaints.

Nezumi of the Blue Fur tribe are physically similar to the Crippled Bone. However, they gain the following bonuses instead of those presented in *Rokugan*:™

- +2 Strength, -2 Wisdom. Though they are several generations removed from the Crippled Bone Tribe, Blue Fur Nezumi tend to be strong and impulsive like their cousins.
- **Favored Class:** Ninja. Training side by side with the Hiruma has introduced the Blue Fur Nezumi to the many uses for this class.
- **Starting Outfit:** Masterwork tanto. Blue Fur Nezumi have begun treating the short knives given to them by the Hiruma in much the same way samurai treat their wakizashi. They consider it a badge of their tribe and are fiercely protective of it.

Nezumi of the Blue Fur tribe are physically similar to those of the Crippled Bone. They may select Advantages, Skills, and Schools as if they were Crippled Bone and may purchase ranks in Rokugani Culture as if they were human. Due to their status as runaways hidden within the confines of a Hiruma-owned warren, they start with 0 Niche and all their Niche gains are halved until they reach Niche Rank 2.

CHAPTER THREE:

THE KUNI

VIGILANT
PART FOUR

"Hatori-san, you seem surprised. Is it not what you expected?"

Miya Hatori raised his eyebrows as he took in the chamber around him. "I imagined it would be a bit... different, Tansho-sama." The audience chamber was small, far smaller than those found in the courts of most family daimyo. It was not much larger than guest chambers for an extended stay. The most surprising part was its tasteful and artistic decoration, not at all what he had expected from the Kuni daimyo.

Kuni Tansho's eyebrows also rose, as if to mock Hatori, and she smiled. "You were perhaps expecting a dank, filthy workshop, with pickled goblin ears stored in jars lining the walls? If you were very lucky, maybe even a dissection of some sort in progress on a grand stone table?" She laughed. "I could arrange something like that for you, if you like."

"No, no," said Hatori, "this is quite nice, thank you." He shook his head. "You would think that by now an old man like me would have learned not to make assumptions. Clearly, that is a problem I shall take with me to my grave."

"You have been quite the traveler this past year, haven't you?" Tansho asked. "I hear that you have been traipsing all across the Empire on one errand or another."

Hatori nodded. "I have not been home in some time, I'm afraid. The completion of one task leaves only more questions and more duties to be performed."

"If you are looking for sympathy over having to perform an unsavory duty, I fear you will find little among my clan."

"I do not question that which has been given to me to do," Hatori said. "But surely I cannot be blamed for wishing for an easier task." He glanced at the shugenja. "Or have you never wished, even for a moment, that your burden was another's to bear?"

Tansho's smile faded, and for a moment her eyes glazed over as if she was contemplating something distant. "I have wished for that very thing, Hatori-san. But we all must perform our duties as best we can."

"It is your duty that has brought me to Crab lands," Hatori said, gladly changing the subject. "My recent experiences have made me more curious about your clan's struggle against the Taint and those who bear it." He met Tansho's inquisitive stare. "I had hoped to gain insight from you, as your clansmen among the Hida and Hiruma were not particularly forthcoming."

"You must understand, Hatori, that we Crab receive visitors from other clans almost constantly, all wishing to learn all there is to know about the Taint so that they can show us how to deal properly with the Shadowlands." Tansho frowned. "We have suffered so many fools that our brothers among the other families assume any visitor with such questions must be so. Unfortunately, they are often accurate."

"Please understand, Tansho-sama, I have no desire to undermine the Crab's duties on the Wall. Indeed, with Daigotsu directing the Lost, I feel the best thing I can do is give your people whatever you need and stay out of your way."

"By the Fortunes," Tansho said, "perhaps not all Imperials are fools after all."

Ignoring the jibe, Hatori continued. "I am only here because I have recently seen things. Things that make me fearful for the Empire. I feel that I need to know how to deal with the Taint if I am to protect that which is dear to me. I cannot stand feeling so..."

"Vulnerable?" offered Tansho. Seeing his mute nod of agreement, she shook her head. "Are those in the Empire at large so ill-informed of the Crab's ways that they feel we are secure? Do you honestly believe we do not share the feelings you have experienced? Because if you think for one moment that we sleep every night confident that we will live to see the sun rise, then perhaps you are the fool my cousins believe you to be."

"I am no fool," Hatori said, his blood rising. "I clearly made a mistake." He stood to leave. "I believed that it was the Kuni's duty to oppose the Taint wherever it appeared. Apparently your job is to fight it in your own home and mock others who wish to do the same. I will take up no more of your time with my foolishness." He turned and stormed from the chamber, his jaw set and his eyes blazing.

"Hatori!" Tansho called after him. He stopped and turned to face her. "What do you want from me?" she demanded. "Do you think I can easily explain how to deal with the Taint? How to ensure that it won't take those you love away from you before you even realize it's reached your home? Because I cannot do that. If I had that type of expertise, then the Shadowlands would have fallen long ago. I can tell you how to destroy a hundred different creatures that come out of that hellish realm, but I can't tell you anything about the thousands that I've never seen, and I can't tell you how to stop the Taint from seducing the weak and the fearful."

Hatori stared at her for long moments. "What can I do?"

"Be strong," she said, her voice low. "Be aware of those around you. Never drop your guard, and never stop questioning the motives of those you love."

The historian shook his head. "That is no kind of life."

Tansho nodded sadly. "But it is the only life a Crab knows."

THE KUNI PROVINCES

MAJOR KUNI HOLDINGS

Like the Yogo family among the Scorpion, the Kuni have had their name all but destroyed by the actions of a single sinister individual. Kuni Yori nearly brought their family to ruin, but they have resumed their ancient duties with a new passion. They hold fiercely to their ancestral lands, determined to remember their former glory and return to that state.

HIGH TREE VILLAGE

(LOCATION CB7)

The somewhat frivolously named High Tree Village is a place devoid of humor. The village's location high in the Twilight Mountains means that its dwellers only see the Crab lands below them when the tallest treetop peeks through the thick fog that perpetually shrouds the foothills — thus the name. The actual village is without trees, or life of any sort save the heimin workers and samurai who live there. Food is brought up to the village every week by the families of the men who work there.

Midaki sano Mura is an important source of iron for the Crab Clan. The mines that the villagers work are deep and twisting, reaching into the very heart of the mountains. Although uncommon, the miners have disturbed sleeping Shadowlands beasts often enough that the Kuni daimyo has stationed a garrison of samurai within the village. The Hida protect the village, the Kaiu ensure that the mines are stable, and the Kuni destroy and study anything that billows forth from the darkened pits the miners descend into each day. The peasants are a cowed, defeated lot who every day expect to meet their deaths at the hands of Fu Leng himself. They perform their duty like Crab, however, and do not complain. Every worker receives one week a month to return to their home village and visit their families, and this is what drives them to return to the mines with the sunrise every morning.

THE IRON MINE

The iron mine at Midaki sano Mura is one of the oldest of its kind. The iron ores there were discovered early in the clan's history and have been steadily mined ever since. There have been many occasions when it was believed that the iron had finally run out, but each time another vein has been found, ever deeper in the Twilight Mountains. The twisting caverns seem endless, reaching for the center of the world. Many peasant miners are terrified of the mines, but consider it their sacred duty in the name of the Crab samurai who defend them from the Shadowlands.

While they would never admit it, many Crab feel uncomfortable around the mines. This region of the Twilight Mountains is known for strange and dangerous phenomena, and many feel that having mined in one location for so long is an invitation for disaster. Most feel it is only a matter of time before they awaken something terrible deep beneath the earth. The King of the Trolls awakened not so long ago, some say, and the Kusatte Iru sleeps only a few hundred miles or so to the west. Is it so hard to imagine that other such beasts slumber beneath the earth?

Regardless of their reservations, dozens of men descend into the mines every day and return with precious iron ore. The ore produced is of above-average quality and is put to a thousand different uses by the Kaiu. Ore from this village is rarely used for things such as pots or farming implements, but is instead reserved for weaponry and armor.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: The peasants working the iron mine have begun to report strange things from deep inside the mountains. Accounts vary, but most describe glowing red eyes in the deepest tunnels. Even the most loyal peasants are beginning to balk at the notion of going in each morning, and if things are not dealt with, the Crab will have a serious problem.

Focus: Expecting nothing more serious than minor oni, bakemono, or perhaps mountain goblins, the Crab enlist the characters' aid in dealing with the situation. The characters must deal with wildly superstitious peasants, dark and treacherous tunnels, and potential hazards such as cave-ins in their attempt to debunk the peasants' fears.

Strike: The tunnels have descended far enough into the earth to attract the attention of the Shakoki Dogu, a race of earth spirits whose realm lies far below the surface. The Shakoki Dogu are not really harmful, but are curious. Unfortunately, since their encounter with humans have turned out so poorly in the past, they are likely to react badly to attempts to engage them unless they are handled with the utmost care.

HIGHWAYS OF THE KUNI PROVINCES

The Stone Road (Connects CB7 to CB8) — This road connects Midaki sano Mura to Kakita Bogu. It is very lightly traveled, as no one wants to go to Kakita Bogu. Most traffic involves the transport of ore from Midaki sano Mura to the ironworks in the marsh village.

Wasted Path (Connects CB7 to CB11) — This morbidly named path travels through some of the most desolate portions of the Kuni Wastes. It is a depressing journey that most try to avoid.

THE PIT

Near the outskirts of Midaki sano Mura is a deep chasm with walls far too sheer for anyone to descend into it. When the village was founded, the Kuni investigated the site and found the chasm not to be Tainted, but conceded that there was something decidedly unnatural about it. It was declared unsafe, to be avoided. This was an easy command to follow, as the Pit is far outside the village and difficult to reach, and there is nothing of any value to the village in that direction.

The Pit, as the chasm came to be called by the villagers, might have lapsed into obscurity except for a tragic incident a few hundred years after the village's founding. The son of a prominent Hida magistrate accompanied his father to the village and heard of the Pit from other children. Being an adventurous sort, the youngster went to explore the Pit and disappeared. The magistrate's investigation turned up few leads, and the best guess is that the boy fell into the chasm. The anguished magistrate ordered the miners to dump all unusable stone and residue into the chasm until it was filled up.

Centuries later, the chasm appears exactly as it did that day so long ago. Granted, much of the stone and ore the miners extract from the tunnels is used by the Crab, but at least a ton of debris is dumped into the chasm each month. Yet somehow, it has never been filled, nor can anyone peering into it discern the bottom or any sign of the tons of stone and dirt that have been poured into it over the centuries.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: Eager to purge the clan of any potential dangers and prove himself in the process, a zealous Kuni witch-hunter has launched an investigation into the nature of the chasm. His aunt, a powerful woman within the Kuni family, politely requests that the characters keep an eye on him and prevent him from doing anything overly foolish.

Focus: The young Kuni is intent on using a bizarre combination of Kaiu apparatus and magic to descend into the depths of the chasm. He makes a good case for how it cannot fail, but pragmatic characters will recognize that his plan requires far too many things to go in his favor to be depended upon. It is a plan rife with potential for disaster.

Strike: Somewhere deep in the chasm is a passage into one of the Spirit Realms. Exactly which Realm the chasm leads to depends upon your particular campaign. Should the characters enter it, they are likely to meet its angry residents who would like to know where all that rock has been coming from for so long...

SHIRO KUNI

(LOCATION CB11)

Often grouped with such places as Yogo Shiro and the Moto family's Outsider Keep, Shiro Kuni is a feared and misunderstood place. Despite the family's labors to keep the Shadowlands at bay for over a thousand years, their strange appearance and demeanor has always set others on edge, and the betrayal of Kuni Yori during the Clan War was enough for most to condemn the Kuni. Fortunately, the Crab Clan has seen Yori for what he was, an abomination and a traitor, and has allowed the Kuni to return to their ancestral pursuits. The Kuni have proven their worth to the Hida a hundred times over since then, even if the rest of Rokugan refuses to recognize the truth.

Shiro Kuni is not a particularly imposing structure, but its location in the center of a dead, twisted wasteland tends to give it a rather sinister feel. The most striking feature of the castle is its enormous size; it is among the largest fortresses controlled by a shugenja family in all the Empire. Not even Kyuden Isawa or Shiro sano Ken Hayai can rival it for sheer size. The reason for this is simple: Shiro Kuni sits at the approximate center of Crab lands, and as such a large standing army resides here so that it can deploy anywhere within the provinces at a moment's notice. It is not uncommon for entire units to be sent forth from Shiro Kuni to reinforce the Great Wall. While many of these soldiers never return to their post at Shiro Kuni, new arrivals are common as samurai fresh from their gempukku arrive to receive their unit assignments and begin their combat training.

The Kuni rarely hold court at their home. It is a strange combination of military outpost and shugenja laboratory, and as such is unsuitable for guests. Instead the Kuni are involved in the courts held at the Face of the East Castle in the Kaiu provinces. They assist the Yasuki, who oversee such events, and are a common sight at the Crab winter courts.

THE KUNI LABORATORIES

Children all across the Empire tell each other horror stories involving the terrors of a Kuni shugenja's workshop. Grisly and nightmarish, the workshop of a Kuni is a gruesome place where horrible things are done in the name of defending the Empire. Over the centuries, the Kuni have experimented upon and dissected hundreds of different kinds of Shadowlands creatures, carefully cataloguing their abilities and weaknesses. It is a wretched duty unfit for a samurai, yet the Kuni perform it without hesitation or complaint. If the Hida and Hiruma are destined to die on the Wall to preserve the Empire, then the Kuni can surely sacrifice their honor to the same end.

Following the Kuni provinces' decimation by Shadowlands forces centuries ago, many Kuni settlements were unable to survive in the renamed Kuni Wastes. The small family chose to consolidate the majority of its resources into a few settlements, the largest of which was Kuni Shiro. During that time, individual shugenja often established workshops in the wilderness, conducting their research on their own with only their apprentices and servants to witness their achievements. While this arrangement worked for many years, many believe that the family's isolationist tendencies contributed to the corruption of many powerful members, including the infamous Kuni Yori, daimyo of the family during the Clan War era.



BARRACKS OF THE DAMNED

Outside the walls of Shiro Kuni is a nondescript building with none of the normal military markings. No banners flap in the wind identifying the units stationed within, nor does it bear any boasts of the courage and prowess of the soldiers within. There is only a single banner flying above the barracks: a black crab clutching a decaying finger of jade. Not a Crab soldier fails to instantly understand its meaning. The Damned are stationed here.

This barracks was the birthplace of that strange sect of berserkers. It was here that the Kuni first began exploring the possibility of using Tainted but not yet Lost samurai as front-line troops against the Shadowlands. Understandably, many Crab samurai cannot avoid contracting the Taint during the course of their duty on the Great Wall. Whether through wounds received in battle or through the abilities of insidious creatures like the Pekkles no Oni, dozens of samurai contract the Taint each year, far more than that during periods of heavy conflict. Most die within a short time.

Those who survive are brought to the nameless barracks outside Shiro Kuni. There, they are subjected to countless examinations and tests by the Kuni shugenja who supervise such individuals. Once it has been determined that they pose no immediate threat to themselves or others, they are taught meditative techniques to aid them in controlling the worst

aspects of their Taint. Those who master this difficult task are placed in units with others like themselves and trained in the strange, eclectic fighting styles of the Damned. Fully staffed units are assigned a Kuni shugenja to oversee them and relocated to one of the handful of Damned barracks along the Great Wall.

Dissident Crab have protested that assigning a shugenja to a single unit of soldiers is a gross misuse of resources. Those who have seen the Damned in action, however, know that they are an incredibly effective weapon against the Shadowlands. One Kuni minder per unit has been found appropriate, and two might not be a bad idea.

KUNI RIHITO, OVERSEER OF THE DAMNED

[Shugenja 16; Kuni Witch Hunter 4]

If one were to imagine the stereotypical Kuni that comes to mind when other clans discuss that sinister, intimidating family, the image would surely resemble Kuni Rihito. Rihito's duty is to oversee the Tainted samurai who are assigned to the barracks outside Kuni Shiro. He has the final word on who is suitable to serve the Damned and who must be killed before they can threaten the clan. He trains the Damned in the techniques they need to survive just long enough to be sacrificed on the front lines of the Crab army. Rihito knows that the men and women he sends forth into battle will die, and soon.

The weight upon Rihito's shoulders is overwhelming. Death lives with him every day of his life, and he considers himself little better than a common murderer. Countless men have been sent to their deaths by his hand alone, and he must live with the knowledge that any man sent to him will die, in battle or by the Kuni's hand when they prove unstable.

MINOR KUNI HOLDINGS

The devastation of the Kuni provinces centuries ago has yet to be overcome. Much of their land is a useless wasteland. Despite this, the Kuni have abandoned few of their lands, preferring to use them for whatever meager purposes they can still serve.

KAKITA'S BREATH

(LOCATION CB8)

Perceptive individuals might note that the peasants of Kakita's Breath seem more appropriate for a Kaiu village than a Kuni holding. However, very few visitors ever reach it at all. Kakita Bogu lies on the edge of a vast salt marsh, and the stink of the marsh drives away all but the most determined travelers.

Kakita Bogu would almost certainly be known for the skill of its inhabitants if it were not for the fact that the stench dominates any conversation concerning the village. The peasants receive a sizeable portion of the ore taken from the mines at Midaki sano Mura to the west, and over the years they have developed considerable metalworking skill. They do not produce samurai weaponry, of course, but they craft many farming implements and everyday items used by samurai and peasant alike throughout the Crab provinces.

IRONWORKS

This unimaginatively named business is the largest building in Kakita Bogu, and employs most of the village's non-farmers. The ironworks has a large forge, deemed "crude but effective" by the Kaiu, that renders down the ore brought from Midaki sano Mura. The peasants here get the low-grade ore; the higher quality ore goes to the Kaiu for weapons or other useful items. The ironworks in Kakita Bogu produces essential but low priority items such as pots, farming implements, yari heads, arrowheads, and even portions of the Crab's great metal ships, the koutetsukan. These items go to offset a portion of the village's taxes. The Crab consider this an appropriate arrangement, as the nearby salt marsh severely limits the village's ability to produce crops.

THE MARSH

The marsh just beyond the borders of Kakita Bogu is not particularly large, but it is especially foul. On a bad day the stench can reach the peaks of Midaki sano Mura. On those days, productivity in the mines is often exceptional as many miners go deeper into the tunnels and stay longer into the evening in order to escape the wretched stink.

Unsurprisingly, the peasants of Kakita Bogu have many superstitions regarding the marsh. One of their more advanced theories is that it is fed by an underground river that originates in the Shadowlands. Less scientific theories suggest that the marsh is a portal to the Dark Oracle of Water's lair,

or that it is a site where the First Oni once marked its territory in the manner of all beasts.

Despite the many wild theories and accusations, the marsh is a natural phenomenon. The plain on which it rests dips down very slightly, and the marsh collects all the runoff water from miles around. This causes periodic size fluctuations, making it seem as though the marsh grows and recedes. While it certainly may be true that there are Shadowlands creatures hiding within, the marsh is decidedly ordinary.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: Recent heavy rainfall has caused the marsh to grow considerably, threatening to cross the village's border and begin flooding it. The villagers are desperate to forestall this disaster, and desperately plead to visitors for assistance.

Focus: There is little that can be done outside of using magic to stem the water's advance or digging a ditch to divert the water. Characters with any skill in Engineering automatically know the appropriate means of dealing with the problem.

Strike: The rising waters and activity near the marsh's edge has attracted the attention of a Shadowlands beast (or beasts) within the marsh. It may be an aggressive, dangerous creature like a Sanshu Denki or a Bog Hag, or it might be a more passive creature like a complacent marsh troll or even a family of swamp goblins. How the creatures react to the characters and vice versa depends upon the circumstances.

EXTRATERRITORIAL HOLDINGS

The Kuni have little interest in anything outside their borders. The only exceptions to this are their handful of labs and workshops in the Hiruma provinces, close to their chosen object of study: the Shadowlands.

THE KUNI TOWER AT SHIRO HIRUMA

(LOCATION CB13)

Relations between the Kuni and Hiruma have been tense since the Clan War. The Hiruma lost everything to the Shadowlands, then watched in horror and disgust as the Kuni daimyo willingly embraced the very darkness that robbed them of their lands, their school, and their honor. While Hiruma Masagaro has publicly voiced his support of both Kuni Utagu and now Kuni Tansho, many among the family quietly disagree with their daimyo's assessment. The Kuni betrayed them once, and may do so again.

Despite these hard feelings, the Hiruma have acquiesced to their daimyo's wishes and assisted the Kuni in the construction of a large tower adjoining their ancestral home. The Kuni stationed there have committed themselves body and soul to the defense of Shiro Hiruma, unleashing their most powerful magic upon the beasts that assault it daily. Their efforts have met with great success: not only have they gathered a tremendous amount of information regarding their enemies, but they have saved countless lives among the defenders of Shiro Hiruma with their spells and insight. Slowly but surely, the bond between the two families is growing.

IMPORTANT KUNI NPCs

KUNI KIYOSHI, WITCH HUNTER

Kuni Kiyoshi's parents died in the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, and he was raised alongside other Oblivion's Gate orphans in a small monastery. Kiyoshi was a strange and solitary child who spent all his time in study, learning the history of the Crab Clan. The monks feared for Kiyoshi's future, as he had no friends and no intention of making any. When the time came for the orphans to enter training as samurai, the monks brought Kiyoshi's solitary nature and love of history to the attention of the local Kuni magistrate.

Three days later Kuni Utagu arrived at the monastery and made Kiyoshi his personal apprentice. The Kuni expect each shugenja to take an apprentice at some point in his career. Utagu accepted no students who did not match him for dedication and love of learning. He and his wife Tansho became surrogate parents for young Kiyoshi, who developed into a clever and powerful young shugenja. He followed Utagu into the Witch Hunters, and brought seven mahotsukai to justice in the first year after his gempukku. Some whispered that Kiyoshi was surely Utagu's heir, if not his true son.

Though Kiyoshi wanted nothing more than to investigate his adopted father's mysterious murder, he was quickly recalled from Otosan Uchi to deal with the growing crisis at the Kaiu Wall. Kiyoshi's skills were put to the test. The day Kuroda fell, Kiyoshi saw the attack coming and could do nothing. Shahai, the Dark Daughter, stepped forward and used her magic to cripple Kiyoshi's leg. He could only watch helplessly as Hida Kuroda died.

Oddly, Shahai did not kill Kiyoshi when she could have. The Witch Hunter escaped the battlefield and, using his magic, soon recovered the use of his leg. Since then he has never been far from Hida Kuon's side. He has entered into training with Hida Rohiteki, and has found that the gruff high priestess' teachings supplement those of his adopted parents quite well. He has grown much stronger in a short time, and he feels ready to face the Horde again.

Each day that passes he is more restless, but he has come to realize that his restlessness has nothing to do with combat. Each night is filled with fevered dreams, which have recently become lucid. Again and again he sees the same face, the same pair of depthless lavender eyes. He hears the same sultry voice call out his name, and he longs to answer.

Deep in his heart he knows he should resist, but he fears he cannot.

He knows the face now. She is Shahai, the Dark Daughter, the Dark Lord's consort. Somehow she is speaking to him, tormenting him, calling him. Kiyoshi wonders if the dreams are just a fevered response to the magic she worked on him, or if there is something darker behind them. Kiyoshi has come to dread the day when he will face the Dark Daughter again.

He fears that she will call to him again.

He fears that he will go to her.

KUNI KIYOSHI

Male human Crab, Shu 5/Witch Hunter 9: CR 14; Medium-size humanoid (human), HD 14d6+87, hp 146, Init: +2, Spd 30 ft., Atk +2 wakizashi +8/+3 melee, 1d6+2 damage, AC 20 (touch 13, flat-footed 18), SQ Class Skill — Knowledge (Shadowlands), Element Focus (Earth), Hunter's Focus, Sense Elements, Sharpened Senses, Shrug Off the Darkness, Track the Darkness, Witch's Bane, Honor 1, AL LN, SV Fort +12, Ref +6, Will +13, Str 12, Dex 15, Con 20 (24), Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 14, Maximum Void: 8, Height: 5 ft. 6 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Bakemono, High Rokugani, Nezumi, Oni, Rokugani), Concentration +19, Heal +14, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +19, Knowledge (history) +14, Knowledge (Shintao) +14, Knowledge (maho) +19, Spellcraft +16; Depths of the Void (x2), Elemental Insight, Jade Rationing, Strength of the Earth Taint Binding, Toughness, Void Use.

Dojo: Kuni Wastelands.

Spells per day: 6/8/8/8/7/7/6/4 base DC 17 + spell level
Elemental Focus — Earth. Spells Known (Kuni School) +9 spellcasting level; 0 — *commune with elements, detect magic, hands of clay, Jurojin's balm, mage hand, mending, purify food and drink, read magic, summon, summon water*, 1st — *cure light wounds, detect taint, mage armor, protection from taint, walk without passing, whispers of the land*; 2nd — *bull's strength, endurance, hold person, hurried steps, lesser restoration, make whole*; 3rd — *cure serious wounds, dispel magic, Kaiu's jade, magic circle against Taint, stone shape*; 4th — *dismissal, jade strike, lessons of the Crab, minor globe of invulnerability, restoration*; 5th — *flame strike, major binding, summon nature's ally V, wall of stone*; 6th — *banishment, heal, importune kami VI, power of the earth dragon*; 7th — *earthquake, tomb of jade*.

Possessions: +2 wakizashi, +3 ashigaru armor, amulet of health +4, amulet of natural armor +1, level 3 Kuni crystal amulet, ring of protection +1.

KUNI KIYOSHI

Earth: 5

Water: 3

Fire: 4

Air: 3

Void: 5

School/Rank: Kuni Shugenja 5

Dojo: Kuni Wastelands

Honor: 1.8

Glory: 5.5

Advantages: Strength of the Earth (2), Irreproachable (3), Heartless

Disadvantages: Fascination (Shahai), Lost Love (Kuni Utagu, adopted father)

Spells: (Spells marked with * are memorized) Commune*, Earthquake, Evil Ward*, Fires From the Forge, Hands of Clay, Hands of Jurojin, Heart of the Inferno, Jade Eternal*, Jade Strike*, Path to Inner Peace*, Preservation, Sense*, Strength of the Crow, Summon*, The Tie That Binds*, Tomb of Jade, Walk Without Passing, Wings of Fire

Skills: Calligraphy 3, Defense 3, Goblin Culture 3, History 4, Kenjutsu 1, Lore (Maho) 6, Lore (Shadowlands) 6, Medicine 4, Meditation 4, Nezumi Language 3, Shintao 4, Wakizashi 5

KUNI TANSHO, KUNI FAMILY DAIMYO

Kuni Tansho is a somewhat peculiar person, which is quite a statement for a family as peculiar as the Kuni. Though she is almost ninety years of age, she is still bright, witty, and extraordinarily tough. The Crab have come to rely on Tansho as an indispensable source of wisdom and magical expertise. Upon first meeting her, most are taken aback by Tansho's rapier tongue and tendency to intrude into others' business, but such is her way. After her lifetime of service to the Clan, few among the Crab would dare question her.

Early on Tansho was apprenticed to Kuni Masami, an adventurous shugenja who traveled throughout the Empire. During this time Tansho developed a taste for adventure and excitement. Return to the desolate, remote towers of the Kuni family did not appeal to her.

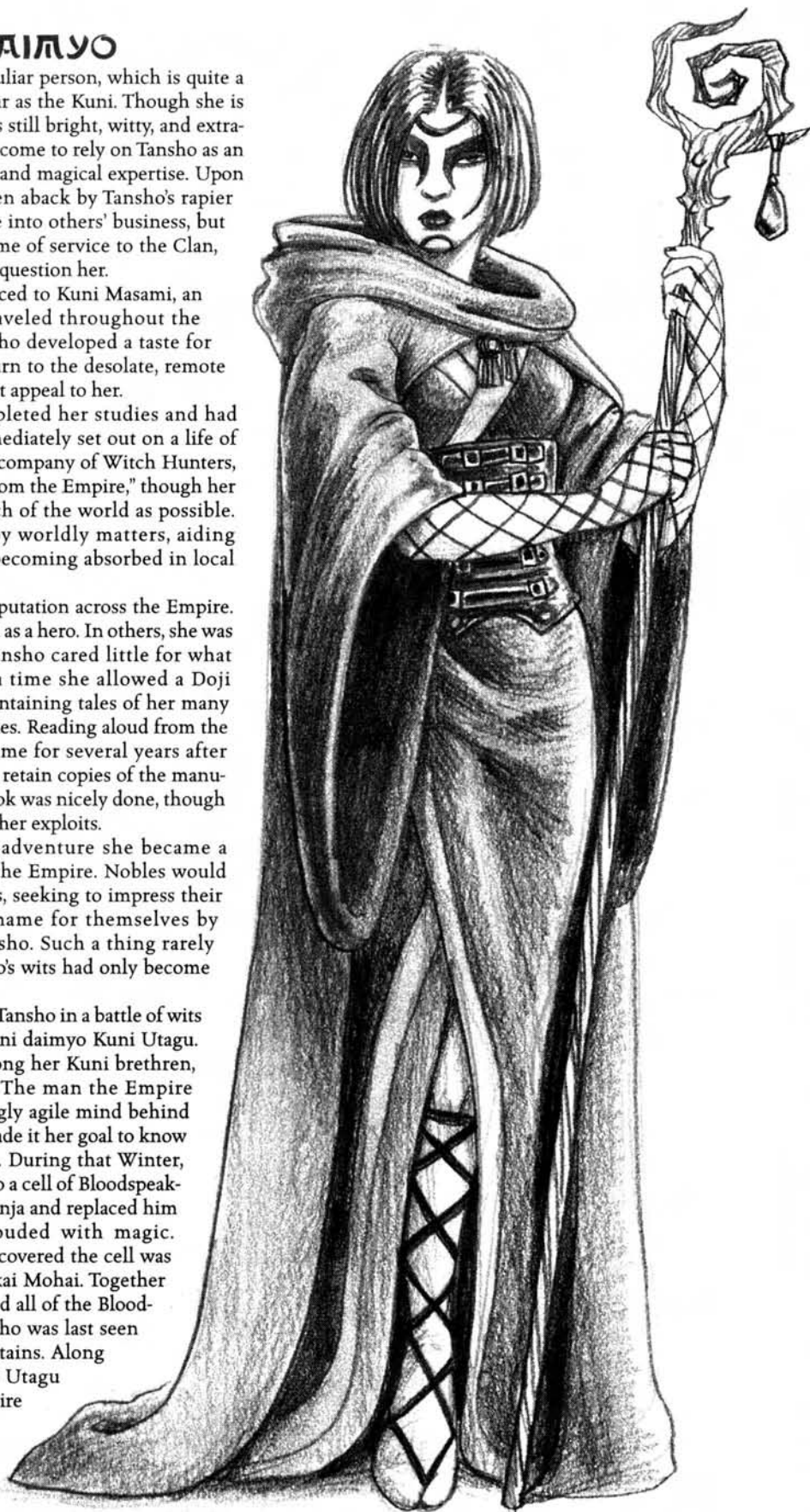
As soon as Tansho had completed her studies and had passed her gempukku, she immediately set out on a life of adventure once more. Joining a company of Witch Hunters, she sent out to "burn the Taint from the Empire," though her primary goal was to see as much of the world as possible. Tansho was often distracted by worldly matters, aiding magistrates on assignment or becoming absorbed in local politics.

After a time, she developed a reputation across the Empire. In some cities she was welcomed as a hero. In others, she was reviled as a nosy interloper. Tansho cared little for what others thought of her. After a time she allowed a Doji storyteller to publish a book containing tales of her many adventures: the Tansho Chronicles. Reading aloud from the Chronicles was a popular pastime for several years after their release, and many libraries retain copies of the manuscript. Tansho thinks that the book was nicely done, though the author tended to understate her exploits.

When she grew too old to adventure she became a popular guest at courts across the Empire. Nobles would invite her to their winter courts, seeking to impress their guests, or to perhaps gain a name for themselves by outwitting the legendary Tansho. Such a thing rarely happened, of course, for Tansho's wits had only become keener with age.

The only samurai who bested Tansho in a battle of wits was the Jade Champion and Kuni daimyo Kuni Utagu. During a rare winter spent among her Kuni brethren, Tansho came to know Utagu. The man the Empire called The Wall had a surprisingly agile mind behind his grim exterior, and Tansho made it her goal to know the mysterious Jade Champion. During that Winter, Utagu and Tansho stumbled onto a cell of Bloodspeakers who had killed a Kuni shugenja and replaced him with one of their own, shrouded with magic. Together, Tansho and Utagu discovered the cell was led by the legendary maho-tsukai Mohai. Together they destroyed the cell and killed all of the Bloodspeakers save Mohai himself, who was last seen fleeing into the Twilight Mountains. Along the way, Tansho came to know Utagu better than any other in the Empire could claim to. A month later, they were married.

When Utagu was murdered, rulership of the Kuni family fell to Tansho. Since her husband's death,



Shadowlands, appearing in the presence of the Celestial Jitte that the Horde had stolen months before. Unable to exist in the mortal realm for long, the Jade Dragon quickly reached out to Omen. The enigmatic shugenja's corruption burned away in an instant, and the first Oracle of Jade was born.

As the Jade Dragon is less powerful than his elder brethren, Omen is less powerful than the other Oracles. His abilities are nevertheless quite potent when directed against the Shadowlands. Hida Kuon is suspicious of Omen's mysterious arrival, but he cannot deny that the Oracle has been an indispensable aid to the Crab armies. Even Omen is uncertain what future the Jade Dragon has planned, but for now he is simply pleased to stand against the armies of Jigoku once more.

His father would be proud.

OMEN

Male Jade Dragon Crab, Shu 10: CR 18; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 10d6+53 plus 8d12+40; hp 220; Init: +2; Spd 40 ft., fly 90 ft., Atk Omen's crimson spear +19/+14/+9 melee, 1d8+6 damage, AC 22 (touch 12, flat-footed 20); SA Breath weapon, spell-like abilities; SQ Alternate Form, Class Skill — Knowledge (Shadowlands), Element Focus (Earth), Omen Qualities, Purity, Sense Elements; Honor 3; AL LG; SV Fort +13, Ref +11, Will +15; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 19, Int 16, Wis 13, Cha 11; Maximum Void: 2; Height: 5 ft. 7 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Bakemono, High Rokugani, Nezumi, Oni, Rokugani), Concentration 13, Diplomacy 11, Heal 13, Knowledge (arcana) 13, Knowledge (maho) 13, Knowledge (Shadowlands) 13, Knowledge (Shintao) 13, Spellcraft 13; Elemental Insight, Strength of the Earth, Toughness, Void Use, Weapon Focus (yari).

Spells per day: 6/8/7/7/6/4 base DC 15 + spell level, Elemental Focus — Earth. Spells Known (Kuni School); 0 — *call earth, commune with elements, detect magic, hands of clay, Jurojin's balm, mending, pebble charm, purify food and drink, read magic, summon*; 1st — *burning hands, cure light wounds, mage armor, pass without trace, protection from Taint, whispers of the land*; 2nd — *courage of the seven thunders, endurance, flaming sphere, lesser restoration, minor globe of invulnerability*; 3rd — *blood curse, dispel magic, greater magic weapon, importune kami III, Kaiu's jade, keen edge*; 4th — *cure critical wounds, minor globe of invulnerability, spell immunity*; 5th — *dispel taint, wall of stone*.

Possessions: +2 ashigaru armor, amulet of health +2, Celestial Jitte, haori of resistance +1, Omen's crimson spear.

OMEN QUALITIES

While Omen is bound to the Jade Dragon in a manner similar to the Oracles, the Jade Dragon is not as powerful as the other Elemental Dragons. Thus, Omen is not as powerful as the Oracles described in *Creatures of Rokugan*.™

Jade Dragon: Omen has all the powers and abilities of the minor Jade Dragon described in *Creatures of Rokugan*. He can transform into a Jade Dragon or back into human form as a standard action. He may only use his breath weapon in his dragon form.

Minor Oracle Abilities: Omen can divine the future as the Oracles in *Creatures of Rokugan*.™ Like other Light Oracles, Omen must obey certain rules. He is not allowed to use his powers to interfere in the affairs of the mortal world, except as an advisor. He can use his powers only to preserve his own life. He is not allowed to seek out others to give advice, but must wait until he is asked.

OMEN'S CRIMSON SPEAR

Forged by the legendary Nezumi shaman Te'tik'kir, this spear has the potent ability to help its wielder resist corruption.

D20 SYSTEM:™

Omen's crimson spear is a +3 yari. It grants the person carrying it a +10 bonus on all rolls to resist accumulating Shadowlands Taint. In the Shadowlands, the person carrying it need only roll to resist accumulating Taint every 72 hours rather than every 24 hours.

Since becoming Oracle of Jade, Omen has become able to grant the spear's blessings to others by touching them with the blade. The spear loses all of its powers for one week when he does so, but persons so touched are protected as if they were carrying the spear during this time.

LSR RPG 2E:

Omen's Crimson Spear is a yari that inflicts 3k4 Wounds. The person carrying it rolls four extra dice to resist accumulating Shadowlands Taint. In the Shadowlands, the person carrying it needs only roll to resist accumulating Taint every 72 hours rather than every 24 hours.

Since becoming Oracle of Jade, Omen has become able to grant the spear's blessings on others by touching them with the blade. The spear loses all of its powers for one week when he does so, but persons so touched are protected as if they were carrying the spear during this time.

THE CELESTIAL JITTE

Crafted on the Celestial Forge in a collaboration between the Fortune of Steel and Shiba Tsubeko, the Celestial Jitte are a pair of powerful unique artifacts that were stolen by the Onisu Hakai shortly after their creation. Until Omen recovered them from the City of the Lost, their powers were unknown. In the Oracle of Jade's hands they are extremely potent.

D20 SYSTEM:™

The celestial jitte are +5 lawful holy jitte that grant their wielder the Ambidexterity and Two-Weapon Fighting feats. If separated by more than ten feet, the weapons automatically rejoin one another, either teleporting to each other's side or returning to their last wielder's hands.

If wielded by a Tainted or dishonorable individual, the jitte exhibit no magical powers whatsoever.

LSR RPG 2E:

The Celestial Jitte are identical to the jitte in the Player's Guide, save that they inflict 3k3 Wounds, 4k4 against Shadowlands creatures. Their wielder gains an extra attack per round if wielding both jitte. If separated by more than ten feet, the weapons automatically rejoin one another, either teleporting to each other's side or returning to their last wielder's hands.

If wielded by a Tainted individual or a person with less than 2 Honor, the jitte exhibit no magical powers.

OMEN

Earth: 6

Water: 3

Fire: 3

Air: 5

Void: 6

School/Rank: Kuni Shugenja 4

Dojo: Kuni Wastelands

Honor: 3.4

Glory: 0.0 (Has no past or history)

Advantages: Oracle

Spells: (Spells marked with * are memorized) Commune*, Earthquake, Evil Ward*, Fires From the Forge, Hands of Clay, Hands of Jurojin, Heart of the Inferno, Jade Eternal*, Jade Strike*, Path to Inner Peace*, Preservation, Sense*, Strength of the Crow, Summon*, The Tie That Binds*, Tomb of Jade, Walk Without Passing, Wings of Fire

Skills: Calligraphy 2, Defense 4, Jitte 2, Kenjutsu 1, Lore (Maho) 6, Lore (Shadowlands) 6, Medicine 4, Meditation 4, Nezumi Language 3, Shintao 3, Yari 4

OMEN'S ABILITIES

Aura Sight: Omen can instantly determine the true Honor rank of a person with a glance, as well as if a creature has the Shadowlands Taint.

Carapace: 5, 7 against Shadowlands creatures.

Flight: Omen can fly at will at four times his normal walking speed.

Jade Dragon: Omen can take the form of a jade dragon, roughly the size of a horse, at will. While in this form, he can breathe green fire in a thirty-foot cone. All Shadowlands creatures within this cone take 7k7 Wounds. Non-Tainted creatures are not affected.

Magic Resistance: Omen has Magic Resistance 15, as per the Advantage, save that it applies only against magic cast by Tainted creatures.

Oracle Abilities/Restrictions: Like all Oracles, Omen has a natural ability to divine the future; this ability is not magical, but part of his very nature. Any mortal being may ask Omen one question. If Omen wills it, he immediately knows the answer to this question (the knowledge appears in his mind) and he must tell the questioner the answer. The answer may be cryptic, but it is always truthful. Omen cannot use this ability more than once for any given mortal, even if he wishes to do so. Omen has some control over when this power is used. He need not use it on the first question posed to him ("Are you really the Oracle?"), though he may do so if he wishes to.

Omen may not use his powers to interfere in the affairs of the mortal world, except as an advisor. He can use his enormous magical might only to preserve his own life. He may not seek out others to give them advice, but must wait until he is asked. Should he violate these rules, the Jade Dragon can retract its blessing at any time, destroying Omen.

Teleportation: Once per day, Omen can teleport to any place in Rokugan that he has visited before, bringing up to three other human-sized creatures with him.

VASSALS OF THE KUNI

THE MEISHOZO FAMILY

Meishozo can be read as "false face," a vague clue to the mysterious nature of this vassal family. Publicly, the Meishozo are responsible for mixing the Kuni's white face makeup. Only among certain Kuni is the true mission of the Meishozo known.

In the Empire's eighth century, the Kuni investigated a Shosuro actor, Akamiru, who seemed to have acquired the Taint in order to portray villains more convincingly in kabuki plays. In fact Akamiru was using Tainted mud in his makeup while protecting himself with a layer of jade paste and a neutral unguent. In this way he could project the theatrical effect of unease created by prolonged closeness to the Taint, while staying technically pure. The witch hunters were unimpressed by his artistic excuse but offered Akamiru his life in exchange for his method. Using these techniques, refined over the years to include cosmetics simulating physical corruption, the Meishozo distinguished themselves in the near-suicidal mission of infiltrating maho cult cells.

Lacking a family stronghold, the Meishozo wander Rokugan, indistinguishable from other Kuni. To better understand the secretive mindset of their prey, the Meishozo have devised a system of clandestine meeting places and markers by which they communicate with others of their family. Working on their own or under other Kuni, they carry out two kinds of missions.

Their standard mission is one of entrapment, creating a false maho cell to catch the easily tempted. While no real maho is involved, these missions are not without danger, as occasionally true maho-tsukai discover the sting operation.

Much more difficult is their occasional infiltration of existing maho cells. The Meishozo are strongly averse to using maho themselves, and cannot use the air magic that would facilitate illusions. Traditionally, they pose as an acolyte or a traveling maho-tsukai for just long enough to expose the meeting place and ringleaders. A Meishozo who survives such a mission is considered lucky; one who survives three or more is a legend.

In the years before the Clan War, a group of investigators discovered that the notorious Bloodspeaker Asahina Yajinden had, with dark irony, been posing as a Meishozo shugenja. The scandal raised the possibility that the Meishozo had been counter-infiltrated. The family voluntarily disbanded, becoming ronin on a dangerous quest to punish those who betrayed the family secrets. During the Clan War several Meishozo even served Kuni Yori, lured by the possibility of using actual Taint and maho to uncover Bloodspeakers. When Yori later became a Shadowlands overlord, these unfortunates found themselves pawns in his rivalry with Jama Suru. In the tumult of those years, the Meishozo mission was all but forgotten by Kuni and Bloodspeaker alike.

A generation passed before the Jade Champion, Kuni Utagu, saw fit to reinstate the family under the leadership of one of its few remaining uncorrupted members, Meishozo O-Churi. In truth, the most advanced sects of Bloodspeakers had been detecting and subverting Meishozo infiltrators for decades before the scandal, using a ritual bath (in blood, of

course) to wash away the cosmetics and expose them as spies. The reformed Meishozo devised a new secret spell, Stench of Taint, to simulate the Taint more effectively.

Omen, Oracle of Jade, has taken a special interest in the Meishozo. He finds it sadly ironic that his father sponsored a secret family of shugenja who could easily have infiltrated the City of the Lost in his place and spared the loss of his name. The Oracle of Jade has not explained the reason for his interest to the Meishozo, but he is very protective of the family and has offered his guidance to its members on more than one occasion. In return, Omen has requested that the Stench of Taint spell no longer be kept secret among the Meishozo, though he has not asked that it be spread any further than the rest of the Kuni family.

HOLDINGS

None. The Meishozo stay on the move, and use a network of hidden rooms in roadside inns scattered throughout the Crab and Scorpion lands when they need to rest, meet, or prepare. The inns are identified by a system of secret marks.

THE MEISHOZO FAMILY

- Favored Class:** Shugenja
- Starting Honor:** 1
- Class Skill:** Bluff
- Starting Outfit:** (Choose one)
 1. Masterwork tanto and five jade fingers.
 2. Scroll of one 1st level maho spell (for prop and bargaining use only), staff, and 20 koku.
- Special:** Meishozo shugenja must learn the 2nd-level spell stench of Taint upon reaching level 4.

THE MEISHOZO FAMILY

- Benefit:** +1 Willpower
- Glory:** 0.2
- Honor Rank:** 1
- Special:** Meishozo shugenja must start with the Kuni secret spell Stench of Taint. Characters from the Meishozo family may replace one of their starting skills with Acting.

MEISHOZO FACE PAINT

Though it is no longer commonly used, the Meishozo and some other members of the Kuni family still remember how to produce the face paint they once used to simulate the Shadowlands Taint. It costs six koku per application. The face paint lasts 6 hours or until washed off.

Meishozo face paint makes its wearer seem to have the Shadowlands subtype, with a Taint modifier equal to his highest ability score modifier, for the purposes of detect Taint and all other abilities that detect Taint.

Meishozo face paint makes its wearer seem to have a Taint Rank equal to his highest Ring for the purposes of all spells and abilities that detect Taint.



SPELLS

STENCH OF TAINT

(KUNI SECRET SPELL)

- Illusion (Earth)**
- Level:** Shu 2
- Components:** V,S, DF
- Casting Time:** 1 minute
- Range:** Personal
- Target:** You
- Effect:** Aura of Taint
- Duration:** 1 hour/level (D)
- Saving Throw:** Fortitude negates (harmless), Will negates (special)
- Spell Resistance:** Yes

An invisible aura clings to your skin, simulating the Shadowlands Taint. During the spell's duration, you seem to have a Taint modifier equal to your highest ability score modifier for the purposes of all abilities and spells that detect Taint. The illusory Taint disappears when the spell ends.

This spell is an illusion, and does not make you vulnerable to effects that apply to Tainted individuals (such as *jade strike*). However, any damaging spell that harms Shadowlands creatures but fails to harm you allows all viewers a Will save to disbelieve the illusion.

STENCH OF TAINT

(KUNI SECRET SPELL)

- Earth Spell**
- Mastery Level:** 2
- Duration:** 1 hour
- Range:** Personal
- Area of effect:** Personal
- Raises:** Duration

An invisible aura clings to your skin, simulating the Shadowlands Taint. During the spell's duration, you seem to have a Taint Rank equal to your highest Ring for the purposes of all abilities and spells that detect Taint. The illusory Taint disappears when the spell ends.

This spell is an illusion, and does not make you vulnerable to effects that apply to Tainted individuals (such as *Jade Strike*). However, any damaging spell that harms Shadowlands creatures but fails to harm you allows all viewers a Perception check vs. TN 15 to see through the illusion.

THE UGAWARI FAMILY

Very early in their researches into the nature of the Shadowlands and its creatures, the Kuni discovered certain realities of the labor they had assumed. Monsters had to be captured, brought back alive, subdued, and kept alive while waiting for the scalpel. The Hida and Hiruma seldom volunteered for such duties. In their view, Tainted abominations should be exterminated, not captured and coddled. The hunters and zookeepers of the Kuni instead came from what is euphemistically described in the official histories as "stock of the Minor Clans," but almost certainly comprising ronin and possibly even heimin.

This lack of status in their servants caused problems for the Kuni; a ronin bushi trying to persuade a Hida samurai to let a wounded ogre live for study was seldom heeded and would

sometimes be attacked outright. In the fourth century of Rokugan, the Kuni saw fit to grant vassal family status to the more respectable of their monster-catchers. Thus, the Ugawari were born.

Even for Crab the Ugawari are an ill-favored lot, their faces and bodies scarred and warped from hand-to-hand combat with vicious creatures. They wrap their limbs in coarse cloth sleeves, cover their vulnerable areas with battered armor of solid iron, and wear cage-like helmets. They fight with blunt weapons: tetsubo, thrown chains, whips, nets, and the man-catcher weapon known as the sasumata. Because they shun use of the katana (it's far too fatal), samurai of other clans classify the Ugawari, with sarcastic disdain, as "the Kuni bushi school." Even the samurai of the Crab look down on the Ugawari, whose duties are coarse and foul even by a Hida's standards.

Most of the Kuni shugenja who dwell on the edges of the Shadowlands have one or more Ugawari assistants. These in turn supervise gangs of eta who do the close and dirty work of dealing with the monsters and cleaning up afterwards. The eta are considered expendable and are given only meager protection against the Taint. When they expire or begin to display signs of corruption, it is considered efficient to use their remains to feed the Kuni's pets. The Ugawari themselves are never far from jade fingers, tea of jade petals, or the protective spells of their shugenja associates. Despite their foul reputation, most Ugawari bathe several times a day as a precaution against infection.

Once a monster is captured, the Ugawari are skilled at constructing restraints and dungeons that will hold the creature. While they are guests of the Kuni, monsters are fed and treated at the direction of the Ugawari, who use their knowledge of the Shadowlands to assess their prisoner's requirements and behavior. This task is no less perilous, especially if the shugenja prefers to keep his subjects alive and healthy. Because they pay the price for the mistakes of incautious Kuni experimenters, the Ugawari have the reputation of being a voice of common sense and even compassion in a Kuni laboratory.

When the Shadowlands overran the Kaiu Wall early in the era of the Four Winds, Ugawari Torid-e, the family keep, held out valiantly against a wave of besieging goblins and oni until help could arrive. Sadly, the creatures in its dungeons had already been slaughtered as a precaution against their release should the castle have fallen. With the menace of the Horde greater than ever before, the Ugawari are increasingly seen as irrelevant, a luxury from a more secure time when the Shadowlands could be studied at leisure instead of fought with fire and iron. Without any stores of prisoners to prove their usefulness, the Ugawari are hard pressed to prove their value to the clan.

One exception, if rumors are to be believed, is the presence of several corrupted Ugawari keepers in Daigotsu's City of the Lost. There, presumably, they are encouraged to tend the corrupt beasts kept in that hellish mirror image of Rokugan. It is not a prospect that consoles the rest of the family.

UGAWARI TORID-E

The Ugawari have a small and ancient keep, Ugawari Torid-e, where family members are trained. It lies close to the Kaiu Wall between Shiro Kuni and Kyuden Hida. The keep is little more than five stone towers linked by walls, creating a central courtyard or arena whose walls are lined with rows of benches. The true extent of the keep lies underground,

in a maze of cells where captured Shadowlands monsters are kept. In the arena, the Ugawari practice and observe the techniques of subduing monsters.

Sometimes, young samurai of the other Crab families have been known to overcome their disdain and visit the arena, hoping to improve their skill by being allowed a bout to the death with one of the creatures. There are also usually a few Yasuki around the keep who will innocuously engage any visitors in side wagers on the action in the arena. The leader of the Ugawari, Furoken, knows about these irregularities but takes the cynical attitude that the reputation of this vassal family can not become any worse than it already has.

THE UGAWARI FAMILY

Favored Class: Ranger

Starting Honor: 0.5

Class Skill: Knowledge (Shadowlands)

Special: Ugawari rangers do not select a creature type against which to get a combat bonus. Instead, their ranger combat bonus applies to striking any Tainted creature native to the Shadowlands. As with most Rokugani rangers (see *d20 Rokugan*,™ p.29), the Ugawari receive a bonus fighter feat, other than Weapon Specialization, in place of gaining access to new levels of spells.

Starting Outfit: (Choose one)

1. Tetsubo, weighted net, and three jade fingers.
2. Sasumata, light armor, and three jade fingers.

THE UGAWARI FAMILY

Benefit: +1 Strength

Glory: 0.5

Honor Rank: 0.5

Special: Ugawari characters may sacrifice one of their starting skills to gain Lore (Shadowlands) or raise their Lore (Shadowlands) skill by a rank if it is already a starting skill.

KUNI MECHANICS

ANCESTORS

KUNI YOSHIMITSU (YOKAI)

Yoshimitsu was a practical man. Like most Kuni, he didn't shy away from corpses, or oni, or any creature that walks or crawls or slithers. Goblins, ogres, trolls: nothing frightened Kuni Yoshimitsu. He was simply unable to feel fear — a fact of which he was very proud. "Fear," he was often heard to say, "is the only dishonor." He took great pains to not allow his attitude to turn to overconfidence. He was the consummate hunter — prepared, unafraid, and talented.

On his last raid into the Shadowlands, he chose to take with him a scroll of maho — a powerful and deadly invocation. His reasoning was simple: it was more powerful than anything else he had, and there might come a time where it would stand

between him and utter disaster — especially as his quarry was a Oni no Kyoso spawn. The raid went poorly, and Yoshimitsu elected to finish off the beast quickly with the maho. The spell was a success, but the rush of powerful kansen drove Yoshimitsu instantly mad. He turned the maho on his friends and allies, and in short order became completely Lost.

Yoshimitsu's is a cautionary tale among the Kuni; a story (one of hundreds) that sensei tell their students to remind them of the dangers of the Shadowlands. His yokai wanders the Shadowlands and the Kuni Wastelands, occasionally haunting other Kuni.

BLOOD-CRAZED MADNESS

ANCESTOR: KUNI YOSHIMITSU

You are fearless, though you also have an unholy attraction to maho.

Benefit: You are immune to magical fear. Any time you inflict damage with a maho spell, you do one additional point of damage per die of damage.

Special: Unlike other ancestors, you may take this feat after first level so long as you have the Shadowlands Taint.

KUNI YOSHIMITSU

(0 POINTS)

Yoshimitsu had no descendants, but his spirit still guides and haunts the Kuni family. For whatever reason, his spirit has chosen you as one of his successors. You are immune to fear effects and gain a Free Raise for damage on all maho spells. However, you also automatically gain the Fascination (Maho) Disadvantage.

KUNI TOKAJI

Tokaji was daimyo of the Kuni long before the Maw's attack dispersed the family throughout the Wastelands. He was a vain and arrogant man, and believed that his magic was supreme. He set out to prove to the Emperor that he was the most powerful shugenja alive.

He traveled to the lands of the Crane, Lion, and Scorpion looking vainly for a shugenja to match his graceful control and the sheer power of the kami that obeyed his call. Following that, he sought to challenge the Agasha family in their mountain home. He was met at Kyuden Tonbo by a runner with a message from the Agasha family daimyo: the Dragon would not participate in his braggart's quest.

His next stop was the Phoenix Council of Elemental Masters. They told Tokaji in no uncertain terms that they considered him unworthy of their attention.

Bearing this insult in typical Crab fashion, and taking advantage of a rare Imperial Winter Court in Crab lands, Tokaji approached the Emperor himself. "I am the greatest shugenja in the Empire. The Crane, Lion, and Scorpion cannot produce a shugenja to match my skill, and the Dragon and Phoenix are afraid of me. Excellency, allow me to protect the Empire with the strength and purity that only jade and my family can bring. Make me governor of magic in the Emerald Empire. If all shugenja answer to me, I shall police magic and keep away the foul touch of the Dark Brother. Iuchiban's legacy must be purged, and I am the man to do it."

As fate would have it, the Crab were in favor in the Imperial Court at the time, and the Emperor rewarded Tokaji by making him the first Jade Champion.

JADE CHAMPION'S MIGHT

ANCESTOR: KUNI TOKAJI

You are an inheritor of Tokaji's power.

Prerequisite: Shugenja level 1

Benefit: You may double the casting time of any spell to increase your effective caster level by two. Spells that normally take one action to cast are increased to full round actions instead. Spells with instantaneous casting time are unaffected.

KUNI TOKAJI

(5 POINTS, SHUGENJA ONLY)

You may consider one of your Traits in each Ring to be one Rank higher for the purposes of determining your Ring Rank. This increased Ring applies only for your spellcasting. For example, Kuni Itamori has an Earth Ring of 4, and Traits of Stamina 5, Willpower 4. Tokaji's guidance allows Itamori to cast Earth Spells as if he had an Earth Ring of 5. If Tokaji had Stamina 5 and Willpower 5, the ancestor would have no effect until one of the Traits was raised once more.

CRYSTAL

True crystal has only one source — the tears of the Sun. At the beginning of the Empire, and on several rare occasions throughout its history, the tears rained down from the heavens, and became crystal as they touched the ground. There is a large amount of crystal present in the Empire relative to jade, which has grown even more scarce in recent years. Unlike jade, crystal never wears out with use, though it cannot protect its bearer from the Taint as jade does.

Crystals come in five levels of strength, with each increasing level of strength being progressively less common. Light focused through a crystal deals 1d3 damage per crystal level per round to a Shadowlands creature, and twice that to a creature of the Lying Darkness. Regardless of the amount of light that a creature is exposed to, only the single highest-level crystal's damage applies. This damage ignores all damage reduction abilities, and may not be regenerated or healed with the fast healing ability. Focusing a crystal's light in this manner is a full round action and requires a successful ranged touch attack (modified at the GM's discretion for the beam's width). The range of this attack is 20 ft. per level of the crystal.

Shadowlands creatures may not come within 1 ft. per crystal level of a shining crystal without making a Will save (DC 15 + 2 × crystal level).

A piece of true crystal costs 500 koku per level, has a hardness of 2 and 4 hit points per inch of thickness. True crystal is too fragile to be suitable for use as a weapon unless properly awakened by magic, a difficult and time-consuming process. Making a magic weapon out of crystal doubles the base cost.

Every crystal has a Strength Rating of one through five, with stronger crystals being progressively rarer.

All crystal weapons ignore Carapace on Shadowlands creatures and beings with one or more Shadow Points.

Shadowlands creatures who attempt to come within a distance of (Strength Rating) feet must make a Willpower roll vs. TN 10 × Strength Rating or be unable to proceed further of their own volition.

Light projected through a crystal deals Xk1 Wounds per round to a Shadowlands creature, and Xk(X-1) to a being with Shadow Points, where X is the crystal's Strength Rating. The light must be held on the creature for the entire round to deal damage, so a character actively using a crystal and light source this way may take no other actions during the round. The targeted creature may make an Agility roll (at the GM's discretion, based on the beam width) to avoid the crystal's light. The maximum range of this damage is 20 ft. × Strength Rating.

NEW SPELLS

CRYSTAL'S AWAKENING

(KUNI FAMILY SECRET SPELL)

Transmutation

Level: Shu 4 (Earth)

Components: V, S, F, DE, XP

Casting Time: 2 hours

Range: Touch

Target: One crystal object weighing no more than one lb./level

Duration: Instantaneous

With this ritual, you transform a true crystal into a Kuni crystal (see below). Only one crystal may be transformed per casting, and the ritual requires the crystal spend the full time in sunlight focused through another Kuni crystal to be effective.

The new Kuni crystal is of the same level of strength that it was as a normal crystal. If it is broken (note the increased hardness and hit points of Kuni crystals over normal crystal), this spell's magic is lost and the crystal becomes normal crystal once more.

Focus: A Kuni crystal at least as large as the crystal to be transformed.

XP Cost: 500 XP per lb. of crystal, per level of crystal

CRYSTAL'S AWAKENING

(KUNI FAMILY SECRET SPELL)

Element: Earth

Mastery Level: 3

Duration: Permanent

Area of Effect: 1 crystal item

Range: Touch

This two-hour ritual transforms a crystal into a Kuni crystal. Only one crystal may be transformed per casting, and the ritual requires the crystal spend the full time in sunlight focused through another Kuni crystal to be effective.

The new Kuni crystal is of the same Strength Rating that it was as a normal crystal. If it is broken (note that Kuni crystals are nearly as hard as steel, much harder than most crystals), this spell's magic is lost and the crystal becomes normal crystal once more.

Upon casting this spell the shugenja must expend a bit of his own life force to power the crystal. This process drains him of 5 Experience Points per lb. of crystal. If he cannot pay this cost, the spell fails.

SPELLCASTING IN THE KUNI AND HIRUMA LANDS

Spellcasting is difficult within the Kuni and Hiruma lands, thanks to the powerful cleansing magic by which the Kuni expunged the Taint from their lands centuries ago, and the Hiruma lands more recently. The kami who power a shugenja's magic travel only in specific "dragon lines" throughout the provinces; these "dead areas" are not habitable for them. These lands are truly devastated.

This elemental waste does not affect any form of magic other than shugenja's elemental magic. Kiho, maho, Nezumi Name magic, etc. all function normally.

D20 SYSTEM™

All shugenja not of the Kuni school are considered to be two levels lower when casting a spell within the Hiruma or Kuni lands. Characters who wish to learn the Kuni secrets to avoid this effect may do so by spending two skill points, though the Kuni guard this secret jealously as Secret Lore. Shugenja may cast spells normally while within a Kuni castle.

LSR RPG 2E:

All shugenja not trained by the Kuni have a +10 to the TN of any spell they cast in the Kuni or Hiruma lands. Characters who wish to learn the Kuni secrets to avoid this effect may spend a single experience point to learn to cast in the barren lands if a teacher can be found. The Kuni consider this instruction very dangerous; it is taught approximately as often as Kuni Secret Spells are (i.e. almost never). Shugenja may cast spells normally while within a Kuni castle.

KUNI CRYSTALS

The substance known as "Kuni crystal" is new to the Empire, and it has proven highly effective in the Crab's fight against the Shadowlands. It glows when near a Shadowlands creature, and allows its bearer to resist the taint almost like jade without corroding away (though it is not as effective). Most importantly, it is especially useful in crystal magic — a new field developed by the Kuni over the last few decades, and one that shows great promise.

The ritual to create Kuni crystal requires a Kuni crystal as well, so the Kuni family sometimes speculate: where did the seed crystal come from? The truth is that the recently deceased Jade Champion Kuni Utagu created it. It was this feat of magical prowess, in an area that even the Isawa had not considered, that earned him the title of Jade Champion. After the debacle of previous Jade Champion Kitsu Okura's reign, Toturi was pleased to have a Jade Champion dedicated to his intended task — the destruction of the Shadowlands.

Like the true crystals that they are made from, Kuni crystals have five levels of strength. A Kuni crystal keeps the same level of strength it had before the crystal's awakening spell, above.

Kuni crystal has a hardness of 7 and 12 hit points per inch of thickness. Because it is so strong, it can be made into weapons (see *Oriental Adventures*,™ pages 61, 126–7).

A Kuni crystal needs no external light to affect Shadowlands creatures — if a creature with the Taint approaches within 30 ft. of the crystal, it begins to glow with a white light (akin to a *daylight* spell), hindering the approach of the Tainted creature. The creature must make a Will save (DC 15 + level of the crystal or total enhancement bonus if a Kuni crystal weapon) or be unable to approach the crystal bearer closer than 5 ft/crystal level. If the crystal bearer approaches closer than half this distance, the protection is broken against that creature.

A Kuni crystal protects against the Taint, though it cannot stave off the inevitable corruption. While wearing a piece of Kuni crystal at least as large as a finger, the wearer gains a sacred bonus to all Fortitude saves against the Taint equal to the crystal's level. Multiple Kuni crystals do not provide extra protection; only the strongest one counts.

For the purposes of crystal magic (any spell that makes use of crystals), Kuni crystals are considered to be two levels higher.

Kuni crystals have no extra effect against creatures of the Lying Darkness. Except as noted above, Kuni crystals have all the same powers that normal crystals have.

Like the true crystal that they are made from, Kuni crystals have five levels of strength. A Kuni crystal keeps the same Strength Rating it had before the Crystal's Awakening ritual, above.

Kuni crystal is nearly as strong as steel, and can be made into effective weapons. A Kuni crystal weapon deals +2k2 Wounds against a Shadowlands creature.

If a Shadowlands creature comes within 30 feet of a Kuni crystal, the crystal begins to glow with a white light. This pure light hinders the approach of Tainted beings. The Shadowlands creature must succeed at a Willpower roll vs. TN 5 times the crystal's level or be unable to approach closer than 5 feet times the strength rating of the crystal. If the crystal bearer approaches closer than half this distance, the protection is broken against that creature.

A Kuni crystal protects against the Taint, though it cannot stave off the inevitable corruption. While wearing a piece of Kuni crystal at least as large as a finger, the

wearer rolls extra dice equal to the crystal's level on all attempts to resist the Taint. Multiple Kuni crystals do not provide extra protection; only the strongest one counts.

For the purposes of crystal magic (any spell that makes use of crystals), Kuni crystals are considered to have a Strength Rating two higher.

Kuni crystals have no extra effect against creatures of the Lying Darkness. Except as noted above, Kuni crystals have all the same powers that normal crystals have.

KUNI WITCH-HUNTERS

The rules presented here do not supersede the rules presented in *Oriental Adventures*™ and *Way of the Crab*™ for the tsukai-sagasu, but are instead presented as an alternate, to represent the other forms that Witch Hunters take.

THE TSUKAI-SAGASU (VARIANT CLASS)

The order of tsukai-sagasu, the Witch Hunters, is centuries old and less policed than other Kuni teachings. Thus, several variant traditions of Witch Hunters have cropped up over the years.

Hit Die: d8/d6*

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a tsukai-sagasu, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Clan: Crab.

Skills: Knowledge (maho): 8 ranks, Knowledge (Shadowlands): 8 ranks, Spellcraft: 4 ranks.

Feats: Void Use.

Special: A character must be specifically trained as a tsukai-sagasu by another tsukai-sagasu. Every tsukai-sagasu's reasons for training a student are different, but worthy and humble students should find little trouble convincing a tsukai-sagasu to train them.

CLASS SKILLS

The tsukai-sagasu's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Alchemy (Int), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (all skills, taken individually) (Int), Listen (Wis), Profession (Wis), Scry (Int, exclusive skill), Spellcraft (Int), Spot (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

TABLE 3-1: THE TSUKAI-SAGASU

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day*
1st	+0 +1	+2	+0	+2	Hunter's Focus, Shrug Off Darkness	+1 level of existing class
2nd	+1 +2	+3	+0	+3	Bonus Feat	+1 level of existing class
3rd	+2 +3	+3	+1	+3	Sharpened Senses	+1 level of existing class
4th	+3 +4	+4	+1	+4	Track the Darkness	+1 level of existing class
5th	+3 +5	+4	+1	+4		+1 level of existing class
6th	+4 +6	+5	+2	+5	Witch's Bane	+1 level of existing class
7th	+5 +7	+5	+2	+5	Bonus Feat	+1 level of existing class
8th	+6 +8	+6	+2	+6		+1 level of existing class
9th	+6 +9	+6	+3	+6	Bonus Feat	+1 level of existing class
10th	+7 +10	+7	+3	+7	Dispel the Darkness	+1 level of existing class

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the tsukai-sagasu prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Tsukai-sagasu gain no additional weapon or armor proficiencies.

Hunter's Focus: At first level, the tsukai-sagasu must choose to be a martial hunter or a spiritual hunter.

Martial hunters receive the higher base attack bonus listed in Table 3-1, and d8 hit dice. Martial hunters receive no spell abilities. If a character does not have any divine spellcasting ability from a previous character class, he must be a martial hunter.

Spiritual hunters receive the lower base attack bonus and d6 hit die. Spiritual hunters also receive the increased spells per day at odd-numbered levels, as listed in the table above.

Spells per Day: A spiritual tsukai-sagasu (see *Hunter's Focus*) continues training in the ways of the kami. When a new tsukai-sagasu level is attained, the character gains new spells per day as if he had also gained a level in any divine spellcasting class he had before becoming a tsukai-sagasu. He does not, however, gain any other benefits of gaining a level in that class (such as improved sense elements ability, turn undead, etc.) This essentially means that a spiritual tsukai-sagasu adds his class level in tsukai-sagasu to shugenja (or other divine spellcasting class) for the purposes of determining spells known, spells per day, and caster level.

Shrug Off Darkness: Tsukai-sagasu are trained to be resistant to maho. At first level, the tsukai-sagasu gains spell resistance 15 + class level, which only applies against maho spells.

Bonus Feat: The tsukai-sagasu gains a bonus feat at 2nd, 7th, and 9th level. The bonus feat must be Taint Binding or a feat from the Crab Technique list.

Sharpened Senses: The tsukai-sagasu has an uncanny ability to detect creatures and minions of the Shadowlands. Starting at 3rd level, the tsukai-sagasu gains a +5 competence bonus to his Spot and Listen checks to sense a Shadowlands creature.

Track the Darkness: At 4th level, the tsukai-sagasu gains Track as a bonus feat. While tracking Shadowlands creatures (only creatures native to the Shadowlands such as ogres, goblins, etc.), the tsukai-sagasu may substitute his Knowledge (Shadowlands) skill rank for his Wilderness Lore skill rank. If the tsukai-sagasu already had Track, he gains Alertness instead.

Witch's Bane: At level 6 the tsukai-sagasu becomes capable of the swift elimination of maho-tsukai, punishing them with the wrath of the Crab for treason against the Celestial Order. Once per round, when a maho spell is cast within 100 feet or targeting the tsukai-sagasu, he may spend a Void Point as a free action to gain a bonus against that maho-tsukai.

Martial hunters get a +2 bonus to all attack rolls until the end of the combat against the maho-tsukai. This ability may be used several times against the same target in the same combat with a cumulative effect.

Spiritual hunters gain a +1 bonus to the save DC of all spells cast upon the maho-tsukai for the duration of the combat. This ability may be used several times against the same target in the same combat with a cumulative effect.

Dispel the Darkness (Sp): At 10th level, the tsukai-sagasu becomes adept at thwarting maho use. As a standard action, the witch hunter can cancel any maho spell cast within 100 feet by making a Spellcraft check (DC 20 + spell level) and spending two Void Points.

TOKAJI'S MIGHT (NEW PATH)

Technique Rank: 2 or 3

Path of Entry: Kuni Witch Hunter 1

Path of Egress: Kuni Witch Hunter 2

Witch's Bane: A properly trained tsukai-sagasu is capable of the swift elimination of maho-tsukai, punishing them with the wrath of the Crab for treason against the Celestial Order. Each time a maho spell is cast in the tsukai-sagasu's presence, he may spend a Void Point to gain a +1k1 bonus to all attack rolls against the caster until the end of the combat. This ability may be used several times in the same combat, with cumulative effects. It may not be used twice in response to the same maho casting.

Technique Rank: Variable

Path of Entry: Kuni Shugenja or Kuni Witch Hunter 2

Path of Egress: Kuni Witch Hunter or Kuni Shugenja 1 (may not reenter the same school twice)

Dispel the Darkness: The tsukai-sagasu becomes adept at thwarting maho use. The witch hunter can counter a maho spell by making a Lore (Maho) roll (TN 10 + 5 × Mastery Level of the maho spell) and spending two Void Points. The countered spell automatically fails.



CHAPTER FOUR:

THE KAIU

VIGILANT
PART FIVE

"By the Fortunes!" exclaimed Sekkou. "Is it always this loud, do you suppose? How can they get anything done?" The din from the forges and workshops of Kaiu Shiro's courtyard was incredible. Taneji could only shake his head. He did not care to try and shout over the sound of white-hot iron being immersed in water, nor over the sound of steel being pounded brutally into shape on dozens of anvils. He had heard such a commotion only once before, when he had accompanied his father to the heimin market in Otosan Uchi. The shouting and catcalling there had been overwhelming, a valuable lesson in how base mercantile interests eroded the soul.

Ironic that he should be reminded of that trip now. Taneji tapped Sekkou on the shoulder and pointed after their escort, who was walking briskly along the tower walkway while the shugenja had stopped to peer over the edge at the legendary Great Forge. The young priest grinned foolishly and hurried after the sullen Crab who was supposedly leading them where they needed to go. Again, Taneji shook his head. His companion, as always, seemed to have no grasp of the importance of their mission.

Otomo Taneji fell in behind Sekkou and their guide. Their instructions had been to see the master sensei of the Kaiu Engineering Academy at Kaiu Shiro. Presumably, Hatori's letter would be sufficient to grant them audience. Under different circumstances, Taneji might expect to be kept waiting for a few days while their host prepared to receive them. In his admittedly limited experience, however, the Kaiu were not ones to engage in such practices. Not so long ago, Taneji had disdained those who

deviated from the social norm. More and more of late, however, he had come to appreciate practicality.

Expecting to be led to an audience chamber, Taneji was surprised to find that their guide had brought them instead to what appeared to be a vast storeroom. Kaiu moved throughout the chamber, checking what seemed to be an endless supply of merchant's carts filled with rock. The escort walked pointedly toward the eastern wall, then stopped and bowed very low before a man inspecting a cart. He held the bow as the older man continued speaking to his subordinates.

"This will suffice for second-grade steel at best. Mark it for the first-year students, and have the six carts of substandard ore we examined transported to one of the peasant villages. That should suit their needs for the rest of the season." Glancing up, the man seemed to finally notice them and their escort. Nodding, he waved the escort away and gestured for Taneji and Sekkou to approach. "What business do you have?" he asked. It was curt, but not rude. He looked at them expectantly. "I have many duties to perform today yet."

"Kaiu Namboku-sama," Taneji said with a deep bow. "Our lord Miya Hatori sends his warmest regards and appreciation for you seeing us on his behalf."

"I had heard Hatori was among us," Namboku said. "He seems to have a habit of visiting every family when he visits a clan. Strange, but predictable. What can I do for Miya Hatori and his vassals?"

"Lord Hatori wishes to enlist the services of the Kaiu in adding to the defenses of his family's estate," Sekkou said plaintively. Taneji winced a bit inwardly. Negotiating such matters was a delicate process indeed, and not one for which Sekkou was ideally suited.

Namboku raised an eyebrow. "Hatori wishes to hire us, does

he?" He looked both men squarely in the eye. "And does he believe that the Kaiu are common laborers, to be hired like a peasant carpenter might be?"

"No, Namboku-sama, of course not," Taneji added hastily. "He does not wish to pay you for your services, of course. He plans to purchase the materials and hire the laborers, but he humbly requests the presence of a unit of your family's peerless engineers to oversee the project. He believes that unless one plans to do a thing correctly, it should not be done at all."

"Tell Hatori to find one of his Anou cousins to do it."

Taneji was taken aback. The venerable Anou bloodline was not prominent among the Miya. The Anou vassal family of the Kaiu had been absorbed into the Miya centuries ago by Imperial decree; they were generally regarded as some of the finest architects in the Empire.

"Hatori has great respect for his Anou brothers," Sekkou added, "but he knows that their skill stems from the Kaiu blood in their veins." The Monkey shugenja smiled knowingly. "Hatori-sama often says that one should not travel to the market to purchase stone if one can take it from the mountain itself."

Taneji managed to keep his relief from showing as Namboku broke into a smile. "And we Kaiu should perform this service for your lord out of the goodness of our hearts, I suppose?"

"Hatori-sama is known for his generosity," Taneji said. "And who better to demonstrate his generosity to than those who aided him in so personal a task?"

Namboku's smile grew broader. "Well then, perhaps we should perform this task for our great friend Miya Hatori. It will prove an excellent learning experience for some of our brighter students. You perhaps have information for me?"

"Of course," said Taneji, withdrawing a thick scroll from the folds of his kimono. "This is the information on Hatori's estate. He said it should provide you with everything you require."

The Kaiu grunted. "That is rarely the case."

"In anticipation of that," the Otomo continued, "Hatori-sama has requested that I provide any information you require. I have lived at Hatori-sama's estate most of my life, and there is little I cannot tell you."

"Very good, very good," muttered Namboku, unrolling and looking over the scrolls. "And you?" he asked Sekkou.

"I have business to attend to in the north, in the Toritaka provinces," Sekkou replied. "And in any event, Taneji-san is far more knowledgeable in matters of construction than I. I am merely a priest, after all."

"Every stone serves its purpose," Namboku said. "You'll learn that if you're among the Crab for very long."

THE KAIU PROVINCES

MAJOR KAIU HOLDINGS

The Kaiu are as scientifically-minded a family as can be found in Rokugan, and they place great importance on holdings that can provide them with valuable resources or which provide logistical value to the clan. The Kaiu typically oversee every detail of the holdings under their control, keeping their provinces orderly, efficient, and precise.

KAIU SHIRO

(LOCATION CB4)

For centuries, many have proclaimed that only the Imperial Palace in Otosan Uchi could be considered more secure than Kaiu Shiro. Now that the capital city has been destroyed, some Kaiu have somewhat smugly observed that the Palace could not have been as secure as Kaiu Shiro, or it would never have fallen to the Shadowlands. While zealous samurai would certainly take umbrage at this statement, few would contest the notion that Kaiu Shiro is now unquestionably the single most unassailable stronghold in the Empire.

Visitors to Kaiu Shiro have no doubt where they are. The castle itself seems to have been hewn from a single piece of stone. The numerous additions to the castle over the centuries have been so flawlessly integrated into the existing building that they cannot be distinguished from the original. Siege engines of all kinds adorn the castle walls, most facing the Shadowlands. The western Crab lands have never been attacked seriously by the Horde, and many believe it is because even the insane minds of that dark realm recognize the futility of assaulting the Kaiu lands.

Kaiu Shiro is among the more hospitable Crab strongholds. The Kaiu always issue invitations to other clans for their winter courts, if their winter activities can truly be called such. Guests are typically those who share similar interests with the Kaiu, and among generals and talented blacksmiths an invitation to Kaiu Shiro is considered a mark of considerable distinction.

THE GREAT FORGE

Easily the most distinctive feature of Kaiu Shiro, the Great Forge dominates that structure's sizeable courtyard. The Great Forge is the most sacred location in the Kaiu provinces. Among the oaths a Kaiu swears at his gempukku is one to defend the Great Forge with his life, no matter the cost. Kaiu's original forge, crafted when he and his followers settled in these lands, was built upon until it became the largest forge in the Empire. It is the only forge worthy of producing the legendary Kaiu blades, and a small number of those sacred weapons are produced each year for the Kaiu lords to bestow on those that have earned their favor.

Only the Kaiu master smiths may use the Great Forge, and then only once they have performed several preparatory

HIGHWAYS OF THE KAIU PROVINCES

The Steel Path (Connects CB1, CB2, CB3, and CB4) —
This painstakingly maintained road is the principal road through the Kaiu provinces. It connects all their important locations and is very heavily traveled.

Ebisu's Way (Connects CB4, CB5, and CB6) —
This highway connects the Kaiu lands to the Empire's northern reaches. Any travelers leaving Crab lands from the Kaiu provinces travel along this road.

THE KAIU PROVINCES

rituals. Others occasionally mock the Kaiu's reverence, their "foolishness" in placing such importance on so utilitarian a device. The Kaiu point to the rituals bushi perform before donning their armor and say nothing more. If the average man places so much importance on armor crafted from silk, wood, and metal, how can the Kaiu not revere their founder's most sacred relic?

KAIU TSURIKO, MASTER OF THE GREAT FORGE

[Samurai 10/Master Smith 5; Kaiu Engineer 4]

Many visitors to Kaiu Shiro are surprised to discover that the gigantic, hulking master of the Forge is a woman. There can be no question that Kaiu Tsuriko is among the largest and strongest of all Crab warriors. Those who know her claim that she can crush a barrel in her steel embrace, and few have the courage to question such claims.

The brooding and intense Tsuriko rules the Great Forge like a vengeful Fortune. Those who would request access to the Forge often change their minds when told they must receive permission from Tsuriko. When using the Forge herself, however, a strange transformation comes over her. She is gentle, quiet, and contemplative. Those close enough to work alongside her claim she is a different person altogether. In truth, this is Tsuriko's real nature. The gruff, unpleasant exterior she presents to others is just an outward sign of her anger at having to spend time doing anything other than her true love, shaping metal.

THE KAIU ENGINEERING ACADEMY

The Kaiu's detractors have said that the family's engineering academy is a replica of the Kakita Artisan Academy robbed of all joy and beauty. The family's proponents, however, claim that the engineers possess the form and purpose that the artisans lack. While neither of these views is truly correct, there are striking similarities between the two groups. Both encourage students to pursue their interests. Both have an unconventional teaching style and method of measuring advancement among their pupils. Perhaps most importantly, though, both are considered the pinnacle of achievement in their fields. Few would argue that the Kakita artisans are unparalleled experts of the performing arts, and no one would question that the Kaiu are the finest engineers in Rokugan.

Among the myriad disciplines taught at the Kaiu Engineering Academy are the studies of battle, siege weaponry, weaponsmithing, armorsmithing, architecture, and traps. This last topic, while normally dishonorable, is considered of the utmost importance when ensuring that Shadowlands forces attempting to cross the wall suffer considerable losses. The tunnels beneath the Wall are laden with traps, as goblins and various burrowing creatures frequently attempt to make their way into Rokugan through them.

Outsiders are permitted to study at the Academy only after significant political pressure. The Kaiu consider their methods to be family secrets that have been derived through centuries of experimentation and revision. To turn them over to another clan, or even a single student from another clan, goes against their nature. They also realize, however, that they are obligated to pass on their knowledge in the event that the unthinkable ever happens and the Shadowlands overrun the Crab altogether. They never voice their concerns, of course, but so practical a family as the Kaiu must consider them.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: A strange tower has been discovered in the mountains west of Rokugan, and it has fallen to the characters' lord to determine what should be done regarding it. After having his scribes make rough sketches of the tower, the lord sends the characters to seek the wisdom of the Kaiu at the Engineering Academy.

Focus: The Kaiu are uninterested at first, but allow their students to review the sketches. When the Kaiu students begin discussing the unique features of the tower, however, the sensei take notice and immediately confiscate the plans. They refuse to see the characters for several days; it is clear that they find something disturbing.

Strike: Several architectural features of this strange tower all point to a single great engineer who was lost to the Shadowlands decades ago. The existence of this tower indicates that he may have survived, or that he now works for the Dark Lord and has been active in the western mountains. In either case, the Kaiu insist on sending one of their own to accompany the characters in a further investigation.

RAZOR OF THE DAWN CASTLE (LOCATION CB3)

Also known as Kamisori sano Yoake Shiro, this ancient stronghold marks the border between the Great Carpenter Wall and the Crab provinces beyond it that do not benefit from its protection. The lands beyond it are dominated by the Plains above Evil, a vast, empty region that is all but devoid of life. For whatever reason, the Shadowlands creatures avoid this region just as the samurai of Rokugan do. Essentially, Razor of the Dawn Castle is the last point along the Crab-Shadowlands border that can be expected to see attacks from the Shadowlands, and those attacks are rare indeed.

The castle nestles between two peaks in the Twilight Mountains in an extremely secure and eminently defensible location. In other words, it is a typical Kaiu stronghold. Because there are so few direct attacks on the Crab lands in this region, most of the troops stationed here are essentially reservists. Their normal bushi training is augmented by fast response conditioning and cavalry training so that they may ride forth and bolster troops anywhere else in the Crab lands in days or even hours. This arrangement was sorely tested in recent months, but the Kaiu reputation for efficiency remained: the reserve troops from Razor of the Dawn responded to Daigotsu's attacks in time to prevent the loss of additional watchtowers. They were also essential in the recovery of those same watchtowers.

In addition to its importance as a source of additional manpower, the castle serves as an excellent infiltration point for the Shadowlands. The jagged peaks and yawning ravines of the surrounding mountains make it relatively easy for Hiruma scouts to sneak past the creatures that often patrol the Shadowlands northern borders and penetrate the deeper lands beyond.

DOJO OF THE RAZOR'S EDGE

While not the most prestigious of Crab dojo, the Razor's Edge Dojo is certainly among the best known. It was founded rather recently, being only a few decades old. It is a dojo of berserkers, that strange sect of Crab warriors who hurl themselves into battle with no thought of self-preservation. The Kaiu find them strange, but they are respectful to their hosts and serve as an additional source of reservists, so they

are allowed to practice their techniques in their small dojo outside the castle walls.

For more information on Razor's Edge Dojo and the morbid samurai who serve there, see *Way of the Samurai*™ pages 18–19.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: The characters' lord sends them to the Kaiu lands to solicit the testimony of a particular bushi. This samurai was present as a visitor in the lord's lands during an unpleasant incident that ended with an illegal duel. The lord now requires the bushi's testimony in order to punish the responsible parties.

Focus: For one reason or another, perhaps one that applies to the incident under investigation, the bushi has joined the ranks of the Crab berserkers. He now resides at Razor's Edge Dojo, where he eagerly anticipates the next great battle that may claim his life in the name of his clan. The berserker refuses to leave, as an attack on the Wall is expected in short order and his squad may be required to reinforce the bushi already at the site.

Strike: The berserker agrees to accompany the characters once the battle is finished. The attack comes in three days' time, and the berserker and his unit are deployed to reinforce the Wall. Will the characters fight alongside him, keeping him safe so that he may give the testimony their lord requires? Or will they trust in the Fortunes to bring him back intact?

THE HIRUMA OUTPOST

The strategic value of Razor's Dawn Castle is amplified considerably by the ability of the Hiruma to infiltrate the Shadowlands from their outpost near the castle. Since the loss of their ancestral lands centuries ago, the Hiruma have conducted countless reconnaissance missions into the depths of the Shadowlands in order to determine what their enemies there were planning. Now that they have recovered their lands, these missions are more important than ever. If the Crab cannot anticipate their enemies' actions, the Hiruma lands could fall beneath a wave of filth once more. The Hiruma are all too aware that if their lands are lost again, they will never retake anything more than a blasted, twisted wasteland that cannot support life.

Ironically, the Hiruma outpost at Razor's Dawn Castle continues to see extensive use despite the fact that the family has many holdings closer to the Shadowlands. Daigotsu's legions patrol the Hiruma borders heavily, making it difficult to infiltrate his dark realm from there. It is much easier to send long-range patrols from the Castle of the Razor's Dawn through the Plains above Evil. The paths through those expansive Plains are well hidden and as yet unknown to Daigotsu's forces.

HIRUMA KYURU,

GUNSO OF RAZOR'S DAWN CASTLE

[Ranger 8/Ninja 4; Hiruma Scout 2, Hiruma Stalker 1]
A veteran of countless sorties into the Shadowlands, Hiruma Kyuru looks much older than his true age. The scars that criss-cross his face and limbs map the Crab's activities in the Shadowlands for the last decade. Despite his intimidating exterior, Kyuru is not a morose or angry man. He is as quick to smile as to frown, belying the standard preconception of the Hiruma scouts.

Although he enjoys himself when not on duty, Kyuru considers his duty sacred. He was appointed to his position by Hiruma Masagaro himself, and he will not be derelict for any reason. He places a great deal of trust in his men, allowing them a great deal of input into the planning and execution of the missions he assigns to them, but he does not take suggestions from others well. Kyuru cannot trust anyone who has not conducted at least one extended mission in the Shadowlands. They simply do not have the experience necessary to understand the enormity of the Hiruma's task.

KUDA MURA

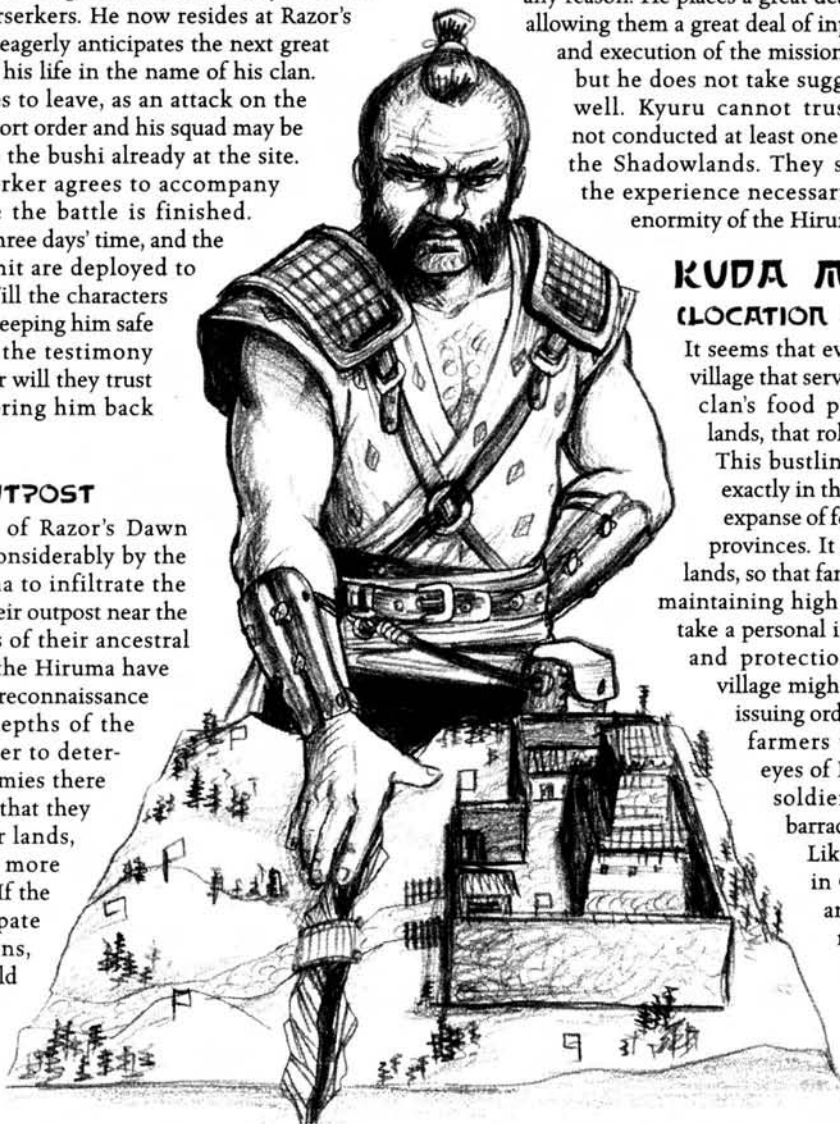
(LOCATION CBS)

It seems that every clan has a single village that serves as the center of the clan's food production. In Crab lands, that role falls to Kuda Mura. This bustling village was placed exactly in the center of the largest expanse of fertile land in the Crab provinces. It falls within the Kaiu lands, so that family is responsible for maintaining high yields, but the Hida take a personal interest in its security and protection. A visitor to the village might find Kaiu engineers issuing orders to various peasant farmers under the watchful eyes of Hida magistrates and soldiers stationed at its barracks.

Like many of their kind in Crab lands, the peasants of Kuda Mura are more likely to meet a samurai's eyes with a respectful dip of the head rather than prostrating themselves.

These men and women are proud

of the role they play in the Crab's protection of the Empire. Kuda Mura has never been evacuated, not even during the worst fighting of the Clan War and War of Spirits. When the rare attack has come from the Shadowlands, the peasants take up their farming implements. The folk of Kuda Mura are a hardy, courageous lot, and will not be driven from their home and duty by anything less than death.



MAGISTRATE'S OFFICE

While the magistrate's post in Kuda Mura is technically a position under the Kaiu's control, no Kaiu has held the office for over a hundred years. The ever-pragmatic Kaiu do not bear any resentment toward the Hida because of this. If they wanted to, the Hida could annex the province with nothing more than an informal proclamation from the Champion. Instead, they have merely taken over the magistrate's position, which results in Kaiu samurai who can be instead assigned to the family's innumerable engineering tasks. Ultimately, the loss of this position is of little importance.

The magistrates' position in Kuda Mura has been filled by several different samurai since the Hida took control; the constant rotation of troops on and off the Great Wall makes it difficult to fulfill any position with consistency. It has become normal procedure for this position to be given to highly decorated soldiers who can no longer serve atop the Wall for one reason or another. As a result there have been many faces attached to the position, but the rule has always been the same: unwavering consistency, devotion to duty, and swift, merciless punishment to any who risk the village's peace by breaking the law.

KAIU SURVEYOR'S OFFICE

The Kaiu have turned their scientific expertise toward maximizing the crops in Kuda Mura's many rice fields. They have adopted a former tea house and converted it into a laboratory. The engineers stationed at Kuda Mura have made an extensive study of agriculture and soil, topics that most samurai would consider beneath them. These men and women have condensed centuries of farming experience and superstition into a few decades of extensive research. Unique in Rokugan, these engineers are beginning to explore the notions of fertilizers and even crop rotation, things that would befuddle most farmers. To the Kaiu, progress is unavoidable and should be embraced. They have not yet revealed their plans to the Hida, and it remains to be seen if the traditionally-minded overlords of the Crab will be as receptive to change.

MAJOR KAIU HOLDINGS

The Kaiu find a use for almost everything within their borders. Holdings that are not of immediate value to their logistical efforts are typically relegated to vassal families.

WATCHTOWER OF THE WEST (LOCATION CB19)

Unlike the Watchtower in the East (*see below*), this tower holds virtually no military significance. It has never seen military action since its creation shortly after the Great Carpenter Wall was built. It is so remote, in fact, that it has become a post for the disgraced and undependable among the Crab. An appointment to the Watchtower of the West is a mark of shame from which a samurai is unlikely to recover.

The men and women of this watchtower are a surly, quiet lot. They have the look of men who have seen their fate and found it wanting. They are not hostile toward travelers or outsiders, but neither are they particularly welcoming.

HIDA MORITOSHI, WATCH COMMANDER

[Samurai 10; Hida Bushi 3]

Hida Moritoshi is in hell. A man of strong moral fiber, his only crime was to be the sole survivor of a unit guarding the Wall one cold winter night. One of his men betrayed the clan and made a pact with darkness, allowing a single deadly oni onto the Wall. All of Moritoshi's men died in its attack, and it went on to claim three dozen lives before it was destroyed. Moritoshi took full responsibility, and was banished to the Watchtower of the West.

The Hida consider Moritoshi's dishonor to have been expunged long ago. He remains at the Watchtower because of his ability to bring discipline and honor to the wretched creatures the Crab condemn to this place of darkness. It is his ability to overcome adversity that chains him to the place he hates so much.

EXTRATERRITORIAL HOLDINGS

The Kaiu have very little interest in things that lie outside their provincial borders. Their lands provide them with everything they require, so they have little reason to covet the lands of others. Nevertheless, they maintain a small number of extraterritorial holdings, either due to their great importance or because it is required of the Kaiu by their Hida lords.

THE GREAT CARPENTER WALL

Although the Great Carpenter Wall is the responsibility of all Crab families, it is also known as the Kaiu Wall for very good reason: they maintain, repair, and improve upon the gigantic construct. This is not an easy task, as the Wall is by far the single largest structure known to exist. Indeed, even the Unicorn histories of that clan's travels abroad record nothing to rival it for sheer size and complexity. Dozens of Kaiu engineers along the wall's length direct hundreds of peasant workers in a constant maintenance effort.

The most recent activity along the Kaiu Wall has been the reconstruction of those portions that were destroyed during Daigotsu's siege several months ago. Despite the Kaiu's speed and determination, the final repairs have only just been enacted. There has been concern from several quarters that this delay in repairs might have allowed many Shadowlands beasts to enter the Empire. Unfortunately, the Kaiu simply do not have the resources to make repairs along the entire wall at once. Under orders from Clan Champion Hida Kuon, the Kaiu were forced to do something they never imagined: they destroyed a portion of the Wall. This was to separate the greater Wall from the terminally Tainted Tower of Fear. The subsequent reconstruction of the Wall to circumvent the Tower has been a huge drain on the family's resources, and is the primary reason the other sections were allowed to languish for as long as they did.

The Great Carpenter Wall is home to more advanced and numerous siege engine weaponry than anywhere else in Rokugan. No standing army, not even that of the Lion Clan, can match the sheer destructive power of the Crab's constant, ever-vigilant defensive force.

KAIU HOSARU, ENGINEER

[Samurai 6; Kaiu Engineer 2]

One of hundreds, Kaiu Hosaru is the perfect example of a dedicated Kaiu engineer. He rises with the sun each morning to perform the first of a thousand different maintenance tasks that the Great Wall requires every day. The past few months have been more hectic than usual, but now that the majority of repairs have been completed, work has begun to resemble its normal routine again.

Hosaru often performs menial labor alongside his peasant workers. This is unusual, and would likely be found dishonorable by other clans. Like so much else, however, things are different on the Great Wall. Hosaru believes he cannot ensure a job is done correctly unless he participates, and the Hida who defend the Wall for which he is responsible appreciate his eye for detail and devotion to duty.

WATCHTOWER OF THE EAST (LOCATION CB2)

A Yasuki holding, the Watchtower of the East marks the eastern edge of the Great Carpenter Wall and the border between the Crab and Crane provinces. The Hida decreed decades ago, however, that the Yasuki's service to the clan lay in other quarters, not defense. As a sort of counterbalance to the Yasuki diplomats who serve at Face of the East Castle in Kaiu lands, the Kaiu have taken over administration of this tower.

Until recently, the eastern watchtower has not been of any military significance. The war with the Crane over the fate of the Yasuki family changed that. The tower became the rallying point for forces preparing to enter the contested provinces, and this is the point to which the army routed by Hida O-Ushi's death retreated after Doji Kurohito cut her down. More recently, the tower has come to represent the border between Crab lands and those lands seized by Akodo Kaneka, the self-styled Shogun of the Empire. As such, there are always a large number of troops in the ramshackle, hastily erected barracks near the tower.

IMPORTANT KAIU NPCS

KAIU UMASU, KAIU FAMILY DAIMYO, SIEGE MASTER

If a more unflappable man than Kaiu Umasu lives in Rokugan, no Crab has met him. Umasu is as unyielding as the steel he works, and as unrelenting as the siege engines he unleashes against the Shadowlands. He is a man without doubt or hesitation, and he knows deep in his soul that the Crab can never be defeated by the inhuman filth spawned by the Shadowlands. He and his family will see to that.

Umasu was born into an influential branch of the Kaiu, but as a young man he had few political aspirations. He was not interested in court life, or even in the family's management. Umasu was a student of engineering even before entering the Kaiu Academy. While other young men dreamed of forging weapons that would claim the lives of a thousand oni, Umasu

dreamt of expanding the Great Wall to protect all of Rokugan. Masonry and stonemasonry were his passions, and he embraced them with zealous fervor when he entered the Kaiu Academy.

Umasu might very well have gone on to serve as a combat engineer, lost among the hundreds of Kaiu who perform that essential duty on the Great Wall every day. That was not to be, however, as Umasu's uncle died with no heir. When the great Kaiu Utsu died in Umasu's youth, his father became the family daimyo. His father was not a well man, unfortunately, and he passed on after only a decade serving as the family daimyo. The mantle fell to Umasu.

His first few years were not easy. Umasu's personality did not inspire loyalty or even friendship. It was not until a significant attack on the Wall that others realized Umasu's potential. His leadership in rebuilding the Wall was nothing short of amazing. He went without sleep for days, directing much of the work himself, and improved upon the original in many ways. When the effort was complete, the Wall was stronger and more defensible than ever and the Kaiu had rallied around their daimyo.

It was an eye-opening experience for Umasu as well. He saw in others the same passion he had felt his entire life. His fellow Kaiu leapt at the chance to rebuild the Wall. Some shared his enthusiasm for engineering, while others devoted themselves to improving the siege engines atop it. Still others filled the tunnels beneath the Wall with deadly traps. For the first time, Umasu felt that he belonged. He had discovered his family.

The past decade has proven eventful. The retaking of the Hiruma provinces has given Umasu the chance to order many new fortifications throughout those hotly contested lands. The Great Wall has been attacked countless times, and each time Umasu has had it rebuilt stronger than before. The engineers under his command have taught him warfare, and he has truly earned the title of Siege Master that his uncle carried before him. By far the most notable event was Daigotsu's siege of the Great Wall. The horror of losing his beloved Wall was almost more than Umasu could bear. He never left the borders where Crab and Horde territory met, and he stood alongside Hida Kuon when his Champion led the attack to retake the lost watchtowers.

There was never a more painful moment in Umasu's life than when Kuon ordered him to destroy the Wall around the so-called Tower of Fear. Umasu wept openly as centuries of his family's work were torn to rubble, but he led the rebuilding effort personally, and now a new Wall separates the Crab from the Shadowlands. Kaiu Umasu has sworn that he will die before he allows the Wall to be taken or destroyed again. None among the Kaiu doubt him.

KAIU UMASU

Male human Crab Samurai 7/Siegemaster 10: CR 17; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 7d10+28 plus 10d8+40 (hp 151); Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 19 (touch 13, flat-footed 18); Atk +23/+18/+13/+8 *mighty cleaving die tsuchi* melee (1d8+10, +3); SQ Class skill – Knowledge (architecture and engineering) (family bonus), Ancestral Daisho, Command +5, Leadership Bonus +3; Honor 2; AL LE; SV Fort +12, Ref +5, Will +8; Str 24, Dex 13, Con 19, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 9; Height 5 ft. 6 in.

Skills and Feats: Battle +21, Craft (armor) +23, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +25, Intimidate +27, Listen +23, Sense Motive +19, Spot +23; Alertness, Endurance, Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Initiative, Leadership, The

Path of Destruction, The Path of War, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Knowledge (architecture and engineering)), Versatile (Listen, Spot), Void Use, Weapon Focus (die tsuchi).

Possessions: +3 mighty cleaving die tsuchi, obi of giant strength, bracers of armor +6, amulet of natural armor +2, masterwork smithing tools.

KAIU UMASU

Earth: 4

Stamina: 6

Water: 4

Fire: 3

Intelligence: 4

Air: 3

Void: 4

School/Rank: Kaiu Engineer 4 (Path of Stone 3, Path of Destruction 1)

Dojo: Kaiu Shiro (no benefits)

Honor: 2.9

Glory: 7.2

Advantages: Social Position (Kaiu daimyo)

Disadvantages: Bad Reputation (Difficult), Benten's Curse

Skills: Armorer 3, Battle 5, Engineering 8, History 4, Shintao 3, Siege 4, Traps 5, Weaponsmith 3

Kata: None

KAIU NAMBOKU, MASTER SENSEI OF THE KAIU ENGINEERING ACADEMY

During his studies at the Kaiu Engineering Academy several decades ago, Namboku attracted the attention of one of the senior sensei. Most did not consider Namboku to be a particularly gifted student, but Kaiu Noriko saw something in him that others did not. She took him under her wing, and under her tutelage, his hidden talents blossomed. Before long he had advanced to the head of his class.

One of the advantages Namboku received was the honor of accompanying a Kaiu unit to the Unicorn lands to oversee the construction of Shiro Moto, the palace of the new Unicorn Champion Moto Gaheris. The work was fascinating, but very different from anything Namboku had studied before. The Moto were insistent that the Kaiu use the styles and materials of their homeland, which the Crab engineers had no experience with at all. The initial stages went well, but over time relations between the two families became somewhat frayed. Eventually, the Kaiu withdrew from the arrangement altogether, causing some bad feelings between the two families. Namboku in particular found himself the target of enmity from one of his Moto counterparts, an impulsive young bushi who singled out the slightly built Crab for persecution.

The experience had a strange effect on Namboku. He took to his studies with even more fervor, and added an element of martial training to his studies. Some believed that after his altercation with the Moto he wanted to be able to defend himself, while others whispered that his relationship with Noriko was more than just that of student to mentor.

Regardless of the reasons, Kaiu Namboku's redoubled efforts resulted in his graduation with much acclaim. He served several tours of duty along the Great Wall as a siege engineer, but his real talent lay in smithing. Namboku even apprenticed to the Master of the Great Forge, aiding in the creation of over a dozen Kaiu Blades during his years of service. Ten years ago, the Academy's master sensei died.

Namboku, who had been serving as a lesser sensei among the smithing students, was asked by the family daimyo to assume the position. He did so gladly.

Like most Kaiu, the recent conflict with Daigotsu's forces has galvanized Namboku. He has led large groups of his finest students in repair efforts on the Great Wall, giving them vital experience in the field and allowing him to escape Kaiu Shiro and perform a valued service for his clan in the process. He has at last found common ground with Kaiu Umasu, with whom he had had several enthusiastic disagreements regarding the role of the Kaiu in the clan. The irony of Daigotsu's attack on the Crab is not lost on Namboku: what was meant to shatter the clan has, at least in part, brought it closer together.

KAIU NAMBOKU

Male human Crab Samurai 8/Siegemaster 4/Master Smith 6: CR 18, Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 8d10+21 plus 10d8+30 (hp 140); Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 22 (touch 13, flat-footed 21); Atk +2 keen lawful katana +23/+18/+13/+6 melee (1d10+6 (+2d6 vs. chaotic); SQ Class skill — Knowledge (architecture and engineering) (family bonus), Ancestral Daisho, Command +2, Leadership bonus +2 Legendary Craftsman, Temper the Blade; Honor 3; AL LN; SV Fort +15, Ref +5, Will +12; Str 18, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 19, Wis 14, Cha 10; Height 5 ft. 4 in.

Skills and Feats: Battle +16, Climb +18, Craft (armorer) +25, Craft (weaponsmith) +27, Disable Device +14, Intimidate +14, Jump +17, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +25, Open Lock +11, Use Magic Device +10; Alertness, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Endurance, Leadership, Path of Destruction, Path of Steel, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Craft (weaponsmith)), The Mountain Does Not Move, Void Use, Way of the Crab, Weapon Focus (katana).

Possessions: +2 keen lawful katana, +2 great armor of spell resistance (SR15), ring of freedom of movement, ring of protection +1, rod of metal and mineral detection, amulet of natural armor +1.

KAIU NAMBOKU

Earth: 6

Water: 5

Perception: 7

Fire: 4

Air: 3

Awareness: 5

Void: 4

School/Rank: Kaiu Engineer 6 (Path of Steel 3, Path of the Anvil 3)

Dojo: Kaiu Shiro (no benefits)

Honor: 2.7

Glory: 6.4

Advantages: Allies (many among other clans), Social Position (Master Sensei)

Disadvantages: Blackmail, Dark Secret, Sworn Enemy

Skills: Armorer 5, Athletics 2, Battle 4, Courtier 3, Engineering 6, History 3, Instruction 6, Intimidation 4, Kenjutsu 4, Shintao 3, Siege 6, Subojutsu 5, Traps 5, Weaponsmith 6

Kata: Striking as Earth

KAIU RYOJIRO, THE CRAB CHAMPION'S SIEGE ENGINEER

In any other family, a man like Kaiu Ryojiro would likely have been punished for no other reason than having been in the right place at the right time. Ryojiro was an engineer assigned to the Great Wall and was present when a lone oni made it over the wall and attacked Hida Kuroda, son of Crab Champion Hida O-Ushi. Although Kuroda and his guards were holding their own against the beast, Ryojiro triggered a trap that held the oni in place, allowing the bushi to kill it without loss of life. Kuroda was impressed with Ryojiro and had him reassigned to serve in his personal staff. A few months later, Hida O-Ushi was killed and Ryojiro suddenly found himself serving as one of the Crab Champion's chief advisors.

In another family, the family daimyo or master of the family school might resent Ryojiro for occupying a position they felt they should hold. Ryojiro was surprised to discover that neither Kaiu Umasu nor Kaiu Namboku cared in the slightest. In fact, the two men seemed pleased at this development, since it allowed each of them to pursue their own duties and interests without having to painstakingly explain complicated engineering principles to a non-engineer.

Ryojiro's duties are simple in theory. He advises the Champion of potential logistical problems and interprets the actions of opposing siege engineers during battles. It is not a difficult task, and when Ryojiro served under Hida Kuroda it was almost effortless. Hida Kuon is a different matter. While he is learning to deal with the burdens of being Crab Champion, Kuon is a warrior at heart, not a general. Ryojiro must explain many rudimentary engineering and siege concepts to Kuon during battle, and often circumstances have changed by the time he has finished, requiring him to begin anew. It is a frustrating experience for both of them, but Ryojiro is patient and Kuon is learning rapidly. The two have forged a mutual understanding and respect over the past months, one made necessary by the seemingly endless conflict with Daigotsu's forces.

Despite Ryojiro's growing confidence in his abilities and in his Champion, there is a terrible ache in his soul that refuses to heal. It was Ryojiro who prepared the trap that Hida Kuroda used to end his own life when confronted with Kyofu, the Onisu of Fear. Realistically, he knows that Kuroda made his choice, and that he is not to blame for his Champion's death. He cannot help but wonder, however, if Kuroda would have joined the Shadowlands so readily if he had been taken alive. No one had a greater spirit than Kuroda, after all, and he would have resisted corruption with every fiber of his being. Or maybe he might not have died at all if Ryojiro had defied his orders and stayed to fight. He may not be a warrior, but he is a Crab, and has no fear of death.

Ryojiro's grief has caused him to make mistakes, but he has recognized his weakness and is striving to overcome it. Others have noticed the new determination in him and attribute it to Kuon's influence. While that is partially true, few realize that Ryojiro's redoubled efforts on behalf of his family and clan stem from a driving need to atone for a sin that is not really his.

KAIU RYOJIRO

Male human Crab Samurai 6/Siegemaster 3: CR 9; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 6d10+18 plus 3d8+9 (hp 73); Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 19 (touch 13, flat-footed 17); Atk +1 *katana* +11/+6 *melee* (1d10+4); SQ Class skill – Knowledge (architecture and engineering) (family bonus), Ancestral Daisho, Command +2, Leadership Bonus +1; Honor 3; AL LG; SV Fort +11, Ref +5, Will +6; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 11, Cha 11; Height 5 ft. 6 in.

Skills and Feats: Craft (trap) +14, Diplomacy +12, Disable Device +14, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +11, Open Lock +8, Ride +11, Spot +14; Alertness, Endurance, Leadership, The Path of Death, Versatile (Disable Device, Spot), Void Use, Way of the Crab, Weapon Focus (*katana*).

Possessions: +1 *katana*, +1 *lamellar armor*, *bag of holding* (1), *lens of detection*, *ring of protection* +1.

KAIU RYOJIRO

Earth: 3

Water: 4

Fire: 2

Intelligence: 4

Air: 2

Awareness: 3

Void: 3

School/Rank: Kaiu Engineer 3 (Path of War 1, Path of Death 2)

Dojo: Kaiu Shiro (no benefits)

Honor: 3.1

Glory: 3.4

Advantages: Higher Purpose (Serve the Champion)

Disadvantages: Obligation, Unluck (1 level)

Skills: Armorer 3, Battle 2, Calligraphy 2, Chisaijutsu 2, Craft (Stonemasonry) 4, Defense 3, Engineering 4, Etiquette 3, History 2, Horsemanship 3, Jiu-jutsu 2, Kenjutsu 3, Locksmith 4, Mountaineer 3, Siege 4, Subojutsu 3, Traps 4, Weaponsmith 2

Kata: Soul of Stone

VASSALS OF THE KAIU

THE FUNDAI FAMILY

Five hundred years ago, piracy along Rokugan's coasts was much more common. Some believe this was because the Mantis Clan had not yet tamed the shipping routes that enjoy heavy use today, while others believe it was because no one was keeping close eye on the sons of Kaimetsu-uo. Whatever the reason, shipping along the coast was substantially more difficult. Weary of losing shipments to petty thieves, the Clan Champion ordered the Kaiu daimyo to find a solution.

The Kaiu daimyo immediately took stock of all Crab shipping vessels, and was disgusted to find such shoddy workmanship in service to her clan. She assigned one of her senior advisors, an accomplished engineer in his own right, to evaluate and improve upon the Crab shipping system by whatever means possible. As she was following a direct order from her Champion, the Kaiu daimyo allocated substantial resources to her advisor, a battle-hardened veteran named Kaiu Shimatsu.

Shimatsu dealt with the situation in a methodical fashion. First, he hired ronin to guard Crab ships. While the clan continued to lose some shipments, the pirates soon came to recognize that Crab vessels would fight much more ferociously than others, and began avoiding them. Shimatsu knew this was only a temporary solution, and immediately established a headquarters in a small village on the shores of Earthquake Fish Bay. Here, he and his followers began planning a better type of vessel, one that could outrun the pirate ships. Within a year, trial and error had provided the first group of these newer vessels for Crab merchants to use.

The first fleet of these new vessels was a great success. They were hardier, faster, and generally superior in every way to those kobune used by other clans. Their style was soon duplicated by other clans, but the pirates did not have the resources or craftsmanship necessary to replicate these advances. The Crab Champion was so pleased that he ordered Shimatsu and his men to continue to oversee the production of ships, both those necessary for the Yasuki to conduct their trade and the rare "iron turtle" ships the Hida required for battle.

A problem arose years later between the Kaiu and the Yasuki. The Yasuki insisted that they should not be responsible for paying taxes on the growing port village Shimatsu's followers maintained. The Kaiu returned that they would gladly pay the taxes if they were allowed control of the surrounding land in order to generate the funds, but the Yasuki balked at such a suggestion. The Crab Champion settled the matter by declaring Shimatsu's followers to be a vassal family of the Kaiu, entitled to a small percentage of all goods transported by their ships. The Yasuki were clearly not pleased with this arrangement, but acquiesced to their lord's command.

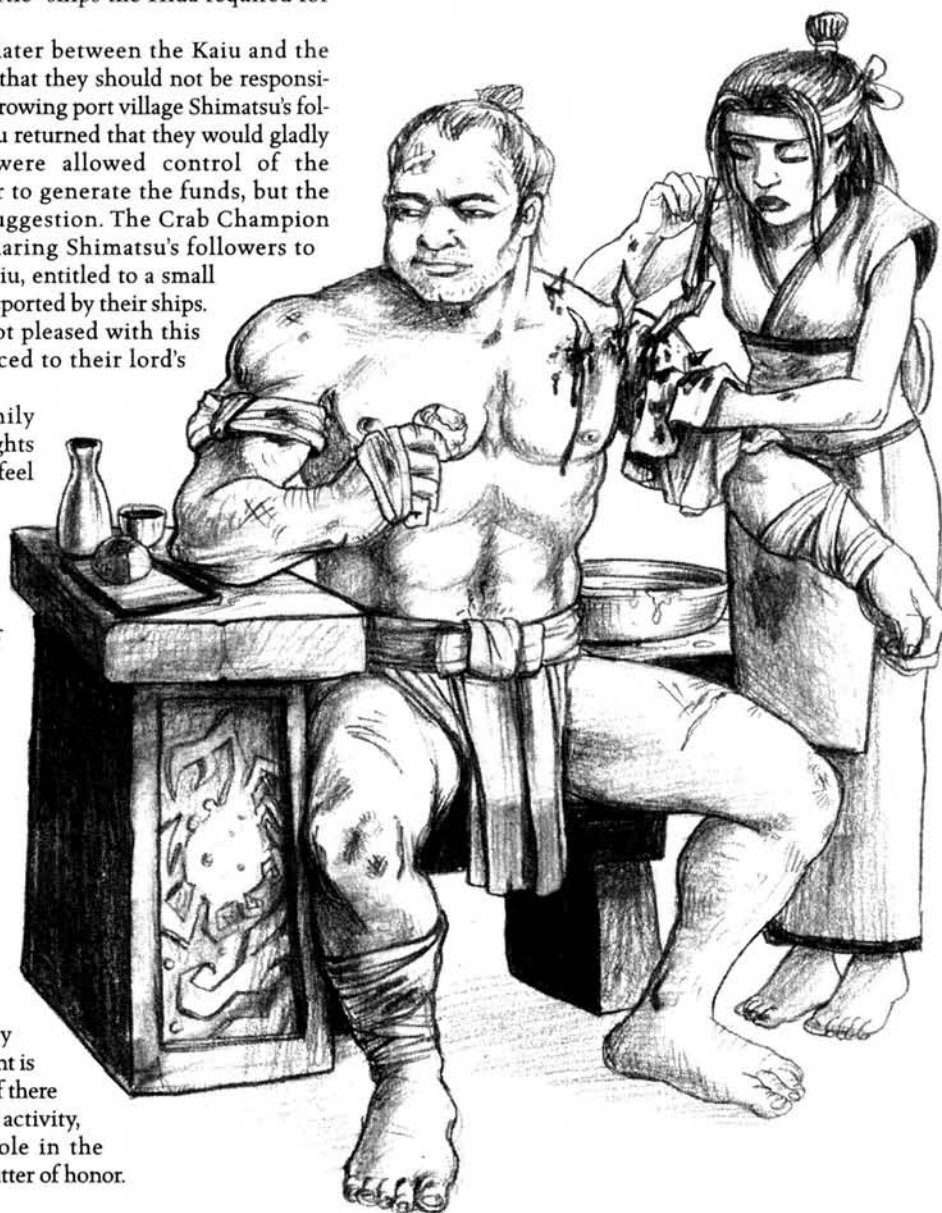
The Fundai vassal family contains the finest shipwrights in the Crab Clan, and many feel they are second only to the Watanabe shipwrights of the Mantis Clan. Every ship that sails under the Crab mon was constructed under the watchful eye of the Fundai, and they take great pains to ensure that each vessel is perfect in every respect.

In addition to their primary role within the clan as shipwrights, the Fundai occasionally provide security for important shipments personally. The family considers the safety of Crab vessels a facet of their duties, and they take threats to their domain very seriously indeed. If a shipment is of particular importance, or if there are rumors of strong pirate activity, they take a more active role in the defense of their ships as a matter of honor.

FUNDAI MURA

More a port than a village, Fundai Mura is a bustling town on the western shore of Earthquake Fish Bay. The village offers relatively little in the way of amenities, as the Fundai remain focused on their task. There are a handful of sake and geisha houses; the Fundai realize that if their workers have no way to alleviate the stress of their jobs, productivity will suffer.

The Fundai do not maintain an estate per se within the village, but instead consider the shipyards their center of influence. The samurai dwell in houses throughout the city, congregating each day at the shipyards to fulfill their duty to their lords at Kaiu Shiro. The shipyards are quite large in contrast to the village, and they can accommodate up to two dozen kobune at any given time. If circumstances demand it, they can service half that number of iron turtle warships, although they rarely see more than one or two at a time, and then only during times of extensive military action.



THE FUNDAI FAMILY

Favored Class: Samurai
Starting Honor: 2
Class Skill: Craft (Shipwright)
Starting Outfit:
 1. Masterwork ashigaru armor and 50 koku.

THE FUNDAI FAMILY

Benefit: +1 Intelligence
Beginning Honor: 2, plus 5 boxes
Glory: 0.5 (as opposed to the normal 1.0)
Skills: Regardless of what school they attend, a member of the Fundai family may sacrifice one rank in any of their school skills to gain a rank (or an additional rank) in Craft (Shipwright) or Sailing.
Other: May only attend Kaiu or Hida schools.

THE MAISUNA FAMILY

During Rokugan's eighth century, the Shadowlands laid siege to the Hiruma lands with an army more terrible and powerful than anything the Crab had ever seen. The Crab were forced

to retreat before the Maw's forces until they reached the River of the Last Stand. There, the magic of Kuno Osaku held the Maw and its forces at bay for over a month while the Great Carpenter Wall was erected. Once the Wall and the subsequent Battle of the Cresting Wave were finished, the Shadowlands had been defeated. Already the Wall had suffered considerable damage.

Recognizing how massive an undertaking the Wall's upkeep would be, the Kaiu daimyo gathered the leaders of the work crews that had gathered the stone to construct the Wall. The daimyo commissioned these men and women to begin what would become their lifelong duty: mining stone from the Twilight Mountains to repair and expand the Great Carpenter Wall. A small keep near the northern edge of the Kaiu provinces was assigned to these individuals and the peasants who would serve them, and they set to their task.

The Crab are a loyal people, and these individuals did not question their lot. They immediately began exploring the foothills of the mountains, testing the various outcroppings in search of the strongest and most durable stone. At first they broke these outcroppings into boulders and hauled them back to the keep. There, they would be carved into the appropriate shape and transported to the Wall. Over time, the stonemasons came to perfect the process so that they could carve the great cubes of stone they needed directly from the mountain, eliminating time and expense in transport.

The descendants of the original stonemasons were eventually awarded a vassal name for their ceaseless efforts in the clan's name. In addition to their duties, the Maisuna samurai became exceptional sculptors and artists. Having so many smaller stones that were unsuitable for use on the Wall, it was perhaps inevitable that the samurai found some recreational use for them. In addition to their invaluable service to the clan, the Maisuna are very popular among courtiers and are often individually commissioned to produce artwork for castles and courts all across the Empire.

The Maisuna are a hardy people, like the Kaiu from whom they are descended. They value strength highly, for it is impossible to carve rock from the mountain without it. They also prize the ability to finesse stone, and to uncover the beauty that lies hidden beneath the surface of all rock. Their lands are surprisingly beautiful and decorated with a variety of exquisite statues.

It is said by the more poetic Crab that when one meets a Maisuna, one witnesses the strength of the mountain as well as its quiet beauty, all in a single human form.



MAISUNA SHIRO

As a rule of thumb, most of Rokugan's vassal families govern unimportant villages or a small keep somewhere out of the public eye. The Maisuna were originally no exception, having been given a small keep near the base of the Twilight Mountains. Being exceptionally gifted stonemasons with literally a mountain of raw material at their disposal, however, the Maisuna were not inclined to make do with their meager accommodations. Shortly after being given vassal family status, the Maisuna began a massive construction effort and carved a large, exquisitely beautiful castle from the mountain itself. The Maisuna commemorated their achievement by connecting the castle to the tiny keep they had been given and declaring that they had expanded the keep in service to their lords the Kaiu. The Kaiu daimyo of that era is reputed to have found this declaration hilarious, and the Maisuna were commended for their devotion.

Maisuna Shiro is a breathtaking sight, and one that forcefully demonstrates how differently the Maisuna regard their work compared to their lords the Kaiu. To them, Maisuna is a work of art, a masterpiece of skill and devotion. They are not merely stonemasons, but artists capturing the essence and strength of the earth in a static, unchanging form. Perhaps the blocks they hew from the mountainside only go to rebuild the Great Wall or other stark Crab fortifications, but in Maisuna Shiro, the family can express their true calling and talent.

THE MAISUNA FAMILY

Favored Class: Samurai

Starting Honor: 2

Class Skill: Craft (Stonemasonry)

Starting Outfit:

1. Ashigaru armor, warhammer, and masterwork stone-cutting tools.
2. Masterwork warhammer and 25 koku.

THE MAISUNA FAMILY

Benefit: +1 Strength

Beginning Honor: 2, plus 5 boxes

Glory: 0.5 (as opposed to the normal 1.0)

Skills: Regardless of what school they attend, a member of the Maisuna family may sacrifice one rank in any of their school skills to gain a rank (or an additional rank) in Craft (Stonemasonry).

KAIU MECHANICS

ANCESTORS

By the standards of most families, the Kaiu are a practical lot with little use for superstition. Most assume that this extends to normal religious conventions, and are surprised to discover that the Kaiu are indeed a pious family. To the Kaiu, however, it makes perfect sense. There is more than ample proof that

the Fortunes and ancestors watch over their descendants, and the guidance of such spiritual beings can only aid in the defense of Rokugan from the Shadowlands.

KAIU OSUKI

Two passions dominated Kaiu Osuki's life: steel and the law. He began life as a simple smith serving the Hida. His keen eye for detail and penchant for intense scrutiny resulted in some of the finest blades that his lord had ever received, and before long Osuki found himself the favored vassal of the provincial daimyo. Although he felt ill at ease in court, Osuki's presence was frequently requested by his lord. During one particularly intense winter court, coincidence and Osuki's eye for detail resulted in the exposure of a duplicitous Crane plot that would have cost his lord much honor. Osuki was rewarded with a position as a magistrate within the Crab lands, and within five years he had become an Imperial Magistrate.

The true test of Osuki's abilities came in 1126, when he was sent on a relatively unimportant mission to the Badger Clan provinces. Located in the northernmost reaches of the mountains separating Rokugan from the Burning Sands, the Badger Clan often went unnoticed for decades at a time. Upon his arrival, Osuki discovered the Badger lands in ruins, decimated by an unknown foe. He immediately set up camp near the ruins of Shiro Ichiro and requisitioned more men to secure the area. Osuki soon found himself commanding a sizable force of Imperial troops, overseeing the area in the name of the Emperor. Two years later, he perished in final combat with Oni no Hideo alongside a band of young Badger samurai devoted to cleansing their land.

Kaiu Osuki is remembered among both the Crab and Badger clans as a great hero and a master smith. His spirit still guides others, particularly young smiths and magistrates who embody the twin virtues he held dear during his life.

SOUL OF STEEL

ANCESTOR: KAIU OSUKI

Your passion for steel and the law focus your energies and allow you to achieve great things.

Clan: Crab or Badger

Benefit: Up to three times per day, you may add a competence bonus equal to half your character level (rounded up) to any Craft (Weaponsmithing) or Gather Information check.

KAIU OSUKI

(4 POINTS; 3 POINTS FOR BADGER CLAN CHARACTERS)

Spiritual descendants of Kaiu Osuki share his undeniable passion for the perfect blade and the perfection of law. The character may add his Insight Rank to the total of all Weaponsmithing and Investigation rolls.

KAIU UTSU

During any other era, Kaiu Utsu would have been the finest tactical mind of his age. Utsu had the misfortune (or fortune, depending upon one's outlook) of living in the same era with such incredible generals as Bayushi Shoji, Akodo Toturi, and the Great Bear Hida Kisada, ensuring that his considerable gifts as a tactician would seem meager in comparison. To his credit, however, Utsu never gave any indication that this disturbed him. Instead he focused only on his duty, spending the entirety of the Clan War defending the Great Wall from the

Shadowlands during the height of that dark realm's power. It is a credit to his skill that more foul creatures did not escape during that time.

Utsu believed that duty to one's ancestors and family was of paramount importance. Despite the Crab pact with the Shadowlands during the Clan War, Utsu would permit no Tainted creature to cross the portions of the Wall under his command. He believed that doing so would be a perversion of all that his family had worked for since the time of their founding, and would be a betrayal of his duties as the family daimyo. Utsu's implied disapproval of Kisada's tactics was tolerated only due to the Great Bear's tremendous respect for Utsu's abilities.

Kaiu Utsu died of natural causes during the War of Spirits. His shrine is rather unusual: a portion of the Great Wall has been dedicated to his memory, with a shrine built along a section that supports numerous siege engines, each one pointed toward the heart of the Shadowlands.

SIEGEMASTER

ANCESTOR: KAIU UTSU

You are an expert at defending against attacks from others.

Clan: Crab

Benefit: Any time you are defending a location from a physical attack, whether this location is the Great Wall or a forest campsite, you gain a +1 insight bonus to attacks and to AC. This bonus is lost if you do not have at least five minutes notice before the attack begins.

KAIU UTSU (6 POINTS)

Those over whom Kaiu Utsu watches share his ability to plan and implement extremely effective defensive strategies. If the character has at least five minutes notice before an attack begins, he may roll one additional die on all Full Defense and Standard Attack actions.

THE KAIU ENGINEERS

Under different circumstances, the Kaiu might be considered a family of scholars or academics. While they do conduct a great deal of research and experimentation, they also put this learning to use, standing alongside their Crab brethren on the Great Wall every day. Wherever the Crab employ their great engines of war, there are Kaiu to guide and direct them. Wherever the Crab require great tactical minds, the Kaiu stand ready to advise their Hida lords on how to deal with the realities of their constant war.

Kaiu Engineers are a varied lot, with a large number of different training areas available to them. Many study the science and art of warfare, aiding in the destruction of the Shadowlands at every opportunity. Others produce weapons and armor to equip the Crab for their struggle. Still others prefer to build and maintain the enormous fortresses of the Crab, keeping their clan strong against all who would attack them. The masters of the Kaiu Engineering Academy endorse and support each of these courses of study, allowing individual Kaiu to find the path that best suits them and their clan.

THE PATH OF THE ANVIL

ICRAB TECHNIQUE FEAT

You are trained in creating the great protective armor used by the Crab.

Prerequisites: Craft (Armorsmithing): 8 ranks

Benefit: Armor you craft has its armor bonus increased by one. Alternately, you may choose instead to raise the maximum Dexterity bonus allowed by a piece of armor by one. This effect is cumulative with masterwork bonuses, but is replaced by enchantments.

THE PATH OF DESTRUCTION

ICRAB TECHNIQUE FEAT

You are expert in the operation of siege machines.

Prerequisites: Battle: 4 ranks, Knowledge (architecture and engineering): 6 ranks

Benefit: When operating a siege machine (see the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide™* or the information later in this chapter), you may choose to increase the engine's range increment to 150% of its total, or you may increase the total of the engine's damage rolls by 30%.

THE PATH OF STEEL

ICRAB TECHNIQUE FEAT

You have learned the Kaiu's secret steel-folding techniques.

Prerequisites: Craft (Weaponsmithing): 10 ranks

Benefit: You can produce non-magical katana that possess an innate +1 enhancement bonus. These weapons have a market price of 3,700 koku and must be produced according to the Craft rules found in the *Player's Handbook™*.

THE PATH OF WAR

ICRAB TECHNIQUE FEAT

You are a student of war, an accomplished tactician of the Crab Clan.

Prerequisites: Battle: 6 ranks, Listen: 6 ranks, Spot: 8 ranks

Benefit: When in combat, you can keep track of your enemies and anticipate attacks, even when facing multiple opponents. Any attacker who could normally ignore your Dex modifier to AC must first make a contested Spot check against you. If your result is higher, you may add your Dex modifier as normal.

THE KAIU ENGINEER SCHOOL

Benefit: +1 Intelligence

Skills: Armorer, Battle, Engineering, History, Siege, Traps, Weaponsmith

Beginning Honor: 2, plus 5 boxes

Outfit: Katana, wakizashi, heavy armor, kimono, surveying tools, drawing paper and pens, scroll case.

TECHNIQUES

The Kaiu Engineering School does not teach a set progression of Techniques like most Rokugani schools. Instead, they offer a number of different areas of study, each of which is vital to the Crab's ongoing struggle against the Shadowlands. Each time a Kaiu Engineer gains a new Insight Rank, he may choose one of the abilities listed below. These abilities are

sequential, so a Kaiu Engineer with only the first level of the Path of the Anvil may choose to learn the second level of that path or the first level of another path, but not the third level of the Path of the Anvil. Each of the following paths is based on one skill that the Engineer gains as part of his school training.

THE PATH OF THE ANVIL (ARMORER)

Rank 1: The Crab's Shell

The engineer may custom fit armor to suit the needs of its wearer. This requires 4 hours of work for light armor and 8 hours for heavy armor. With a successful Armorer roll (TN 15 for light armor, 25 for heavy armor), the engineer may increase the armor's bonus to TN by 1.

Rank 2: Protection of Kaiu

The engineer's armor far exceeds the standard fare. When creating armor, the character may choose one of the following benefits to confer upon the armor. Light armor (TN 20): +1k0 initiative for the first round of combat, an additional +2 to the TN bonus the armor confers, or the benefit of a Free Raise in social settings when wearing the armor. Heavy armor (TN 30): Remove the standard heavy armor penalty, confer a Free Raise in social settings, or subtract an additional die of damage when rolling on the Battle Table.

Rank 3: Hida's Armor

The engineer can create truly magnificent armor. The armor grants its wearer a Carapace rating. The armor's Carapace rating may not exceed the engineer's School Rank (not Insight Rank). The TN to create this armor is equal to 10 + the desired Carapace rating \times 5.

THE PATH OF WAR (BATTLE)

Rank 1: Strike as One

When coordinating men in battle, the engineer knows how best to distribute his troops for maximum efficiency. Others taking direction from the engineer in a skirmish gain a bonus to their Initiative rolls equal to the engineer's Insight Rank. The engineer may confer this bonus on a maximum number of warriors equal to his Insight Rank \times 5.

Rank 2: Sun Tao's Lesson

Tactics come easily to the trained mind. The engineer may add or subtract one from any of his Battle Table rolls for each unit under his command.

Rank 3: Kisada's Blessing

During a skirmish, the engineer gains a number of additional dice equal to his Insight Rank. These dice may be granted to any man under his command, and may be used to roll extra die on any combat roll. Also, in large battles, the engineer may negate a number of damage dice equal to his Insight Rank per round of battle. Negated damage dice may be assigned to others under the engineer's command if he so chooses.

THE PATH OF STEEL (WEAPONSMITH)

Rank 1: The Crab's Claw

When creating a weapon, the engineer may grant it the ability to confer Free Raises. The weapon may hold no more Free Raises than the engineer's Insight Rank, and these Free Raises are used once and then refresh at the beginning of every month. The TN to create the weapon is increased by five times the number of Free Raises conferred by the weapon.

Rank 2: Hiruma's Blade

Similar to the Rank 1 benefit, the engineer may instill additional rolled dice in a weapon. The maximum number of additional dice is limited to the engineer's Insight Rank, and the additional dice are used once and then refresh at the beginning of each month. The TN to create this weapon is increased by ten times the number of additional dice conferred by the weapon.

Rank 3: Steel of the Crab's Soul

The engineer may craft weapons that completely ignore non-magical armor, and that reduce any creature's Carapace rating by 3. These weapons may also cut through wood or similar substances of up to 6 inches in thickness. The weapon may also cut through up to three inches of stone or non-folded steel with the expenditure of a Void Point by the wielder.

THE PATH OF STONE (ENGINEERING)

Rank 1: Stand Against the Enemy

Fortifications, buildings, or other constructions planned and overseen by the engineer have their building time reduced by 10%. This is cumulative if multiple engineers are coordinating on a project, with a maximum reduction of 30%.

Rank 2: None May Enter

The Kaiu build their fortifications to last. Those defending a fortification built by a Kaiu of Rank 2 or greater in the Path of Stone gain an additional rolled die on their Defense rolls.

Rank 3: Master of Stone

Engineers who devote their training to architecture are capable of truly amazing accomplishments. The Kaiu may roll an additional number of dice equal to his Insight Rank on all Engineering rolls.

THE PATH OF DESTRUCTION (SIEGE)

Rank 1: The First Strike

The Kaiu engineer counts as two people whenever operating a siege engine, reducing the number of crewmen necessary by one.

Rank 2: The Distant Strike

A siege device constructed by an engineer of this rank or higher has its maximum range increased by 25%.

Rank 3: The Final Strike

Any siege engine operated by a Kaiu engineer of this rank rolls an additional two dice for damage. This may not take the amount of damage rolled over 150% of the normal amount this engine inflicts.

CHAPTER FIVE:

THE TORITAKA

VIGILANT
PART SIX

Fuzake Sekkou looked out at the horizon from atop a large hill. His guide settled next to him, smiling faintly. The sun was slowly sinking behind the leaves of the verdant forest that surrounded them.

"Among the Falcon, it is said that Lord Yakamo lights a torch for Lady Hitomi as a grudging sign of respect, just before he retires for the evening." Toritaka Ikanko's whispering voice reminded Sekkou of the spirits that the Falcon were so famous for dealing with.

Sekkou turned to Ikanko and raised an eyebrow. "So the Falcon seek to be a sort of guiding light in the world of the mortal? That seems rather pretentious for a family with such humble beginnings."

The Falcon shugenja met Sekkou's gaze and laughed. "It only seems pretentious until one realizes that we take the position of 'guiding light', as you call us, both literally and figuratively. Wait for a moment more and continue to watch the horizon, Fuzake-san."

Ikanko turned to watch the forest again, crouched and ready, as if she was anticipating something. Sekkou, more curious than ever, attempted to speak again but was silenced by a quick gesture from the priestly woman.

As the Monkey shugenja turned to follow the object of Ikanko's interest, the horizon seemed to burst with flame. Sekkou watched as a brilliant band of illumination stretched across the far reaches of the forest and eventually met a similar band that had started behind the hill the two were on. The stunning ring of fire that now lit the Falcon borders was beautiful to behold.

"As I said, the Falcon are, in all senses, the bright beacon of the Crab. We go where none dare, deal with that which even the Kuni have yet to fully understand, and hold ourselves with a sense of honor akin to the Lion's." Toritaka Ikanko rose to her full height while she spoke, standing tall from her previously crouched position.

Sekkou stood and folded his arms into the sleeves of his muddy brown robes. "With such convictions, it is good that you are the sensei that trains the Toritaka's shugenja. With another, they might falter. However, while we are speaking of sensei, mine sent me to you to request one boon and offer another."

Ikanko began to walk away from the Monkey shugenja down the slope of the hill and into the forest. "Miya Hatori seems to ask many people for many things. The Falcon would, of course, be happy to provide a service to such an impressive member of the Imperial families, but we are simply a small Crab family. What could we offer the great and powerful Hatori-sama?"

Sekkou winced at the sarcasm. Perhaps it had not been such a good idea to come here alone.

"The Falcon, now the Toritaka, are famous for their attention to detail. Hatori-sama requested copies of any information your libraries held regarding the shuten doji that massacred your clan, or any personal accounts of that time. The Miya records are woefully incomplete concerning the event." Fuzake Sekkou held out to the Toritaka shugenja a writ detailing Hatori's request. She looked it over and scoffed.

"Our sacred texts are not simply for anyone's perusal! My ancestors fought and died for that information. It is not to be traded lightly. Only one who has been initiated into the Council of Twilight may read the scrolls that detail the attacks of the shuten doji. Many have come seeking the information, some who wished to release that horrible spirit again. I must be sure that you seek the knowledge only for the Empire's benefit."

THE TORITAKA PROVINCES

The young man frowned. "Surely you don't think I seek to free the *shuten doji*, do you? Hatori-sama only wants the details that have been neglected by other historians. I will do whatever you deem necessary, but I must have that information, else I will have failed my master. In return, I can offer the Toritaka any aid that the Miya can provide."

The Toritaka sensei smiled faintly and bowed to Sekkou. "Very well. You must gain an audience with the Council of Twilight. One week from tonight, we will initiate you into the spirits' mysteries, and you shall help us fight the harmful *kami*. In the meantime, you must train at my side, observing my lessons to the next generation of Toritaka priests. Once the Council approves it, I will escort you into the libraries and help you find the information you seek. As for your offer of aid, we want for nothing. My family has been self-sufficient in this valley for generations. I sincerely doubt the Miya can offer anything we might desire."

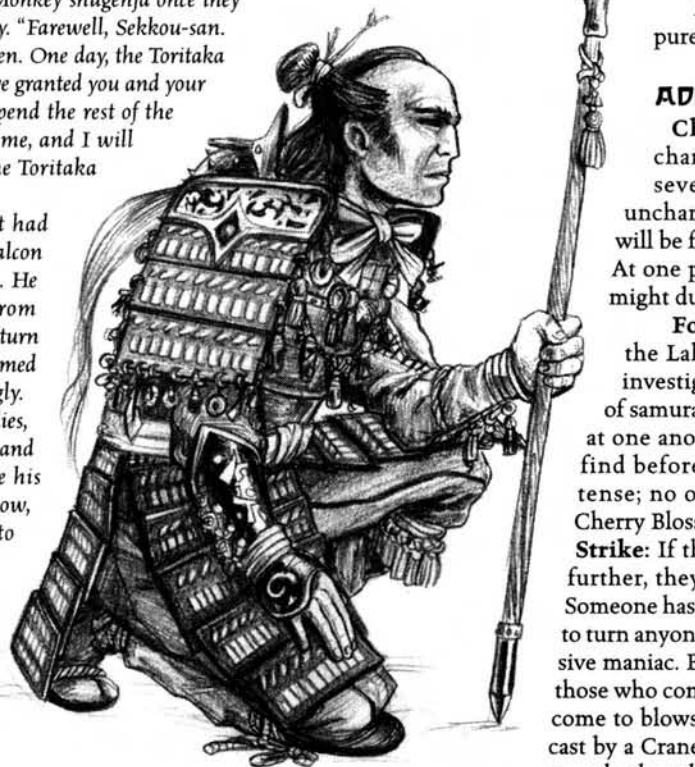
For the next seven days, Sekkou learned more than he had thought possible about the Spirit Realms and how *Ningen-do* connected to them. Ikanko taught him to determine a spirit's type from subtle hints, like the faint jangling sounds a powerful *yorei* makes when moving from one Realm to another. The Monkey *shugenja* began to comprehend the peril in the information he sought.

On the seventh night, Toritaka Ikanko convened the Council of Twilight. The Falcon had created the Council to deal with the evil spirits that haunted their valley; over the years, it had become a guiding force for the Minor Clan, and then for the Crab family.

With great ceremony, the Council tested Sekkou's knowledge of the Spirit Realms as well as his understanding of the *kami*. After hours of interrogation, they deemed him ready. Ikanko led him deep into the libraries of the Toritaka and watched him pore over the detailed accounts written by the survivors of the attack that had crippled the Falcon. Sekkou memorized as much as he could. He would carefully record the details of the *shuten doji*'s rampage, but keep the secrets of the Toritaka at the same time.

Ikanko bowed before the Monkey *shugenja* once they had finished with the library. "Farewell, Sekkou-san. Remember what you have seen. One day, the Toritaka will call in the favor they have granted you and your master. For now, however, spend the rest of the evening in meditation with me, and I will tell you the final secret of the Toritaka family."

Fuzake Sekkou left what had once been the lands of the Falcon shortly after the next sunrise. He had learned a great deal from Ikanko and hoped he could return in the future. The Toritaka seemed to respect Hatori, if grudgingly. As with the other Crab families, however, their independence and survival instincts had made his offer of aid pointless. For now, Sekkou had to catch up to Hatori and Taneji in the Yasuki lands.



MAEMIKAKE

(LOCATION CB6)

This town has grown into a city much larger than any of the nearby villages. Formerly ruled by the Hiruma, Maemikake came under the control of the Toritaka after the return of the Hiruma to their ancestral lands. A great deal of the lumber from surrounding Falcon lands is funneled south to the Hida and Kaiu to build *dojo*, siege weaponry and other items. In return, the Hida ship some of the food produced in Kuda Mura to this city for distribution to the Falcon and Crab patrols in the Shinomen Mura.

LAKE OF CHERRY BLOSSOM SNOW

The shores of *Mizu-umi no Sakura Yuki* are lined with cherry trees. When the stark white blossoms fall in the autumn, the lake looks as if it has been covered in snow. Many monks and devout samurai visit during the Cherry Blossom Festival. Each sits under a tree and meditates until its blossoms fall. Tradition says that he who sits longest (i.e. his blossoms fall last) is most pure.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: Some of the player characters have overheard tales of several Crab samurai who have uncharacteristically boasted that they will be found to have the greatest purity. At one point, it looks as if two samurai might duel over the matter.

Focus: When the group goes to the Lake of Cherry Blossom Snow to investigate, they find pairs and groups of samurai sitting around the lake, staring at one another with the focus one would find before a duel or battle. Everyone is tense; no one is actually celebrating the Cherry Blossom Festival.

Strike: If the player characters investigate further, they find a sinister magic at work. Someone has enchanted the waters of the lake to turn anyone who consumes it into an obsessive maniac. Because of the peaceful nature of those who come to test their purity, no one has come to blows just yet. The enchantment was cast by a Crane *shugenja*. For the party to find out whether the Crane meant for violence to occur or if this is just a colossal joke gone wrong, they have to find the *shugenja*.

HIGHWAYS OF THE TORITAKA PROVINCES

Forest Edge Road (Connects CB6 to CB5) — The road between Kuda Mura and Maemikake carries a great deal of trade traffic. Lumber travels from Falcon to Hida lands, and food goes from the Hida to the Falcon and the surrounding Crab villages.

The Falcon's Flight (Connects CB20 to U24) — Formerly only traveled by the Falcon themselves and the few Unicorn merchants willing to trade with the Toritaka, this road has recently become much more important, as it brings Imperial patrols to investigate Tsuno sightings in and around the western Shinomen.

Snow's Bloom Road (Connects CB6 to A22) — The highway from Maemikake to Humble Priest Village is used mainly by those who wish to visit the Lake of Cherry Blossom Snow during the Cherry Blossom Festival in the autumn.

KYUDEN TOKETSU

(LOCATION CB21 FROM ROKUGAN;TM
NOT IN GAME MASTER'S GUIDETM)

Kyuden Toketsu was founded by a wealthy Yasuki merchant who wished to retire in comfort. He built his castle near a monastery whose monks preserved the tale of Kuni Harike, a Crab shugenja who sacrificed his life to imprison perhaps the most powerful oni that has ever existed — the Kusatte Iru. Harike is remembered as a great Crab hero, and some have suggested that worship of his example might one day elevate him to the status of a minor Fortune. Most visitors to the castle move on to Harike's temple, but the occasional Yasuki caravan rests here overnight on its way back to the more populated highways of the Empire. The family of the castle founder still lives here in relative peace, but is always on guard; they live just north of the Twilight Mountains, and only a few miles east of where the Kusatte Iru once spawned.

HARIKE SEIDO

The temple to Kuni Harike is just west of Kyuden Toketsu. Ten monks, all retired Crab, tend it and invite visitors to gaze upon the Iru husk that is mostly buried underground here. While they do enjoy travelers passing through, the brothers never allow anyone to actually touch the Iru husk remnants, for fear that those with devious intentions might find a way to reawaken the Kusatte Iru. A monk guards each side of the area, north, south, east and west, during all hours of the day and night.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: One of the monks of the temple runs up to the party, out of breath and looking very worried. Once he catches his breath, he introduces himself as Tatomo and tells them that all of his brother monks have been knocked unconscious. He requests aid, and rushes back to the temple whether or not the characters agree to help him.

Focus: Those who follow him find several more of the brothers recovering from whatever knocked them out. They were ambushed from behind and never saw their attackers. Evidence indicates recent maho use: one of the brothers does not awaken. His corpse is near the temple, drained of blood, his face grim and determined even in death.

Strike: A piece of the Kusatte Iru husk has been removed. The monks ask the player characters to find those responsible for the theft, and several of them set off to nearby Crab outposts to summon help. Tracking down the thieves won't be easy, but the Crab would be extremely grateful for the aid, especially since it involves such a dangerous potential threat to the Empire.

TANI HITOKAGE

(LOCATION CB20 FROM ROKUGAN;TM
LOCATION MM FROM THE GAME
MASTER'S GUIDETM)

Tani Hitokage, known as the Valley of the Spirits, is the home of the Toritaka family. Located between the Shinomen Mori and the haunted Twilight Mountains, living in the valley necessitated the focus on the Spirit Realms that the Falcon cultivated over the years.

The valley is still sparsely populated, even after all the years since the shuten doji attack that almost wiped out the Falcon. Both of the generations since then have been focused on repopulating the area, but war and the clan's need for the Toritaka's specially trained warriors has made that difficult.

One of the greatest spectacles here is the nightly ritual of lighting the lanterns and watchfires that surround the valley. From several points in Tani Hitokage, it appears as if a ring of fire forms each night, protecting the valley from harm. The patrols involved in the ritual time their routes so that the ring appears exactly at sundown each night. Other patrols cover the routes in between the fires, to keep intruders from sneaking in while the Toritaka are lighting their borders.

FALCON'S SPIRIT DOJO

The dojo run by Toritaka Ikanko has been in operation for almost 30 years. Her mother, Hiruko, founded the school shortly after coming to the Falcon lands following their absorption into the Crab.

Once a Kuni, Hiruko met and married Toritaka Kitao shortly after he had come home from his blood quest to avenge his family's murder. Kitao chased the bloodspeaker Agasha Kaushen for years and finally tracked the corrupted shugenja to the streets of Ryoko Owari. There, in the City of Lies, Kitao beheaded Kaushen and cremated the remains. Since the day of their marriage, Kitao and Hiruko have strengthened the ranks of the Falcon, having seven children. They have also helped to construct and maintain the Falcon's Spirit Dojo, training both bushi and shugenja in the ways of their Toritaka and Kuni ancestors.

Hiruko and Kitao have retired from active duty, but both still live on the grounds and can often be found teaching a lesson or two when Ikanko is too busy with her own lessons or hosting visitors.

TORITAKA IKANKO

[Shugenja 15; Toritaka Shugenja 5]

One of the finest shugenja the Toritaka have ever seen, Ikanko has molded the current generation of Crab within the Valley of Spirits to value sword and spell equally. Toritaka Ikanko is a patient teacher who instructs her students to revere their ancestors as well as the kami. The sensei also teaches the identification of spirits, both harmful and benevolent. Ikanko welcomes visitors, but is fiercely protective of the libraries of the Toritaka, wary of those who seek her family's secrets for their own ends.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: While the party is visiting the dojo, one of Ikanko's students, Kuni Yarima, invites them to participate in a special ritual that used to be performed when the Toritaka were still the Falcon Clan. He is secretive, but obviously wants an audience. The ritual itself is simple, but observant PCs notice that the student shugenja moves so gracefully that he seems to float above the ground.

Focus: Kuni Yarima is, unfortunately, dead. He was coming to learn the spirit lore of the Toritaka, but he and his escorts were killed by bandits halfway to the Valley of the Spirits. Yarima was asleep at the time and hasn't quite realized what has happened to him. He reported to classes normally, and has been attending them for the past couple of days with no one the wiser.

Strike: The Toritaka haven't noticed Yarima's condition yet; they were told that the Kuni wore long robes and was a very private individual, so no one has touched him yet. Once they became aware of the situation, it may become very embarrassing, as the Falcon somehow failed to observe a spirit in their midst. The party can decide how to handle the situation, but Ikanko will do anything within reason to keep the incident under wraps.

IMPORTANT TORITAKA NPCS

TORITAKA TATSUNE, MASTER SENSEI OF SUNDA MIZU RYU

Born in the Falcon provinces on the same day that Hantei the 38th was made Emperor, Tatsune has seen a great deal during his years. The young samurai was raised as a Falcon and trained alongside his cousin, Toritaka Genzo, in his youth. However, Tatsune was fostered to the Crab only days after his gempukku, in an attempt to garner the Great Clan's favor.

During the next decade, Tatsune would work as a liaison between the Falcon and the Crab, learning the ways of the Hida but always looking north to his family's home. His posting at Face of the East Castle was a great honor. As Crab patrols investigated the Shinomen Forest to discover its secrets, Tatsune became respected for his strength and his ability to use his troops' supplies efficiently.

When a powerful maho-tsukai ritual allowed many of his clanmates to be possessed by shuten doji, Tatsune was blissfully unaware, still serving the Crab at Face of the East Castle. As soon as he heard word of the shuten doji attack, Tatsune requested leave and rushed back to the Falcon lands. While Genzo and a few others survived the attack, the Falcon had been decimated. Toritaka Genzo was now daimyo of the clan and decided to use his and Tatsune's close connections with the Crab to save their family from complete destruction.

In 1129, the Falcon were officially absorbed by the Crab Clan and the Toritaka recognized as a family by the newly-crowned Toturi. While Genzo attempted to hold the clan

together, Tatsune went to study at Razor's Edge Dojo. He thought that the sensei might help control the anger he felt for having had most of his family taken from him while he was off serving with the Hida. Tatsune took the event that had shattered his family as a personal failure and would awaken in the middle of the night, screaming for justice. While the sensei at Razor's Edge made Tatsune into a berserker, he soon understood that the sensei there only knew how to inflame his hatred. After talking to a visiting Hiruma, Tatsune realized his place was at Sunda Mizu Ryu. He could channel his rage into an indomitable will to survive and use that fury to fight the creatures of the Shadowlands, wherever they might be.

During the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, Tatsune led the Crab into battle. His unit destroyed hundreds of bakemono and trolls, but was overrun by a battalion of ogres. Tatsune and Genzo fought to save their troops, but simply weren't fast enough. The ogre bushi leading the group attacked Toritaka Genzo directly and crushed the Falcon daimyo's skull with his bare hands. Tatsune, enraged, pummeled the ogre who had slain his cousin into the rocky ground and continued attacking anything that moved until the group of ogres retreated. One ogre stayed behind to finish off Tatsune. It snapped the Falcon's tetsubo, so Tatsune drew his father's sword and buried its blade in the ogre's hide. Dying convulsively, the ogre swung its club at Tatsune and shattered the samurai's leg. The Crab had won, but at a significant price.

Reinforcements finally came and took the injured Toritaka back to Crab lands. Tatsune's leg never properly healed and still festers, emitting a foul, rotting odor when unbound from its bandages. Fortunately, he has a Kuni shugenja at Sunda Mizu Ryu apply a special poultice to the wound to keep its stench from getting any worse.

For his valor and so that he might remain in service to the Crab Clan, Toritaka Tatsune was named sensei of Sunda Mizu Ryu soon after Oblivion's Gate. He was also named Falcon daimyo at the same time, but his wife Toritaka Koiso takes care of most of those daily duties. The Toritaka have the utmost respect for both Tatsune and his wife, but hope that he will one day return to his homeland to settle down. Contrary to their desires, Tatsune believes his work will never be done. Each generation of Crab must be prepared to fight the Shadowlands with every ounce of strength they have. He greets each new student of Sunda Mizu with the same words: "I will teach you how to fight. And I will teach you how to survive."

TORITAKA TATSUNE

Male Human Sam 6/Brk 4/Shv 10: CR20, Medium-sized humanoid; HD 16d10+96, plus 4d12+24; hp 291; Init +2, Spd 40 ft; AC21 (touch 10, flat-footed 21); Attack +3 *Kuni crystal tetsubo of speed and initiative* +28/+23/+18 melee (1d8+9 damage plus 2d6 holy vs. Shadowlands); SA Rage 2/day, Unchained Fury +2; SQ Ancestral daisho, Grim Visage, Class skill - Knowledge (Spirit Realms) (family bonus), Resist the Darkness, Sense the Darkness, Strength Boost 4/day, Survivalist, Uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus to AC); Honor 2; AL NG; SV Fort +29, Ref +8, Will +19; Str 19, Dex 9, Con 22, Int 14, Wis 11, Cha 8; Height 5 ft.10 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Bakemono, Rokugani, High Rokugani, Nezumi, Oni, Ogre), Battle +10, Climb +13, Intimidate +14, Jump +7, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +14, Knowledge (Spirit Realms) +4, Listen +11, Move Silently +14, Ride +5, Spot +15, Wilderness Lore +20; Cleave, Hida Technique, Iron Will, Mountain Does Not Move, Power Attack, Power Attack - Shadowlands (Ancestor: Kaiu Gineza), Toughness, Void Use, Way of the Crab, Weapon Focus - Tetsubo.

Dojo: Sunda Mizu; Kata: Soul of Stone, Shards of Earth.
Possessions: +3 Kuni crystal tetsubo of speed and initiative, +5 taint resistant katana of mighty cleaving and thundering, +4 great armor of healing and stamina (+4), goggles of night, haori of resistance +3, Hiruma's hakama, jade pendant, ring of sustenance, twilight lantern.

TORITAKA TATSUNE

Earth: 8
Stamina: 9
Water: 7
Perception: 8
Fire: 4
Agility: 5
Air: 4
Awareness: 5
Void: 4
School/Rank: Hida Bushi 5/Hida Avenger 3
Dojo: Sunda Mizu Ryu
Honor: 2.2
Glory: 8.7
Advantages: Ancestor: Kaiu Gineza, Crab Hands, Large, Leadership, Strength of the Earth 3
Disadvantages: Lamé, Permanent Wound
Skills: Athletics 7, Battle 3, Defense 8, Goblin Culture 3, Horsemanship 2, Hunting 3, Intimidation 4, Jujutsu 2, Kenjutsu 4, Lore (Shadowlands) 8, Lore (Spirit Realms) 2, Ratling Speech 4, Stealth 5, Subujutsu 8, Tetsubo 7
Kata: Soul of Stone, Shards of Earth

TORITAKA MECHANICS

ANCESTORS

TORITAKA YOTOGI

Enigmatic founder of the Falcon Clan Toritaka Yotogi was rewarded with lands after his father's sacrifice to protect the Emperor from a supposed ninja assassin. He revealed the assassin as a maddened peasant who might have been aided by dark magic. While he could never prove the use of maho, Yotogi meditated for many days after the incident and eventually emerged from contemplation a much wiser man. When asked what he had learned, he only replied, "There are not enough names." From that day forward, the Falcon trained in the arts of meditation and it is believed that some of their legendary awareness is provided by their ancestors.

Yotogi had learned of the power of a name and part of the connection between names and the Celestial Order. His spirit occasionally manifests within the Toritaka lands. It is said those to whom he whispers will be part of a great destiny.

FALCON'S SENSES

ANCESTOR: TORITAKA YOTOGI

You can track those whom you know through almost any conditions.

Clan: Crab

Benefit: If you know the true name of the creature or person you are tracking, you gain a +15 insight bonus to making any Wilderness Lore check while using the Track feat, no matter what the conditions are. This feat has no effect if the name you know is not the true name of the creature or person being tracked.

ANCESTOR: TORITAKA YOTOGI (5 POINTS)

Those who are whispered to by the first leader of the Falcon Clan find that they can track any creature or person through almost any conditions, provided they know its true name. While using making any Perception-based checks involving tracking or hunting down the creature or person in question, you may add the highest-rolled kept die twice to your total. This Ancestor has no effect if you do not know the true name of the creature or person being tracked.

TORITAKA GENZO

Genzo was born to the Yotogi — clan daimyo — of the Falcon soon after his sister had a son who would eventually be known as Tatsune. Genzo was always a curious young boy, constantly wanting to learn more about both yorei and the Shadowlands. Everything he wrote was annotated with the names of people involved in the event.

Genzo was personally responsible for destroying more than ten different spirits and corrupted samurai, including Moto Saibusa, an undead Unicorn who had been fighting and killing students of the Kuni for decades. Genzo cultivated a strong relationship with the Crab, one that would only be reinforced by the actions of his cousin, Toritaka Tatsune.

Genzo died during the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, fighting alongside many other Crab. His body was returned to the Falcon lands by Tatsune, who had been injured by an ogre during the battle. It is said that Genzo's spirit protects the lands of the Toritaka, manifesting occasionally as a ephemeral falcon of pure jade.

SPIRIT ENMITY

ANCESTOR: TORITAKA GENZO

Your ancestor's thirst to vanquish evil spirits has been passed on to you.

Clan: Crab

Benefit: You gain a +2 to all attack and damage rolls when facing a creature with the Spirit subtype. You gain an additional +2 to your attack rolls if the spirit has an evil alignment.

ANCESTOR: TORITAKA GENZO (4 POINTS)

Descendants of Toritaka Genzo feel the thirst of Genzo's hatred for yorei. While facing a yorei, yokai or other harmful spirit, you may roll and keep an additional die on both attack and damage rolls.

CHAPTER SIX:

THE YASUKI

VIGILANT
PART SEVEN

"I do not think I can leave these lands soon enough," Taneji said under his breath as he watched the small caravan being loaded. They stood just outside a minor holding of the Yasuki; Hatori had gone inside a building to ensure the purchase of the correct supplies for his travels. With any luck, they would leave by noon and arrive in more hospitable territory by nightfall.

"You didn't enjoy your stay, I take it," Sekkou said in equally low tones. Neither of the young men was sure that their status as vassals of an important Miya lord would protect them from a bored and angry Crab bushi.

The Otomo eyed his companion critically. "Hard beds? Being the constant butt of 'pretty eyes' jokes? Food that could make a farmer's dog choke? I can't imagine why I'd want to leave."

"You weren't this sarcastic a year ago," Sekkou said good-naturedly. "I think I may be having a negative influence on you."

"Fortunes protect us from insult-hurling Otomo and teasing Fuzake," Hatori's voice grumbled behind them. "If we are not careful, soon Taneji will be throwing lightning from the sky and Sekkou will be forging alliances between the Lion and Crane." Both young men turned sheepishly.

"Whatever would make you proud of us, Hatori-sama," Sekkou said with mock gravity and knelt low into the dirt.

"On your feet, Sekkou. We have a schedule to keep. If you have so much love for braying and stomping around in the dirt, I may have to tether you with the rest of the animals drawing the caravan." The old Miya's voice held little amusement.

It was clear to Sekkou and Taneji that their lord was rushed and agitated. It did not take long to find out why.

"Hatori-sama!" a cheerful voice called from the storehouse the Miya had left moments before. The two young men turned to see who was calling out, but Hatori sighed slowly and shut his eyes as if in exquisite pain. The stranger was clad in the blues and grays of a Crab courtier, but dust and other odd stains clung to his kimono. "Hatori-sama!" he repeated, closing in on the group. "You seem to have overpaid by a small amount. It would be a shame if you were to lose the fortunes of the Miya in such a manner." The man laughed at his own humor.

Hatori had wished not to deal with this man, but that seemed a distant impossibility now. Summoning up every bit of nerve he had left, the old man turned and presented a smiling face to the Crab. "Jinn-Kuen-san," Hatori said as he greeted the man with a bow. "How fortunate of you to have noticed. Thank you." The Miya accepted the coin purse the Yasuki offered by motioning for Sekkou to fetch it.

Yasuki Jinn-Kuen smiled warmly, placed the bag in the Monkey shugenja's hands with a formal bow, and clasped his hands together. "Domo, honorable Fuzake-sama." Unsure how to react to such treatment, Sekkou smiled dumbly and stepped back next to Taneji.

"So," Jinn-Kuen began before Hatori could even attempt to excuse himself, "I see your caravan is nearly packed. Leaving the lands of the Crab so soon?"

"I am afraid so, Jinn-Kuen," Hatori said in reply and motioned vaguely to the east. "Business takes me onward and back home for a time. It will be nice to rest in the place I call my own, even if only for a short while."

The Crab nodded with a sympathetic look. "Truly, I do not know of any man who travels so much, Hatori-sama. And at such

an age! I do not wish to insult your years, but I would not dishonor you with lies. You are no young colt, and it must be exhausting."

Hatori smiled and nodded back. "Yes. I am afraid I may not be able to continue in my service like this much longer. If you do not mind, Yasuki-san," he added quickly, "I must be getting to my travels now."

"So very soon," Jinn-Kuen repeated, almost to himself. "And yet you have not spoken with the Yasuki as you have the other families? How odd. I do so hope we have not offended the Imperial families."

Sekkou and Taneji shared a quick glance. Jinn-Kuen's tone and statement could have implied any number of insults.

"Of course not, my friend," Hatori replied, chuckling mildly. "Armies move across the Empire and threaten the peace Emperor Toturi worked so hard to forge, and you think you may have affronted the Imperial houses?" He smiled broadly. "You have nothing to fear, I assure you." The shisha hoped it would be left at that, but he somehow knew it would not.

"I see," the Crab replied, showing obvious relief and gratitude. "Why did the Yasuki receive no such guest, then? Are we no longer of consequence? I would hate to believe such a thing, but I must admit with our dwindling numbers of late I can understand such an opinion."

Hatori knew Jinn-Kuen was trying to bait the Miya into saying or even implying the Yasuki didn't have a daimyo for him to meet with. If Hatori were not careful, he would leave the Yasuki lands deeply indebted to this man. "No indeed, Jinn-Kuen," the Miya said, straining to maintain his façade of good humor. "I'm afraid it's more complicated." Hatori lowered his voice conspiratorially. "The business with the Emerald Champion and the bastard son of Toturi have made matters regarding your family murky. The Imperial nobles are under strict orders to interfere no further in the Yasuki's affairs."

Jinn-Kuen stroked his chin as if what Hatori had just told him were unknown to him before. "I see," he said, staring off for a moment. "Well, I must say I appreciate your candor and the wisdom of the Imperial houses in this matter. Who was clever enough to think of such an edict, I wonder?"

The Miya waved a hand dismissively. "I do not recall," Hatori said, not wanting to say it was he who suggested such an action months ago. "Some minor functionary of Otomo Hoketuhime's, I believe."

"Hmm." Jinn-Kuen placed his hands in his kimono sleeves and stared off thoughtfully for a second. "Well, the journey calls to you, Hatori-sama, and I will not keep you. Before you go, though — I actually came to give you this." The merchant produced a sealed letter from the folds of his sleeves. "A message from the Miya lands."

Hatori raised a curious eyebrow and nodded his head in thanks before taking it from Jinn-Kuen's hands. "Domo, Jinn-Kuen-san. When did you receive this?"

"Just this morning. I believe the messenger said it was most urgent." Surprisingly, the Crab left with nothing further to say.

Hatori cracked the seal and read the scroll quickly, not knowing what news would bring a messenger all the way to Crab lands when he was due back in his home within the week.

My dear friend —

A samurai loses much in service, and I fear that I must tell you that the pain that grips the Empire has struck your very home. Your son Senkazu has reported to me that your wife has gone missing. She may have been gone for a week by the time you receive this. Senkazu will attend to your estate while you are away if you find you cannot return to your home. War creates opportunity for villains and heroes alike — I cannot help but think some enemy you have had for so long has taken a chance to strike at you now. Seek out those who would do such a thing and know the Miya, the Seppun, and the Otomo stand ready to aid you. Fortunes be with you, Hatori.

— Miya Yumi

Hatori read silently for a moment before his grip loosened and a breeze blew the letter out of his hands. With impressive reflexes, Sekkou snatched it out of the air and looked at his master. Hatori had not moved to try and get the letter back. "My lord?" Sekkou asked hesitantly. Even Taneji's usually stoic face showed clear concern.

"Home will have to wait," Hatori said quietly. "We have other business to attend to. We are bound for Crane lands."

From inside the building, Yasuki Jinn-Kuen looked at the scene with none of the frivolousness he had displayed moments before.

"Enjoy your travels, Hatori," the Kolat said, his white teeth showing ever so slightly in a cold smile.

THE YASUKI PROVINCES

The remaining Crab-controlled Yasuki lands are mostly arable land and breathtaking shorelines, easily the most beautiful Crab land. As the Yasuki lands spread from the southeast to the most northern point in Crab territory, it is difficult to categorize their provinces in one group.

At the end of the recent Crab-Crane war over the Yasuki, the Crane claimed much of the Yasuki territory on the former clan border. This was less a military loss than one precipitated by roughly half of the Yasuki siding with the Crane when Akodo Kaneka intervened to end the conflict. For now, the Yasuki name is shared between the Crab and the Crane, and the two branches of the family have little use for one another.

MAJOR YASUKI HOLDINGS

One of the fortunate results of the Shogun's intervention in the Crab-Crane war was that the fighting ended before the Crane could capture any of the truly important Yasuki holdings. The major unfortunate result was that without a clear Crab Yasuki daimyo, none could contest Kaneka's claim on the stronghold of the Yasuki family without force of arms.

YASUKI YASHIKI

(LOCATION CB18)

The ancient Yasuki stronghold hangs dramatically on a cliff edge overlooking Earthquake Fish Bay. Yasuki Yashiki was originally the family estate of Yasuki Kiringu and became the family's primary stronghold after its break from the Crane Clan. Since that time, the holding has gone from being a stately household to an opulent and impressive testament to the Yasuki family's wealth. Its towers reach higher than most great castles across the Empire and its splendor rivals the Crane and Phoenix palaces. Unlike most similar holdings, Yasuki Yashiki also boasts an impressive array of defensive structures.

At the start of the recent Crab-Crane conflict, Yasuki Yashiki stood mostly empty as most Yasuki samurai either flocked to the banner of Yasuki Hachi or stayed loyal to the Crab and marched against the Crane. As the Crab and Crane prepared to skirmish for the palace, Shogun Akodo Kaneka named himself its legal heir — citing an obscure lineage found by the Miya and Otomo — and commanded both clans to remove themselves from his property. The Crab were eager to see the conflict ended, for it drained resources away from the Wall. The Crane withdrew as well; had they not, the Shogun would have rallied his forces and crushed them.

While the Crab are grateful that Kaneka ended the war, the Crab still have no clear daimyo for their Yasuki. Because of this, none can contest the Shogun's shaky claim to Yasuki Yashiki, so the Crab must stand by and allow him to establish his would-be rulership in their lands. Should the situation change in the Crab's favor, however, Akodo Kaneka may find himself in a position to supplicate the Yasuki instead of intimidating them.

SHOGUN'S BARRACKS

Many of the stables and vast storehouses of Yasuki Yashiki have been emptied in order to house Akodo Kaneka's personal army. The previous contents of these chambers have either been disbursed among the Shogun's troops or transported to other strongholds in Crab territory. Though only three clans support Kaneka in large numbers — the Mantis, the Unicorn, and the Crab — members of every clan, Great and Minor, can be found in these barracks. For the most part, the soldiers from different clans have quartered themselves together. Those living in Yasuki Yashiki have begun referring to each section as if it were a valid division of space within the palace (e.g. "Scorpion Halls," "Lion Chambers," etc.).

The northern fields of the palace grounds have been converted into a gigantic marshaling field and practice area for the restless followers of the Shogun. To the south, innumerable Mantis kobune and larger vessels await commands from their general while at anchorage in the bay. Kaneka has wisely chosen to keep the lands and structures open to members of the Crab, and has begun to send a small tax to the Hida from the profits of the lands. Of course, the Shogun calls these koku a gift, "to aid the Crab in their war," to avoid anyone getting the impression he is beholden to the Crab. Because of this, the Crab are happy to continue running the day-to-day functions of the palace and the surrounding lands as if there were indeed one of their kin in charge. The Shogun silently wonders if the Yasuki act as if nothing has changed because they intend to return things to normal.

DAIKOKU AND YASUKI SHRINE

The Yasuki have preserved two things from their Crane heritage: their remarkably attractive features and their skill as merchants and artisans. Because of their economically-minded philosophy, they revere the Fortune of Wealth above all others. In the heart of Yasuki Yashiki stands a gigantic pair of statues in the likenesses of Daikoku in his beneficial aspect and the first Yasuki. The statue of Yasuki is markedly stockier than the way the Crane represent her, a fact that is generally the first point of debate whenever Crane and Crab courtiers deal with one another. Violence follows shortly after, without exception.

The Yasuki are neither the least nor the most religious of families, and Daikoku Seido is a center of unusual spirituality. Outsiders tend to stereotype Yasuki merchants as koku-pinching misers who part with no coin unless driven by necessity. The Yasuki have battled this image since their Crane days. An oft-repeated family adage is, "Koku is made round to go around." In reality they are the least likely to hoard koku just for the sake of counting their own wealth. The largest Yasuki trading grounds have shrines to Daikoku in their center, and the family is most content when goods and koku change hands all day.

The Yasuki venerate Daikoku because he encourages the spread of wealth and good fortune, and they endeavor to follow his example. The monks that tend Daikoku Seido are shrewd businessmen — either retired Yasuki merchants of great success or their students — and aspiring businessmen from all clans come to Daikoku Seido in the Yasuki lands seeking advice.

EIKYU

[Courtier 6/Inkyo 4; Yasuki Merchant 2/Seven Fortunes Monk 1]

The current master of the major shrine to Daikoku and Yasuki is much younger than most retired samurai. Eikyu was a courtier and businessman of the Yasuki family from his gempukku at age 13 until his retirement at 25. Eikyu's mastery of both the human psyche and the nature of trade made him legendary among his peers. The Daidoji learned to be wary of the young Yasuki, and the Bayushi family quickly made him a close ally to forestall future unpleasant business with him. During the War of Spirits, Eikyu forged alliances and brokered deals that kept the Crab army from starving. Like most of his family, Eikyu always wanted to see his trading partners profit from his business, and usually ensured such an outcome. When ambassadors from other clans grew tired of shady deals with the Mantis tradesmen and having to tolerate the barbaric Moto and Ide, they would come to deal with Yasuki Eikyu. After the defeat of the Steel Chrysanthemum, the young Yasuki courtier counted allies in major houses across the Empire and called in favors that easily supplied the Crab after the lengthy war.

It was just as nothing seemed impossible for the cheerful and clever young Yasuki that he shockingly announced his retirement. Daikoku had visited him in his dreams, instructing Eikyu to tend his great shrine in the lands of the Yasuki. Eikyu practically begged this favor of his daimyo Yasuki Oguri, citing his unparalleled service to his clan. Reluctant to see his most promising vassal retire to a life of contemplation, Oguri nevertheless acceded to Eikyu's request, consoled by the fact that the young man would always be close at hand to share his wisdom.

Within a week, a mysterious disease ended the lives of Oguri and his heir. Two weeks later, a Crane named Hachi was declared daimyo of the Yasuki, and war began. Since that time, Daikoku has made his purpose clear — Eikyu has been a shelter for the Yasuki family in these times of turmoil. Even the Yasuki who defected to the Crane refuse to speak ill of the young man and write to him fondly. His efforts, alongside those of Yasuki Jinn-Kuen, keep the remaining Crab Yasuki united. They are almost completely responsible for keeping the family from falling apart.

FACE OF THE EAST CASTLE

(LOCATION CB1)

Shiro Kaotsuki no Higashi rests between the southern leg of the Shinomen Forest and the Twilight Mountains, a location that would not be unusual for any other Crab holding. However, Face of the East is governed by the Yasuki family and is where the Crab receive ambassadors and representatives from other clans. The castle is inconveniently located, but historically it has been one of the safest Crab strongholds. With no other clan's borders nearby there is no fear of diplomatic business being interrupted by a sudden skirmish; and while Shiro Kaotsuki no Higashi is relatively close to the Shadowlands, its proximity to the Shinomen Forest generally keeps Tainted beasts at bay.

More recently, however, the Crab have had to conduct diplomacy in the Watchtower of the East (CB2) or Maemikake (CB6) due to the sudden presence of Shadowlands beasts in the Shinomen. Visitors to Face of the East Castle have been sparse recently, as most of the Crab's dealings with other clans have involved the new Yasuki border. The number of troops stationed at the generally quiet stronghold has nearly doubled due to the events of the past two years. With the resources of the Yasuki halved and the manpower of the family at its limit, the courtiers of the Crab don't seem to mind that their base of external relations is nearly defunct for the time being.

GOLDEN CARP MARKETPLACE

Second in size only to the trading grounds at Yasuki Yashiki, the Golden Carp Marketplace houses the deals the Yasuki try to keep out of the public eye. Its secluded location ensures that prying magistrates or those with no business in the castle will never set foot on the grounds. Though away from any shipping port, the marketplace is the point of entry of many Unicorn goods into Yasuki hands and through the Yasuki, into the Empire.

FRIENDLY TRAVELER VILLAGE (LOCATION CR19)

The small village of Friendly Traveler has endured hundreds of years of anonymity until the past century. The village had little in the way of resources, and was little more than a set of docks on Earthquake Fish Bay until fifty years ago, when an enterprising young Yasuki Taka discreetly purchased a small sake works from the local Crane lord and within a year turned it into one of the most successful businesses in the Empire.

To the villagers of Friendly Traveler, the change seemed to occur overnight. Other profitable businesses such as inns and playhouses sprang up around the popular sake works, and soon Friendly Traveler Village was easily the most frequented and active village in the Yasuki lands, if not in Rokugan. Though the Crane were disgusted by the lost opportunity, though there was little they could do about it.

One of the first significant holdings to witness open war between the Crab and the Crane was Friendly Traveler. The Crab swiftly moved to hold the village, fortifying it with a quick sea raid. The Crane response was immediate, repelling the Crab in a surprise attack and relying on their tactical advantage to overcome the Crab's superior numbers. When the two forces eventually met on an even battlefield to decide the fate of the village, the Crab and Crane commanders did the last thing their respective clans expected — they declared a truce and negotiated a peaceful solution. When Akodo Kaneka later tried to oust the Crane from the village, Emerald

Champion Yasuki Hachi drew upon the dregs of his support in the area to demand that the Shogun allow the peaceful village to remain jointly held by Crab and Crane.

For now, the bulk of the village's taxes go the Crane but the Crab claim the land legally. Samurai from both clans exist side by side in the small town, and for now life in the busy village has returned to some semblance of normalcy.

HIDA SHARA

[Samurai 7; Hida Bushi 3]

The unexpected resolution over Friendly Traveler Village has cost young Hida Shara more than she had expected. It was a great honor for her to be appointed the captain of the force that attacked Friendly Traveler and protected the Crab's interests in the town. Many were surprised by her appointment by Crab Champion Hida O-Ushi, but after the speed in which she claimed Friendly Traveler, few skeptics remained.

Shara's reputation among the Crab has fallen just as quickly as it rose. After negotiating peace, some scorn her as a coward, or worse — a Crane conspirator. Others within the clan see the wisdom in her actions, but neither group is moved enough by the situation to take direct action for or against the young samurai. All agree that once peace reigned in Friendly Traveler and along the Yasuki border, the Crab needed to turn their full attention to the Wall.

Shara has earned a great deal of respect from the Crane within the village she now presides over. As a stipulation of the agreement, Hida Shara is the official magistrate and lord of Friendly Traveler and has the authority to settle all disputes within its grounds. The Crane endorse her as the Crab do, and all within the village have quickly grown to appreciate her dedication to the ideals of honor and justice. Shara has vowed to herself that despite what her critics may think, she will continue to labor for the greater good of Rokugan just as her kin do on the Kaiu Wall.

MINOR YASUKI HOLDINGS

YASUKI HANKO

(LOCATION CB16)

The village of Hanko, also known as Yasuki Hanko or "The Yasuki's Defiance," carries the scars of the relations between the Crab and Crane since the first Yasuki War. In more recent times, Doji Kurohito contested it with the Crab. Shortly after the Yasuki defected to the Crab family, the Crane refused to allow the Yasuki to claim control of the village (then called Oyabashi Mura) due to its control of the river that flowed into Earthquake Fish Bay. The peasants refused to accept rule by the Doji magistrates sent to secure the village, revolted, and were slaughtered for their impertinence. Eventually, the Crane transferred the village into Yasuki control in exchange for trade concessions.

Recently Hanko was a focal point for the second Yasuki war. The end of the war found Hanko in Crab hands, and the Crane were forced to relinquish their claim. Yasuki Hanko remains one of the precious few fertile farmlands under Yasuki control, and the Hida have sent a large contingent of guards to ensure its food production does not falter.

SHRINE OF YASUKI KIRINGU

When the Yasuki broke from the Clan of the Crane and swore their fealty to the Crab, a man named Kiringu led them to their new clan. In the annals of Crane history, few villains are so despised as the thief and traitor Yasuki Kiringu. Crimes of that era that could not be traced back to a particular person are often blamed on Kiringu by the Doji and the Daidoji families, who are eager to sully the man's name further.

To the Crab, the heroic Yasuki Kiringu is the skilled negotiator who freed the persecuted Yasuki from their unjust treatment at the hands of the Crane and brought them into the welcoming arms of the Crab. Kiringu is also hailed as the man responsible for adding the Yasuki's considerable wealth to the coffers of the Crab, saving them from starvation. His shrine was constructed amid the bountiful farmlands of Yasuki Hanko village to represent the resources he brought.

During the more recent conflict between the Crane and Crab, Yasuki Hanko changed hands on an almost weekly basis. When the Crane first captured the village, their first act was to destroy Kiringu's shrine; when the Crab retook it, theirs was to begin rebuilding it. This process was repeated several times until the conflict ended and Yasuki Kiringu's monument was left in Crab hands.

ROADS OF THE YASUKI PROVINCES

The Yasuki currently have no major highways that connect their sparse holdings within the Crab lands, but the merchant family maintains several trade routes that it forgets to report to the Imperial Cartographers each year.

Black Crane Way (Connects CB18 to CB17) — The most valued secret route of the Yasuki connects the Yasuki stronghold to the Hida family's castle, skirting the edge of Earthquake Fish Bay. The path is maintained with the utmost attention, as an interruption of supplies to the Hida could endanger the entire clan.

Path of No Man (Connects CB18 to CB19) — This route travels directly through the mountain range north of Yasuki Yashiki, and is hard to spot even by experienced climbers. The route ultimately ends at the base of the mountains near Watchtower of the West. The Yasuki constantly make sure outsiders are aware just how treacherous the mountains are, ensuring the route is never accidentally stumbled upon.

IMPORTANT YASUKI NPCs

YASUKI JINN-KUEN, YASUKI TRADER

With the conclusion of the Crab-Crane war over the Yasuki, Jinn-Kuen has assumed the role of the most powerful Crab Yasuki daimyo. With the Crab's strength unflagging in the face of the Crane's attacks, the young Yasuki has aligned his purposes with the Crab once and for all. The Scales of the Carp have continued to wage a silent war against the Daidoji in the

Crab's name, and Jinn-Kuen has personally overseen several agreements that have hit the Crane Yasuki in their coffers.

While many of the remaining Crab Yasuki are content to rebuild, Jinn-Kuen has already planned for the future of his family and the increase of his own wealth. Firm in his loyalties to the Crab, the Kolat merchant is fully aware the success of the Yasuki only means further opportunities for him. His masters in the Kolat's Coin Sect approve of his ambitious nature and his importance among the organization grows each month.

For the first time in his life, however, Yasuki Jinn-Kuen suspects his ambitions may have exceeded his capabilities. Though he is not particularly honorable, he does not know if he wishes the Kolat to rule the Yasuki family through him. He has made several discreet attempts to reach an agreement with the Kolat that they would not interfere with his rule over the Yasuki, but has been refused at every turn. Jinn-Kuen is concerned less with the Yasuki's future than with his safety — he is not completely sure the Kolat would not instruct him to do something that would bring undue attention to him once he takes control of the Yasuki. After weeks of contemplation, the young Yasuki has hit upon a solution. Before he takes control of the Yasuki family, he will have to replace his lord in the Kolat, Master Coin.

YASUKI JINN-KUEN

Male human Crab [Ctr 4/Rog 8/Mas 3]: CR 15; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 12d6+24 plus 3d4+6; hp 93; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 34 (touch 19, flat-footed 31); Atk +3 *wakizashi* +9/+4 melee (1d6+3 damage); SQ Courtier Abilities (Whisper From the Soul), Evasion, Gossip, Skill Bonus (Diplomacy), Wealth, Talent, Style and Grace, Sneak Attack +4d6, Uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus, Can't be flanked); Honor: 1; AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +9, Will +14; Str 11, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 20, Wis 16, Cha 22; Height 5 ft. 5 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani), Appraise +18, Bluff +24, Decipher Script +23, Diplomacy +27, Forgery +16, Games (go) +12, Gather Information +24, Innuendo +24, Intimidate +24, Knowledge (etiquette) +20, Listen +6, Perform +13, Pick Pockets +13, Profession (merchant) +21, Read Lips +20, Sense Motive +23, Spot +14, Tea Ceremony +10; Iron Will, Leadership, Perceived Honor (2x), Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Skill Focus (Sense Motive), Versatile (Pick Pocket, Appraise), Wily Trader.

Dojo: Favorable Tides Inn; **Kata:** None.

Possessions: +3 *wakizashi*, ring of protection +5, ring of mind shielding, haori of charisma +4, amulet of natural armor +3, boots of jumping.

YASUKI JINN-KUEN

Earth: 3

Willpower: 5

Water: 2

Perception: 6

Fire: 5

Intelligence: 7

Air: 6

Awareness: 7

Void: 4

School/Rank: Yasuki Merchant 4, The Carp Smiles, The Silent Current

Dojo: Favorable Tides Inn

Honor: 1.1

Glory: 4.3

Advantages: Perceived Honor, Voice, Luck

Disadvantages: Dark Secret (Kolot), Insensitive

Skills: Commerce 8, Courtier 5, Craft 5, Defense 4, Etiquette 6, Gambling 4, Heraldry 3, Kuenai 6, Lore (Crab Clan) 6, Lore (Crane Clan) 5, Lore (Kolot) 4, Manipulation 5, Shintao 4, Sincerity 7, Tantojutsu 3, Tea Ceremony 3

VASSALS OF THE YASUKI

THE KANO FAMILY

The Kano family dates back to the time of the first Yasuki, a wise woman who befriended the noble Kakita and taught him how to win Doji's heart. Though Kakita was a clever and honorable samurai, he often turned to Yasuki for advice and the two were close friends. As Kakita was not much of a craftsman, many speculate that it was the peaceful and skilled Yasuki who impressed him with the worth of craft and artifice and led to his family's tradition as artisans of the highest rank.

While the family of Yasuki grew and undertook a great many pursuits, a handful of her followers always learned the art of crafting at her feet. Blessed by the Heavens for her kindness and wisdom, Yasuki lived over a hundred years. Toward the end of her life, a small group of her favored students came to live in the estate her son had built. As the years passed, Yasuki's own children cast aside her traditions in the face of the Kakita's growing mastery of the arts. When Yasuki lay on her deathbed, her last act was to name her follower Kano the keeper of her ways. She granted his family the status of vassals, beholden to her true heirs.

Since that time, the Kano have quietly forged items of great beauty, and their masters in the Yasuki family have always been happy to trade them away for favors and resources. When the Yasuki broke from the Crane, the Kano followed them into the Clan of the Crab. The Yasuki became their new clan's courtiers and merchants, but the Kano continued in their role as artisans providing goods to sell.

During the recent troubles, the Kano have been surprisingly loyal to their lords in the Crab Clan. The small family retains many of its Crane heritage and mannerisms, including the desire for peace. Though exposed to centuries of war through their Hida cousins, they were horrified by the actions of the Crane at the start of the war — stealing cities by force from the Crab and slaughtering the peasants that dared defy the sudden change in rulership. The Kano have done everything they can to support their clan in these times, turning their arts to the smithing of steel weapons and armor and even sending their children to bushi schools. The other families of the Crab have been impressed by the tiny, peaceful family's actions, and the name "Kano" has become synonymous with "patriot."

KANO MURA

The Kano family line is governed from the relatively large village of Kano Mura, just outside Yasuki Yashiki. Kano Mura is the third home the Kano family has inhabited after leaving Yasuki's first palace to found their line and then leaving the lands near the Doji to live among the Crab. The village is unremarkable, with fewer farms and sources of raw material than most holdings within Crab lands, and hardly anyone who is not a Yasuki knows the village exists. Visitors to Kano Mura

are usually surprised to find the place and shocked to learn of the fantastic creations it houses. The Kano do not sell or display their items they produce for the clan's commerce, leaving that to their Yasuki lords, but gladly haggle over prices with the rare visitor to Kano Mura.

THE KANO FAMILY

Favored Class: Courtier

Starting Honor: 2

Class Skills: Craft (any one)

Starting Outfit:

1. Royal outfit and 100 koku.

THE KANO FAMILY

Benefit: +1 Awareness

Glory: 0.5

Special: Kano characters may choose to give up one of their starting skills to gain any Craft skill or increase their beginning Craft skill to 2 ranks.

YASUKI MECHANICS ANCESTORS

YASUKI KOJIRO

During the time of the Clan War, the infamous pirate Yasuki Kojiro plied the waters of the Crane, the Phoenix, and even the weakened Imperial lands in search of loot and adventure. His capital gains he sent back to his Yasuki lords to help fund Hida Kisada's campaign in Crane lands, or resold to his victims months later. Kojiro was eventually captured and executed by the agents of the Mantis acting under direct orders from Emperor Toturi shortly after he came to power. The Yasuki publicly denounced Kojiro as a villain and traitor to the Crab, but privately revere him to this day for his cunning and bravado.

WILY TRADER

ANCESTOR: YASUKI KOJIRO

Like your ancestor, you are a devious and unpredictable foe. You are willing to sacrifice a great many things in pursuit of your goals, including your own honor.

Clan: Crab

Benefit: As long as your Honor is below 2, you gain a +1 bonus to all low skill checks. If your Honor ever rises above 2, you lose the benefits of this feat forever. (See *Rokugan*, page 44, for an explanation of Low skills.)

ANCESTOR — YASUKI KOJIRO (5 POINTS)

Choose three Low Skills. As long as your Honor is below 2, you gain a Free Raise when making Skill Checks with any of those three Skills. If your Honor ever rises to 3 or greater, you lose this Ancestor forever.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

THE TOWER OF FEAR

As a precursor to the assault on Otosan Uchi by Daigotsu's armies, the Shadowlands launched an attack on the Great Wall greater than any since the first war with Fu Leng over a thousand years ago. Unlike the crude brute force and insidious sorcery of previous assaults, this attack stealthily inserted forces behind the Wall to attack the Crab where they were relatively defenseless. With the incredible power of the Onisu, the dread general Tsukiro, and even Shahai, the Dark Daughter, augmenting the thousands upon thousands of goblins, oni, and ogres attacking the wall, it was little wonder that the Shadowlands took several of the Crab's watchtowers along the Wall.

With a determination only found among the descendants of Hida, the new Crab Champion Hida Kuon began planning to retake the towers. Slowly the Crab took the towers back until only one remained. The Battle for the Last Tower was one of the most brutal in recent memory, matching even the Battle for Otosan Uchi. Calling on the power of Lord Sun and the Fortune of Thunder, Kuon and his forces shattered the Horde's ranks and drove them back to the last tower. There, the Tainted union of the undead Hida Kuroda and the Onisu of Fear, Kyofu, called out to the dark lord Fu Leng, who with Daigotsu's assistance had ascended to the Celestial Heavens. The Dark Kami's power suffused the final watchtower, Tainting it beyond hope of redemption. The Great Carpenter Wall had become corrupted.

Undaunted by this terrible turn of events, the Crab adapted to meet their new challenge. Under Hida Kuon's orders, the Kaiu tore down the wall surrounding the Tower of Fear, as it was now called, and with new construction sep-

arated the Tower from the remainder of the Great Carpenter Wall. The Wall was whole once more, and the Tower of Fear was now positioned directly between the Wall and the Hiruma lands. Despite its exclusion from Crab lands, the Tower of Fear dominates the landscape for a considerable portion of the Wall, a constant reminder of the Crab Clan's failure to protect their interests from the Shadowlands' eternal threat.

The Crab have seized control of the Tower on two separate occasions, but neither time for longer than a few days. In truth, the Tainted Tower is of little use to the Crab, but they have quartered the Damned there, some of their legions of Tainted warriors. Each time, the seething presence within the Tower has overwhelmed those who remain within it, driving them screaming into the dead of night.

Hida Kuon has sworn never to stop trying.

USING THE TOWER OF FEAR

Incorporating the Tower into an adventure is easy, but should not be done lightly. The malignant forces within it can be temporarily defeated, but never completely overcome. The Tower has been Tainted permanently, and the evil presence there is hungry for more, eager to corrupt anything that dares enter its blasphemous walls.

The Tower of Fear can be used in several ways:

- The Crab conduct periodic raids on the Tower in an attempt to keep the Shadowlands from staging another attack on the Wall from it. By constantly disrupting the Horde's activities within the Tower, the Hida hope to prevent further losses along the Wall.
- Kaiu tunnels run along the Tower's base. The Kaiu may have something of importance that yet remains within them. They might contract outsiders to regain the item in question, trusting in the element of surprise and the unfamiliarity of the Tower's defenders with outsiders' fighting styles to get the job done.
- Groups running reconnaissance in the Shadowlands might find that the Hiruma tunnels leading into and out of the Shadowlands have been crossed by a new tunnel. The Nezumi tunnels beneath the Tower of Fear could provide a means to take the Tower by force.

HOW TO USE THIS INFORMATION

Each of the major areas of the tower is presented here with all the information a GM needs to use it. Each section contains a heading entitled "At a Glance," which summarizes the components of that area. Specific portions of the tower and the surrounding area are given their own descriptions, which may be read aloud to players if the GM so desires. Individual GMs are encouraged to alter or expand the information presented here to suit their own games.

DWIZERS OF THE TOWER

The majority of creatures found within the Tower of Fear are simply Lost or undead, and as such are common foes for the Crab and their allies. If they were the only foes the Tower contained, then retaking it would be simple. The true danger



posed by the Tower is the heavenly power of Fu Leng that suffuses it. The Tower has become an anchor tying the dark Spirit Realms to the mortal realm. It is not unusual for creatures to cross over from Jigoku, Gaki-do, and even Toshigoku when they sense the delicious untainted flesh of samurai within the Tower. The Crab have yet to realize the spiritual ramifications of the Tower's corruption. When they do, they will realize that the Tower poses a far greater threat than they imagine.

THE LOST

Medium-size Undead (Shadowlands)

Hit Dice: 8d12 (52 hp)

Initiative: +1 (Dex)

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 16 (+1 Dex, +1 natural, +4 partial armor)

Attacks: Katana +7 melee

Damage: Katana 1d10+3 melee

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Abilities: Damage reduction 10/+1 (jade), fear aura

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

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 12, Con —, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8

Skills: Intimidate +10, Intuit Direction +11, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +11, Ride +12

Feats: Power Attack, Weapon Focus (Katana)

Climate/Terrain: Shadowlands

Organization: Patrols (5–10), squadrons (11–25), battalions (50–100) often with one large zombie (horse) or onikage per Dark Moto

Challenge Rating: 4

Treasure: None

Honor: 0

Alignment: Always lawful evil

Advancement: By character class

THE LOST

Earth: 5

Water: 4

Fire: 3

Agility: 5

Air: 4

Reflexes: 6

School/Rank: Black Guard 3 or Daigotsu's Legion 3

Shadowlands Taint: 7.0+

Shadowlands Symptoms: Various

Advantages: Combat Reflexes, Quick

Disadvantages: Obligation (Defend the Tower)

Skills: Archery 4, Athletics 3, Battle 4, Defense 4, Horsemanship 4, Hunting 5, Intimidation 5, Investigation 4, Kenjutsu 5, Lore (Shadowlands) 5, Subojutsu 4, Yarijutsu 4

Other suitable creatures that might be drawn through from other spirit realms include gaki, kansen, Toshigoku/Legacy spirits, yokai, and the like. (Sample statistics for these creatures can be found in *Creatures of Rokugan*,™ *Fortunes & Winds*,™ and various other L5R supplements.)

THE SURROUNDING AREA

At a Glance: Much to the Crab's disgust, the Tower of Fear lies only 200 feet from the Kaiu Wall. While they despise being so close to such an abomination, the Crab were unwilling to move the Wall any further back, surrendering more territory to the Shadowlands. The Tower is often wrapped in a sickly, otherworldly mist that partially obscures it from view,

even from a short distance away. The ground around the Tower appears to be growing ever more Tainted, and stands out because of its sickening black coloration. Hiruma scouts report that the ground around the Tower is much like that found far deeper inside the Shadowlands, and have expressed concern that if it does not stop spreading that it could reach the Great Wall soon.

The Swamp: The ground surrounding the Tower has succumbed to its foul power, becoming increasingly thick and viscous as time goes on. The mud sucks at boots like a living thing. Odd bits of armor and bone jut out of the mud here and there.

This region is considered a marsh terrain (see the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide™* for terrain types). Characters crossing it must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 15) every 100 feet or become fatigued from the effort of crossing the thick mud. For every 15 minutes spent in the marsh (it requires a minimum of 45 minutes to reach the Tower from the nearest edge), there is a 30% chance that the ground will react as if it had been the affected area of an imprisonment spell cast by a 17th level sorcerer. This effect is temporary, lasting one hour before the terrain returns to normal.

Crossing the mud around the Tower is difficult at best. Characters are reduced to one-quarter of their maximum speed as they slog through the viscous mess. For every 15 minutes spent crossing the swamps to reach the Tower (this takes a minimum of 45 minutes), roll a d10. On an 8, 9, or 10, the thick mud grabs at the party's legs and attempts to drag them under. The characters must succeed at an opposed Earth roll to break free. The mud is considered to have an Earth of 6 for this roll.

The Rubble at the Tower's Base: The stones scattered about by the Kaiu's separation of the Tower from the Wall have changed from their original dull gray color to a glossy black. They bear a striking resemblance to obsidian with their flawless black sheen and the twisted, ghastly reflections they cast. They remind onlookers of great pile of teeth, or perhaps a mass of gigantic beetles crawling across one another in an attempt to feast on the flesh of some bloated and forgotten corpse.

This rubble is particularly treacherous, and requires a Climb check (DC 20) every ten feet for those trying to access the Tower's upper levels this way. Failure results in a fall, inflicting 1d6 damage for each ten feet fallen. Accessing the Tower's upper levels requires climbing 50 feet to the lower ramparts.

This rubble is particularly treacherous, and requires an Athletics or Mountaineer roll versus a TN of 15 for every ten feet for those trying to access the Tower's upper levels this way. Failure results in a fall, inflicting 2k1 Wounds for each ten feet fallen. Accessing the Tower's upper levels requires climbing 50 feet to the lower ramparts.

THE EXTERIOR

At a Glance: The Tower of Fear is constructed from the same stone as the Great Wall. Already the slate gray exterior has begun to warp. The Tower no longer resembles the Great Wall at all, but instead appears to have been built from obsidian. A thick, slimy mold grows over much of the Tower's exte-

rior, cutting down on the glare that one might expect from an obsidian construct. For the most part the Tower and the portion of the wall that remains connected to its base looks exactly as it did before it was Tainted. The exceptions are the two ends where the Tower was forcibly separated from the Wall by the Kaiu siege engineers. The broken rubble on those ends is strangely chaotic, and the Kaiu who keep watch over the Tower believe that the stone is actually healing, like a wound.

The Tower can be entered either through a massive steel door that leads from the ground into the storage room or by ascending a ladder that leads to the lower ramparts.

The Tower of Fear: The Tower's blackened, battle-scarred exterior reaches toward the sky, blasphemously defying Kisada, Osano-Wo, and even Lord Sun. It seems somehow aware, regarding onlookers with amusement, outrage, and hunger. It seems to swell and deflate imperceptibly, drawing Tainted breaths from the noxious fumes the marsh generates.

The Tower of Fear generates a powerful Fear effect. Characters attempting to enter it must succeed at a Will save (DC 30) or become shaken. Characters who miss their save by more than 10 points are frightened, and characters who miss it by 20 points or more are panicked. Characters must leave the Tower's area in order for this effect to subside; it will persist so long as they remain within sight of it.

The Tower of Fear generates a powerful Fear effect. Characters intending to enter it must succeed at a Willpower roll versus a TN of 30. Failure means that the characters cannot bring themselves to enter the building. A character may roll once per hour to attempt to overcome the Tower's debilitating mental effects.

THE LOWER LEVELS

At a Glance: The lower levels of the Tower comprise the base upon which the Tower itself rests. When it was part of the Great Wall, the Tower's base was the lifeline that connected all the watchtowers. The supply room could support dozens of troops for weeks at a time and replace the weapons and equipment necessary during an extended siege. The Kaiu tunnels once connected all the watchtowers, although they were far less accessible than the other portions of the Wall. While many Crab knew of them, only the Kaiu engineers and Hida unit commanders knew how to access them, and even then their traps made travel exquisitely dangerous. In the level above, the runner's tunnel allowed Hiruma scouts to carry messages along the Wall without needing to stop at each watchtower. Additionally, the lower ramparts were the battleground on which countless struggles with the Shadowlands were played out. More blood has been washed from these stones than any other section of the Tower.

The Nezumi tunnels that descend from the Kaiu tunnels are even more securely hidden. The Nezumi have had over a thousand years of practice hiding from the Shadowlands. Locating the entrance to their tunnel requires a [Spot check, DC 25/Perception check, TN 20]. The tunnels are mostly the remnants of a bolt-hole the Third Whisker tribe carved out beneath the Wall, but they have also dug a new tunnel that leads to safety beyond the marsh that surrounds the Tower. There is a 50% chance that 3–5 members of the Third Whisker tribe will be present in the tunnels at any time. They are almost certain to attack first, as they do not expect anything coming from the Tower to be an ally.

The Lower Ramparts: The mist swirls all around the Tower, making it difficult to see more than a few feet. The thick, disturbing mist swirls unnaturally despite the lack of wind, and faces and forms move about in it just out of sight. There is a dull, roaring sound as well, like the ocean or something calling from deep inside a cavern.

Note: The incredible number of deaths that have taken place on this portion of the Wall over the centuries have combined with the influence of the Taint to result in a link to Toshigoku, the Realm of Slaughter. Of all the Tower locations, this is the most likely site for a crossover to occur. If any living character remains on the lower ramparts for more than ten minutes, there is a 10% chance that a Toshigoku Spirit will cross over during the following five minutes. During the five minutes following that, the chance increases to 20%, and so on.

The Tower is both aware and hostile. Anyone who approaches the edge of the lower ramparts will find that the stones there suddenly give way for no reason. The Tower is not structurally unstable, but can alter its physical structure as necessary to deal with intruders once it has grown bored with them. A Reflex save (DC 20) is necessary to avoid plummeting the fifty feet back down to the ravenous marsh below.

The Tower is both aware and hostile. Anyone who approaches the edge of the lower ramparts will find that the stones there suddenly give way for no reason. The Tower is not structurally unstable, but can alter its physical structure as necessary to deal with intruders once it has grown bored with them. An Athletics/Dexterity roll versus a TN of 15 is necessary to avoid plummeting the fifty feet back down to the ravenous marsh below.

THE TOWER AND THE TAINT

Being inside the Tower or the tunnels directly beneath it is effectively the same as being in the Shadowlands. Anyone entering without jade or other protection from the Taint runs the risk of becoming corrupted as if they were in the Shadowlands.

Like the Shadowlands, the tower possesses a malevolent awareness. It can control the temperature, light, and other aspects of its environment, and does so to unnerve unwelcome visitors.

Runner's Tunnel: The gap between the Tower's upper and lower levels is filled by the so-called runner's tunnel. The tunnel only tall enough to accommodate a man atop a horse. It is wide, however, and it was not uncommon along the Wall to see as many as half a dozen riders abreast of one another emerging from the tunnel into the sunlight. That image is little comfort now, however, as the tunnel is as black as midnight, with only a weak light emanating from the openings at either end. The wind through the tunnel sounds a great deal like breathing, and it is difficult not to imagine that the walls are slowly closing like the jaws of some horrific beast.

The runner's tunnel is the source of an additional Fear effect. All characters must make a Will save (DC 20) or become shaken for the remainder of their visit.

The runner's tunnel is the source of an additional Fear effect. All characters must roll Willpower versus a TN of 25 or be unable to spend any Void Points for the remainder of their visit.

The Storage Room: The dank recesses of this room are mercifully hidden from view. The stench of rotten food and flesh is almost overwhelming, and weapons and masonry materials are strewn about as if a monsoon had been contained within this room. The stairs appear to have survived relatively intact, however, and they appear to give access to the upper levels.

Note: There are roughly half a dozen plague zombies lurking in this room at any given time. Combat in the storage room is a risky prospect, as there is a 10% chance each round that a character can stumble over a weapon or other sharp object and injure himself.

PLAGUE ZOMBIES

Medium-size Undead (Shadowlands)

Hit Dice: 2d12+3 (16 hp)

Initiative: -1 (Dex)

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 11 (-1 Dex, +2 natural)

Attacks: Slam +2 melee

Damage: Slam 1d6+1

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Plague

Special Qualities: Undead, partial actions only

Saves: Fort +0, Ref -1, Will +3

Abilities: Str 13, Dex 8, Con -, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 1

Feats: Toughness

Climate/Terrain: Any land and underground (Shadowlands)

Organization: Solitary or mob (2-40)

Challenge Rating: 1

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always chaotic evil

Advancement: 3-6 HD (Medium-size)

PLAGUE ZOMBIES

Earth: 0

Stamina: 4

Water: 3

Strength: 4

Fire: 2

Air: 0

Rolls When Attacking: 2k1

Rolls For Damage: 5k2 (various improvised weapons)

TN to Be Hit: 5

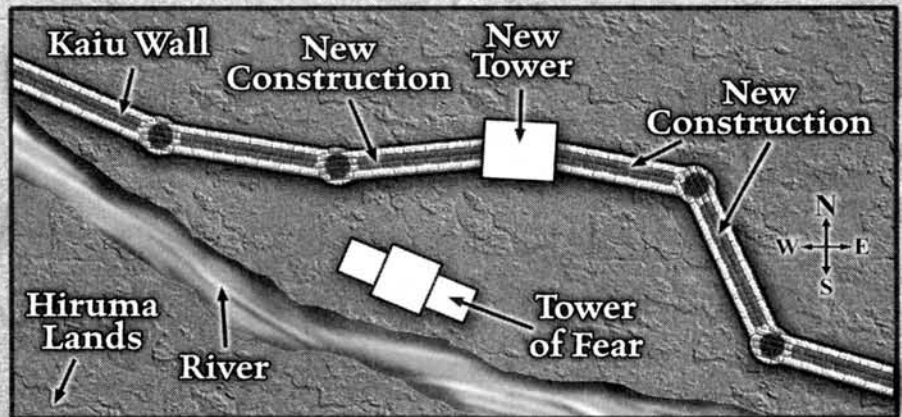
Carapace: 7

Wounds per level: 75: Dead

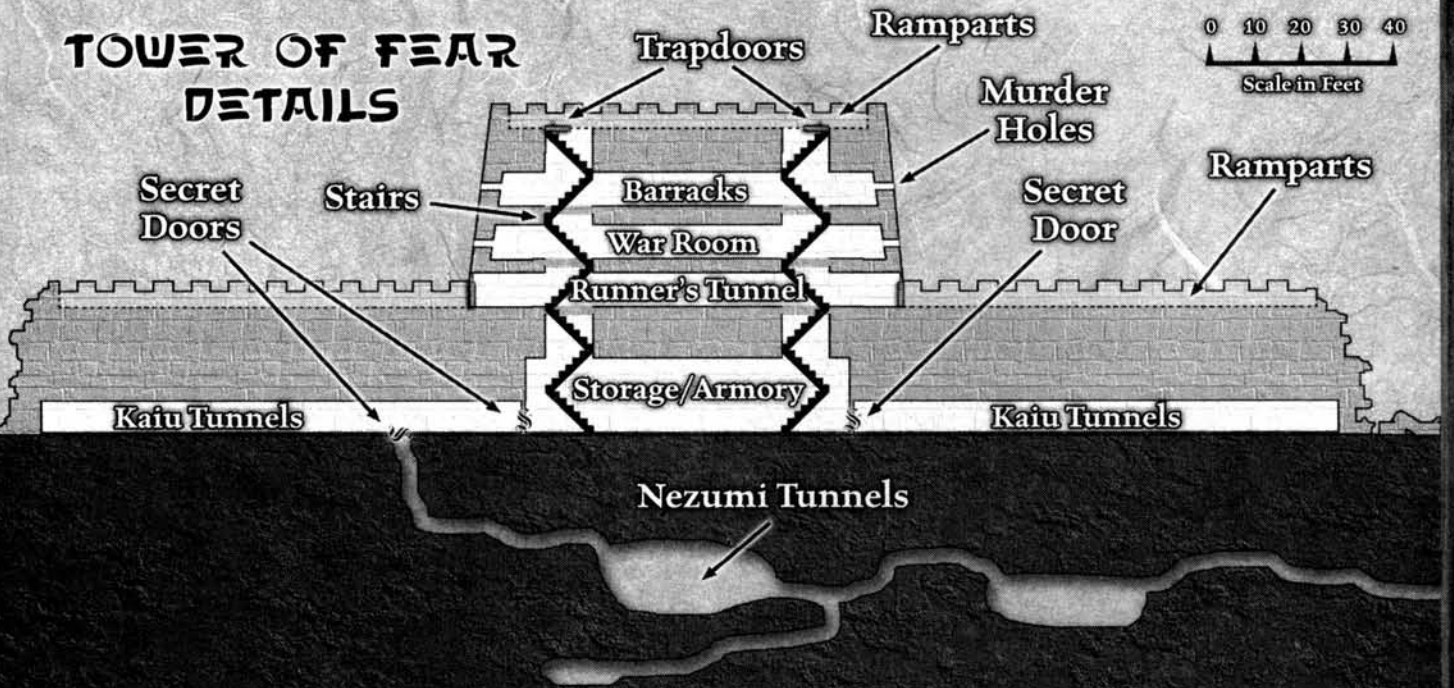
Invulnerable: If a zombie takes more than 15 damage in a single strike, it loses a random limb: 1-2: left arm, 3-4: right arm, 5-6: left leg, 7-8: right leg, 9: cut in half, 10: decapitated. Severed limbs slither behind the zombie and attempt to attack or to hold a target while the zombie attacks. Zombies are destroyed instantly by decapitation. Zombies suffer no penalties as a result of wounds received.

THE TOWER OF FEAR

TOWER OF FEAR ENVIRONS



TOWER OF FEAR DETAILS



The Kaiu Tunnels: The scent of fresh earth tinged by the rancid tang of a swamp pervades this area. The stones here are damp and slick to the touch from a nauseating mold that slowly creeps in from the marsh outside. The soil is still fresh, however, and the stone does not appear to share the obsidian finish of the Tower's exterior. The Taint has not yet infiltrated this secret place, it seems.

Note: The Kaiu Tunnels can only be accessed from the storage room. The difficulty to locate the secret doors is considerable [Spot, DC 25 / Perception, TN 20]. Once located, the doors must still be forced open [Strength check, DC 20 / Strength, TN 15].

The Nezumi Tunnels: Unlike the Kaiu tunnels, this crude passage has none of the elegance or stability that marks the work of a Crab engineer. This tunnel seems to have been dug entirely by hand, and a thick, musky scent fills it. There is no illumination of any kind, and the tunnels lead downward into unknown territory.

THE UPPER LEVELS

At a Glance: The upper levels of the Tower are perhaps the most sinister. The barracks and war room are the command center for most of Daigotsu's troops within the Tower, and the upper ramparts are home to two of the most insidious creatures ever spawned by the Taint. Daigotsu has left two living cannons, spawn of the beasts carried aboard the flagships of Garen's Tainted navy, atop the Tower. When the hideous things grow to maturity, they will be able to shower the Great Wall with their bile. They are as yet unable to see through the mist and must instead sate their bloodlust by destroying all who dare visit their territory.

The War Room: Once the center for Crab tacticians and engineers, the war room has become a crude and blasphemous temple devoted to the worship of Fu Leng. The tables that once detailed the terrain around the watchtower have been replaced with an obscene altar hewn from bone and rock. The altar is faintly luminescent, casting the entire room in a sinister scarlet light alleviated only by the shafts of light feebly struggling through the murder holes on the walls. The temple is not abandoned, however, as Fu Leng's adherents appear to worship at all times.

Note: There are 6–10 Lost present in this room at all times, along with a single maho-tsukai. The maho-tsukai has the stats of the Lost above, but also possesses numerous maho abilities.

The maho-tsukai Lost may cast maho spells as if a maho-tsukai of 12th level (see *Oriental Adventures™* for more information on the maho-tsukai prestige class).

The maho-tsukai may cast maho and Earth spells as if he were a shugenja of Insight Rank 3.

The Barracks: This chamber once served as a barracks for samurai awaiting an attack on the Great Wall. Now it is barely recognizable. Much of the sparse furnishing lays strewn about the chamber in tattered ruins. Here and there body parts are scattered about, occasionally an entire cadaver. Daigotsu's troops are not gentle in their training exercises. The room is dark and visibility limited, for the Lost do not need light. Only faint shafts of light illuminate the darkness, spilling inward from the murder holes on the southern face of the wall.

Notes: The barracks are always occupied. During the day, there are 4–6 Lost (see above for statistics) found within. At night, this number increases to 8–10 as the "guards" on the ramparts are reduced to a few sentries.

The Upper Ramparts: At the very pinnacle of the Tower of Fear, its awareness is almost palpable. Its eyes turn from the Great Wall to regard intruders with its full attention. The trapdoors leading below close with a slam, stranding those intruders alone with the strange forms moving in the mist.

The Living Cannons: Skittering atop the Tower like gigantic, grotesque insects are a pair of hideously inhuman siege engines. They do not appear to be iron at all, but rather a misshapen carapace of bone and hardened sinew. The things rest upon a trio of legs that end in menacing talons, and although they seem incapable of movement from looking at them, they drag themselves across the roof of the tower with terrifying speed. The most offensive feature, however, is the gaping maw that dominates the front of each beast. A thick, foul ichor drips from them in long ropes, like a predator salivating at the thought of its next kill.

ZENMENSORSOU — LIVING GAJJIN CANNON

Large Construct (Shadowlands)

Hit Dice: 10d10 (55 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 20 ft.

AC: 18 (–2 size, +8 natural)

Attacks: Slam +12/+7 melee, bite +6 melee; or cannon fire +15 ranged

Damage: Slam 2d6+7, cannon fire 6d6

Face/Reach: 10 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Fear, spell-like abilities

Special Qualities: Damage reduction 12/+2 (jade), regeneration 5

Saves: None

Abilities: Str 25, Dex 10, Con –, Int 4, Wis 10, Cha 2

Climate/Terrain: Any Shadowlands

Organization: Solitary, units (2–4)

Challenge Rating: 8

Treasure: None

Honor: 0

Alignment: Always chaotic evil

Advancement: 11–30 HD (Huge)

Spell-like Abilities (Sp): A living cannon may cast spells from the destruction domains as a cleric of 17th level.

ZENMENSORSOU — LIVING GAJJIN CANNON

Earth: 6

Air: 3

Fire: 2

Agility: 6

Water: 6

Taint: Innate

Rolls when Attacking: 6k4

Rolls for Damage: 10k3

TN to Be Hit: 25

Wounds: 50: +1, 100: +3, 150: +5, 200: Dead

Special: The living gajjin cannons have the following special abilities.

Maho: The living cannons may cast any maho spell that directly targets and deals damage to an individual or over an area.

CHAPTER EIGHT:

BEHIND THE VEIL

THE YASUKI CONNECTION

While even the Kuni have a strong combat tradition, only a small fraction of the Yasuki family pursue the warrior's path. Most Yasuki become merchant patrons, courtiers, or diplomats. Some would argue that this is because even the Crab realize the importance of retaining a family of diplomats, but recent events have reminded the Empire of the Yasuki's true origins — a dishonored Crane family that broke from its clan to join the Crab. Though some minor skirmishes predated the defection, the Crab-Crane War it sparked is remembered as Rokugan's first full-fledged civil war. Most believe that this war, like the more recent war over the Yasuki lands, resulted from conflicts over wealth and territory. The truth is much darker, and goes back long before the Crab-Crane War.

THE BIRTH OF THE KOLAT

When the Kami fell from the sky, not all mortals were content under their rule. The foolish defied them and perished. Wiser rebels fled to the shadows and made plans. Seeking some means by which they might gain power to undermine the Kami's rule, they settled upon the humble koku. The nascent Kolat observed that all men, even samurai, were greedy at heart, and that a good man could be encouraged to turn on his beliefs for the sake of avarice.

The clan with the most talented merchants at the time was the Crane. Their Yasuki family had essentially created the Empire's economy. A Yasuki by the name of Tanaka had designed the first koku and determined the basis of wealth exchange in Rokugan. (Though the Kolat never hesitate to imply that they influenced Tanaka, the truth is that he had no association with them, but was simply a clever man with groundbreaking ideas.) Though the Crane were the wealthiest samurai in Rokugan, they ironically placed little value on wealth. They did not encourage their samurai to quest for it and always demanded that the Yasuki be fair and open in their dealings. The Kolat recruited a few operatives in positions of power within the Yasuki family, but most of them failed to generate any true influence. Ultimately the Crane Champion determined how the Yasuki's business dealings were handled, and the Crane Champion's first loyalty was to the Emperor.

THE YASUKI BREAK

It was clear that if the Yasuki were to grow as the Kolat desired, the economic environment would have to change. As the Crane wanted for nothing, they did not need to rely upon the Yasuki. The Kolat decided to engineer a situation that would make the Crane desperate enough to turn to the Yasuki for help, and eager to indulge in shady business dealings and cutthroat business deals. Simply put, they needed to make the Crane bleed so that they would realize the value of a koku.

The Lion Clan were the most obvious choice to threaten the Crane, but the Lion had proven frustratingly difficult to control. Lion philosophy clashed with Kolat beliefs, and

Kolat agents among the Lion were few and far between. While fueling the Lion's feud with the Crane would have been easy, the ensuing war would have been too difficult for the Kolat to control. The Masters intended to demonstrate not only that the Crane needed to rely on the Yasuki to survive, but also that relying on the Yasuki worked. That would hardly be accomplished by taunting the Lion into a war the Crane could not win.

The Scorpion were the next choice, but the Kolat were not quite ready for such an undertaking. The risk of discovery by the Emperor's clan of spies and watchers was too great. For the moment, the Kolat were content to leave the Scorpion alone.

The Kolat finally settled upon the Crab. Even so early in the Empire's history many Crab resented their lot in life. Many chafed at the duty they had been given and were willing to hear the philosophies the Kolat had to offer. It was simple to encourage a few influential Crab to begin expanding their borders into Crane territory. Soon enough, war had erupted between the Crab and Crane, and the Kolat agents among the Yasuki were ready.

The Masters deftly manipulated both clans. The Yasuki produced weapons and supplies for the Crane, and their spies provided critical information about Crab troop movements (due mostly to Kolat double agents within the Crab). The Kolat Yasuki expected the Crane Champion to be grateful. Instead, to the Masters' great surprise, the Crane Champion Doji Mizobu refused to be a party to the Yasuki's underhanded dealings. He ordered the Yasuki to cease all illegal activities; they were to deal only in honest trade with other clans, or face the Emperor's justice.

The Kolat were dumfounded. Even in the face of his clan's destruction, Mizobu failed to see the value in what he had been offered. Luckily, the Masters had a contingency plan. Their association with the Crab had taught them that the Empire's defenders cared little for fairness so long as their duty was maintained. In a family as traditional as the Crane, the Yasuki would never grow as the Kolat intended, but in the Crab they would flourish so long as they did not interfere with the war. The Kolat agents within the Yasuki began their subtle manipulations and eventually engineered the Yasuki break, simultaneously making certain that the Crab were prepared to accept them.

Without even drawing attention to their existence, the Kolat had engineered a civil war and caused an entire family to leave one clan and join another. The Masters were overjoyed.

With greater freedom, the Yasuki began to rely more heavily on criminal ventures and underhanded dealings. Ironically, the Kolat discovered that since they gained more freedom the Yasuki had become more difficult to manipulate. Ever vigilant for magistrates, business competitors, or simple honest samurai who would interfere with their activities, it was rare indeed that any Yasuki would listen to the subtle manipulations of Kolat recruiters. The few reliable agents in the Yasuki family were the descendants of agents who had joined before the break. Due to the Kolat's distaste for inherited positions, these agents were rarely given any duties of note. The Yasuki quickly went from the Kolat's primary focus for domination of the Empire to a grand but ultimately unsuccessful experiment.

THE YASUKI TODAY

While the Kolat's involvement in the first war over the Yasuki lands may come as a surprise, the Empire would be more shocked to learn that the recent Yasuki conflict was also a result of Kolat intervention.

Daimyo Yasuki Taka had been a powerful Kolat agent before his transformation into the creature now known as Master Jade. Before the War of Spirits he had been the spearhead of a slow revolt within the Kolat. Taka did not agree with the organization's ultimate goals, that rulership of the Empire and the lands beyond could only be accomplished through the use of assassination, sleepers, and other morally questionable activities. While Taka was hardly a saint, he preferred to limit his sins to the subjugation of others' free will. He passed these beliefs on to his nephew Oguri, who became Yasuki daimyo upon his death.

With the reorganization of the Kolat following the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, Yasuki Oguri saw an opportunity to change the entire nature of the Kolat. He endeared himself to Doji Akae, Master Coin. When Akae died of illness during the War of Spirits, he named Oguri his heir. Immediately Oguri drew upon his resources to begin a quiet war within the Kolat. Those who did not agree with his philosophies were denied the Coin Sect's considerable resources. He even went so far as to name his son, Kamoru, as the heir to his position. Oguri made it clear that he had a large number of supporters both within the Kolat and the Yasuki, and if the Masters did not give up their goal of dominating the Celestial Order he would destroy them. Even other sects that did not agree with the traditional goals of the Kolat were disturbed by Kamoru's rebellious actions. For years he waged his quiet war against the other Masters until, finally, the Kolat had had enough.

In the dead of winter in 1157, Yasuki Oguri died of a mysterious illness that the Kuni healers could find mentioned only twice in their extensive archives. The following spring, Kamoru died of the same illness. With no direct heirs, the Yasuki scrambled to determine the closest relation. They discovered that any other Yasuki with a potential to assume leadership had either died in the War of Spirits or perished under mysterious circumstances following Kamoru's death.

The closest heir, it seemed, was a Crane, and the Crane were eager to use the Yasuki family's wealth to fund their campaign to win back the courts from the Scorpion. A brief war between Crab and Crane followed. The Kolat used the war as an excuse to exterminate Kamoru's remaining sympathizers, making the deaths look like casualties of war. In the meantime, the Masters saw to it that a more sympathetic agent used the conflict to rise to a position of influence among the Yasuki.

That man is Yasuki Jinn-Kuen, a man that most believe will be the next Crab daimyo of the Yasuki. The Kolat eagerly look forward to the day that one of their loyal agents commands the destiny of the Yasuki. For the moment only Yasuki Hachi, the Emerald Champion who still technically holds the position of daimyo, stands in their way. Hachi's guards are exceptional and he is ever vigilant for assassins, making it difficult to eliminate him. Fortunately, the likelihood of the Crab accepting a Crane daimyo of their most powerful merchant family are slim, so the Kolat need only wait...

THE DAMNED

As feared as the Shadowlands are, there is a sect of warriors among the Crab who are feared even more by the Empire. While the Shadowlands can never truly be understood, the horror of the Damned is all too obvious: men and women who have been consumed by the Taint and who measure their lives by the weeks, days, or hours that they have left. They are

feared not only for what they are, but for what they once were. Even a child can understand the horror of the Damned.

The Damned come almost exclusively from the Crab. Not only are Crab samurai the most likely to become Tainted, but few outside the clan have the fortitude to resist the Taint. Those who endure the Kuni's screening process and are deemed suitable to serve are grouped into units and placed under the direct supervision of a shugenja. This shugenja aids them in coping with their Taint, but will destroy them if they find that they cannot control it. Units of the Damned are sent to one of a small number of barracks maintained specifically for them along the Great Wall. They do not mix with non-Tainted troops, nor do they participate in any sort of non-combat activities with their pure brethren. The Damned are a society unto themselves, and only interact with others when ordered into battle alongside them.

BURNING THE SHADOW

TECHNIQUE FEAT

You may tap the power of your Taint without allowing it to corrupt you.

Prerequisite: Membership in the Damned, Taint modifier of +1 or higher, Concentration (8 ranks).

Benefit: You may make a Concentration check (DC 10 + your number of Taint points). If successful, you may add your Taint modifier to a single Strength, Constitution, or Dexterity check without accumulating additional Taint points. The DC of this check increases by 2 each time beyond the first it is used each day.

Normal: A character with the Shadowlands Taint may add his Taint modifier to such a roll, but gains a single Taint point in the process.

SHOUT AT THE DARKNESS

TECHNIQUE FEAT

You can summon the darkness inside you and unleash it upon your enemies... for a price.

Prerequisite: Membership in the Damned, Taint modifier of +2 or higher, Concentration (8 ranks)

Benefit: You may add your Taint modifier to all damage rolls against Tainted opponents or creatures with the Shadowlands subtype. You gain one point of Taint in the process and receive damage equal to half your Taint modifier (rounded down to a minimum of 1).

DARKNESS ASCENDANT

TECHNIQUE FEAT

Your Taint has all but overwhelmed you, yet you will not surrender to it.

Prerequisite: Membership in the Damned, Taint modifier of +1 or higher, Base Will save +4 or better.

Benefit: You are allowed a Concentration check once per day (DC = 20 + your Taint modifier). If successful, you are not subject to becoming Lost, but instead retain control of your mental faculties despite the overwhelming influence of the Taint.

Normal: If a character's Taint modifier exceeds his highest ability modifier, he becomes Lost and is no longer suitable as a player character.

THE DAMNED BERSERKER SCHOOL (REVISED)

Benefit: +1 Willpower

Skills: Battle, Defense, Herbalism, Kenjutsu, Lore (Shadowlands), Meditation, any one Bugei skill.

Beginning Honor: 1, plus zero boxes

Starting Outfit: (All Average Quality) Katana, Wakizashi, Yumi, 20 arrows of any type, Light or Heavy Armor, Helm, Traveling Pack, Kimono, any 2 weapons, finger of jade, 2 koku.

Special: The character must have at least one point of Shadowlands Taint.

TECHNIQUES

Rank 1: Burning the Shadow

The Damned have learned a series of herbal and meditation techniques through which they can slow the corruption of their bodies. A Damned berserker may make a Void/Meditation roll once per month against a TN of 30. If successful, the berserker's Taint is reduced by one point. This roll may not be attempted more than once a month, whether or not the roll fails. This may not reduce a berserker's Taint below a full rank, if he has that much, or below one point. This is an individualized process, and cannot be used by a berserker to reduce another person's Taint. In addition, the berserker may add his Taint Rank to all attack and damage rolls.

Rank 2: Turn the Dark Lord's Battle

The Damned walk a razor's edge between embracing the Taint and using it as a weapon. A Damned berserker may permanently gain one point of Taint to gain an extra attack each round against a Tainted opponent. The berserker gains no Taint if he kills his opponent within three rounds.

Rank 3: Shout at the Darkness

At this point, the berserker is very nearly Lost, but it does not stop him from giving his death meaning. The Damned gains a number of Free Raises equal to his Taint Rank against all Tainted opponents. On a successful strike against a Tainted target, the berserker may choose to double his damage roll, but gains a rank of Taint and receives Wounds equal to those inflicted on the target if he does so.

Rank 4: Swallowed by Shadow

Those Damned who survive long enough become unstoppable engines of death and destruction. The berserker may make an additional attack against any Tainted opponent. This may be combined with the Rank 2 technique to grant three attacks per round against a Tainted opponent, but making three attacks per round grants the berserker a point of Taint that cannot be avoided.

Rank 5: Darkness Ascendant

Only a handful of berserkers have ever reached this level. Most lose control long beforehand, while others are killed in battle. At this point, the threat of becoming Lost is very real. At this level, a berserker whose Taint increases above his highest Ring is not automatically Lost. He may make a Willpower roll each week versus a TN equal to his Taint Rank \times 5. Success means that he has resisted the siren call of the Shadowlands for another week. Eventually, he will fail, and he knows this. The Shadowlands has no more hated and feared foe than a Damned who longs for death in battle.

KYOFU, NIGHTMARE OF THE CRAB

A samurai lives his life without fear. But even the bravest samurai has his moments of weakness, and it is in these moments that the Onisu of Fear is strongest. It was Kyofu that defeated the renegade Oni Lord, Kyoso. It was Kyofu that marched at the forefront of Daigotsu's legions when the Kaiu Towers fell. He is the most intimidating of the Onisu, and he draws power from the fear he inspires in his opponents.

After Kyofu's defeat at the hands of a fearless Nezumi warrior, Daigotsu decided to increase the Onisu's power even further. Though all Onisu inhabit the bodies of dead samurai, the memories and souls of the previous owners are usually wiped away. In Kyofu's case, Daigotsu left them intact. Kyofu's new vessel was none other than Hida Kuroda, former Champion of the Crab Clan.

To see their former daimyo leading the armies of the Lost against them has broken the spirits of many Crab samurai. Fortunately, many more are filled with righteous outrage when they see the abomination Kuroda has become. Kyofu cares nothing for those brave enough to stand against him... all men fear something, and he is a patient demon.

It is important to note that Kyofu is the only one of the Onisu with a distinct gender. While the other seven are generally referred to as "it," Kyofu, wearing the body of Hida Kuroda, is most certainly male. In fact, when the Onisu speaks, it is never entirely clear whether the entity speaking is Kyofu or Kuroda. In Daigotsu's mind, there is no longer a distinction.

KYOFU, ONISU OF FEAR, NIGHTMARE OF THE CRAB

Large Outsider (Evil, Oni, Shadowlands, Spirit)

Hit Dice: 16d8 + 160 (232 hp)

Initiative: +14 (+10 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

Speed: 40 ft.

AC: 26 (-2 size, +10 Dex, +8 Natural)

Attacks: Katana +26/+21/+16/+11 melee

Damage: Katana 1d10+15

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft. / 10 ft.

Special Attacks: Fear aura, spell-like abilities, enhancement, onikage summoning

Special Qualities: Oni Qualities, honorable vulnerability, possession, regeneration 5, rejuvenation, SR 25

Saves: Fort +19, Ref +24, Will +13

Abilities: Str 30, Dex 18, Con 30, Wis 12, Int 15, Cha 14, Taint 9

Skills: Battle +17, Climb +26, Handle Animal +18, Jump +26, Knowledge (Crab) +18, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +18, Knowledge (Yume-do) +18, Ride +20, Sense Motive +17, Spot +17

Feats: Kharmic Twin (Ancestor — linked to Hida Kuon), Multiple Schools (Unicorn), Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge, Way of the Unicorn

Climate/Terrain: Shadowlands, Yume-do, any land or under ground

Organization: Solitary or with onikage mount and 20–200 zombies

Challenge Rating: 18

Treasure: Standard

Honor: Always 0 Honor

Alignment: Always lawful evil

Advancement: 17–48 HD (Large)

COMBAT

Kyofu looks like a withered, undead version of Hida Kuroda. He wears black armor at all times, with an impressive helm that he always removes in the presence of anyone who would recognize him as Kuroda.

Enhancement (Ex): Any time a person within 100 feet of Kyofu commits a dishonorable act of cowardice the Onisu gains one bonus hit die. All other benefits of advancement (such as higher saves, base attack, and caster level for spell-like abilities) are also gained. This benefit lasts for one week, after which time the Onisu loses one bonus hit die per week until he returns to the above statistics. Each time the Onisu gains ten levels from this ability, he increases by one size category. Enemies who flee from its fear aura are not necessarily guilty of dishonorable cowardice unless they fail three Will saves against Kyofu's fear in one round. Any target that fails four fear saves against Kyofu in one round must make an additional Fortitude save (DC 20) or die from fright.

Corrupted Katana: Kyofu's katana is a +5 *unholy katana of wounding*. Any opponent struck with it must make a Will save (DC 20) or be affected by his fear aura. Targets normally immune to fear receive a +4 bonus to this save.

Fear Aura (Su): Kyofu is surrounded at all times by an aura of fear so strong that even enemies normally immune to fear are affected (albeit with a +4 bonus to their save). All enemies with 5 HD or less that are not normally immune to fear are automatically panicked (no save). Other enemies are allowed a Will save every round (DC 25) to avoid being panicked. Even those who make their save successfully are still shaken unless they are normally immune to fear. If Kyofu does nothing but concentrate on his fear aura (a full round action) he can force all enemies in range to make three Will saves instead of one. An enemy who fails his save remains affected for ten rounds.

Honorable Vulnerability (Ex): Any time a person within 100 feet of Kyofu commits an act of selfless bravery (such as standing alone against Kyofu while comrades run for help), the Onisu receives a negative level. This negative level remains for one week, or until the Onisu can cancel the effect with his Enhancement ability. If the Onisu is reduced to zero levels due to this effect, he perishes. His damage reduction and spell resistance are entirely negated for any opponent who has committed an act of selfless bravery within the last minute.

Oni Qualities (Su): All oni have certain qualities, described on page 5 of *Creatures of Rokugan*.™ Unlike normal onikage, Kuroda's onikage has a flight speed of 60 with Poor maneuverability.

Onikage Summoning (Su): Kyofu can summon an onikage steed (see *Oriental Adventures*™) to his side as a free action or banish the steed with a free action. Kyofu may only have one onikage in existence at a time, though he can summon another if his previous steed dies.

Regeneration (Ex): Holy and honorable weapons do normal damage to Kyofu, as do weapons that have been immersed in the water of Yume-do, the Realm of Dreams.

Rejuvenation (Su): If slain, Kyofu can be harvested from the Realm of Dreams once more via a special ritual known only to the Dark Lord Daigotsu and the Tsuno Soultwisters.

The Onisu cannot be restored more often than once a month. It is unknown whether Hida Kuroda would still be a part of Kyofu if the Onisu were restored.

Spell-like abilities: at will — *detect passage**, *dispel magic*, *know alignment*, *obscuring mist*, *passage into darkness**, *passage into dream**, *protection from good*. 3/day — *deeper darkness*, *detect thoughts*, *emotion*, *haste*. These abilities are as cast by a 16th level sorcerer (DC 12 + spell level). Spells marked with an asterisk are described in *Fortunes and Winds*.™

KYOFU, ONISU OF FEAR, NIGHTMARE OF THE CRAB

Earth: 6

Fire: 3

Agility: 4

Water: 4

Strength: 6

Air: 3

Reflexes: 4

Rolls to Attack: 7k4

Rolls for Damage: 8k2 plus corrupted katana effects

TN to be Hit: 30

Carapace: 5

Wounds: 75: +10; 100: +15; 150: +20; 200: Dead.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Fear 9: Enemies normally immune to Fear are still affected as if Kyofu had Fear 6. If Kyofu does not attack or move, he can force every opponent in range to be subjected to his Fear three times that round. Any enemy who fails three Fear rolls against Kyofu in one round must make an Earth roll vs. TN 20 or die of fright.

Corrupted Katana: Kyofu can attack three times per round with his corrupted katana. Any opponent struck by the katana loses one Wound per round until he spends a round tending his wounds. Any target struck by the katana is affected by Fear 5. Targets normally immune to Fear are affected by Fear 3.

Enhancement: Any time a person within 100 feet of Kyofu commits a dishonorable act of cowardice, one of the Onisu's Traits (and all associated attributes) increases by one. This benefit lasts for one week, after which time the Onisu loses one bonus Trait per week until it returns to the above statistics. The oni grows slowly larger each time it draws upon betrayal in such a manner.

Honorable Vulnerability: Any time a person within 100 feet of Kyofu commits an act of selfless bravery (such as standing alone against Kyofu while comrades run for help), one of the Onisu's Traits (and all associated attributes) decreases by one. This penalty remains for one week, or until the Onisu can cancel the effect with his enhancement ability. If one of the Onisu's Traits is reduced to zero, he perishes.

Onikage Summoning: Kyofu can summon an onikage steed (see the *Game Master's Guide*™) to his side or banish the steed with a thought. Kyofu may only have one onikage in existence at a time, though he can summon another if his previous steed dies.

Passages: The Onisu can cast *Detect Passage*, *Passage Into Darkness*, and *Passage Into Dream* at will.

Carapace: Weapons that have been dipped in the waters of Yume-do ignore Nikushimi's Carapace rating.

Rejuvenation: If slain, Kyofu can be harvested from the Realm of Dreams once more via a special ritual known only to

the Dark Lord Daigotsu and the Tsuno Soultwisters. The Onisu cannot be restored more often than once a month. It is unknown whether Hida Kuroda would still be a part of Kyofu if the Onisu were restored.

NEWS OF THE EMPIRE

The world of Rokugan as presented in the Legend of the Five Rings CCG is a living, breathing, ever-changing place where major events occur all the time. This section is intended to keep you up to date on events that have happened in the Empire, especially those recounted in various RPG sourcebooks, the CCG expansion Heaven & Earth, and in fiction found online at <URL:<http://15r.alderac.com/fiction/>>.

The dark god Fu Leng, freed from his imprisonment in the Realm of Waiting, continues his assault on the Celestial Heavens. With vast armies of oni and other evil creatures at his command, Fu Leng threatens not only to destroy the gates of Tengoku, but also to corrupt the heavenly realm by virtue of his evil presence.

Enraged by a failed assassination attempt, Shogun Akodo Kaneka leads his army to Ryoko Owari in an attempt to destroy his hated rival Hantei Naseru. Although lacking a force to match the Shogun's, Naseru possesses enough men and influence to blunt his half-brother's attack, and his own Scorpion allies know the territory well enough to defend themselves indefinitely.

Crane Champion Doji Kurohito voluntarily relinquishes control of the hotly contested city Toshi Ranbo to the Lion Clan. Doing so flies in the face of centuries of warfare, but Kurohito does so to provoke the vengeful spirits within his cursed blade, Chukandomo. With the curse brought to fruition, Kurohito and Doji Yasuyo confront the spirits in an attempt to end Chukandomo's threat.

Emerald Champion Yasuki Hachi returns to Friendly Traveler Village in an attempt to unite the Crab and Crane there and stop the war between Kaneka and Naseru. When both clans refuse, Hachi becomes frustrated by the lack of respect. Gathering troops loyal to him, he marches beyond the Great Carpenter Wall and enters the Shadowlands, following rumors that an army of Lost samurai plans to attack the village of Shinsei's Last Hope. Most believe Hachi will never return.

Shiba Aikune separates a small portion of the Last Wish's power, creating a flaming dagger of exquisite beauty and incredible potency. He offers it as a gift to the Empress Tsudao, pledging the Phoenix Clan's loyalty to her. Shortly thereafter, Aikune attempts to use the Wish to enter the Celestial Heavens and join the battle against Fu Leng. The attempt fails, and in the ensuing backlash of power Aikune destroys a mountain and a small monastery. Shocked, Aikune retreats from the Empire, vowing to master the Last Wish in a place where none can be harmed.

Following the destruction of Otosan Uchi, the Otomo family seeks a new home amid the Great Clans. A tense court session is held to see which clan will enjoy the honor of hosting the Otomo. In the end, Doji Tanitsu cleverly outmaneuvers Ikoma Sume and bluffs Bayushi Kaukatsu, securing the Otomo's home within the Crane lands for the foreseeable future.

CRAB PROVINCE KEY

Hi1	Garanto Province	Ka1	Hokufuu Province
Hi2	Juuin Province	Ka2	Yoake Province
Hi3	Kyoukan Province	Ka3	Kuda Province
Hi4	Ishibei Province	K1	Midakai Province
Hi5	Ishigaki Province	K2	Adauchi Province
Hr1	Hissori Province	Y1	Sunda Mizu Province
Hr2	Ienikaeru Province	Y2	Junkin Province
Hr3	Kinbou Province		



SHIROMEN
FOREST

PLAINS
ABOVE EVIL

CRAB TERRITORY

Daidoji Training
Grounds
[CN14]

KAIU
WALL

Yasuki (Yashiki)
[CB18]

Shinden Asahina
[CN18]

YAKAMO'S HEART

“Every day would be the death of you all,
the end of everything the Empire has built...
except that we are there.”

— Hida Reiha

Secrets of the Crab investigates the children of Hida, the most indefatigable of Great Clans. See the customs, holdings, and way of life of the men and women that live only a stone's throw from the Festering Pit. Come stand upon the Kaiu Wall beside them... if you dare.

Within, you will find:

- Information on the major and minor holdings of each Crab family, complete with points of interest, notable individuals, and suggestions on how to incorporate these elements into character backgrounds and adventures.
- Mechanics for the secret weapons and techniques of the Crab armies: Kaiu siege weaponry, Kuni crystal weapons, Hida weaponry innovations, and new techniques for the Damned — doomed crack troops who rush to their death in combat to avoid the inevitable madness of the Taint!

Secrets revealed about the Yasuki conspiracy, the Crab's Nezumi alliance, and the mysterious Shakoki Dogu, ghost of the Twilight Mountains.

This book is a dual-system supplement for the Legend of the Five Rings Role-Playing Game, Second Edition,[™] and Rokugan[™] the d20 Companion for Legend of the Five Rings. Players and DMs may also find it a useful source of feats and abilities for any d20 System[™] campaign.

Game Masters running the Second Edition L5R RPG will need a copy of the Legend of the Five Rings Game Master's Guide[™] and the Player's Guide[™]. Players need only the Player's Guide.

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